

University of Southern Queensland

**An Exploration of the Interconnectedness Between
Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction, School Culture and
Student Achievement:**

A Study in Two Canadian Elementary Schools

A Dissertation submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to explore the interconnectedness between the job satisfaction of elementary teachers, school culture and student achievement. This study focused on the inter-relationship factors between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture. Further it examined the nature of the relational factors of school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction that contribute to or hinder student achievement.

The school sites that participated in this research study were two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6), one from a lower socio-economic area and one from a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area. The principals and elementary teachers from these two schools were the participants in this research study.

By employing a sequential mixed-methodological approach, this research study looked at how collaborative school cultures conducive to learning affect teacher job satisfaction and motivation, which has the potential to contribute to student outcomes. The study used the mixed quantitative and qualitative data within the interpretivist perspective. This perspective helped to determine principals' and elementary teachers' views of how they perceive job satisfaction in relation to the school's culture as well as their thoughts on the effect these two factors have on student achievement.

The findings of this research study led to a realization that elementary teacher participants are intrinsically motivated and have high levels of job satisfaction due to caring and collaborative relationships formed at work. The findings of this research study also indicated that both elementary teachers and principals enjoy autonomy as well as collaboration in their work settings which further ensures integrity and loyalty regarding their own careers and the careers of their colleagues. The significance of this research study has further emphasized the importance of collective action and distributed leadership (parallel leadership) on behalf of both elementary teachers and principals in order to sustain change and to further enhance student learning outcomes. This research study constructed a Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model to further explain the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The diagram below, (Figure 1) outlines the model that emerged. The CRL Model is further discussed in Chapter seven of this research study.

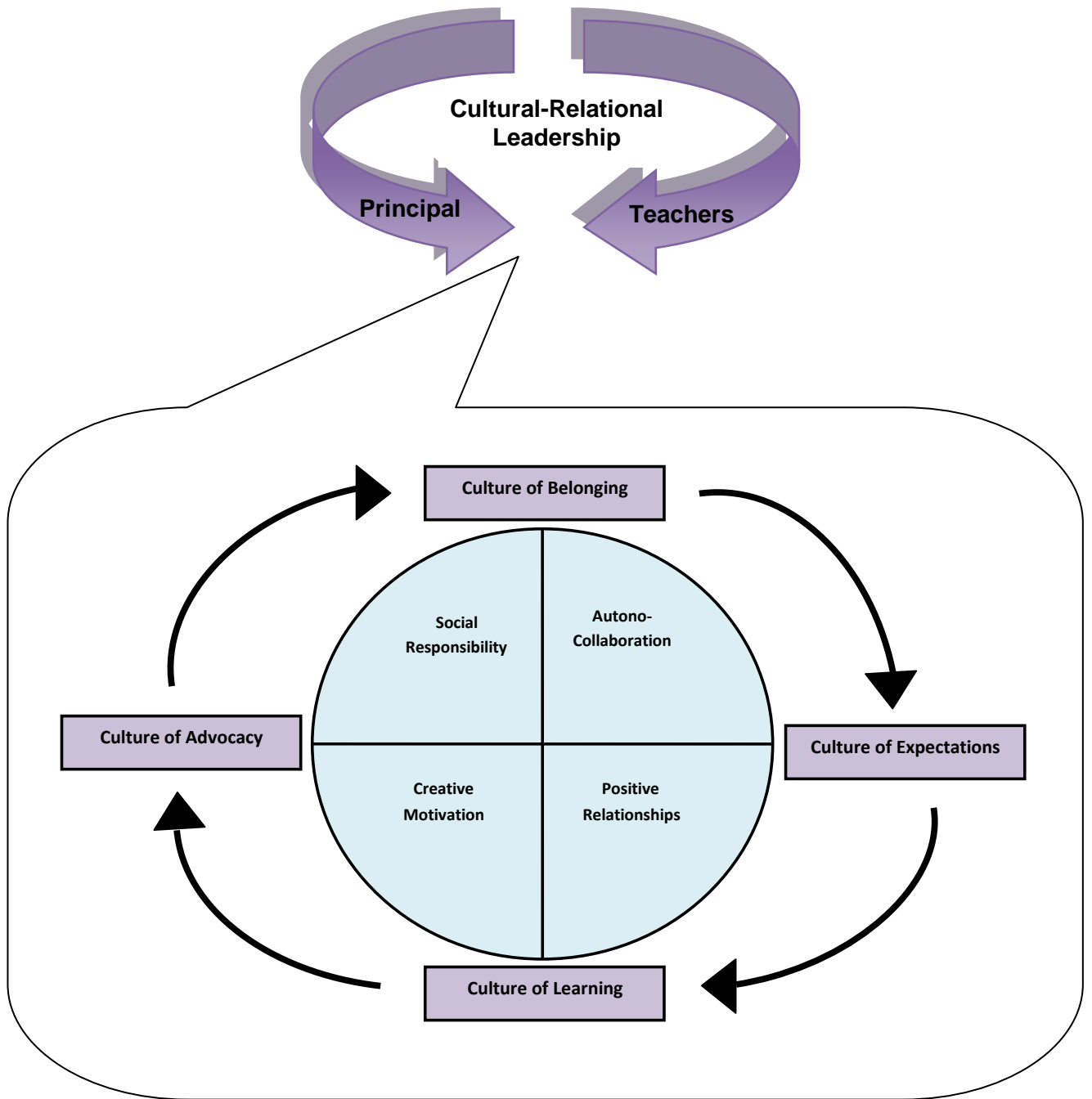



Figure 1: Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) Model

CERTIFICATION PAGE

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

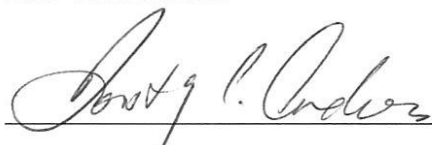
I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.



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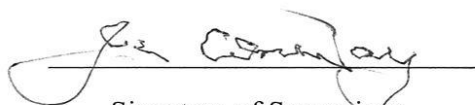
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GLOSSARY

AC	Autono-Collaboration
ACL	Autono-Collaborative Leadership
ALP	Annual Learning Plan
CRL	Cultural-Relational Leadership
Custodian	Chief Caretaker at a School
Elementary School	Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6 (ages 4 – 12)
EQAO	Education Quality and Accountability Office
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IPRC	Identification, Process and Review Committee
JK	Junior Kindergarten (age 4)
Junior Division	Grade 4 to Grade 6 (ages 10 – 12)
PLCs	Professional Learning Communities
Primary Division	Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3 (ages 4 – 9)
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SK	Senior Kindergarten (age 5)
TPA	Teacher Performance Appraisal
USQ	University of Southern Queensland

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Overview of the chapter

This first chapter begins with a discussion as to the background of this research study, its purpose and the overall concerns that it addressed. Following the background is the research problem and the four research questions that guided this study. This section is followed by a brief overview of the research design and methodology which is explained in more detail in Chapter three. Next is an important discussion highlighting the significance of the research study and also possible limitations of this study. An overview of the organization of the dissertation is also found in Chapter one, rounded out by a chapter summary.

1.2 Background to the study

The purpose of this research study was to explore the interconnected relationship of elementary teachers' perception of job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The research for this dissertation was based on three concerns: 1) the inconsistencies that were being cited in overall student achievement in Ontario, Canada schools at the elementary level (Junior Kindergarten to grade 6); 2) the interest in maintaining elementary teacher job satisfaction; and 3) the challenges involved in creating and sustaining collaborative school cultures focused on student and staff learning, relationship building and distributed leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Hulley & Dier, 2005; Crowther, Andrews, & Conway, 2013).

The central focus of any school must be teaching, learning and overall student achievement. Contributing factors vitally connected to this central focus stem from the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture that in turn directly affects teaching, learning, and overall student achievement. Satisfaction with one's job is of vital importance to the health and well-being of elementary school teachers (Fullan, 2001, 2009). School culture can positively or negatively impact the quality and success of job satisfaction for elementary school teachers; it can also impact student achievement, positively or negatively (Fullan, 2001, 2009).

Improving elementary teacher job satisfaction and morale is one of the most important issues to be addressed, due to the relationship with school culture and the fact that elementary teacher job satisfaction is relational to student achievement (Blankstein, 2004). Teachers and their relationships with students are very important to all areas of school life. However, the single most influential school-based factor connecting teaching and learning to student achievement is the teacher (Wright, Noe, Hollenbeck, & Gerhart, 2007). If elementary teachers are person-centered in their teaching methodologies and demonstrate to students that they respect and care for them the result is higher student achievement levels (Cornelius-White, 2007).

In essence then, this research arose from the above concerns documented by Fullan (2001, 2009), Blankstein (2004), Cornelius-White (2007), and Wright et al. (2007),

and brought together three constructs: 1) job satisfaction for elementary school teachers is important to each individual teacher as it impacts on their morale, health and well-being; 2) working in a positive, collaborative school culture certainly affects the job satisfaction of elementary school teachers and thus student achievement; and 3) the single most influential school-based factor connecting teaching and learning to student achievement is the teacher (Crowther et al., 2013).

1.3 The research problem and research questions

Due to the nature of the concerns expressed and the three constructs upon which this research was based, the context for the research study was two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6): one located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area and the second located in a lower socio-economic area. The purpose for studying two schools in variant socio-economic areas of a school district was to explore the interconnectedness between school culture, elementary teacher job satisfaction and student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic factor.

The researcher chose to study specific constructs at two high-performing elementary schools (JK-6) to help provide suggestions that may assist in addressing the concerns cited in the research. The goal was to make a contribution to this area of research and encourage others to continue researching this particular field of study for the betterment of student achievement, school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction. The research problem explored in this study was:

What emerges as the interconnectedness between school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the impact this interconnectedness has on student achievement in two high-performing Canadian elementary schools located in distinctly different socio-economic areas?

This research study was guided by the following four questions:

1. What factors are relational between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture in two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada?
2. What is the nature of the school culture factors that elementary teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?
3. What is the nature of the elementary teacher job satisfaction factors that teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?
4. What model might emerge to explain the interconnectedness between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this interconnectedness affects student achievement?

Throughout the research study, three perspectives on meanings prevailed: the teachers' meaning, the principals' meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teachers' and principals' social reality. The researcher was aware of these three points of view when discussing, comparing, analyzing and interpreting throughout the research study (Patton, 2002, 2004).

1.4 The research design and methodology

In an attempt to address the overall concerns cited above and bring together the three stated constructs in a research project, the methodology used in this research study was sequential mixed methodology. This research study was constructed from an interpretivist paradigm focusing on the three perspectives of meaning: that of the teachers', that of the principals' and that of the researcher's interpretation of the teachers' and principals' social reality (Patton, 2002, 2004). The basic contention was that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs (Berger & Luckman, 1966). The researcher emphasized a collaborative inquiry approach (Patton, 2004), and adopted the theoretical framework of social constructivism (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

This study was built on a pilot research study conducted by the researcher as a component of the Doctor of Education program. The purpose of the pilot research project was to study the relationship between school culture and job satisfaction of elementary school teachers. The pilot research project used both qualitative and quantitative data from an anonymous survey as well as from in-depth interviews. Elementary teachers from two randomly selected schools volunteered to participate in the pilot research study.

Based on the quantitative data collected from the anonymous questionnaire used in the pilot research project, a series of bivariate correlations were performed to quantify the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and age, years of teaching experience at their current school, years of teaching experience at their current grade level, total number of days absent, and total number of absences in the previous year. Job satisfaction was found to be positively related to age and negatively related to the number of days absent for the school year. So, as the elementary teachers got older, they became more satisfied if the number of days absent did not exceed the average of six days per school year. However, the analysis of the quantitative data confirmed, as some teachers took more absences, they became less satisfied. No other significant correlations were reported from the quantitative survey data of the pilot research project.

The qualitative results from the pilot research study confirmed that being an elementary school teacher is inherently paradoxical. The teacher participants of the pilot research study discussed the expectations placed on elementary teachers and that these expectations seem to be rapidly expanding. In addition to being expected to deal with a diversity of broader social problems that find their way into their classrooms, many other pressures plagued these teachers such as inappropriate student behaviour, limited support from some parents and administration, decreased autonomy and sometimes toxic school cultures.

Despite the increased demands placed upon them, the teacher participants of the pilot research study discussed many positive aspects that provided them with job satisfaction. Most of the teachers who participated in the pilot research project enjoyed an increased level of job satisfaction. They found teaching to be very rewarding as they had a chance to be creative every single day. The pilot research participants discussed the importance of strong, collaborative working relationships with regards to their job satisfaction and their overall physical and mental health. The teachers also discussed the importance of teamwork and how working within a

school culture that provides a caring place where everyone belongs was vitally important to their job satisfaction. Participants believed that their career as a teacher was personally as well as professionally fulfilling, as they love doing what they do and helping students to succeed. Most of the teacher participants in the pilot research study seemed passionate about their careers and cited intrinsic reasons for increases in job satisfaction as well as reasons to develop and continue to create positive school cultures. None of the teacher participants of the pilot research study suggested extrinsic rewards such as salary, benefits and summer holidays as motivating factors that provided them with job satisfaction or motivated them to create positive school cultures.

All participants from the pilot research study agreed that building and maintaining a positive and collaborative school culture needed to be a priority for both the teachers and the principals. The participating teachers suggested that their schools had created cultures where shared decision making, active engagement in learning opportunities and designing learning organizations were a priority of the formal leadership as well as the informal leadership. The teacher participants of the pilot research study agreed that it was important for them to know and to be a part of a shared and collaborative school culture, one in which all staff help to develop and maintain the school's vision and goals. The participants of the pilot research project acknowledged that they did work in schools where collaborative cultures were evident and that this led to increases in their job satisfaction levels.

From the pilot research project, the researcher refined the methodological approach and the data collection instruments. Through discussions with the researcher's supervisors it was decided that teachers can be satisfied with their jobs however, it was unclear from the pilot research study as to what motivated teachers in terms of job satisfaction. As is cited in Wright et al.'s (2007) research, teachers are the most school-based influential factor related to student achievement. After discussions with the researcher's supervisors, an accountability factor as to the purpose and responsibility of a teacher's job was added to this current research study. The researcher and her supervisors agreed to continue to study the exploration of elementary teacher job satisfaction and the relationship it has with school culture, however, the "student achievement" component was added to determine whether this interconnected relationship affects student achievement.

Thus, this current research study further explored the relationship of elementary teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction in relation to school culture and added an additional component to this research study, thus it also explored the interconnectedness of this relationship on student achievement. Teachers and principals need to work together and agree on a vision of authentic and high-quality intellectual work for students that includes intellectually-challenging learning tasks and clear goals for high-quality learning (Hord, 2004; Hord & Sommers, 2007) based on the Ontario Ministry of Education's curriculum expectations.

This research study supports that this collective vision can only happen when school staff are working towards building a collaborative culture of shared and distributed leadership, focusing on improving teaching practices and improving student achievement. This research study defined that high-quality student learning is achieved in classrooms through authentic pedagogy (instruction and assessment), and

students from all social backgrounds benefit equally, regardless of race, gender, or family income (Hord, 2004; Hord & Sommers, 2007).

In accordance with Hord's (2004) and Hord and Sommer's (2007) research regarding socio-economic backgrounds of students and how students from all backgrounds benefit equally from authentic pedagogy, the researcher decided to study two elementary schools, one from a lower socio-economic area and one from a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area. The researcher wanted to study two schools in varying socio-economic areas that both demonstrated high levels of student achievement to determine what factors and characteristics were evident in terms of the interconnectedness between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement, regardless of income and social status. The two elementary schools identified in this research study were from varying socio-economic backgrounds and were selected using results from the Ontario provincial assessments conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The two schools selected had demonstrated increases in student achievement scores over a five year period.

Throughout this current research study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected, recorded, analyzed and interpreted. Sources of information included an anonymous questionnaire, in-depth interviews, a focus group, conducting member checks, peer and colleague debriefing and the researcher's reflective journal. These methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation will be further explained in Chapters three, four and five.

The premise of this research study was that perceptions are personally constructed by each individual, impacting on views of job satisfaction as well as the underlying theme that realities of each school culture are socially constructed through words, symbols and behaviours, thus creating learning environments that are linked positively to student achievement (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Constructivism and collaborative inquiry (Lambert, 2003) were prominent methods used as they involve the sharing of ideas and individual strengths by enhancing interactive questioning, investigation and learning (Kuhn, 1962; Patton, 2004). Constructivism and collaborative inquiry help to build positive relations. It is research 'with' people rather than 'on' people (Nelson, Slavit, Perkins, & Hathorn, 2008).

1.5 Significance of the study

This research study explored the very vital relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement levels. Job satisfaction and the building of school cultures rooted in an interpretive paradigm (Patton, 2004) where teachers are constructing their realities through their own words, symbols and behaviours (Berger & Luckman, 1966) are key factors to elementary teachers being satisfied with their profession.

According to Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969), job satisfaction represents the difference between what is expected and what is experienced in relation to the alternatives available in any given situation. Job satisfaction for elementary school teachers is unique and personal to each individual. Each teacher constructs his or her own reality as to what he or she perceives and values in terms of satisfaction with their own teaching career. Constructing social reality is done through the perceptions

and interactions of inter-relationships at work (Kuhn, 1962; Lambert, 2003). This research study supported the concept that working in a positive, collaborative school culture certainly affected the job satisfaction of elementary school teachers where teachers reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The word 'positive' describes the type of culture and is defined throughout this study as constructive. 'Positive' can be further explained as moving in a direction of progress and increase (Webster, 1988).

Positive and collaborative school cultures are essential to influencing the direction of school-wide initiatives both academically and socially. The culture of a school establishes many vital factors that influence the lives of school community members on a daily basis. This study is significant in that it researched the interconnectedness between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

This research study further expanded upon the leadership roles of both principals and teachers and how autonomy and collaboration are essential to leadership roles. This research study defined leadership characteristics of principals and teachers that help to sustain capacity within schools and it further developed cultural characteristics essential for growth. This study is significant in that it researched the interconnectedness between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

1.6 Limitations of the study

There were several limitations surrounding this study. A significant limitation was the sample size. Only two elementary schools were selected for this study and the elementary teachers at both sites participated on a voluntary basis. Due to the sample size, it was difficult to generalize the results across various sectors. Thus, the intent of this study was not to produce generalizations. Follow-up studies on the significant findings will be needed to verify the results herein.

The role of the researcher was also a limitation. During the data collection phase, the researcher was in a vice-principal role at another school. Hopefully the administrative role will not be seen as conflicting with the authenticity of answers and responses from participants. The two elementary schools selected were schools at which the researcher had not worked prior to this research study. Currently the researcher works as an elementary school principal at another school unrelated to this study.

1.7 Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation is presented in seven chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the research associated with the dissertation that includes background information and rationale for the study, the research problem and the research questions, an overview of the research design and methodology, possible perceived limitations, and a summary of the organizational structure of the dissertation.

Chapter two outlines the literature review. The literature review is sectioned into six main themes: 1) Canadian job satisfaction reports; 2) International research on job satisfaction; 3) Research on school culture; 4) Contributing factors to student

achievement; 5) Student achievement levels in Ontario, Canada; and 6) The influence of leadership on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

Chapter three outlines the methodological approach used throughout the research. It focuses on the design and research instruments of an anonymous mixed questionnaire, in-depth interviews, a focus group, peer debriefing, member checking and the researcher's journal. It discusses the use of the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, whereby knowledge is socially constructed and culturally embedded. The chapter explains how three perspectives on meanings will prevail: the teachers' meaning and the principals' meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teachers' and the principals' social reality. The chapter also discusses the rationale behind the selection of elementary schools and elementary teacher participants. Chapter three also outlines the four phases of collection of data and explains how the data will be presented, analyzed and interpreted in Chapters four, five and six.

Chapter four contains the presentation and analysis of the quantitative data from phases one and two. Chapter four begins to form a response to the research problem as well as research questions, one, two and three. Chapter five outlines the presentation and analysis of qualitative data from phases three and four. Chapter six explores the interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative data and responds to research questions one, two and three. Chapter six helps to formulate a response to research question four in terms of a model that emerges from the research. The model is further described in Chapter seven.

Chapter seven provides a summary and discussion of the findings throughout this research study, in particular, the interpretation of the data in response to the research problem and research question number four is explored: "What model might emerge to explain the interconnectedness between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this interconnectedness affects student achievement?" The findings from this study will lead to the formation of further possibilities in this field for future research.

1.8 Chapter summary

Chapter one has provided the framework for the dissertation and readied the reader for an exploration of the literature review in Chapter two. As well it has given consideration to the research problem and questions that constitute the basis of this research study. Also established is the position taken in this study, that is, that the research will view as many perspectives as possible when addressing and discussing the research questions. Finally, the chapter has also provided a starting point to explain why elementary teachers require a voice within the school organization so that their thoughts, ideas and plans can be heard, listened to and understood.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter reviews the literature that provided the research foundation for this study. The chapter begins with an exploration of the concept of job satisfaction. This section begins with a report on job satisfaction amongst Canadian workers followed by a discussion regarding job satisfaction with Ontario elementary teachers. Next is an historical overview of the international research literature on job satisfaction as well as a recent literature review on linking job satisfaction and employee motivation. Concluding remarks on the topic of job satisfaction are followed by an introduction to a literature review of organizational as well as school cultures. Definitions, concepts and characteristics of cultures are outlined followed by a critique of research literature on how groups are formed within cultures as well as the influence that both internal and external relationships have on cultures. The literature review then reports on the contributing factors focused on student achievement and is rounded out by a discussion on the assessment methods used in Ontario, Canadian schools. The final section of chapter two reviews the literature related to the established, though contested influence that leadership, in particular shared, distributed and parallel leadership have on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

2.2 Canadian job satisfaction reports

According to the article, “Unhappy on the Job” in the October 2006 quarterly edition of Health Reports (Statistics Canada, 2006) that about 1 in 12 Canadian workers, roughly 1.3 million people in Canada, were dissatisfied with their jobs in 2002 (Statistics Canada, 2006). Adults aged 18 to 24 were most dissatisfied with their jobs, with job satisfaction increasing with age (Statistics Canada, 2006). The same study found clear associations between the amounts of job stress workers perceived and their job satisfaction. Among workers who found most days extremely stressful, 1 in 4 were dissatisfied with their jobs. By contrast, among those for whom stress was not an issue, only 1 in 15 was dissatisfied (Statistics Canada, 2006).

This Statistics Canada study also found that relatively large percentages of workers who were dissatisfied with their jobs rated their physical and mental health as fair or poor, compared with workers who were satisfied. In fact, the average number of days taken by workers who were dissatisfied was almost three times that for workers who were very satisfied with their jobs (Statistics Canada, 2006). Therefore, they conclude the happier people are with their job the more satisfied they will be. Job satisfaction is not the same as motivation; however, as will be discussed in this chapter, they are clearly linked. Other influences on satisfaction that were not stated above include management style, organizational culture, employee involvement, empowerment and autonomy (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In 1990, King and Peart (1992) conducted a survey looking at job satisfaction of 11,000 Canadian elementary and secondary school teachers. At the time, 24% of Ontario teachers were identified as having high job satisfaction. The national average for all workers was only 18%. Most teachers across Canada, 92%, identified that

student respect for them as a teacher is a key source of satisfaction in their job. As for other sources of satisfaction, 51% of teachers nationally found the financial rewards satisfactory. Moreover, 61% of Canadian teachers would choose teaching again as a career (King & Peart, 1992). However, King and Peart's (1992) study was conducted more than 20 years ago.

Twenty years ago only 24% of all Canadian teachers, elementary and secondary, were satisfied with their jobs. However, a more recent Canadian survey conducted by Northstar Research Partners (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007), indicates that teachers, whose average salary is almost \$70,000 less than corporate executives, are the second most content with their jobs. Corporate executives reported the greatest job satisfaction in Canada (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007).

This Northstar Research Partners' (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007) study was based on an online survey of nearly 8,000 Canadians. The survey asked participants to evaluate their jobs based on eleven (11) factors, including salary, culture, creativity and stress level. CEOs, CFOs and presidents reported to have the most job satisfaction out of all 8,000 participants and rated autonomy as the most satisfying aspect of their work. Interestingly, the executives indicated that they would like a greater balance between their professional and private lives (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007).

In the same study Canadian teachers cited the ability to be creative as the most rewarding aspect of their profession and a lack of high salaries the main detriment. A positive culture was the most important job quality to all 8,000 Canadian participants, followed by the opportunity to use their skills and abilities, and the opportunity to learn. The study indicated that Canadians believed that salary is important, however, once a certain threshold of salary has been met, other factors provide for true job satisfaction. Factors such as learning and development, creativity and culture were reported as indicators of job satisfaction for today's working Canadians (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007).

2.2.1 The Ontario, Canada elementary teacher situation

Another study conducted by Kenneth Leithwood (2008) discovered interesting findings with regards to job satisfaction and working conditions of elementary and secondary teachers in Ontario, Canada. Leithwood was commissioned by the Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario (ETFO) to study, compare, and write a report on possible differences in the working conditions and experiences of elementary and secondary school teachers in Ontario's public schools. The teachers who participated in the study's interview process had worked at both levels and were asked about the main differences in the working conditions they experienced as elementary versus secondary teachers. Teachers were unanimous in the view that working conditions were more favourable in secondary schools. Almost all indicated that workload volume in secondary schools was less demanding than it had been in elementary schools. Most of the participants claimed that the complexity of their work in secondary schools, was also much reduced (Leithwood, 2008).

In the survey portion of the study, secondary teachers rated their working conditions higher than elementary teachers overall for seven (7) of the nine (9) broad categories (Leithwood, 2008). The nine (9) broad categories are: 1) workload volume; 2)

classroom-level working conditions; 3) diversity of students taught; 4) access to technology and support for its use; 5) school-level working conditions; 6) district-level working conditions; 7) conditions created by the provincial policy context; 8) conditions created by factors external to the school system; and 9) school leadership (Leithwood, 2008, p. 8). Only working conditions created by the provincial policy context and external influences on teachers' working conditions were rated more favourably by elementary than secondary teachers and only those differences on external influences were statistically significant (Leithwood, 2008).

Leithwood (2008) concluded that even though differences on many separate measures appear to be small, the collective effort of these differences, most of which favour secondary teachers, is likely to produce a distinct and relatively more positive secondary school culture. Secondary teachers were more than likely to perceive fair treatment by their schools and districts. The differences between elementary and secondary teachers can also more than likely be associated with higher levels of morale and job satisfaction (Leithwood, 2008). Evidence cited from many sources suggests that perceptions and emotions of this sort, triggered by working conditions, shape how teachers interact with students and thus contribute to an increase or decrease in student achievement and thus shape the culture of the school (Leithwood, 2008).

2.3 International research on job satisfaction

In this chapter, the international research on job satisfaction explored both the historical context and the current international research context. The purpose of combining both perspectives was to explore the influence that historical research has had on modern day job satisfaction research.

Some of the best known and cited research associated with job satisfaction has been the Hawthorne studies, now coined "*The Hawthorne Effect*" (Mayo, 1933). "*The Hawthorne Effect*" findings provided strong evidence that people work for purposes other than financial remuneration, and as such, paved the way for researchers to investigate other facts associated with job satisfaction (Mayo, 1933).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, a motivation theory, laid the foundation for job satisfaction theory. This theory explains that people seek to satisfy five specific needs in life – physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization. This model has served as a basis from which early researchers could develop job satisfaction theories (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1968, 1971).

Moreover, the main premise of Edwin A. Locke's "*Range of Affect Theory*" (1976) is that job satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between what one *wants* in a job and what one *has* in a job. Further, the theory states the extent to which a person values a given facet of work such as the degree of autonomy, moderates how satisfied or dissatisfied a person becomes when expectations are or are not met (Locke, 1976).

In 1997 Locke attempted to integrate theories of motivation in the workplace. Locke's (1997) model suggested that the employee must first have his or her needs met. After the employee's needs are met, for increased job satisfaction to occur, the employee moves on to trying to acquire values and motives that lie within their

careers. Once the person has acquired values and motives, they then look at goal choice and self-efficacy. The last two variables are based on performance, which in turn is related to outcomes in one's job. Outcomes from emotional appraisals, such as employee satisfaction and involvement, lead to possible work performance. Judge, Thoreson, Bono, and Patton's (2002) study (as cited in Brett & Drasgow, 2002) suggests that job satisfaction may also affect performance but the causal relationship between the two, they claim, is not fully known. However, Locke's (1997) model demonstrates that job characteristics, such as difficulty, specificity, direction, tasks, leadership and money, are showing as affecting job satisfaction.

Work motivation and job satisfaction is an area of research that needs to be further studied, as there are numerous conflicting theories regarding it. More recently Locke and Latham (2004) have continued to conduct research on job satisfaction. Their discoveries are in the area of motivation and job satisfaction. They state that motivation can affect not only the acquisition of an employee's skills and abilities but also to what extent people will utilize their skills and abilities.

2.3.1 Autonomy in the work place

Autonomy is a well known facet of work that has garnished the interest of researchers throughout the years. Autonomy provides an opportunity for an employee to act with choice – which means an employee can be autonomous and happily interdependent with others at work (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Researchers have found a link between autonomy and overall well-being not only in North America and Western Europe, but also in Russia, Turkey and South Korea. Even in high-poverty, non-Western locales like Bangladesh, social scientists have found that autonomy is something that people seek and that it improves their job satisfaction level as well as their overall happiness in life (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003).

A sense of autonomy has a powerful effect on individual performance and attitude. Autonomous motivation promotes greater conceptual understanding, better grades, enhanced persistence at school and in sporting activities, higher productivity, less burnout, and greater levels of psychological well-being. Those effects carry over to the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004), carried out a study of workers in an American investment bank. The three researchers found greater job satisfaction among employees whose bosses offered “autonomy support”. These bosses saw issues from the employee's point of view, gave meaningful feedback and information, provided ample choice over what to do and how to do it, and encouraged employees to take on new projects. The resulting enhancement in job satisfaction, in turn led to higher performance on the job (Baard et al., 2004).

The benefits that autonomy confers on individuals extend to their organizations. For example, researchers at Cornell University studied 320 businesses, half of which granted workers autonomy, the other half relied on top-down direction. The businesses that offered autonomy grew at four times the rate of the control-oriented firms and had one-third the turnover (Baard et al., 2004).

2.3.2 Motivation in the work place

Autonomy is linked to motivation in the work place (Sergiovanni, 2000). The importance of the work itself as a motivator has a recent history in psychology. Frederick Herzberg's famous Motivation Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) was a pioneering effort in one of the most replicated studies in the history of management. The study looked at several factors related to motivation and work.

The first set of factors that were looked at are known as *hygiene factors*. These factors seemed to be related to poor performance and indicated whether people were dissatisfied with their jobs. The research from Herzberg's study suggested that if supervisors took care of these *hygiene factors*, workers' performance would improve to a certain level where they would work for the pre-established minimum contract of work. However, it was discovered that rarely would employees be motivated to go beyond this pre-established minimum contract of work.

For this reason, Herzberg (1966) coined the term *hygiene factors* to describe this first set of factors, suggesting that they can cause trouble if neglected however they were not sources of motivation. Instead, *hygiene factors* are concerned with conditions of work, not with the work itself. Conditions of work are the source of extrinsic rewards. Herzberg et al. (1959) conclude that extrinsic rewards are not potent enough to motivate people – at least not for very long and not without a great deal of effort from supervisors.

The second set of factors, called *motivators*, seemed not to cause dissatisfaction or poor performance if neglected or even absent. As long as the *hygiene factors* are in place, people seemed to do their jobs in a satisfactory way. The *motivators*, however, seemed to motivate people to go beyond the pre-established minimum contract of work. Motivators are concerned with the work itself, rather than the conditions of work. The work itself was the source of intrinsic motivators (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Frederick Herzberg (1966, 1968) extended the Motivation Hygiene Theory by relating job satisfaction to two fairly independent sets of job factors that seemed to be important to workers (Herzberg, 1966, 1968). He was able to identify that job satisfaction is either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature.

Out of this research, the concept of the Two-Factor Theory (1966, 1968) was established. It outlined two main factors and related them to job satisfaction. The first factor was intrinsic to the nature of work itself, namely aspects such as achievement, recognition and responsibility. The second factor was extrinsic to the nature of work and described job dissatisfaction factors. Dissatisfaction derives from contextual or *hygiene factors* such as policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions and salary. Herzberg's argument was that the removal of a dissatisfier, a *hygiene factor*, prevented dissatisfaction but did not contribute to satisfaction. For satisfaction to increase, improvement would be required in the motivating intrinsic factors such as achievement, recognition, challenge, and independence (Herzberg et al., 1959; Herzberg, 1966, 1968).

When Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory was tested in school settings (Sergiovanni, 1967), what tended to emerge as motivators were a sense of

achievement, recognition for good work, challenging and interesting work, and a sense of responsibility for one's work. By contrast, pleasant interpersonal relationships on the job, non-stressful and fair supervision, reasonable policies, and an administrative culture that did not hinder, were what tended to emerge as the hygiene factors (Sergiovanni, 1967). This research has led to the idea that if supervisors can arrange jobs so as to accent opportunities for the motivation factors to be experienced, people will become self-motivated (Sergiovanni, 2000).

The Motivation-Hygiene Theory is not without controversy. Many of its critics feel that the specific findings may well have been artifacts of the methods used by researchers, portraying an oversimplified version of reality (Sergiovanni, 2000). Nias (1981), for example, rejected a straightforward application of the Herzberg Model (1966, 1968) as it relates to teacher job satisfaction. Her view has had tacit acceptance in much of the research on teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction. She proposed that the Herzberg Model when applied to the teaching profession is overly simplistic and work itself needs to include involvement in the school as a social system. Whilst recognizing the dissatisfiers of pay, career structure and physical conditions as truly environmental and hygiene factors, Nias claimed the factors related to job satisfaction as more complex than the highly work-focused motivators in the Herzberg Model (1966, 1968). Nias (1981) added a new category that included inefficient administration, uncongenial colleagues, lack of participation in the decision-making process and poor communication. If these aspects can be improved, the level of job satisfaction is raised independently of extrinsic factors (Nias, 1981, 1989).

2.3.3 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the work place

Social psychology has continued to identify both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of information about performance as important determinants of professional job satisfaction (Lee, Dedrick, & Smith, 1991). While intrinsic sources originate from the actual work being done, extrinsic information comes from outside the narrow work environment. Most of teachers' intrinsic information on performance comes from interacting with students as they learn the material being presented in the classroom, but it may also include involvement in self-improvement activities such as learning new material or using new teaching methods (Lee et al., 1991). Extrinsic information comes from the larger school context, such as salary increases, recognition and/or support from other teachers, evaluation by administrators, or increased authority over some aspect of school organization, such as becoming a department head or a union leader (Lee et al., 1991).

Intrinsically satisfying work makes sense because it leads to higher levels of commitment and performance. That is the effectiveness side of the equation. Intrinsically satisfying work also makes sense because it is right and good for teachers and others to find their jobs satisfying and meaningful. That is the moral side of the equation (Sergiovanni, 1992, 2000). Teachers who are intrinsically motivated have higher levels of self-esteem, are more physically and emotionally healthy and are able to interact more positively with others (Pink, 2009).

Carrying this theme further, researchers of job satisfaction have identified ways in which jobs can be restructured to allow for teachers to experience greater intrinsic

satisfaction. Perhaps the best known study in this area of research is from Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980). These researchers have identified three psychological states believed to be critical in determining whether a person will be motivated at work:

- a. *Experienced meaningfulness*: The extent to which a person perceives work as being worthwhile or important, given her or his system of values.
- b. *Experienced responsibility*: The extent to which a person believes that she or he is personally responsible or accountable for the outcomes of efforts.
- c. *Knowledge of results*: The extent to which a person is able to determine on a regular basis whether or not the outcomes of his or her efforts are satisfactory (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980).

When the three psychological states are present, people are likely to feel good, perform well, and continue to perform well, in the effort to experience more of these feelings in the future. When these feelings are experienced, people do not have to depend on someone else to motivate or lead them (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980).

How can school leaders restructure jobs so that the likelihood of experiencing meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results will be increased? The answer, provided by Hackman and Oldham (1976) more than 30 years ago, has continued to influence our research today. Hackman and Oldman (1976, 1980) declare that a leader needs to build in opportunities for teachers to do the following:

- a. Use more of their talents and skills (skill variety).
- b. Engage in activities that allow them to see the whole and understand how their contributions fit into the overall purpose or mission (task identity).
- c. View their work as having a substantial and significant impact on the lives or work of other people (task significance).
- d. Experience discretion and independence in scheduling work and in deciding classroom arrangements and instructional procedures (autonomy).
- e. Get firsthand, and from other sources, clear information about the effects of their performance (feedback) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980).

2.3.4 Flow in the work place

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990) carried this research further and concluded that the key to intrinsic motivation is an optimal experience that he calls *flow*, “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1997) believes that flow is commonly experienced by people engaged in a wide range of activities, including rock climbing, hunting, surgery, sports playing, rug weaving, long-distance swimming, writing, playing music, and gardening. All that is needed is for the activity to result in a high level of personal enjoyment and satisfaction, on the one hand, and the enhancement of one’s feelings of competence and efficacy on the other hand (Czikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997).

To experience flow, one must be convinced that one's skills and insights are strong enough to cope with the challenges at hand. The matching of skills to challenges is critical, for this is a condition of growth. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) explains:

In our studies, we found that every flow activity, whether it involved competition, change or other dimensions of experience, had this in common: it provided a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance, and led to previously undreamed of states of consciousness. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self lies the key to flow activities. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 74)

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) discussed the importance of challenge in the work place. However, Sergiovanni (2000) insists that the balance between challenge and job responsibilities is delicate, as too much challenge in one's job, without the skills necessary for success, can lead to anxiety. Unless skills improve enough to match the challenge, one is likely to withdraw in search of less challenging alternatives (Sergiovanni, 2000).

By the same token, not experiencing enough challenge at work, given one's skills, is likely to lead to boredom. Teachers, for example, can become deskilled by having to work narrowly or repetitiously or by using a restricted range of their talents. This condition ultimately takes its toll in loss of commitment and poor performance. When challenge and skills are high enough to matter and are properly balanced, flow can be experienced. Low challenge and skills may lead to a kind of low contentment level, which can hardly be considered flow, or at least not for long (Sergiovanni, 1992, 2000).

Flow can be a powerful substitute for leadership (Sergiovanni, 2000). Sometimes flow just happens as teachers close the classroom door and on their own get into the rhythm of their work. There are many obstacles within the day of teaching that this does not happen often enough. In some schools teaching is heavily scripted by a bureaucratic system that programs what teachers do, when they do it, how they do it, and even why they do it (Sergiovanni, 2000). Teachers that follow a script are not challenged to work anywhere near their abilities. Teaching jobs can often be fragmented and compartmentalized making it difficult for teachers to sense the wholeness of what they are doing (Sergiovanni, 2000). In this type of a setting, teaching can become routinized to the point where it becomes habit, and to make it all work, what gets done gets rewarded, sadly may be a rule that is firmly entrenched as the only motivational strategy for some teachers (Sergiovanni, 2000).

2.3.5 Achievement and empowerment in the work place

Carol Dweck's (2006) studies liberated the notion of teaching as being routinized to the point that it just becomes a habit and that only what gets done gets rewarded. In fact, Dweck (2006) believes that a teacher's job satisfaction is connected to their professional achievements as well as to the achievements of his or her students. Dweck (2006) states that a teacher who believes in the achievements of his or her students have higher levels of job satisfaction and also these beliefs shape what they achieve with regards to expectations and achievements in their own careers (Dweck,

2006). These beliefs not only liberate the routine of teaching but they become a motivational strategy to help students and staff achieve beyond current expectations.

2.3.6 Collaborative individualism in the work place

Limerick, Cunnington, and Crowther (2002) further extended the job satisfaction theory to include the interaction of the school system with the individual employee. They believe that what needs to happen in the school system is a further empowerment of the teachers and principals. This belief in empowering the individual employee is the central theme of Collaborative Individualism (Limerick et al., 2002). Collaborative Individualism stresses the need for individuals to work together with others towards a common vision and mission. However, it also stresses the liberation of the teacher to also focus on individual achievement and recognition in the search for collaboration (Limerick et al., 2002).

2.3.7. Emotional intelligence in the work place

According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) leaders need to be emotionally intelligent. People need to have both personal competence, which determine how people manage themselves, and social competence, which determine how people manage relationships. Under personal competence there are two domains: self-awareness and self-management. Social competence has two domains, social awareness and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2002).

Agreeing with Goleman et al. (2002), Howard Gardner (2011) further discussed job satisfaction in terms of elementary teachers having a moral identity that is linked to their work-related skills and interests. Gardner (2011) takes the concept of autonomy to a higher level by suggesting that teachers who find purpose and moral identity in their work have a sense of ethical responsibility to self and to community. Teachers who have a strong moral identity believe that their teaching job is not just a job but a calling (Gardner, 2011). The belief that their profession is a calling occurs when teachers intrinsically connect their work to a greater moral purpose (Gardner, 2011).

2.3.8 Social community and sense of belonging in the work place

Crowther (2011) inter-connected the links between job satisfaction, intellectual commitment and school community. Crowther (2011) discussed that teachers who have a deeper commitment to teaching through a sense of purpose and pedagogical practice, collaboratively focus on the vision and purposes of the school for both now and in the future. These teachers along with their principals have a sense of social community and social responsibility that brings about greater job satisfaction. Alfred Adler (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979) conceptualized the “will to power” that focused on the individual’s creative power to change for the better (1964). In his later work, Adler adds to the aspect that individuals also have a sense of belonging and a social need to be part of a community. Adler discovered that individuals set goals in life that often lead them to perfecting an ideal community where collectively individuals have a shared sense of purpose. This collective individualism brings about life satisfaction and enjoyment through goals and a shared sense of purpose (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979). Job satisfaction in teaching is brought about

both autonomously and collectively through individual goals as well as collaborative goals all with a school community focus in mind.

2.3.9 Conclusions regarding job satisfaction

Throughout this literature review, certain themes have been identified regarding job satisfaction and job satisfaction of teachers. In 2002 roughly 1.3 million people in Canada were dissatisfied with their jobs (Statistics Canada, 2006). As was outlined in the literature, if people are unhappy with their work their physical, mental, social and emotional health is at-risk. If people are unhappy they take more time off work. Whereas if they are happy, they take less time off, they are more motivated, and, their physical, mental, emotional and social health is also better (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The literature review also discovered that having autonomy at work, having the ability to be creative, working in a positive culture and being provided with opportunities to learn and grow were all related to positive job satisfaction for teachers and for all Canadian workers. Salary was important as well, however, once people reached a certain pay threshold, salary became less important and intrinsic factors became more of a motivator for job satisfaction (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007).

In a survey conducted by Kenneth Leithwood, secondary teachers rated their working conditions as better than elementary teachers (Leithwood, 2008). However, overall, teachers were satisfied with their jobs when they were provided with autonomy, creativity, collaboration and if they worked in a positive culture (The Ottawa Citizen, 2007). As outlined in the literature review, a sense of autonomy affects individual performance and attitude towards their jobs (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Autonomy and motivation are key indicators to job satisfaction and to having a positive attitude and outlook regarding one's employment (Sergiovanni, 2000). People who have intrinsically satisfying work also reported higher levels of commitment and performance and thus greater job satisfaction. Extrinsic rewards only motivated people to a certain level of job satisfaction, and after that if people were not intrinsically motivated by their job, their level of satisfaction decreased (Herzberg, 1966, 1968).

Having the ability to be collaborative in the workplace was also a very positive indicator of job satisfaction, as well as working with others who are emotionally intelligent. It was not only important to have the ability to be collaborative, but it was important as to who people worked with for their satisfaction to increase (Goleman et al., 2002). Finally having a sense of belonging in the work place and feeling as if they were a part of a social community was a definite indicator of positive job satisfaction (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979). All of these factors greatly influence the performance and levels of commitment of elementary teachers. As was discovered, job satisfaction is very important to a person's overall well-being both personally and professionally.

Research on job satisfaction amongst elementary school teachers need to consider organizational conditions, in particular school culture and how it is inter-related to teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction.

2.4 School culture

Satisfaction with one's job is of vital importance to the health and well-being of elementary school teachers (Fullan, 2001). School culture will have either a positive or a negative impact on the quality and success of job satisfaction for elementary school teachers and on student achievement (Fullan, 2001). Cultures rooted in an interpretivist paradigm value staff members who help lead their own development in relation to these forces (Schein, 2010). Schein believes that culture entails the assumptions, values and norms that develop over time in an organization and that are not always explicitly stated or visible to those affected by them (Schein, 2010).

2.4.1 Defining organizational/school culture

There are three prevailing schools of thought pertaining to cultures in organizations. Two views that were explored on how culture is constructed are the interpretivist and the functionalist belief systems. The interpretivists believe people construct their own organizational culture and that culture is fluid and continually changing (Schein, 2010). The functionalists view culture from a behaviourist perspective. They believe that culture is something that is, and the belief system and norms of the culture are designed by the hierarchical structure of the organization. Functionalists believe that people working within an organization must fit into the pre-existing rules, norms and beliefs (Schein, 2010).

Numerous definitions of school culture (organizational culture) have evolved over the years without a definitive consensus. However, Schein's (2010) conceptualization of three (3) levels of culture is generally supported (Schein, 2010, p. 36). Social units such as groups, occupations and organizations are difficult to define. The fact that each of these groups has some sort of a shared history will have, in effect, evolved into a culture. Depending on the length of history, the stability of a group's membership and the emotional intensity of the experiences they have shared will then depend on the strength of the culture that has evolved (Schein, 2010). The existence of cultures is not debatable. Defining what "it" is abstractly is difficult, as there are so many variables to consider. It is a healthy sign that culture is widely debated, in that it testifies to the importance of culture as a concept. However, it creates difficulties in that definitions are often unclear and usages are inconsistent (Schein, 2010).

Due to the complex nature of culture, several definitions were used throughout the research study better capturing the interpretivist view. The first definition used throughout this research study is proposed by Moorthy (1995).

The culture of a school is a way of doing things. Building upon school culture means creating a place where all stakeholders have a sense of shared meaning, shared understanding and shared decision-making. Culture includes values, beliefs, behavioural norms, rituals, shared meanings and assumptions that shape key stakeholders' decisions and practices (Moorthy, 1995, p. 25).

Adding to Moorthy's cultural view, Peter Senge asserts you cannot have a learning organization without shared vision (Senge, 1990, 2008). Without a common vision, decisions are made randomly (Blankstein, 2004). Mission statements remind organizations of the reasons they exist; a vision helps to establish what organizations

can become in the future (Blankstein, 2004). Schein's (1984) definition of culture goes beyond Moorthy's in terms of organizational learning (Schein, 2010) and organizational change (Schein, 1999). Schein (1984) further examines organizational culture.

The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1984, p. 3).

2.4.2 Concepts of culture

Schein (2010) believes that though the essence of a group's culture is its patterns of shared, basic assumptions, the culture of a school will manifest itself at the level of observable artifacts and shared espoused beliefs and values. Schein (2010) further proclaims that any school's culture can be studied at three concept levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010, p. 36).

Schein (2010) defined organizational culture, what it is and explains it in great detail. Throughout this research paper, the concepts of organizational culture are used to describe a school's culture as a school is an organization. Therefore these concepts of school and organizational culture, when discussed throughout this research paper, are interchangeable and are utilized to assist in further understanding school cultures:

- a. **The level of its artifacts.** At the surface of any culture is the concept level of artifacts. Artifacts include all the phenomena that teachers see, hear, and feel at school. Artifacts also include the visible products of the school, such as the architecture of its physical environment; its language; its technology and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, myths and stories about an organization; its published list of values; its observable rituals and ceremonies, to name a few (Schein, 2004, p. 25-26).

The climate of a school is an artifact of the deeper cultural levels, as is the visible behaviour of its members. Artifacts also include, for purposes of cultural analysis, the organizational processes by which such behaviour is made routine, and structural elements such as organizational charts and formal descriptions of how the school works (Schein, 2004, p. 26).

The most important point to be made about this level of the school culture is that it is both easy to observe but very difficult to decipher. A person's own response to physical artifacts such as the school building and layout can lead to identification of major images and root metaphors that reflect the deepest level of the culture (Gagliardi, 1990).

It is dangerous to infer the deeper assumption from artifacts alone, because a teacher's or administrator's interpretations will inevitably be projections of their own feelings and reactions (Gagliardi, 1990). Every facet of school life produces artifacts, creating problems of classification. Often different

observers choose to report on different sorts of artifacts, leading to non-comparable descriptions of school cultures. This creates problems when trying to define what culture is (Schein, 2010).

If an individual works in or observes the school system for a while, the meanings of the artifacts gradually become clearer. If, however, a person wants to achieve this level of understanding more quickly, they can attempt to analyze the espoused values, norms and rules that provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the teachers and administrators guide their behavior, bearing in mind, this kind of inquiry takes time (Schein, 2010).

- b. The level of its espoused beliefs and values.** In the beginning of culture formation, elementary teachers' and principals' learning ultimately reflects someone's original beliefs and values, their sense of what "ought to be", as distinct from "what is". When a group of elementary teachers and their principals is first created or when it faces a new task, issue or problem, the first solution proposed to deal with it reflects some individual's own assumptions about what is right and what is wrong, what will work and what will not work. Those individuals who prevail, who can influence the elementary teachers' group to adopt a certain approach to a problem, will later be identified as the leaders (Schein, 2004, pp. 28-30).

Shared knowledge as a group happens when teachers take a common proposed action. In the beginning, whatever is proposed will only be perceived as to what the leader wants to do. Until the group has taken some joint action and together observed the outcome of that action, there is not yet a shared basis for determining whether what the leader wants will turn out to be valid (Schein, 2010).

Not all beliefs and values, at the school level, undergo such transformations. First of all, the solution based on a given value may not work reliably. Only those beliefs and values that can be empirically tested and that continue to work reliably in solving the elementary teachers' problems will become transformed into assumptions. Second, certain value domains – those dealing with the less controllable elements of the school environment or with aesthetic or moral matters – may not be testable at all. In such cases, consensus through social validation is still possible, but it is not automatic (Gagliardi, 1990; Schein, 2010).

Social validation is defined by certain values being confirmed only by the shared social experience of the teachers' group. Those who fail to accept such beliefs and values run the risk of excommunication – of being thrown out of the group. Such beliefs and values typically involve the teachers' internal relations; the test of whether they work or not is how comfortable and anxiety-free elementary teachers are when they abide by them. Social validation also applies to those broader values that are not testable, such as ethics and aesthetics (Gagliardi, 1990; Schein, 2010).

Teachers will often learn that certain beliefs and values are initially promulgated by leaders and that they work in the sense of reducing

uncertainty in critical areas of the group's functioning. As they continue to work, they gradually become transformed into assumptions supported by a set of beliefs, norms and rules of behavior (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

A set of beliefs and values that become embodied in an ideology or a school's organizational philosophy thus can serve as a guide and as a way of dealing with uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events (Schein, 2004, p.30).

Beliefs and values at this conscious level will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artifacts level. But if those beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, they may also reflect only what Argyris and Schon (1978) have called espoused theories which predict well enough what people will say in a variety of situations but which may be out of line with what they will actually do in situations in which those beliefs and values should, in fact, be operating. Thus a school may say that it values students and that it has high-quality standards for its students, but its achievement levels in that regard may contradict what it says. This may also occur in a school system where the district and the ministry are mandating certain policies and procedures (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

If the espoused beliefs and values are congruent with the underlying assumptions, then articulating values into an operational philosophy can help bring the group together. This will in turn serve as a source of identity and core mission. In analyzing beliefs and values, it needs to be determined if they are congruent with the underlying assumptions, or if they are rationalizations or aspirations for the future. Often lists of beliefs and values are so abstract that they can be contradictory at the same time (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

Espoused beliefs and values often leave large areas of behaviour unexplained, leaving teachers with a feeling that they understand a piece of the school culture but in fact they still do not have a thorough understanding of the culture. To get at that deeper level of understanding, to decipher the pattern, and to predict future behaviour correctly, teachers must understand more fully the category of basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010).

- c. **The level of basic underlying assumptions.** When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it can be taken for granted and gradually is treated as reality. Basic assumptions may reflect the preferred solution among several alternatives, but all the alternatives are still visible in the school culture, and any given employee of the school culture could, from time to time, behave according to variant as well as dominant assumptions (Schein, 2004, p. 30).

Basic assumptions can become so taken for granted that there may be little variation within a school. This degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values (Schein, 2004, p.31). In fact, if a basic assumption is strongly held at the school level, elementary teachers may find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable (Schein, 2010).

Basic assumptions are similar to what Argyris (1976) has identified as “theories-in-use”, that is the implicit assumptions that actually guide behaviour, that tell elementary teachers how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Basic assumptions, like “theories-in-use”, tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable, and thus are extremely difficult to change. Learning something new in this realm requires elementary teachers and principals to resurrect, reexamine, and possibly change some of the more stable portions of their cognitive structures – a process that Argyris and others have called “double-loop learning” or “frame breaking” (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Bartunek, 1984). Such learning is intrinsically difficult because the reexamination of basic assumptions temporarily destabilizes elementary teachers’ cognitive and interpersonal world, possibly releasing large quantities of basic anxiety (Argyris et al., 1985; Bartunek, 1984).

Rather than tolerating such anxiety levels, elementary teachers and principals may tend to want to perceive the events around them as congruent with their assumptions, even if that means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying what may be going on around them. It is in this psychological process that school culture has its ultimate power (Douglas, 1986).

School culture as a set of basic assumptions defines what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations. Once elementary teachers have developed an integrated set of such assumptions – a “thought world” or “mental map” – they may be comfortable with other teachers who share the same set of assumptions and they may be very uncomfortable and vulnerable in situations where different assumptions operate, because either they will not understand what is going on, or worse, will misperceive and misinterpret the actions of other teachers (Douglas, 1986).

The human mind needs cognitive stability; therefore, any challenge or questioning of a basic assumption may release anxiety and defensiveness (Schein, 2004, p. 32). The shared basic assumptions that make up the school culture can be thought of at both the individual and the group level as psychological cognitive defense mechanisms that permit the school organization to continue to function (Schein, 2004, p. 32). Recognizing this connection is important when a principal of a school thinks about changing aspects of a school’s culture, as it is no easier to do that than to change an individual teacher’s pattern of defense mechanisms (Schein, 2010).

Basic assumptions regarding “human behavior” become the basis of management and control systems that perpetuate themselves. McGregor (1960) believed if people are treated consistently in terms of certain basic assumptions, they will eventually behave according to those assumptions in order to make their world more stable and predictable (McGregor, 1960).

Potency exists in implicit, unconscious assumptions. Assumptions often deal with fundamental aspects of life – human nature and human activities, the

nature of truth and how a teacher discovers it, the correct way for the teacher, principal and the group to relate to each other, the relative importance of work, family and self-development, the role of men and women at school, and the nature of the family (Schein, 2004).

Teachers will bring their own cultural learning, from their prior experiences, from their education, and from their socialization into the teaching school community (Lambert, 2003). While a new group of teachers develops its own shared history, it will develop modified or brand new assumptions in critical areas of its experience. It is those new assumptions that make up the culture of that particular school (Lambert, 2003; Fullan, 2003).

Any school's culture can be studied at these three levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2004, p. 36). If teachers and principals do not decipher the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating, they will not know how to interpret the artifacts correctly or how much credence to give to the articulated values. In other words, the essence of the school culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and once this is understood, the other more surface levels can more easily be understood and dealt with appropriately (Schein, 2010).

2.4.3 Characteristics of culture

The very word culture adds some critical characteristics to the already discussed concepts. “Characteristics of culture include structural stability, depth, breadth and patterning or integration” (Schein, 2004, p. 62).

- a. **Culture provides structural stability.** School culture provides stability and predictability (Schein, 2009). Berger and Luckman's (1966) social constructivist view of reality states that the human organism lacks the necessary biological means to provide stability for human conduct. “Human existence, if it were thrown back on its organismic resources by themselves, would be existence in some sort of chaos. One may first point to the obvious fact that a given social order precedes any individual organismic development” (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 51).

Schein (2009) supports the social constructivist view and believes that a school's culture needs to be socially ordered and provides stability (Lambert, 2003). The teachers and administration want to hold on to their cultural assumptions because culture provides meaning and makes life predictable. Schein (2009) claims that humans do not like chaotic, unpredictable situations and work hard to stabilize and normalize them. Any prospective culture change may cause anxiety and resistance to change (Schein, 2009; Fullan, 2003). If leaders want to change some elements of the school culture, they must recognize that they are tackling some of the most stable parts of their school organization (Schein, 2009; Fullan, 2003).

Morgan (2006) supports Schein's view of culture and further asserts that in discussing a school's culture, it is really about the process of reality construction that allows teachers to see and understand particular events, actions, objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways. These patterns of understanding help teachers cope with the situations they encounter and also provide a basis for making their own behaviour sensible and meaningful (Morgan, 2006). Change of any sort promotes unpredictability and can lead to anxiety if not understood and accounted for. This can lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and thus student achievement (Fullan, 2009).

Norms operating in different situations have to be invoked and defined in the light of each individual's understanding of the context (Morgan, 2006). People implicitly make many decisions and assumptions about a situation before any norms or rules are applied. Many of these decisions and assumptions are made quite unconsciously, as a result of previous socialization and taken-for-granted knowledge, so that the action appears quite spontaneous. In most circumstances, the sense-making process or justification for action will occur only if the behaviour is challenged (Morgan, 2006).

- b. Culture provides depth.** The biggest risk in working with culture is to oversimplify it. Culture is the deepest, often unconscious part of a group and is, therefore, less tangible and less visible than other parts (Schein, 2004). To treat culture as a superficial phenomenon by assuming that people can just manipulate it and change it at will, will more than likely produce failure (Schein, 2009). School culture provides a sense of meaning and predictability. As teachers and their principal work together they learn what works, they together develop beliefs and assumptions that eventually drop out of awareness and become tacit rules of how to do things, how to think about things, and how to feel (Schein, 2009).
- c. Culture provides breadth.** The third characteristic of culture is its breadth. Once a school's culture has developed, it covers all of a group's functioning. Culture is pervasive, and it influences all aspects of how a school organization deals with its primary tasks, its various environments, and its internal operations. Thus, when referring to the culture of a school all of its operations must be taken into account (Schein, 2010).
- d. Culture provides patterning or integration.** The fourth characteristic that is implied by the concept of culture, and which further lends to stability, is patterning or integration of the elements into a larger paradigm tying together the various elements that lie at a deeper level. The concept of culture implies that rituals, climate, values, and behaviours somehow weave together into a coherent whole. This patterning or integration is the essence of what is meant by "culture". Such patterning or integration ultimately derives from the human need to make the environment as sensible and orderly as possible (Weick, 1995).

Disorder or senselessness can make teachers anxious, so they work hard to reduce that anxiety by developing a more consistent and predictable view of how things are and how they should be (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Thus, school “organizational cultures, like other cultures develop as groups of people struggle to make sense of and cope with their worlds” (Trice & Beyer, 1993, p. 4).

2.4.4 Forming of groups and cultures

All groups of teachers start with some kind of an originating event. When the elementary teachers’ group first comes together, the most fundamental issue facing it as a whole is, “What are we really here for? What is our task?” (Schein, 2004, p. 65).

At the same time, each individual teacher is facing basic social survival issues such as:

Will I be included in this group?” “Will I have a role to play?” “Will my need to influence others be met?” “Will we reach the level of intimacy that meets my needs?” Each teacher group member will display their own coping style as they come to terms with the answers to these questions (Schein, 2004, p. 65).

In any new group situation, much of the initial behavior of founders, leaders, and other initiators is individually motivated and reflects their own individual assumptions and intentions. However, as the individuals in a group begin to do things together and share experiences around such individually motivated acts, a group arises (Schein, 2004).

The subsequent progress of school culture group forming can best be understood as the group confronts a sequence of shared underlying assumptions that are likely to arise as the group takes shape. Culture formation takes place around the efforts to deal with the anxieties and characteristics of each of the basic assumptions (Schein, 2010).

2.4.5 Roles and relationships relating to organizational/school culture

It is increasingly important in today’s society how the underlying assumptions about the nature of work, satisfaction with work and the relationships among work, family, and personal concerns relate to one another. One assumption would be that work is primary; another, that the family is primary; another, that self-interest is primary; and still another, that some form of integrated lifestyle is possible and desirable for both men and women. These assumptions will help to determine not only how culture relates to job satisfaction but also to satisfaction in all areas of life (Bailyn, 1978, 1982, 1993; Schein, 1978, 1990). At a deeper level, cultures differ in the degree to which the self is seen as differentiated from work and family roles and that gender roles vary to the degree to which masculinity and femininity are seen as different (Schein, 2010).

If members of a school organization have different assumptions about the nature of work activity and its relative importance to other activities, those differences will manifest themselves in frustration and communication breakdowns. If this occurs, a

decrease in job satisfaction and ultimately student achievement will most likely happen as a result (Fullan, 2009).

If assumptions are combined about the appropriate way for people to relate to each other, there is, in effect, the assumption set that specifies what in most cultures are thought of as the basic rules of interaction (Goffman, 1967). What is thought of as tact, poise, good manners, and etiquette can be deconstructed into a set of rules that preserve the social order – what Goffman (1967) has called face work. In other words, in every human group, the members sooner or later learn that in order to survive as a group, they must develop rules and norms that make the environment safe for all. Members must learn to preserve each other's face and self-esteem, lest the social environment become dangerous (Goffman, 1967).

The content of these basic rules of interaction will differ from group to group, but the existence of some set of such rules can be safely predicted for any group that has had some stability and joint history (Schein, 2004).

All groups have some form of hierarchy, but a relevant cultural dimension is the degree of distance that is felt between the higher-ups and the lower-downs in the hierarchy. In the formation of any group, all members must solve for themselves the problem of identity: who to include in that group, how much influence and control they will have, will their needs and goals will be met, and how intimate the group will become. In that process, groups will learn how to structure a given relationship in terms of dimensions of how emotionally charged or neutral it should be, how diffuse or specific it is to be, how universalistic or particularistic it is to be, and how much the value placed on the other person is to be based on achievement (Schein, 2004). Therefore, Schein concludes, “culture is deep, wide and complex and people should avoid the temptation to stereotype organizational phenomena in terms of one or two salient dimensions” (Schein, 2004, p. 185).

2.4.6 External and internal relationships relating to organizational/school culture

Culture is broad, and deciphering culture can be an endless task. As a school group learns to survive in its environment, it needs to learn about all aspects of its external and internal relationships. Beliefs and assumptions form about daily life, such as how to get along with the school organizational leadership, the nature of one's career in the school and district organization, what it takes to get ahead and what is deemed sacred. They all influence how the organization fits into the internal and external cultures that influence it (Schein, 2009).

To add to the complexities of a school's culture, most schools are influenced by the school district's culture; school districts are the holders of power (Schein, 1996). School cultures often espouse teamwork, cooperation and collaboration, but the behaviour that school leadership often reward and encourage is based more on a shared tacit assumption that only individuals can be accountable and that the best results come from a system of individual competition and rewards (Schein, 1996). This is often due in part to the district formed under different assumptions, for example, functionalism. If the external situation demands teamwork, the group will develop some behaviour that looks, on the surface, like teamwork by conducting

meetings and seeking consensus, but members will continue to share the belief that they can get ahead by individual effort and will act accordingly when rewards are given out, due to the fact that the district's norms and values reward this type of behaviour (Schein, 1996, 2010).

These school district unwritten functionalistic expectations, assumptions and values build up over time as elementary teachers, administrators, parents, and students work together, solve problems, deal with challenges and, at times, cope with failures. For example, every school has a set of expectations about what can be discussed at staff meetings, what constitutes good teaching techniques, how willing the staff is to change, and the importance of staff development. All of these examples are influenced by the school district's culture that may be in conflict with the school's interpretivist philosophy (Fullan, 2009).

All of this is to stress that school principals and teachers must become increasingly aware of the bigger picture. When forming, changing and sustaining school cultures they need to ask questions that provide information to make them acutely aware of how the public education system at all levels affects and contributes to the development of culture at the school level (Fullan, 2003).

It is very possible to have change and reform at the school culture level. However, principals and teachers need to realize that in order to sustain current practices and to change others, certain conditions need to be established (Fullan, 2003). These conditions are influenced by national, provincial and district level directives that are often functionalistic in nature (Fullan, 2003). It is possible to have district level reforms that appear to be successful, but in reality only go just below the surface (Fullan, 2003). By not going deep, by not allowing teachers and principals to construct and re-construct their own realities, the impact may be limited (Lambert, 2003). Shallow change at the school or district level may even be in a positive direction however, it is less likely to be sustained. Deep change involves changes in the culture, and establishes conditions at the school level more likely to have staying power (Fullan, 2003).

The concept of Relational Leadership (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013) can assist with both the internal and external relationships that help to define the school culture and would further allow for the construction and re-construction of school-based cultural realities. This type of leadership provides for deep change in the culture that would be more sustainable long term. Relational Leadership, as described by Komives et al., (2013) asserts that leadership is a relational and ethical process of people working together and attempting to accomplish positive change (Komives et al., 2013). One defining feature of Relational Leadership is that it is vision driven rather than position driven. This denotes that the ultimate goal of Relational Leadership is to unite school staff in achieving a shared vision rather than providing titles and creating a hierarchy of positions (Komives et al., 2013). Allowing for relational leadership to drive the organization attempts to promote a shared and distributed leadership approach to positive cultural changes.

Collaborative cultures can be built upon the premise of Relational Leadership. In a collaborative school culture, teachers are committed to being active learners so that they can further assist their students with the learning process (Blankstein, 2004;

Hord, 2004). Teachers who are committed to developing collaborative cultures recognize that they play a crucial role in the educational process and that they can only meet all the challenges and demands that confront them by being collaborative with their colleagues and principals so that problems and decisions can be solved together (Blankstein, 2004; Hord, 2004). Collaboration amongst teacher colleagues and principals enhances teaching and learning.

Through developing collaborative cultures, Hord (2004) recognizes that principals need to provide on-going support by developing a common vision, and using this vision as the “backbone for the work done in the schools” (Hord, 2004, p. 54). Along with the commitment of teachers, the principals need to encourage and nurture whole-school collaboration. Principals and teachers together need to work at building a collaborative culture, thus promoting risk-taking. In this collaborative culture process both principals and teachers set-out expectations all within the “normal parameters of leadership with regard to decisions and responsibilities” (Hord, 2004, p. 54). Teachers committed to working at developing and maintaining collaborative school cultures continually commit to pursuing their best work on behalf of their students. These teachers also provide mutual support to each other, as they see themselves as “members of a team working together as a family of professionals” (Hord, 2004, p. 54).

2.4.7 Conclusions regarding organizational/school culture

In conclusion, there are many researchers who have developed theories and definitions around organizational culture. For the purposes of this research study, Schein’s and Morgan’s definitions of culture were used as the foundation to describe school culture.

Schein (2010) believes that though the essence of a group’s culture is its patterns of shared, basic assumptions, the culture will manifest itself at the level of observable artifacts and shared espoused beliefs and values. Schein (2004) asserts that any group’s culture can be studied at three levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions. “To understand a group’s culture, one must attempt to get at its shared basic assumptions and one must understand the learning process by which such basic assumptions come to be” (Schein, 2004, p. 36). Further, he emphasizes, “the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious, actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel” (Schein, 2004, p. 3).

Recognizing that people accomplish or enact the reality of their everyday world of work invokes a powerful way of thinking about culture. It means that teachers and school principals must attempt to understand culture as an ongoing, proactive process of reality construction. This brings the whole phenomenon of culture alive. When understood this way, culture can no longer just be viewed as a simple variable that societies or organizations possess or something that a leader brings to his or her organization. Rather, it must be understood as an active, living phenomenon through which people jointly create and re-create the worlds in which they live (Morgan, 2006).

Hord discusses the important fact that, “for a school’s vision to become student-focused it must be modeled by the principals in their words, actions, and decisions. They need to communicate to teachers that their work with students is critically important in achieving a vision of academic success for each and every student” (Hord, 2004, p. 46). The principal needs to involve teachers in the collaborative support of developing this vision. Hard work needs to be a norm in schools with all involved: principals, teachers and students. This norm needs to be a daily commitment. Principals can utilize the vision as a powerful instrument to communicate the importance of and commitment to teaching and learning. Teachers need to be able to verbalize that their vision and focus is on student learning, student achievement and addressing the needs of each and every student. Questions to be asked by principals and teachers should be, “How does this help students?” or “How will this help us to reach our vision?” (Hord, 2004, p. 46).

2.5 Contributing factors to student achievement

The central focus of any school must be teaching, learning and overall student achievement. Reported in the literature, contributing factors vitally connected to student achievement are teachers, principals, school leadership, collaborative relationships and other factors such as curriculum, class size, socio-economics, family connections and students feeling a sense of connection and belonging to school.

2.5.1 Contributing factor: Teachers

Cornelius-White (2007) found that in classrooms with person-centered teachers there is more respect, more engagement, fewer disruptive behaviours, and high student achievement outcomes. Cornelius-White (2007) asserts that if teachers demonstrate that they care for students and show that they care for the learning of each student, this translates into higher achievement levels. They believe that students who know that their teachers care about them and their learning will feel safe, and learn to understand others. These same students will also learn the content with the same interest and concern as their teachers demonstrate (Cornelius-White, 2007).

One of the most famous books in education in the past 50 years has been “Pygmalion in the Classroom” written by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968). It argues that teachers’ expectations are powerful influences on the success of student learning. In a study conducted by Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) they randomly labeled 20 percent of a group of students as “bloomers”. At the onset of the study, Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) stated that the students labeled as “bloomers” would show more of a significant increase in achievement levels than the remaining 80 percent of the students (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968). The students that they labeled as “bloomers” did in fact have more significant increases in achievement by the end of the year. This type of a study would not be able to be conducted now in this 21st century, due to ethical concerns. However, the results demonstrate that the expectations teachers place on students are powerful (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968).

For a teacher to have high expectations and to share a common conception of progress requires teachers to be concerned about the nature of their relationships with their students (Hattie, 2009). Further, “the power of positive teacher-student

relationships is critical for learning to occur” (Hattie, 2009, p. 129). Crowther et al. (2013) agree with Hattie, as they also discuss how, “the teacher is the biggest in-school influence on student achievement” (p. vii).

Critical also to influencing student learning outcomes is related to teachers creating conversations that challenge the current views and ways that achievement levels are being addressed within schools. “In recent times, there has been a growing emphasis upon breaking down the isolation of the individual teacher and classroom in favour of mutually shared, agreed and supported approaches to teaching and learning” (Crowther et al., 2013, p. vii). Teachers need to ensure that they collaboratively work together to design and implement strategies that will enhance student achievement levels and actively address the existing problems that may be plaguing achievement. It is also crucial for teachers to continually monitor and use feedback information to become more effective and purposeful with their teaching strategies thus directly affecting student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Research suggests that curriculum, class size, district funding, family and community involvement, and many other school-related factors all contribute to school improvement and student achievement (Cawelti, 2004). However, the single most influential school-based factor is the teacher (Stronge & Tucker, 2000). Research focusing on the value-added connection between teaching and learning has found that teachers produce a strong cumulative effect on student achievement (Wright et al., 2007).

2.5.2 Contributing factor: Principals

In a study of principals who led schools that exceeded expectations on standardized tests (Tucker, 2005), the perspectives of the principals were very refreshing. These principals did not believe in the value of testing more than others; they just understood the importance of test results as compared to others. They were fully aware that success on standardized tests brought their school greater autonomy to do what they believed was best for students (Tucker, 2005). The more effective principals in the study described student achievement in a much broader sense than did principals whose schools underachieved on standardized tests (Tucker, 2005).

From Tucker’s research no matter what the socioeconomic background, schools that performed poorly defined student achievement only in terms of test scores. However, principals and their teachers, whose schools had equally diverse populations, mentioned test scores, but they also listed student social skills, self-worth, behaviour, responsibility, involvement in school, and other such characteristics as important components of student achievement (Tucker, 2005).

Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010), discuss the combined influence of all leaders within a school and that they have a greater impact on learning than just the influence of one leader. However, they state that collective leadership occurs because principals encourage others to join in. The sharing of leadership between principals and teachers is key to higher scores on standardized tests due to the principals helping teachers to improve instruction, and the teachers trusting in the principal. Louis et al (2010) discovered that principal jobs need to be re-designed so that they can focus more on improving instruction, thus transferring into higher

student achievement levels. They also found that principal turnover impeded on school culture and student achievement results in schools. They believe that in order to show effective improvements in these areas that principals needed to be in schools at least five to seven years (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010).

However, research conducted by Horng and Loeb (2010) found that the time that principal leaders spent in teacher classrooms for observation and instruction rarely, if at all, have any impact on student performance and seem to have a negative impact on teacher performance. Horng and Loeb (2010) believe that principals affect student learning in a positive way by influencing teachers' motivations and working conditions. They state that effective principal leaders who use organizational management are effective at hiring and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources, and are much more able to maintain positive working and learning environments. As stated by these researchers in schools with principals as effective organizational managers, a great deal more academic improvement is seen and teachers feel more supported, trusted, and motivated to be successful in their classrooms (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

In direct contrast to Horng and Loeb, earlier research by Hattie (2009) states, principals who display instructional leadership have the most effects on student outcomes. This effect is an indirect effect. Hattie (2009) defines instructional leadership as, "those principals who have their major focus on creating a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for teachers and students" (Hattie, 2009, p. 83). Evidence from a meta-analysis conducted by Hattie (2009) supports this statement. Hattie (2009) believes that it is principal leaders that need to promote challenging goals, and then establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question and support other teachers to collectively reach goals thus having the most affect on student outcomes (Hattie, 2009).

2.5.3 Contributing factor: School leadership

Enhanced student learning outcome is the content of leadership (Lambert, 2005). The principal and teachers together must become the learning leaders of the school organization, sharing in distributed leadership. It is what all teacher leaders talk about, struggle with, decide about and plan for. Unless the reciprocal learning processes of leadership includes student learning that focuses on overall student achievement, teachers and the school organization will have only process for the sake of process (Lambert, 1998, 2005; Crowther, Ferguson, & Hann, 2009).

In agreement with the above findings regarding leadership and student achievement, Louis et al (2010) discovered that collective leadership does have a stronger influence on student achievement than individual leadership. As well, almost all people associated with high-performing schools have greater influence on school decisions than is the case with people in low performing schools. Higher performing schools award greater influence to teacher teams, parents and students in particular. Principals and district leaders have the most influence on decisions in all schools; however, they do not lose influence as others gain influence. School leaders have an impact on student achievement, primarily through their influence on teachers'

motivation and working conditions; their influence on teachers' knowledge and skills produces less impact on student achievement (Louis et al., 2010).

High quality leadership by both principals and teachers is necessary if quality teaching and learning is to occur in all classrooms, thus bolstering student achievement levels (Sparks, 2007b). School leaders, both teachers and principals, who focus on students' achievement and instructional strategies are the most effective (Henchy, 2001). Schools that had the ability to change an aspect of student achievement in two years or less had several qualities in common, of which purposeful and motivating shared leadership was one of them (Crowther et al., 2013). It has been discovered that leaders who place more attention on teaching and focused achievement domains have the higher effects in terms of student achievement levels (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

2.5.4 Contributing factor: Collaborative relationships

Collaborative relationships must be a school-wide commitment from all contributing members of the school community. School community members need to be committed to engage in collaborative relationships with all key stakeholders (Fullan, 2009).

Building and maintaining collaborative relationships with students is fundamental to connecting with students and empowering them. Dramatic differences in behaviour, effort and performance on behalf of students occurs when teachers and the school community commit to building positive and collaborative relationships with students (Sparks, 2007b). In schools where there is a commitment to establish an on-going professional, respectful and collaborative relationships with the students, students feel nurtured and feel a sense of belonging. This sense of positive rapport with community members renews their belief in learning and provides them with the distinct opportunity to take risks and to continually improve their learning outcomes (Sparks, 2007b).

The nature of relationships among the adults at school has more impact on the quality and the character of the school – and on the accomplishments of students – than any other one factor (Barth, 2001). The positive relationships begin with the adults in the school building and district. The personal rapport among teachers, students and parents influences students' school attendance and their sustained efforts at difficult school tasks (Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1998). The history of relations between the principal and the teaching staff determines teachers' willingness to undertake new reforms (Fullan, 1992, 2009), and the relationships among adults in the school greatly influence the extent to which students in that school will succeed academically (Barth, 2001; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Leadership within a school needs to promote collaborative relationships at all levels. The interpretivists' approach to leadership focuses on student learning and student achievement in an arrangement that requires all staff to develop adult-to-adult relationships with each other (Lambert, 1998). Leadership rooted in the interpretivist paradigm builds a collaborative culture with peers where the formal leader provides space and time for teachers to struggle with tough issues and to confront data relating

to student achievement, subjecting ideas to the challenge of evidence (Lambert, 1998). This autonomy provides teachers with involvement in the decision-making process and thus will more than likely bolster their job satisfaction and student achievement (Lambert, 1998, 2005).

The more collaborative schools tend to have higher student achievement. This is true at the elementary, middle and high school levels (Fullan, 1992, 2009). Perhaps under external pressures, some school personnel have narrowed their focus on what, to some, matters most – test scores. This has caused some educators to miss the bigger picture. If educators focus on student achievement to the exclusion of focusing on students, both may suffer. Teacher job satisfaction and motivation may decrease, thus affecting student learning (Fullan, 2009).

2.5.5 Other contributing factors

The home can be a nurturing place for the achievement of students or it can be a place of low expectations and lack of encouragement. All children are born into a set of expectations and these expectations can be critical to the success of students when they go to school (Hattie, 2009; Clinton, Hattie & Dixon, 2007; Hart & Risley, 1995; White, 1982). A major concern is that some parents know how to speak the language of the educational system to their children and some do not. This can also be a major barrier to the home making a contribution to the achievement levels of their children (Hattie, 2009; Hong & Ho, 2005; Hart & Risley, 1995; White, 1982).

“Socioeconomic status (SES) relates to an individual’s, or household’s relative position in the social hierarchy and directly relates to the resources in the home; such resources are parental income, parental education, and parental occupation as three main indicators of SES” (Hattie, 2009, p. 61).

It is likely that the effects from socio-economic resources are more influential during the pre-school and early years of schooling (Hattie, 2009; Razel, 2001; Gottfried, 1984), as the lack of resources in the home and the lower expectations from the home may mean that students from lower SES groups start the schooling process behind others (Hattie, 2009; Ennemoser & Schneider, 2007; Hong & Ho, 2005). Adequacy of funding at the school level must be addressed in areas of lower socio-economic status so that there is a sufficiency of resources available for optimal academic achievement. Hattie (2009) believes that the culture and politics within schools have a major role in explaining the effectiveness of the school. However, the “visibility of teaching and learning is indeed a within-school phenomena” (Hattie, 2009, p. 63). It can be encouraged or discouraged by the culture and politics within the school, and “can be maximized as a function of within-school cultures and politics” (Hattie, 2009, p. 63). There can be many efforts made both on the cultural and political fronts to reduce barriers between school and home on student learning (Hattie, 2009; Ennemoser & Schneider, 2007).

Parental expectations on children and their involvement in their academic life have profound effects on a child’s achievement levels. Researchers found that overall, “the higher the hopes and expectations of parents with respect to the educational attainment of their child, the higher the student’s own educational expectations and, ultimately, the greater the student’s academic achievement (Hong & Ho, 2005, p.

40). These high expectations are assisted by greater parent-student communication and the student's control over their own studies.

Hattie (2009) suggests there are other factors within schools that may have an effect on learning and achievement such as school compositional effects (size, mobility, mainstreaming), leadership, classroom compositional effects, school curriculum effects and classroom influences such as climate, peer influence and disruptive behaviour (Hattie, 2009).

Hattie (2009) determined that all children can learn when provided with clear expectations of what it means to "master" the material that is being taught and that when feedback is combined with effective instruction in classrooms it can be very powerful in enhancing learning and thus improve student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Teachers who state the learning intentions and success criteria, and then engage students to move towards these are empowering them to achieve. Hattie (2009) asserts that vital components linked to student achievement are inviting students to learn, providing deliberative practice and modeling and providing appropriate feedback and multiple opportunities to learn (Hattie, 2009). Hattie (2009) acknowledges that this list of factors is not exhaustive.

Earlier research conducted by Reeves (2006) aligned with Hattie (2009), in that if students are to take personal responsibility for their learning then teachers and the school community must directly and clearly teach students the expectations of learning (Reeves, 2006). There are other factors that are inherent to students that influence their ability to be successful in school, however, Reeves (2006) believes that these factors are malleable and are subject to the influence of teachers, principals and parents. Schools are pivotal in assisting students not only with achievement levels but with character formation, helping them make decisions and problem solving. All of these are important characteristics that students need to be successful in life (Reeves, 2006).

Students need to feel a sense of belonging and connection to the school. The need to belong is essential to learning (Mendler, 2001). The need to belong is a reciprocal relationship that is needed by both the elementary teacher for job satisfaction and the student to engage in the learning process (Mendler, 2001). James Comer (2004), a Yale psychiatrist, believes that no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship. Most teachers care for students, however students may not always receive these messages that their teacher cares. Teachers need to demonstrate to students that they care and teachers need to develop cultures within their classrooms of belonging so that students feel connected to them and to the school community (Elbot & Fulton, 2008). A study conducted by Wentzel (1997) found that perceived caring from teachers was significantly and positively related to students' pursuit of pro-social goals and academic effort (Wentzel, 1997). Students will work hard for teachers with whom they connect with and who they also believe want to build caring relationships. Students who feel that their teachers want to build caring relationships with them feel a sense of belonging and purpose, especially at the elementary level (Elbot & Fulton, 2008).

Grodsky and Gamoran (2003) also cite that many of the influences that make a difference to student learning in developed nations happen within schools. These

authors claim that differences that influence student achievement is the influences of specific teachers, specific curriculum, and strategies teachers use to teach.

2.5.6 Conclusions regarding student achievement

From the literature review, the good news was that teachers can have a profound positive effect on student achievement. According to Cornelius-White (2007), teachers who care for students, connect with students and develop person-centered classrooms have fewer disruptive behaviours and higher student achievement levels. Crowther et al. (2013) stated that teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement.

From the literature review, Hattie (2009) believed that principals who created a safe, supportive environment, by allowing teachers to collectively work together to solve problems and reach goals have the most affect on student outcomes. Horng and Loeb (2010) also argued that principals have the most positive effect on student learning by influencing teacher motivation and working conditions. Positive relations with the adults on staff can often lead to higher achievement levels in students as does having a learning environment where all the adults care for and understand each other.

Lambert as well stated that it is teachers and principals working together, sharing distributed leadership by being learning leaders that positively affect the learning outcomes of students (Lambert, 2005). Louis et al. (2010) agrees with Lambert in that they discovered that collective leadership has a stronger influence on student achievement than individual leadership. It is high quality leadership by both principals and teachers that is necessary to bolster student achievement levels (Sparks, 20007b).

Setting clear high expectations, having effective instructional strategies, providing autonomy for teachers as well as the ability to be involved in the decision-making process all leads to teacher job satisfaction that increases student achievement levels (Lambert, 1998, 2005). All of these factors are very encouraging for the learning and growth of all students regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. The teachers, the principal, the school culture, the leadership of the school and the types of relationships within the school community can all have profound positive effects on student learning. For a school community to truly succeed with students, they must create school cultures and classrooms that are rich with warmth and nourishment for the mind and spirit (Mendler, 2001).

2.6 Student achievement levels in Ontario, Canada classrooms

Test scores, as previously discussed, are certainly not the only method used to measure student achievement. Research confirmed that other student achievement methods are effectively being implemented to assess student learning in Ontario, Canadian classrooms. Three methods that are currently being used effectively in Ontario classrooms are: 1) assessment *of* learning practices; 2) assessment *for* learning; and 3) assessment *as* learning (Cooper, 2007).

Assessment *of* learning refers to those assessments that occur at or near the end of an instructional unit. These assessments provide students the opportunity to synthesize

their learning and demonstrate how well they have learned the essential skills and concepts. The scores that students receive on these assessments *of* learning are used to generate report card grades (Cooper, 2007).

Assessment *for* learning is planned and used in ways that scaffold students' learning towards assessments *of* learning that will be used for grading and report card purposes. It informs teachers on how to adjust what and how they teach in order to increase the likelihood that all students will be successful. Assessment *for* learning is frequent and on-going (Cooper, 2007).

Assessment *as* learning is the most difficult yet the most important skill for a student to grasp. It is crucial for independent progress. It emphasizes the role of the student as the critical connector between assessment and learning. It fosters self-monitoring through meta-cognition and the application of self-regulatory strategies (Cooper, 2011).

Assessment *as* learning is based on the conviction that students are capable of becoming adaptable, flexible, and independent in their learning and decision making (Earl, 2006). This needs to be a shared vision for the school staff to embrace in order to increase student learning and ultimately student achievement levels (Earl, 2006).

All student learning in Ontario elementary and secondary schools is to be assessed based on the Ontario Ministry of Education's curriculum expectations for all subject areas, assessing *of*, *for* and *as* learning (Earl, 2006). To help assess how well Ontario students are performing based on the Ontario Ministry of Education's curriculum expectations the government created the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO).

The two schools that participated in this research study were selected using the data provided through the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) is an independent, arm's length agency of the Government of Ontario dedicated to enhancing the quality and accountability of the education system in Ontario and to work with the education community. EQAO's mandate is achieved through student assessments that produce objective, reliable information, through the public release of this information and through the profiling of the value and use of EQAO data across the province of Ontario (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2013).

EQAO's assessments measure student achievement in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to Ontario Curriculum expectations. The resulting data provide accountability and a gauge of quality in Ontario's publicly-funded education system. By providing this important evidence about learning, EQAO acts as a catalyst for increasing the success of Ontario students (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2013). For the purposes of the selection of participating schools in this research study, the results from the grades three (3) and six (6) assessments were used to determine two schools that demonstrated an increase in student achievement results over a five (5) year period of time.

The objective and reliable results from EQAO's assessments complement the information obtained from classroom assessments to provide students, parents,

teachers and principals with a clear and comprehensive picture of student achievement and a basis for targeted improvement planning at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels. EQAO helps build capacity for the appropriate use of data by providing resources that educators, parents, policy-makers and others in the education community can use to improve learning and teaching. EQAO distributes an individual report to each student who writes an assessment, and posts school, school board and provincial results on its website. All publicly funded schools in the province of Ontario must participate in the EQAO assessment process (Education Quality and Accountability Office, 2013).

2.7 The influences of leadership on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement

There are many factors that influence teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. However, one significant influential factor is leadership. School leadership can be distributed and shared many ways. The following sections will discuss distributed, shared and parallel leadership and their effects on these three areas of research.

2.7.1 Shared and distributed leadership

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the common view in effective schools research (Hulley & Dier, 2005) was that the principal was the key factor in shaping school culture and affecting reform. The literature from that period reflects an assumption that a school's principal, by holding high expectations and directing teachers' activities, would cause teachers to work cooperatively and would thus create an effective school (Hulley & Dier, 2005).

In the 1980s and early 1990s improvement efforts tended to focus on structural rather than cultural issues. Attention was given to things like altering schedules, revising class composition, and implementing new programs. The movement to site-based planning during those years was an attempt to give schools the authority for local decision making. None of these strategies had the desired impact because nothing was done to alter the culture at either the school or district level (Hulley & Dier, 2005).

Current research has shown that although the principal plays an integral role in the school improvement process, getting better is everyone's responsibility (Hulley & Dier, 2005). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conclude that "although it is certainly true that strong leadership from the principal can be a powerful force toward school reform, the notion that an individual can affect change by sheer will and personality is simply not supported by the research" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 175). To be substantive, change efforts must be supported by both principals and teachers. This is possible only when people are working within a strong collaborative culture based on shared values and distributed leadership (Hulley & Dier, 2005; Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Perhaps the most important item on a list of characteristics of an effective principal toward school reform, thus renewing school culture, is the capacity to relinquish power, so that the creative powers of teachers can be released (Barth, 1988). The

principal's willingness to share leadership with teacher leaders is key to improving the culture of the school for emerging teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005).

A leader cannot lead without the resources and the authority to influence others. Traditional functionalist models of school organizations distribute power to the principal. Principals operating from the functionalist, bureaucratic conceptions of schools and hierarchical understandings of leadership may often show (Barth, 2001) an unwillingness to share power (Brown & Sheppard, 1999) with teachers. "Many principals feel they already have too little power...It is against human nature for us to relinquish power when we will probably be held accountable for what others do with it" (Brown & Sheppard, 1999, p. 138).

Keedy (1999) discusses the fact that the "norm of the authority and power of administrators has been deeply rooted in most schools. It casts a pall over the ideology of shared leadership" (Keedy, 1999, p. 787). There is a belief in some schools in that action outside of classrooms is the rightful domain of the school principal (Smylie, Conley, & Marks, 2002). Given this culture, teachers are reluctant to challenge traditional patterns of principals' authority (Smylie et al., 2002). Thus basic understandings have been forged over time between administrators and teachers (Murphy, Hallinger, Lotto, & Miller, 1987). Teachers may often show hesitation to overturn negotiated arrangements, especially when doing so would undermine established patterns of authority and autonomy (Smylie et al., 2002).

One perspective is that teachers are powerless to influence activities beyond the classroom (Troen & Boles, 1994, as cited in Walling, 1994) and that the principals are resistant to actions that would alter this dynamic (Bishop, Tinley, & Berman, 1997; Brown & Sheppard, 1999). The belief is that efforts on the part of teachers to challenge the norm would produce unpleasant repercussions (Clift, Johnson, Holland, & Veal, 1992).

The problem also lies in the fact that because these functionalistic traditional systems of operation are inconsistent with the interpretivist tenets of distributed leadership, institutional views of power may stifle efforts to foster teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Consequently, principals who want to cultivate patterns of distributed leadership in their schools must learn to think about power differently and must be willing to share it with a wider set of colleagues (Murphy, 2005).

Teacher leadership can sometimes challenge long-established and accepted values, beliefs and norms of the teaching profession (Hart, 1995). The school culture is often not conducive to the development of leadership skills of teachers outside the confines of the individual classroom (Smyser, 1995).

Researchers investigating the nature of teacher work (Feirman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989), teacher work re-design (Hart, 1990) and teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Little, 1990; Crowther et al., 2001, 2009) have uncovered knowledge about how "professional norms and school culture" (Wilson, 1993, p. 27) exert a powerful and sometimes negative view on the beginning and continued development of shared and distributed leadership in schools. One belief is that teaching is not a profession that values or encourages leadership within its ranks

(Troen & Boles, 1994, as cited in Walling, 1994), and “that teachers who adhere to the current norms of the profession are a barrier to changing the role of teachers in schools” (Odell, 1997, p. 121). “Norms of privacy, autonomy and egalitarianism” (Smylie, 1996, p. 576) define the teaching profession. “Standards provide the yardstick most teachers use to measure acceptability” (Whitaker, 1995, p. 80) and “proposals for teacher leadership challenge these long established norms” (Hart, 1995, p. 12). “Norms of equality, autonomy, cordiality, and privacy can counter interventions designed to redistribute leadership in schools and these norms can lead to the neutralization of teacher leadership attempts to form new roles and collegial interaction for teachers” (Keedy, 1999, p. 788).

Teacher leadership opportunity and development go against the pre-established functionalist norms influencing working relationships among teachers (Smylie, 1992). It is “difficult for teachers in many schools to accept or display leadership” (Barth, 2001, p. 445). Too often, when opportunities for shared leadership are presented, professional norms stimulate teachers to resist new ways of doing things (Barth, 2001) and cause those who accept school-wide leadership responsibilities to display caution toward their peers (Little, 1990).

The social norms in schools define and govern teachers’ professional relationships (Smylie et al., 2002), and social system dynamics (Hart, 1994). These are powerful and they exert considerable control over change efforts such as the promotion and encouragement of teacher leadership (Murphy, 2005). Unfortunately, there is evidence that something deep and powerful within school cultures seems to work against teacher leadership (Barth, 2001). That is, “the culture and social norms of schools conspire against leadership development and bedevil efforts to develop teacher leadership” (Smylie et al., 2002, p. 183).

Institutionalizing teacher leadership as a norm within the cultural fabric of an entire school is a challenging task (Keedy, 1999). Efforts to cultivate shared and distributed leadership are hampered by the fact that there are few meaningful opportunities for introducing teacher leadership into the school system and the occupation of teaching (Little, 1990). Attempts to promote teacher leadership are influenced substantially by patterns of belief and practice that define old work roles and by socialization pressures from the workplace that resist new work roles or reshape them to conform to those prevailing practices and pressures (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992). Established social patterns are resilient (Hart, 1994) and there is a tendency to fall back on existing and comfortable norms and practices. This is often actually heightened during periods of change, such as those associated with school improvement planning efforts. The end result is that the behaviours and attitudes commonly regarded as demonstrating leadership are not acceptable to some teachers (Murphy, 2005). In circumstances such as this, the important role of the principal is to help to collectively guide and change the culture to become more collaborative in nature. The principal needs to willingly share the leadership role with teaching members of staff through the on-going development of collaborative relationship building (Hord, 2004).

Two related standards, the norm of followership – the belief that teachers are “followers, not leaders” (Moller & Katzenmeyer, 1996, p. 3) – and the norm of compliance – “the belief that it is the job of teachers to comply with directives from

above” (Wasley, 1991, p.42) – also “undermine the espoused theory of teacher leadership” (Clift et al., 1992, p. 906), hinder the emergence of teacher leaders and complicate their work when they do emerge (Murphy, 2005).

Some teachers also see professional autonomy, “which is viewed as freedom from outside scrutiny and the right to make independent judgments” (Wasley, 1991, p. 26), “to choose ends and means, to adopt for (one’s) classroom” (Wilson, 1993, p. 27) – “as a contested right” (Uline & Berkowitz, 2000, p. 419). In short, “they do not wish to lead or be led” (Wilson, 1993, p. 27). The norm of autonomy and isolation “impedes productive relationships with other teachers and with administrators” (Uline & Berkowitz, 2000, p. 419) and “inhibits the work of teacher leaders with their teaching colleagues” (Leithwood, Jantzi, Ryan, & Steinback, 1997, p. 5). It “inhibits professionalism” (Rallis, 1990, p. 194). It “stymies all attempts at reform” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001, p. 7). Urbanski and Nickolaou (1997) assert, “for the sake of such autonomy in their own classrooms, teachers sacrifice their prospects for influence at the school level and beyond” (Urbanski & Nickolaou, 1997, p. 245).

The job satisfaction research cited earlier in this chapter contradicts the above statements with regards to teacher autonomy. Deci and Ryan (2008) acknowledge the importance of both autonomy and working collectively together. They believe that humans have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined and connected to one another. From their years of research they have noted that when this inner drive is permitted within the workforce or in their day-to-day lives, people achieve more and report feeling much more fulfilled with their lives (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Each school’s culture directly influences how willing its teachers will be to take on positive leadership roles (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001), and that teacher leadership can be encouraged or impeded depending on the school culture (Snell & Swanson, 2000). Smylie et al. (2002) believes that the specific social relationships and norms of individual schools are more influential than the general professional norms (Smylie et al., 2002). Hart (1990) discovered that the school social group outweighs the strength of individual teachers’ training, years of experience, effort, personal characteristics, and abilities, and the formal work structure and its impact on the functions of change (Hart, 1990).

Research in this area supports the fact that if teacher leaders are to be recognized and promoted, it is essential to establish an appropriate school culture (Bishop et al., 1997). Re-culturing the school organization to accommodate patterns of leadership must begin with knowledge about “how the concept, teacher leadership, fits into the existing culture” (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001, p. 80). It is also important to work from the understanding that “creating an appropriate culture to support teacher leadership establishes a new dimension” (Bishop, et al., 1997, p. 78). What is required is “a school culture that is clearly committed to providing support for learning of all its members” (Silva, Gimbirt, & Nolan, 2000, p. 802). A school’s culture needs to be a

setting in which teachers are encouraged to collaborate, to participate in school-site decision making, to engage in ongoing learning to reflect upon their pedagogy are the school cultures that best foster the leadership of classroom practitioners (Snell & Swanson, 2000, p. 2).

Relationships are key to encouraging autonomy, collaboration and trust within a school organizational culture.

2.7.2 Parallel leadership

In their research, Andrews and Crowther (2002) conceptualized a distinctive leadership phenomenon involving principals and teacher leaders, called parallel leadership. “Parallel leadership is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build capacity. It embodies mutual respect, shared purpose and allowance for individual expression” (Andrews & Crowther, 2002, p. 7).

Parallel leadership is consistent with the current notions of distributed leadership, however, it differs in one fundamental area. Parallel leadership claims that the leadership functions of teacher leaders are equivalent in value to those of principals. Coupled with this claim, “parallel leadership encompasses three distinct qualities: 1) mutual trust and respect; 2) a sense of shared directionality; and 3) allowance for individual expression” (Andrews & Crowther, 2002, p. 8). In their research they confirmed the importance of these three distinct core values in the relationships of teacher leaders and their principals as they work in a parallel process of sustained school success (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

Parallel leadership develops and grows out of a school culture that thrives when all members of the community are valued and there is a collective responsibility with the teacher leaders and principal to enhance teaching and learning. Andrews and Crowther (2002) have discovered that parallel leadership is associated with school processes that may facilitate enhanced student outcomes. Their research conclusions have focused on the importance of three intersecting processes; 1) school-wide professional learning; 2) school-wide pedagogy; and 3) culture building (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

In her research, Andrews (2008) discusses the fact that parallel leadership is based on mutualism. Mutualism as defined in this context is allowing for a sense of shared purpose as well as individual expression (Andrews, 2008). Limerick et al. (2002) conceptualize mutualism by defining collaborative individualism. Collaborative individualism on the part of teachers allows for both individual and collaborative professional learning and development experiences. It is viewing these concepts of parallel leadership, mutualism and collaborative individualism that are methodologically being utilized to help re-frame teacher and principal leadership. The increasing involvement of teachers in whole school issues and decisions represents a new focus for teacher leaders (Harris & Muijs, 2003; Lambert, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

2.8 Chapter summary

This literature review in Chapter two has provided an overview of the current leadership and support that is aimed at promoting teacher job satisfaction, positive school cultures, improvements in teaching and learning and increases in student achievement levels. The literature review has accomplished this task through the guided explanation and discussion of distributed leadership, parallel leadership and

positive relationship building. All of these areas are foundational to developing collaborative and supportive school cultures amongst staff, students and community members.

However, there are gaps in the literature with regards to teachers and principals engagement in systematic autonomous and collaborative approaches that lead to increases in job satisfaction, positive school cultures and increases in student achievement levels. This research study addresses these gaps as it builds upon the literature review outlined in Chapter two and provides a platform for investigating how principals and teachers create positive school cultures that have an impact on student achievement.

CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter begins with an explanation as to the research study from the global and Canadian educational perspective. The theoretical framework upon which this study was based is next followed by a discussion as to the complexity of using a mixed methodological design and viewing knowledge from the perspective of the social construction of reality. Discussion as to the role of the researcher and the participant-researcher relationship is followed by an explanation of the cultural level of artifacts, the cultural level of espoused beliefs and values and the cultural level of basic underlying assumptions. The main research problem and the four research questions that were the pivotal components to this research study are followed by a detailed description of the components that constituted the research strategy and design of this study. An explanation regarding the four phases of this research study is followed by a detailed account of the primary and secondary research instruments that were used during the data collection. Rounding out this chapter is a discussion as to the validity of the study, trustworthiness, and the rigour and ethics of the study. The final section included is a chapter summary.

3.2 Global perspective

The research study was based on three concerns. The first concern was the inconsistencies that were being cited in overall student achievement in Ontario, Canada schools at the elementary level (grades Junior Kindergarten – grade 6). Secondly, maintaining elementary teacher job satisfaction and thirdly, the challenges required to create and sustain collaborative school cultures focusing on student and staff learning, relationship building and distributed leadership.

The context for the research study was two high performing Ontario, Canada elementary schools, one located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic urban area and the second located in a lower socio-economic urban area. The purpose for studying two schools in variant socio-economic areas of a school district was to explore the inter-relatedness of school culture and teacher job satisfaction and to determine whether this relationship affects student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic factor.

3.2.1 The Canadian educational system

In Canada, the educational system is overseen by each provincial government. Historically in Canada, education has been a provincial mandate, not a federal mandate. All of the ten (10) provinces and three (3) territories in Canada have their own separate Ministry of Education. Policies, procedures, curriculum expectations, assessing, obtaining and tracking student achievement levels are all coordinated at a provincial governmental level. Throughout the research study, the researcher referred to two Ontario, Canada elementary schools where the research was conducted. Ontario is one of the ten (10) provinces in Canada.

At the time that the data were collected for this research study the Ontario Provincial Government and the elementary teachers had a very positive relationship. The Ontario provincial government was providing much needed money and resources to the educational sector. The Ontario provincial government had many initiatives whereby they were ensuring that elementary teachers were receiving professional development during school hours and they were promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) by providing opportunities for elementary teachers to work together on collaborative efforts to increase student achievement levels (Fullan, 2013).

3.3 The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for the research study was centered around an interpretive paradigm based on a social constructivism approach. The researcher employed humanistic strategies and methods to collect and work with the various types of data that were collected, analyzed and interpreted.

The development of the theoretical framework for the research study was adapted from the work of Berger and Luckman (1966) and encompassed the research design for collection, analysis and representation of the data. Social constructivism was the theoretical framework upon which the research study was founded. Berger and Luckman (1966) discuss social constructivism using terms such as “reality” and “knowledge”. Berger and Luckman (1966) agree that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs. The sociology of knowledge first concerns itself with what teachers and principals know as reality in their everyday life. Knowledge must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. It is precisely the “knowledge” that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society, or school system within a society could exist (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

Berger and Luckman (1966) assert that knowledge is also socially distributed. They believe that all staff within a school participate in its “knowledge” in one way or another. However, they implore that only certain people within the school are concerned with the theoretical interpretations of knowledge and only certain people within a school have the pertinent available knowledge. How staff members with the contextual knowledge decide to socially distribute it depends on many factors. Within the context of the research project, beliefs, values and assumptions associated with school leadership ultimately decided how the knowledge was socially distributed at the two school sites thus affecting job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

Throughout the research study, three perspectives on meanings prevailed, the teachers’ meanings, the principals’ meanings and the researcher’s interpretation of the teachers’ and principals’ social realities. The basic contention was that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs (Berger & Luckman, 1966). The researcher always took into account these three points of view when discussing, comparing and analyzing the naturalistic setting, constructivism and collaborative inquiry research aspect of the paper (Patton, 2002). Throughout this study, the researcher adopted the theoretical perspective of social constructivism (Kuhn, 1962). This perspective assumes that

individuals do not share a single, stable, and fully knowable external reality, but that knowledge is socially constructed and culturally embedded (Patton, 2002). The understandings uncovered are contextually embedded, interpersonally forged, and necessarily limited (Neimeyer, 1993). The collective generation and transmission of meaning was the focus, emphasizing the influence that school culture, job satisfaction and student achievement have on shaping perspectives (Crotty, 1998, as cited in Patton, 2002).

A prevailing belief (Patton, 2004) was that all stakeholders would have different experiences and perceptions shaped by experiences and cultural constructs. Therefore, the researcher's role was to examine the implications of different perceptions or multiple realities without asserting which set of perceptions "is right", "more true", or "more real" (Patton, 2002, p. 98), looking for complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2003). In line with this perspective, the goal of the researcher was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the ongoing process and to allow the type of information to be collected to emerge from the participants in the study (Creswell, 2003).

Culture is a part of every organization and it is a continual ongoing creation and re-creation process that is uniquely shared by the members of the organization. To understand a group's culture, one must attempt to understand its shared basic assumptions and understand the learning process by which such basic assumptions come to be (Schein, 2010). The underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious, actually determine how group members perceive, think, and feel (Schein, 1984).

3.3.1 The complexity of mixed methodological research

The sequential mixed methods design that was used in the research study incorporated techniques from both the quantitative and qualitative research traditions. In this research study, the combination of both research traditions helped to answer the four research questions in such a way that they could not be answered in any other way (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Employing a sequential mixed methods approach, one task of the researcher was to emphasize the scientific perspective by using empirical quantifiable observations, to establish causal relationships, and to explain (Husen, 1997). Secondly, the research was derived from the humanistic perspective, with an emphasis on holistic and qualitative information embedding an interpretive approach (Husen, 1997).

Triangulation is an approach that was used in this study to analyze and synthesize data from multiple sources combining both quantitative and qualitative information. In this study, triangulation sought to examine data, to strengthen interpretations and to make improvements based on the available evidence. By examining data collected by different methods and from different groups, findings were then corroborated across data sets, thus reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study (Denzin, 1997).

The development of the methodological framework was adapted from the work of Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008), Creswell, Trout and Barbuto (2002) and Patton (2002). It prompted the research design for collection, analysis and representation of the data. A more detailed discussion of the methodological framework appears later in this chapter.

3.3.2 Social construction of reality

Viewing knowledge as analyzing the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966), the researcher needed to develop an environment that valued and supported hard work, risk taking, and the promotion of growth. Mutual respect, trust and understanding between the researcher and the participants were fundamental for collaborative and constructive inquiry (Lambert, 2003) to occur. In essence, the researcher had to develop a unique sub-culture of values, beliefs and norms to conduct the research in an ethical and respectful manner so that the researcher could understand the teachers' and principals' interpretation of their socially constructed realities. This perspective of reality helped the researcher to determine how group members perceive, think and feel based on a pattern of underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010).

3.4 The researcher

The researcher incorporated both the quantitative and the qualitative knowledge that continuously formed in a sequential manner at each phase, by using a mixed methodological approach. Triangulation procedures were incorporated. "Reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 1). "Sociology of knowledge will have to deal not only with the empirical variety of "knowledge" in human societies, but also with the processes by which any "body" of "knowledge" comes to be socially established as "reality" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 3).

The researcher maintained an interpretive perspective by suggesting that, "if all human knowledge is developed, transmitted and maintained in social situations, the sociology of knowledge must seek to understand the processes by which this is done in such a way that a taken-for-granted "reality" is somehow explained and understood" (Berger & Luckman, 1966, p. 4). The sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966). The researcher was concerned with the theoretical interpretation of the world through the eyes of elementary teachers. The researcher adopted the theoretical framework of social constructivism to assist with this process.

However, the researcher also believes that socially available knowledge cannot be fully understood if it is not placed in the framework of a more general analysis of knowledge (Berger & Luckman, 1966). To further understand the socially constructed knowledge created by the elementary teachers and to support the framework of the study, the researcher espoused humanistic procedures based on collaborative inquiry, comparative research and triangulation. The researcher attempted to interpret the teacher's social reality as a naturalistic researcher. The researcher needed to examine the implications of different perceptions or multiple realities. The researcher believed in the constructivist approach or naturalistic

inquiry, where all participants construct meaning and knowledge together (Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Szabo, 2002).

3.4.1 The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher in this mixed methodological study was to collect, record, organize, store, retrieve, analyze and report on data through the theoretical perspective of social constructivism and collaborative inquiry (Lambert, 2003). The researcher was researching 'with' people, which involved actively seeking information and knowledge. The researcher worked with groups of elementary teachers to actively involve them in sharing their ideas and strengths through interactive questions, investigation and learning with the understanding that schools are adaptive, complex systems (Liang, 1985).

The researcher's role was to view the socially constructed knowledge in the context of its culture. The researcher's role was oriented in the interpretive paradigm and research collected through the use of anonymous mixed questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Peer and colleague debriefing, member checking and triangulation were also employed as methods that established balance and fairness, which provided a system for useful checks and balances. These techniques are included in order to promote trustworthiness and transparency (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

Throughout the research study, the researcher was aware of the many complex, distinct and inter-related roles that were required to carry forth this research – collaborative inquirer, observer, reflector and the mixed methodological analyst - all oriented through the lens of an interpretive paradigm, trying to make sense of the socially constructed knowledge in the context of each school's culture. As referenced earlier, the basic understanding is that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the processes in which this occurs (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Throughout this research study, the researcher was always conscious of the fact that three perspectives on meanings prevailed, the teacher's meaning, the principal's meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's and principal's social reality. The researcher ensured that when discussing, comparing and analyzing in the naturalistic setting and the collaborative aspect of the research report that these three views were noted (Patton, 2002).

3.4.2 The participant-researcher relationship

The participant-researcher relationship was a vital aspect of the research study. The interpretations of both the participants and the researcher were essential to understanding job satisfaction of teachers, school culture and how these affect student achievement. This relationship was also vital for the researcher to be able to interpret how the participants collaborated together through social constructivism (Berger & Luckman, 1966) to create cultures and enhance job satisfaction that led to high levels of student achievement.

The researcher adopted Schein's (2010) beliefs that to understand a group's culture, the researcher must attempt to get at its shared basic assumptions and must understand the learning process by which such basic assumptions come to be

(Schein, 2010). The underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious, actually determine how elementary teachers perceive, think and feel (Schein, 1984).

Schein (2010) states that any school's culture can be studied at three concept levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions. The researcher attempted to develop a trusting, open relationship with each of the participants, to be able to more fully understand these three concept levels of culture (Schein, 2010).

During the data collection phase, the researcher spent time in the school fostering relationships so that both parties became familiar with and trusting of each other's presence (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The researcher attended several staff meetings and connected with the teachers during this time period. Also, the researcher stopped by the school several times before distributing the questionnaires. The researcher purposefully did this to become more familiar with the environment and to have the teachers become more familiar with the researcher. Informal talks took place during these time periods, with the goal that the participants would not feel intimidated and that the teachers would be more comfortable and trusting, thus able to conduct themselves in an authentic manner (Glesne & Pehskin, 1992).

In order to develop a sound participant-researcher relationship and to understand how teachers formulate shared meaning within their school organization, it was necessary for the researcher to work consistently over an extended period of time with all of the elementary teachers (Connolly & Clandinin, 1999; Lieberman & Miller, 1990). The researcher attempted to visit both school sites often during the questionnaire and in-depth interview phases, to connect with the teachers, to observe and to develop trusting relationships with all staff.

Throughout the period of data collection, it became increasingly important that the researcher's interpretations were a formation in progress, which was inevitable in terms of being open to the next phase. It was acknowledged that the researcher was in the first phases of data analysis long before the data collection was complete. Basit (2003) confirms that "qualitative data analysis is not a discrete procedure carried out at the final stages of research. It is indeed an all-encompassing activity that continues throughout the life of the project" (Basit, 2003, p. 145). The adoption of the interpretive paradigm approach, with the researcher attempting to interpret the teacher's social reality through the constructivist and collaborative inquiry approach confirmed the importance of being continually open to new data with the realization that "the analysis of qualitative data is rigorous. . .can start during the period of data collection. . .several analyses may be undertaken. . .researchers may also reformulate their research. . .[and] final analysis is an intense and prolonged period of deliberation" (Basit, 2003, p. 152).

3.5 The levels of culture

The description of culture in this chapter demonstrates that culture can be analyzed at several different levels. The levels according to Schein (2004) mean, "the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer" (p. 25). Schein believes that when there is confusion in defining culture it is the direct result of not being able

to differentiate the level at which the culture manifests itself. The following three sections describe Schein's (2010) levels of culture.

3.5.1 The level of artifacts

Through constructivist and collaborative inquiry (Kuhn, 1962; Patton, 2004), the researcher attempted to interpret the elementary teachers' concepts of artifacts in the school, and how these conscious or unconscious interpretations led to their definition of school culture. For the purposes of this research study, artifacts include all that teachers see, hear, and feel at school, as well as the visible products of the school (artistic creations, school clothing), such as its physical environment; its language; its technology; manners of address; emotional displays; myths and stories; its published list of values; and its observable rituals and ceremonies (Schein, 2010). The climate of a school is an artifact at a deeper level, as is the visible behaviour of staff. For the researcher's purposes of cultural analysis at the two school sites, artifacts also included the school organization's processes by which behaviour is made routine, and structural elements, such as organizational charts and formal descriptions of how the school operates (Schein, 2010). This list is by no means exhaustive, however, the researcher, through questionnaires, interviews, and a combined focus group from participants in both schools, attempted to understand and interpret this level of culture in the two elementary schools.

The researcher also recognized the importance of understanding the teachers' and principals' interpretations of this level of culture, as this level of the school culture is easy to observe but very difficult to decipher (Schein, 2010). The researcher was aware that the participants' responses to physical artifacts such as the school building and layout can lead to identification of major images and root metaphors that reflect the deepest level of the culture (Gagliardi, 1990). The researcher acknowledged the danger that is involved when inferring the deeper assumptions from artifacts alone, because a teacher's or administrator's interpretations may inevitably be projections of their own feelings and reactions (Gagliardi, 1990).

There is a problem that exists in terms of creating classifications of artifacts, due to the nature of school life and the numerous artifacts that are present. Throughout the research project, there was only one observer/researcher. This factor was key (Gagliardi, 1990), as it led to more of a comparable classification description of artifacts between the two school sites (Gagliardi, 1990), as well as between the teachers' interpretations of artifacts within the same school building (Gagliardi, 1990). The researcher attempted to compare similar artifacts in the two schools, so that the classification would be somewhat the same. This process also made it much easier to compare and contrast during the data analysis and presentation phase.

Artifacts are difficult to decipher due to the above noted reasons, however, the researcher made every attempt to be as objective as possible when interpreting artifacts and their interpreted espoused values and tried to interpret the teachers'/principals' realities (Schein, 2010).

3.5.2 The level of espoused beliefs and values

Using Schein's (2010) second level of cultural concepts, the researcher was able to achieve a deeper understanding of the school culture. This was accomplished by collecting data through observations, interviews, a focus group and the researcher's journal, analyzing the espoused values, norms and rules that provide the day-to-day operating principles by which the teachers and administrators guide their behaviour. This type of data collection and analysis took time, and the researcher did find that she had to return to each site on several occasions to continue to foster a deeper relationship with the elementary teaching staff and thus a deeper understanding of the levels of school culture (Schein, 2010).

The researcher needed to continue to develop positive relationships with the teachers in order to discover the level of espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2010). During the interview phase and the focus group phase, it was hoped that teachers would be able to distinguish between different levels of beliefs and values. The researcher needed to discover if some of the beliefs and values they have learned and adopted were a result of them being initially promoted by their principals or by informal leadership within the schools. Many beliefs and values may be continued as the norm because they have worked, possibly by helping to reduce uncertainty in critical areas of the group's and school operation's functioning (Schein, 2010). If these beliefs and values continue to work, they gradually become transformed into assumptions supported by a set of beliefs, norms and rules of behavior (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Through developing a trusting, reciprocal relationship, using a collaborative and constructivist approach, during the in-depth interview phase, the researcher needed to have teachers and principals define these sets of beliefs and values that have become embodied in the school's organizational ideology and philosophy (Schein, 2004). This was a difficult task.

Beliefs and values at this conscious level will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artifacts level (Schein, 2004). But if those beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, they may also reflect only what Argyris and Schon (1978) have called "espoused theories" which predict what teachers will say in a variety of situations but which may not predict what they will actually do in situations in which those beliefs and values should, in fact, be operating (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Thus, the eight (8) elementary teachers interviewed may say that they value students and that they have high quality standards for their students, but the schools' achievement levels, or their particular classes' achievement levels, may in fact contradict what they say (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

Through the anonymous questionnaire, in-depth interviews and the focus group, the researcher needed to determine that the espoused beliefs and values were congruent with the underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010), and that the teachers and principals were able to articulate values into an operational philosophy (Morgan, 2006). If the teachers and the principals at the two elementary schools were able to do this, the questionnaires and interviews then served as a source that helped to identify the school's core mission (Schein, 2010). All participants should be able to be articulate and have congruency in this area for it to be true (Morgan, 2006). In analyzing beliefs and values, the researcher needed to be able to determine if they were congruent with the underlying assumptions, or if they were just rationalizations or aspirations for the future (Morgan, 2006). The researcher needed to also be able to

determine if the lists of beliefs and values provided by the teachers and principals were so abstract that they were contradictory at the same time (Argyris & Schon, 1978). This determination would be done at the data presentation and analysis phase. However, key to being able to collect valid data was the interpretive approach supported through the collaborative and constructivist inquiry model that the researcher employed throughout this process.

Espoused beliefs and values often leave large areas of behaviour unexplained, leaving teachers with a feeling that they understand a piece of the school culture but still do not have a thorough understanding of the culture (Morgan, 2006). To get at that deeper level of understanding, to decipher the patterns, and to predict future behaviour correctly, teachers and administrators must understand more fully the category of basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010).

3.5.3 The level of basic underlying assumptions

Basic assumptions can become taken for granted to such a degree that there may be little variation within a school. This degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values (Schein, 2010). In fact, if a basic assumption is strongly held at the school level, elementary teachers and principals may find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable (Schein, 2010). Through the data collection and analysis phase, the researcher needed to get to the level of the basic underlying assumptions.

Basic assumptions are similar to what Argyris (1976) has identified as “theories-in-use” – the implicit assumptions that actually guide behaviour, that tell elementary teachers and principals how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Basic assumptions, like “theories-in-use”, can be non-confrontable and non-debatable, and thus are extremely difficult to change (Douglas, 1986). The researcher was tasked with determining, through the use of questionnaires, interviews, a focus group and observations (recorded in the researcher’s journal), which basic assumptions are non-confrontable and non-debatable and if these assumptions are healthy or unhealthy for the school culture (Douglas, 1986).

Elementary teachers and principals have developed an integrated set of such assumptions, known as a “thought world” (Douglas, 1986). The researcher, through observation and the in-depth interview process, needed to determine if these sets of assumptions were integrated into the two elementary school sites. The researcher also needed to look through the lens of the interpretive paradigm, in order to interpret each teacher’s and principal’s social reality (Berger & Luckman, 1966). This determination of assumptions was able to happen only by building trusting relationships and exploration through a constructive and collaborative inquiry model.

Assumptions often deal with fundamental aspects of life – human nature and human activities. Teachers will bring their own cultural learning from their prior experiences, from their education, and from their socialization into the teaching community (Morgan, 2006). While a new group of teachers develops its own shared history, it will develop modified or brand new assumptions in critical areas of its experience (Schein, 2004). It is those new assumptions that make up the culture of

that particular school (Schein, 2004). The researcher needed to interpret what those assumptions were in order to be able to understand the culture in the two elementary school sites studied.

Any school's culture can be studied at these three levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions. Through data collection and analysis, the researcher needed to discover if the teachers and principals were able to interpret the pattern of basic assumptions that were operating. The essence of the school culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and once the researcher was able to understand these patterns, the other surface levels were more easily understood (Schein, 2010).

3.6 The research inquiry

Out of the three concerns cited above, 1) the inconsistencies that are being cited in overall student achievement in Ontario, Canada schools at the elementary level; 2) maintaining elementary teacher job satisfaction; and 3) the challenges required to create and sustain collaborative school cultures focusing on student and staff learning, relationship building, shared, distributed and parallel leadership, this research brought together three constructs: 1) job satisfaction for elementary school teachers is important to each individual teacher as it impacts on their morale, health and well-being; 2) working in a positive, collaborative school culture certainly affects the job satisfaction of elementary school teachers and thus student achievement; and 3) the single most influential school-based factor connecting teaching and learning on student achievement is the teacher (Wright et al., 2007).

3.6.1 The research problem and research questions

Due to the nature of the concerns expressed and the three constructs upon which this research was based, the context for the research study was two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada (Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6), one located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic urban area and the second located in a lower socio-economic urban area. The purpose for studying two schools in variant socio-economic areas of a school district was to explore the relationship of school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the affects these perceptions have on student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic factor.

The researcher chose to study specific constructs at two high-performing elementary schools (JK-6) to help provide suggestions that may assist in addressing the concerns cited in the research. The goal was to make a contribution to this area of research and encourage others to continue researching this particular field of study for the betterment of student achievement, school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction. The research question explored in this study was:

What emerges as the interconnectedness between school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the impact this interconnectedness has on student achievement in two high- performing Canadian elementary schools located in distinctly different socio-economic areas?

This research study was guided by the following four questions:

1. What factors are relational between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture in two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada?
2. What is the nature of the school culture factors that elementary teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?
3. What is the nature of the elementary teacher job satisfaction factors that teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?
4. What model might emerge to explain the interconnectedness between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this interconnectedness affects student achievement?

3.7 Research strategy

3.7.1 The interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm was adopted by the researcher as the overall perspective which encompassed the design of this study. Interpretivists treat structures, such as school organizations and school districts, as sets of complex semi-autonomous relationships that originate from human interactions. Interpretivists view hierarchical structure as an outgrowth of sets of relationships that have real consequences on everyday interaction (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). The researcher took this interpretive approach to explore elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and the affect this relationship has on student achievement, through inquiring about the day-to-day interactions in the mixed questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group.

The first assumption of the research strategy in this study focused on the interpretivist perspective in the way structure is conceptualized. Structure is a process and structure fuses into ongoing activities. Human processes constitute structures and these created patterns reflect back to dynamic social relationships (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). In order to determine how the elementary teachers were creating and re-creating their cultural structures at the school and the relational impact their culture has on job satisfaction and student achievement, the researcher used a mixed questionnaire, voluntary in-depth interviews and a focus group which combined teacher participants from both schools.

The second interpretive assumption that encompassed the research strategy of this study was the belief that individuals create their own cultures. The belief is that elementary teachers act and interpret their interactions with a sense of free will and choice. Thus, they play a critical role in shaping school culture and environmental realities such as job satisfaction (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). This assumption was tested mainly through the in-depth interview phase and the focus group phase. The focus group helped to verify and enhance the data that were collected and analyzed from the interviews and questionnaires.

Thirdly, interpretivists adopt a pluralistic view. Multiple treatments of organizational reality were built into the purview (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). Although this

research study focused on elementary teachers, other viewpoints, such as the two principals', were incorporated into the examination of the research questions (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983). Incorporating this approach, the researcher integrated both the principals' and the elementary teachers' perspectives by conducting voluntary in-depth interviews, all the while trying not to cater to one viewpoint at the cost of ignoring the other. The pluralistic view aimed to uncover forces that constrain the processes of organizing the activities of members at all levels of the school organization (Deetz & Kersten, 1983, as cited in Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

The interpretive approach further subdivides into two broad-based traditions, the naturalistic and the critical. The naturalistic tradition is embedded into the research study. Three perspectives on meaning also prevail throughout this study: the teacher's meanings, the principal's meanings and the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's and the principal's social reality. These perspectives were further separated in the discussions while focusing on naturalistic research.

3.7.2 Naturalistic research/constructivist research

Being a naturalistic/constructivist researcher, the aim of the study was to describe and to understand school organizational realities as they are, without questioning what they could or should become. The researcher adopted a stance for understanding how the status quo works, irrespective of the power structures that maintain it. "Consensual meanings evolve from social interactions, knowledge, typifications, written texts, and negotiated order. In the field of communication, coordinated management of meaning, symbolic convergence, and structuration represent theoretical perspectives on the study of shared meaning" (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983, p. 47).

As a naturalistic/constructivist researcher, the school organization was treated as both the process and the product of shared meanings. The ultimate goal of the school organization is to create a social reality characterized by consensual meaning among members. These shared meanings form the basis of the culture: goals, norms, beliefs and practices. The constructivist researcher aimed to understand the nature of consensus and the way it is achieved at the school level (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

The researcher also needed to use a strategy to gather data that exposed and represented the teachers' viewpoints and their experiences within their school setting. Thus an anonymous mixed questionnaire, in-depth interviews and a focus group, were designed to discover each teacher's interpretation of their own social reality. The researcher also needed to expose as much of the teachers' experiences as possible to demonstrate plausibility of the study while, at the same time showing the researcher's position in relation to that of the participants' during the data analysis and conclusion phases (Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

As a naturalistic/constructivist investigator, the researcher sought trustworthiness in data collection by trying, wherever, possible to use multiple methods and divergent data sources. The process was reiterated by the researcher continually checking the interpretations at each phase of the research, with the respective data sources

(member checks). Through cross-checking and observations among divergent data sources, apparent differences between the two school sites and between staff, at times, resolved themselves, and at other times did not. Interpretations that were eventually constructed cohered with the divergent data collected from various sources (Brody, 1992, as cited in Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

3.7.3 Comparative research

The study's comparative research approach often involved different operational measures of the same concept. This process is an acknowledgement, by the researcher, of the numerous problems that can be involved when interpreting data from various sources and measures. By comparing data from separate variables at the various phases, reliability was strengthened (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). The researcher used the framework of comparative analysis as a helpful way to link qualitative and quantitative data. Converging results remained a delicate exercise and thus, "it is worth using multiple methods, comparison analysis, and convergent validity checks to enhance the quality and credibility of findings" (Patton, 1990, p. 466-467). Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data is a form of comparative analysis that was used sequentially in this research study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2008).

3.8 Research design, data collection and analysis

The study followed a mixed methods approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2008), answering the research questions by using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Data were collected following the requirements of inter-method mixing, also known as method triangulation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2008). The mixing occurred sequentially and was based on humanistic procedures of comparative research, collaborative inquiry, constructivist inquiry (natural inquiry) and triangulation procedures. Scientific/analytic research methods were also employed emphasizing empirical quantifiable data and information. It helped to establish causal relationships. A combination of several research techniques was applied (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, 2008).

3.8.1 Humanistic procedures

For the purposes of this study, the researcher adopted two of the three strands of Husen's (1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997) explanation of the humanistic paradigm. The first strand used in this research is the concept that humanities have their own logic of research with the primary purpose of understanding rather than explaining phenomena. Husen's (1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997) second strand, that was incorporated, emphasized "trying to get to the roots of human activity" (Husen, 1997, p. 18, as cited in Keeves, 1997) The research tools of in-depth interviews, focus groups, peer and colleague debriefing, member checking, observation, the researcher's reflective journal and sections of the anonymous questionnaire were employed throughout the study, emphasizing the two strands born out of the humanistic paradigm (Husen, 1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997).

The humanistic procedures used in the study were comprised of several methodologies and philosophies (Schwandt, 1994). The humanities recognize the value of qualitative designs and methodologies and study the human experiences in ways that are not attainable through quantitative approaches (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher, following humanistic procedures, obtained descriptions of school life experiences through accounts of the elementary teachers and principals by using the mixed questionnaire, in-depth interviews, a focus group and observations (noted in the researcher's journal). These procedures align with the interpretivist approach. The researcher recorded her experiences and behaviours, and attempted to interpret their meanings using the lens of humanistic research. The elementary teachers' and principals' experiences and behaviours were viewed as being an integrated and inseparable relationship and the researcher emphasized a holistic approach to these relationships (Moustakas, 1994). Through the incorporation of the humanistic procedural approach, data of experience were imperative to understand human behavior and thus used as evidence in this study (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher formulated questions for the anonymous mixed questionnaire, the in-depth interviews, and the focus group, to also reflect the researcher's interest, involvement and personal commitment to the research. To achieve the aims of humanistic research, the researcher needed to undertake lengthy and complex processes involving social interaction, gathering of history, and understanding the common language and actions of the school culture (Schwandt, 1994).

3.8.2 Collaborative inquiry

The collaborative research process in this project had two main objectives: 1) ensuring the understanding and participation of parties in all phases of the research process; and 2) enhancing the potential of implementing the research and utilizing the research results for the benefit of the educational system (Schensul & Schensul, 1992). The researcher recognized that creative and critical thinking skills were essential during the collaborative research process. Methods of critical thinking were incorporated throughout the entire process and these methods offered orderly approaches to framing, documenting, analyzing and synthesizing information (Schensul & Schensul, 1992). This systematic approach will be further discussed in greater detail in Chapters four, five, and six. Through a participatory research process and analysis, the findings contributed to an understanding of the broader social context, which again will be discussed in Chapters four, five and six (Schensul & Schensul, 1992).

3.8.3 Constructivist inquiry

The researcher also used the origins of the constructivist inquiry model to provide a foundation to the methodological approach of the research project (Lambert et al., 2002). The theory is founded on the fact that knowledge and beliefs are formed within people. The constructivist learning theory assumes that teaching staff bring experience and understanding to each situation, and that they do not encounter new situations out of context, but in fact assimilate this new information (Lambert et al., 2002). A second descriptor of the constructivist inquiry model is that the values and beliefs that teachers have already formed help them to interpret and assign meaning, as do their interactions with others. Meaning is constructed and is influenced by their

previous experiences (Lambert et al., 2002). The researcher's task was to understand and interpret the teacher's meaning of reality.

The constructivist approach also believes that teachers use what they know to interpret new information and construct new knowledge (Lambert et al., 2002). When new situations occur, connections are made, and teachers draw on what they know and reshape it into new, meaningful ways (Lambert et al., 2002). Constructivism also advances the fact that learning is a social endeavour that requires engagement with others in order to gain a growing understanding of the world and one's relationship to it (Lambert et al., 2002). The constructivist approach believes that reflection and meta-cognition are essential aspects of constructing knowledge and meaning (Lambert et al., 2002). Teachers develop in their understanding and skills when they are aware of the processes in which they engage, as they learn and make sense of new information (Lambert, 2005). The outcomes of the new meanings through the interactive process are varied and often unpredictable. By adopting the constructivist approach, the researcher was able to guide and direct the interviews in order to generate both understanding and meaning. Through observation of the interview process, and the focus group, the researcher was better able to understand the way knowledge was constructed by the way teachers work together, create meaning from what they know, value and believe (Lambert et al., 2002). The constructivist approach also helped the researcher to better understand the teacher job satisfaction component that may or may not have influenced student achievement.

Teachers bring their prior conceptions to the learning situation not only in terms of their subjective knowledge but also their views of teaching and learning. These can influence their way of interacting in classrooms and thus student achievement levels (Lambert, 2005). As stated in this research study, elementary teachers' job satisfaction and the school culture can influence teachers' views of teaching and learning as well. Teaching is not just the transmission of knowledge, but it involves the organization of the situation in the classroom and the design of tasks in a way that promotes learning. If a teacher's prior conceptions are interfering with the learning process, student achievement could also be compromised (Lambert, 2005).

3.8.4 Scientific/analytical research methods

In educational research, scientific analytic research methods refer to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical or computational techniques (Kuhn, 1961). The researcher collected quantitative data by using specific, narrow questions/statements through the use of the anonymous questionnaire. The elementary teachers who participated in this portion of the research study were asked to assign numerical data to answer each of the questions/statements relating to school culture, teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. A Likert (1932) rating scale was used for each specific narrow questions/statements. A copy of the anonymous mixed questionnaire is found in Appendix E. The researcher then analyzed the data with the help of SPSS 13.0 for windows, a quantitative data analysis software package. Statistical analysis was performed on the data. Causal relationships were studied by manipulating factors thought to influence the research questions, while other relevant variables were controlled (Kuhn, 1961). These causal relationships will be further explored in

Chapter four. The researcher hoped the numbers yielded an unbiased result that might be generalized to a larger educational population (Hunter & Leahey, 2008).

- a. **Correlational methods.** Correlational studies include all those research projects in which the purpose is to discover relationships between variables through the use of correlational statistics. The correlational approach used in this study analyzed relationships between variables. The correlational methods employed have the same limitations with respect to causal inference as the causal-comparative approach. A correlational relationship of this study between two variables was occasionally due to an ‘artifact’. In this research study, the researcher was also the rater and the one who collected data. Thus, relationships between variables were found to be more consistent because the same rater scored all variables. In this research study, correlational statistics were used to explore cause-and-effect relationships between variables. (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 575-576).

Thus, triangulation of both the qualitative and quantitative data was employed to provide more rigorous understanding of the research questions.

- b. **Correlational analysis.** In this study a correlation analysis is a test that looked at the extent to which two variables are related to each other. A positive correlation (denoted by a positive ‘r statistic’) meant that, in general, higher scores on one variable tended to be paired with higher scores on the other and that lower scores on one variable tended to be paired with lower scores on the other (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005; Pedhazur, 1997).
- c. **Internal consistency reliability/internal reliability.** In the research study, the internal consistency reliability or internal reliability was typically a measure based on the correlations between different items on the same test (or the same subscale on a larger test). It measured whether several items that proposed to measure the same general construct produced similar scores. For example, on the job satisfaction scale, the internal reliability was looking at the extent to which all of the individual questions were in fact measuring the same thing – job satisfaction (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005; Howell, 2002).
- d. **Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive statistics were used in the research study to describe the basic features of the data in this particular study. They provided simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together with simple graphics analysis, they formed the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data in this research study. Descriptive statistics were typically distinguished from inferential statistics which include t-tests, ANOVAs and regression. With descriptive statistics the researcher was simply describing what is or what the data showed. With inferential statistics, the researcher was trying to reach conclusions that extended beyond the immediate data alone. Inferential statistics were used to make inferences from the data to more general conditions. Descriptive statistics were used in this research study to simply describe what was going on with the data (Elmes, Kantovitz, & Roediger, 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).

- e. **Continuous outcome variables.** A continuous variable is one for which, within the limits that the variable ranges, any value is possible. For example, age or longevity in teaching is a continuous variable. While the Likert (1932) scales that were used in this research study are not technically continuous variable, researchers often find that they are referred to as continuous variables because they are not categorical in the typical sense (i.e., think gender – male / female). A variable that is not continuous is called discrete, such as the gender variable that was used in this study (i.e., two categories – male vs. female) (Elmes et al., 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).
- f. **Continuous variables.** The definition used for this study is similar to continuous outcome variables, just not specific to an outcome variable which is also known as a dependent variable. The definition of dependent variable as used in this study is below (Elmes et al., 2003).
- g. **Outcome variables/dependent variables/independent variables.** The dependent variable is what the researcher measured in this study and what was affected during the data collection. The dependent variable responds to the independent variable. It is called dependent because it "depends" on the independent variable. An independent variable's values were controlled and selected by the researcher to determine its relationship to an observed phenomenon such as the dependent variable (Elmes et al., 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).
- h. **Regression.** Regression statistically tested the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Regression analysis helped the researcher to understand how the typical value of the dependent variable changes when any one of the independent variables was varied, while the other independent variables were held fixed. Regression was used in this study to try to predict the nature of the relationship between one or more independent variables and one dependent variable (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005; Pedhazur, 1997).
- i. **Mean scores or mean.** The "mean" is the "average". The researcher determined the sum of all the numbers and then divided it by the number of numbers. The mean helped the researcher to reduce a set of data and still retain its information as to summarize it with a single value. It was used as a measure of central tendency, and helped to capture, with a single number, what was typical of a data set (Elmes et al., 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).
- j. **T-tests.** The t-test used in this research study assessed whether the means of two groups were *statistically* different from each other. This analysis was appropriate as the researcher wanted to compare the means of two groups (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005; Howell, 2002).
- k. **Degree of generalizability.** Degree of generalizability refers to the extent to which the research findings from this study can be generalized which means can be applied to or are reflective of teachers from within the same population who were not studied in the samplings such as teachers in other

schools or teachers in the participating schools that did not actively participate in the research study. Various factors affect the generalizability of research findings, such as sample size. The smaller the sample size, the less generalizable the findings are (Elmes et al., 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2005).

3.8.5 Triangulation procedures

Triangulation is an approach to data analysis that synthesizes data from multiple sources. It combines quantitative and qualitative data (Morse, 2003, as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Triangulation was used in this research study to synthesize and integrate data from the mixed questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups and observations. The goal of using this approach was to conduct data triangulation to answer the research questions, as findings can be corroborated across the data sets, reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist within this single study (Morse, 2003, as cited in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

3.8.6 Mixed methodological approach

The study's mixed methodological approach was used to help determine elementary teachers' views of how they perceive job satisfaction in relation to the school's culture of learning, assessment and evaluation. As well, their thoughts on this relationship and whether it affects student achievement were sought. Quantifiable data were produced to check for reliability and validity of the process.

By using different methods to investigate the same four research questions, the researcher did not expect that, "the findings generated by those different methods would automatically come together to produce some nicely integrated whole" (Patton, 1980, p. 330). The point of triangulation is "...to study and understand when and why there are differences" (Patton, 1980, p. 331).

Applying multiple techniques, comparative analysis, collaborative inquiry and convergent validity checks was an attempt to enhance the quality and credibility of the findings in this research study.

The purpose in the sequential mixed methods approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008) emerged from the inferences of the second phase of the research study. Phase two of the data collection portion of the research phase is an anonymous questionnaire. This phase is explained in more detail below, in Table 3.1. The questions in the third phase emerged at the end of the second phase and the questions in the fourth phase emerged at the end of the third phase. More explanation as to the phases is outlined in Table 3.1 (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008) and in the following section. The researcher viewed evidence and conclusions emphasizing the interpretive paradigm.

Table 3.1: Research design: The relationships between research tools and data analysis

Phases and Methods of Data Collection Description of Methodological Procedure	Research Tools	Data Analysis	Participants	Person(s)' Responsible
<p>Phase One: Selection of Schools (secondary data)</p> <p>Two schools were selected using:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An externally reported systemic data showing sustained significant improvement in literacy and numeracy. 2. SES data – one school is located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area; one school is located in a lower socio-economic area. 3. The principal has worked in the school for more than three years (during the time the EQAO data were collected) and agreed to participate in the study. 	<p>EQAO Results</p> <p>SES Data</p>	<p>Schools Selected</p> <p>Principals of Schools</p>	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Principals of Schools</p>	<p>Researcher</p>
<p>Phase Two: Anonymous Mixed Questionnaires (primary data)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaire were distributed to volunteer elementary teachers at both sites. 2. Completed questionnaires were mailed back to the researcher. 	<p>Developed a questionnaire using survey questions previously used in the pilot research study and additional questions specific to the study reported using a Likert scale with options for qualitative statements.</p> <p>Research questions guided topics for questionnaire and these topics for questionnaire</p>	<p>The mixed questionnaire provided the largest sampling of data.</p> <p>Patterns or sets of inter-relationships and similarities/differences between the two sites were analyzed and used to further explore the next phase, in-depth interviews.</p> <p>SPSS 13.0 for windows – quantitative data analysis software package was used to conduct a data analysis on quantitative data</p>	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Volunteer Elementary Teachers</p> <p>Principals of School</p>	<p>Researcher</p>

	represented general categories for data analysis.	data collected from the questionnaire; used to quantify and validate results. Qualitative data were used to validate results and to provide a more thick description (definition found in Table 3.4).		
Research Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4)				
Phase Three: Interviews (primary data)				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voluntary in-depth interviews were conducted with eight elementary teachers from the two schools. 2. Voluntary in-depth interviews were conducted with both principals. 3. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. 4. Researcher recorded observations as well during the interviews. 	<p>Selection -a purposeful selection of a select group of eight elementary teachers were identified by the researcher.</p> <p>Interview schedules - open ended questions as well as quantitative questions were used (i.e. gender, age, years experience). Topics and themes were determined by findings from the questionnaires.</p> <p>Researcher's reflective journal</p>	<p>This phase provided a follow-up to previously asked questions.</p> <p>-occurred simultaneously as data were gathered; it was coded; patterns and themes were generated.</p> <p>-sub-categories were determined from the data</p> <p>-dependability audit (definition found in Table 3.4)</p>	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Volunteer Elementary Teachers</p>	<p>Researcher</p>
(Research Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4)				
Phase Four: Focus Groups (primary data)				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purposeful selection of eight voluntary participants from the two participating elementary schools; participants were not involved in the in-depth interviews; however, they had the opportunity to be involved in phase two, the anonymous mixed questionnaire. 2. Researcher facilitated focus group discussion and it was tape recorded and 	<p>Focus Groups - discussion items drawn from interview process.</p> <p>Selection -purposeful selection of participants based on findings from interviews.</p> <p>Colleague, peer debriefing and member checking of</p>	<p>This phase was coded; patterns and themes were generated.</p> <p>- sequential approach; thick description (definition in Table 3.4)</p> <p>- linked and recorded findings to theorists/research/current practices</p>	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Voluntary Elementary Teachers</p>	<p>Researcher</p>

<p>transcribed verbatim.</p> <p>3. Researcher recorded observations as well during the focus group session.</p> <p>(Research Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4)</p>	<p>data used for corroboration.</p> <p>Researcher's reflective journal</p>			
<p>Secondary Data</p> <p>1. Researcher used colleagues, peer debriefing and member checking to help with cross-checking of data.</p> <p>2. These methods were used to help support the interpretation and recording of the findings.</p> <p>3. Researcher recorded observations and perceptions of the participants' interpretations.</p> <p>(Research Questions: 1, 2, 3, 4 and main research problem)</p>	<p>Colleague and peer debriefing and member checking of data used for corroboration.</p> <p>Documents -official documents/ministry data.</p> <p>Researcher's reflective journal</p>	<p>- occurred simultaneously as data were generated it was coded; patterns and themes were generated.</p> <p>- thick description (definition found in Table 3.4)</p> <p>- peer debriefing was conducted</p>	<p>Researcher</p> <p>Voluntary Elementary Teachers</p> <p>Professional Community Members</p>	<p>Researcher</p>

3.9 Phases of the research study

In the research study, data were collected, recorded, organized, stored, retrieved and analyzed in four phases. Table 3.2 represents the phases of the research study. Following Table 3.2 is a brief explanation of all of the phases of data collection.

Table 3.2: Schedule of data collection

Phases	Research Tools	Methodology and Participants
Phase One	Externally reported systemic data (secondary data)	Showing sustained significant improvement in grade 3 and grade 6 literacy and numeracy as measured by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The principal has been the leader at the school for more than three years (during the time the EQAO data were collected) and agrees to participate in the study.
Phase One	SES data Ministry and board documents (secondary data)	The first school was located in a lower socio-economic area; the second school was located in a middle-to-upper middle socio-economic area. There were 34 full-time equivalent teachers in total at both schools.
Phase Two	Mixed Questionnaires (primary data)	Total = 31 out of 34 questionnaires returned = 91% of elementary teachers returned completed questionnaires
Phase Three	Voluntary In-depth Interviews with Elementary Teachers (primary data) (round one)	Eight (8) teachers from two schools, four (4) from each elementary school. <u>Willow Tree Public School:</u> Mya – primary division teacher Adam – primary division teacher Pino – junior division teacher Sara – junior division teacher <u>Lake Dore Public School:</u> Destiny – primary division teacher Emma – primary division teacher Will – junior division teacher David – junior division teacher
Phase Three	Voluntary In-depth Interviews with Elementary Principals (primary data) (round two)	After careful reflection upon the data collected from the mixed questionnaires and the voluntary interviews, it was determined to interview the two principals from each elementary school. Their names have been altered for anonymity purposes. Tricia – principal, Willow Tree P.S. Laurie – principal, Lake Dore P.S.

Phase Four	Focus Group (primary data)	Eight teachers, four (4) primary division teachers and four (4) junior division teachers were selected from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. The teachers were not part of the in-depth interview phase. Themes were generated from phase one and phase two that the researcher was interested in exploring further in phase four. The emphasis of the focus group was on member checking. The names of the eight teachers have been altered for anonymity purposes. Jean John June Gordon Maureen Trenton Shekinah Gabriel
Phase Two, Three and Four	Researcher's Reflective Journal (secondary data)	The researcher kept an on-going reflective journal of the entire process of data collection, presentation and analysis. Observations from interviews and the focus groups were recorded, as were school visits.
Phase Two, Three and Four	Colleague, Peer Debriefing and Member Checking (secondary data)	The researcher used colleagues, peer debriefing and member checking to help with cross-checking of data and to help support the interpretation and recording of the findings.

- a. **Phase one:** EQAO results from a public school district in the province of Ontario were examined to determine two elementary schools that have demonstrated significant improvement in Grade 3 and Grade 6 Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) scores for reading, writing and mathematics. The researcher sought the approval of the two principals regarding participation in the study. Participation of elementary teachers, at each site, was on a voluntary basis.
- b. **Phase two:** An anonymous mixed questionnaire was used as a primary method to collect and record data. After receiving permission from each site's principal, an anonymous job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaire was distributed to voluntary elementary teachers at both schools. A waiver of anonymity was explained and signed by the researcher and each participant. The questionnaire combined both qualitative and quantitative methods.

- c. **Phase three:** Voluntary in-depth interviews were used as a primary method of data collection. A waiver of anonymity was signed by the researcher and each voluntary participant. The interview phase provided a smaller sampling of data; however this phase provided a follow-up to previously asked questions, as well as a dependability audit. Four (4) teachers were selected from each site, thus eight (8) teachers in total participated in this phase.

The researcher used open-ended in-depth interviews as a way of finding out what was going on within the minds of elementary teachers. The interview questions emerged at the end of the second phase of the research study.

- d. **Phase four:** Focus group and secondary data were used to corroborate findings and to provide thick description, ensuring data quality and quality of inferences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). The researcher made a purposeful selection of eight participants for the focus group and a waiver of anonymity was signed by the researcher and all eight participants. The participants of the focus group were from the original two participating schools; however, they had not participated in the in-depth interview phase. The researcher facilitated the focus group.

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) suggest using the term inference to denote the last and most important stage of any research project: answering the research questions by making interpretations. The employed methods are being used to help support the interpretation and recording of the findings. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide an outline of these research phases.

3.9.1 Selection of schools and participants

The selection of two elementary schools in Ontario, Canada (JK- grade 6) to participate in this study was based on the results from EQAO scores, which are externally reported systemic data. Both sites demonstrated significant sustained improvement in Grade 3 and Grade 6 EQAO scores for each of reading, writing and mathematics, over a five-year period. One school was located in a higher socio-economic urban area and one school was located in a lower socio-economic urban area. The reasoning for collecting data from two schools with varying socio-economic factors was to potentially isolate the socio-economic factor and rule it out as a determinant factor in exploring the relationship of school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and whether this relationship affects student achievement. The other criteria required the principal at both sites to have been at the school for a minimum of a three year period during the five year data collection results of EQAO scores. Both schools have the same number of full time equivalent teaching staff, one principal and approximately the same number of students.

The principals who worked at the two schools participating in the research project were individually approached by the researcher. The researcher explained the project to each principal and requested their participation in the research project on a voluntary basis. After the principals of the two schools agreed to participate, the researcher then asked

permission to attend a staff meeting to discuss the research project with the teaching staff and to ask for volunteer participants.

The researcher attended a staff meeting and discussed the purpose of the research project with potential teacher participants. The researcher requested voluntary participation from the elementary teachers. Once the elementary teachers volunteered, anonymous job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaires were distributed to all of the elementary teachers at both sites. A waiver of anonymity was signed by the researcher and each participant. At the bottom of each waiver of anonymity, teachers were asked if they wanted to participate in the in-depth interview phase of the research project. Teachers voluntarily completed this section. Elementary teachers at both sites voluntarily completed the questionnaires and mailed them to the researcher.

Eight (8) volunteers were selected for the in-depth interview phase, four (4) from each participating school. The in-depth interview phase explored the relationship of job satisfaction and school culture and the degree to which this relationship may affect student achievement. A waiver of anonymity was signed by the researcher and each participant. Further explanation as to the process of the in-depth interview phase is found in section 3.9.3 of this chapter.

After the data were collected, recorded and transcribed from the interview phase, a sampling of eight (8) selected elementary teachers participated in a focus group to cross-check the data and the interpretation of it. The members of this focus group evolved based on the evidence gathered in the previous phases. Focus group members were members who had not participated in the in-depth interview phase of the research project, however, they were from the two selected sites. This phase was used as a member check, colleague and peer debriefing, cross referencing data further to helping the researcher interpret data already collected and analyzed. Further explanation as to the process of the focus group phase is found in section 3.9.4 of this chapter.

3.9.2 School profiles

Willow Tree Public School Profile

Willow Tree Public School is located in a low socio-economic urban area. The academic site is an elementary school, grade levels ranging from junior kindergarten to grade six (6). The academic program offered at the school is the regular English program with core French. The school has a population of approximately 230 students. Most of the student population lives in publicly funded housing or low income housing.

Approximately one half of the student population speaks English as their second language. There are seventeen (17) full-time equivalent teaching staff at the school, two (2) teaching assistants, one principal, an office administrator, a part-time office assistant and one chief custodian who works during the day and one custodian who works in the evenings. At the time of the research study, the principal had worked at the school for five (5) years.

Lake Dore Public School Profile

Lake Dore Public School is located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic urban area. The site is an elementary school, grade levels ranging from junior kindergarten (JK) to grade six (6). The academic program offered at the school is the regular English program with core French. The population of the school is approximately 220 students. Most students who attend this school live in single family dwellings, townhomes or condominiums. The majority of students speak English as their first language. There are seventeen (17) full-time equivalent teaching staff at the school, one and a half (1.5) teaching assistants, one principal, an office administrator, a part-time office assistant and one chief custodian during the day and one custodian who works in the evenings. At the time of the research study, the principal had worked at the school for four (4) years.

3.10 Research instruments used in the data collection - Primary data

3.10.1 Voluntary anonymous mixed questionnaire

A voluntary job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaire of elementary teachers in the two selected schools was conducted on an anonymous basis. The job satisfaction and school culture portion of the questionnaire combined survey questions previously used in the pilot research study previously conducted by the researcher for the Doctorate of Education program (internal consistency reliability was computed for the survey; Cronbach's (1951) alpha (α) was found to be 0.97). More detail as to the pilot research study can be found in Chapter one of this research study. Additional questions specific to this study were added to the questionnaire due to the information collected in the pilot research project, and also due to the additional literature review research that had been recently conducted. A student achievement component of the questionnaire was also added as the nature and focus of the research study was altered after the pilot research study. A copy of the anonymous mixed questionnaire can be found in Appendix F.

The internal consistency reliability was computed for all three scales included in this research – school culture, job satisfaction and student achievement. Cronbach's (1951) alpha (α) for job satisfaction was 0.97 and for student achievement it was 0.90. This indicates that both scales have good internal reliability. A high alpha (α) indicates that the items in the questionnaire remain together in terms of the topic and measure the same general idea. Thus, it can be assumed from the results of the internal consistency that the degree of generalizability is quite high (Weiner, Freedheim, Schinka, & Velicer, 2003).

Cronbach's (1951) alpha (α) for school culture could not be conducted as the number of items in the scale relative to the number of survey respondents was too discrepant. SPSS would not allow analysis of the data in this area, indicating that the sample was too small for the analysis.

Both scientific and humanistic research methods were employed using the anonymous mixed questionnaire. A questionnaire is a self-report instrument used for gathering

information about variables of interest to a researcher (Wolf, 1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997). In the research study, the questionnaire consisted of a number of questions that the participants read and answered, together with item statements that the participants rated. The questions were both structured and unstructured, meaning the categories of response were both specific, using a Likert (1932) scale and also unspecified, using open-ended questions (Wolf, 1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997). The anonymous questionnaire was based on the following assumptions:

- a. “The participant can read and understand the questions or items.
- b. The participant possesses the information to answer the questions or items.
- c. The participant is willing to answer the questions or items honestly” (Wolf, 1997, p. 422, as cited in Keeves, 1997).

In the developmental work of the anonymous questionnaire used in this research study, three methods - interviewing, piloting and pretesting - were used. The developmental work for the questionnaire took place during and after the pilot research study that was conducted by the researcher prior to this current research study. “The assumptions often have to be tested through adequate developmental work before a questionnaire has confidence. Such developmental work often includes interviewing, piloting and pretesting” (Wolf, 1997, p. 422, as cited in Keeves, 1997).

Part of the questionnaire design provided a quantitative or numeric description of a small fraction of the elementary teaching population. The sample was collected through the data collection process of asking the participant elementary teachers to complete the anonymous questionnaire and to mail it into the researcher. This data collection sample from the questionnaires, in turn, enabled the researcher to generalize the findings from the sample of responses to an educational population (Creswell, 1994, p. 117). The analysis and interpretation of these findings are located in Chapter four of this research study.

Job satisfaction and culture are very important attributes which are frequently measured by organizations. The most common way of measurement is the use of rating scales where employees report their reactions to their jobs and the organizational culture. The most common method for collecting data regarding job satisfaction and culture is the Likert (1932) scale, named after Rensis Likert (1932). The anonymous questionnaire used a Likert (1932) scale to rate and collect the quantitative data and used open-ended questions for the collection of the qualitative data. The results from the analysis of the questionnaire data helped to form the questions used in the voluntary in-depth interviews and the focus group. The results are located in Chapter four of this research study.

3.10.2 Anonymous mixed questionnaire description

The anonymous mixed questionnaire consisted of eighty-nine (89) questions/statements. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix F. Quantitative data were collected and Likert (1932) scales were used to assist with the responses by one (1) indicating strong disagreement, two (2) indicating disagreement, three (3) neutrality,

four (4) agreement and five (5) strong agreement. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- a. **The first section of the questionnaire** included twenty-two (22) background information questions that established the number of years in the teaching profession, grade level taught, demographics of the school and the participant, days absent, and the participant's definition of school culture, job satisfaction and the relationship that these may have to student achievement. The first section represented a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data collected.
- b. **The second section of the questionnaire** included sixty-seven (67) statements that determined levels of job satisfaction, views regarding school culture and beliefs about student achievement.

The first category of the second section of the questionnaire consisted of twenty (20) statements/questions that were related to job satisfaction and the main categories determined: 1) intrinsic/extrinsic motivation; 2) relationships at work with peers and administration; 3) formal and distributed leadership; 4) responsibility and expectations at work; and 5) overall satisfaction with being an elementary school teacher.

The second category of the second section of the questionnaire, school culture, contained twenty-eight (28) statements/questions that were designed around main themes: 1) relationships with parents, peers, students and administration; 2) Schein's cultural levels – artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions; 3) attitude and atmosphere of the school; 4) collaboration and teamwork; and 5) overall satisfaction with the school culture.

The third category of the second section of the questionnaire, student achievement, encompassed nineteen (19) statements/questions focused on: 1) school-wide beliefs, values and assumptions regarding student achievement; 2) individual teacher beliefs, values and assumptions regarding student achievement; 3) school-wide and individual teacher expectations regarding learning; 4) collaborative/community efforts regarding learning; and 5) the decision-making processes focused on learning and achievement.

- c. **The third section of the questionnaire** was a qualitative, open-ended question that was designed to allow each participant to make any additional comments regarding the contents of the questionnaire and the overall topic of research.

The design of the questionnaire used in the research study came from the questionnaire that was originally used during the pilot research study. An additional 'student achievement' section was added. The questions and

statements were based on the findings from the literature review conducted by the researcher, both in the pilot research study and in the dissertation study. The researcher further refined the questionnaire through the pilot research study process. The researcher designed the questionnaire.

3.10.3 Voluntary in-depth interviews

Voluntary in-depth interviews were conducted with eight (8) elementary teachers in the two schools after the completion and data analysis of the questionnaire. The open-ended interview questions were developed using the data analyzed from the questionnaires. Due to Schein's (2010) beliefs that to really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and overt behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think, and feel (Schein, 1984, 2004). The interviews focused on the exploration of the relationship of job satisfaction and school culture and whether this relationship affects student achievement.

The researcher discussed with each principal which teachers should be approached, as the researcher wanted two (2) teachers from the primary division and two (2) teachers from the junior division in each school and with a balance of male and female representation. The in-depth interview process had previously been explained to the teachers during the mixed questionnaire phase. The researcher then e-mailed the potential eight (8) teachers to request their participation in the in-depth interview process. All eight (8) volunteered to participate.

Dates and times for the interviews were set-up via e-mail. It was also decided in consultation with the principals that the school libraries could be used as the interview location. Both school libraries had comfortable chairs and the atmosphere was familiar to the teachers as well as relaxing. Interviews were scheduled at the end of the day, after student dismissal.

The eight (8) elementary teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in the in-depth interview process, confirmed their consent by signing a letter of agreement previously approved by both principals and the University of Southern Queensland (see Appendix D). The process was explained in detail to the teachers. The interview group consisted of four (4) females and four (4) males. Four (4) teachers taught in the primary division and four (4) teachers taught in the junior division. It was explained to them that their names would be changed to preserve anonymity.

Open-ended interviewing was used as a tool to access the perspectives of the teachers being interviewed (Patton, 1990, 2002). The interview was used in the research study as a way of discovering aspects and exploring viewpoints of the elementary teachers that the researcher could not directly observe. The issue was not that observational data are more desirable, valid or meaningful than self-report data, but rather that the researcher could not observe internal aspects such as feelings, thoughts and intentions (Patton,

1990, 2002). The researcher was also not able to observe behaviours or situations that occurred prior to the research study. As well, the researcher needed the in-depth interview to access information such as how schools have organized their environments and the underlying meanings that they attach to what goes on in their world (Schein, 2010). The researcher needed to ask the teachers about these aspects in order to access this very vital information.

The use of the in-depth, open-ended interview as a tool allowed the researcher to try to understand the interpretations of the elementary teachers' social reality. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the social reality of the elementary teachers is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit through the researcher interpreting their social reality (Patton, 1990, 2002). Member checking was employed at the end of each interview to establish credibility by testing the teachers' interpretations and conclusions. The researcher performed member checking throughout the entire interview process and at the end of each interview by re-stating claims for further clarification and by reading and reviewing draft notes to ensure credibility in interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Initially, the researcher had not planned on interviewing the two principals. However, the data collected from the anonymous questionnaires and the in-depth interviews with the eight teachers indicated that it was essential for the researcher to request an interview with both school principals. This was in order to determine what role the principal played in building collaborative school cultures, promoting elementary teacher job satisfaction and consequently increasing student achievement. Due to the nature of the sequential mixed methodological approach, where the data collected in each phase informed the next phase of research, conducting interviews with the two school principals was both possible and necessary.

After discussions between the researcher and her supervisors, the researcher telephoned the two principals and explained that the information collected thus far in the research project pointed to the vital role the principal played in the dynamics of the school setting. This vital role includes the parameters of this research project, elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The researcher requested to conduct separate interviews with both principals. Both principals enthusiastically agreed to participate in this research project. At this phase in the research study, the name of the other participating school was not disclosed to the principals nor to the participating elementary teachers.

3.10.4 Voluntary focus group

After collecting, reviewing and analyzing the data from the anonymous questionnaires and in-depth interviews, the researcher reflected on this informational data and used this informational data to inform the direction and structure of the focus group. The research study used an inter-method mixing, known as triangulation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). The mixing occurred sequentially as questions for the third phase emerged at the

end of the second phase and the questions for the fourth phase, the focus group, emerged at the end of the third phase.

A voluntary focus group was conducted and member checking was also used throughout the process of the voluntary focus group as it is a crucial technique used for establishing credibility and validity. By asking eight (8) elementary teachers from the two schools who had not previously participated in the in-depth interviews portion of the research project, to participate in a focus group, this phase in the data collection helped to check for the accuracy of themes, interpretations and conclusions. It was determined that if other members agreed with the interpretations, evidence for the trustworthiness of the results would be evident.

Constructivism and collaborative inquiry were being emphasized throughout this research project as patterns and themes being generated informed the next phase of research. Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is not something that can be simply given by the leader. Rather knowledge is constructed by members of groups, teachers, and principals through an active mental process of development; school staff are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge (Lambert et al., 2002).

The eight (8) elementary teachers who were selected to participate in the focus group had not participated in the in-depth interviews, although there was a possibility that some or all had participated in the anonymous mixed questionnaire portion of the research study. The focus group participants were selected by the researcher with the assistance of the two principals from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. At this phase in the research study, the names of each of the participating schools needed to be disclosed to the principals, however, it was requested by the researcher that this information remain confidential.

The researcher then contacted the eight (8) potential candidates to explain the intent of the focus group and the research project: four (4) primary division teachers and four (4) junior division teachers. The initial contact was made through e-mail, as other confidential information, such as telephone numbers could not be provided at the school level without the consent of the staff member.

The researcher asked the elementary teachers if they were interested in participating and to show their interest through a reply e-mail. All eight (8) potential candidates accepted the invitation and an agreed upon date, time and location was set for the focus group. The location was a school site that was neither Willow Tree Public School nor Lake Dore Public School. The interviewer purposefully chose an alternate school site, as the researcher wanted all participants to feel a similar comfort level with the focus group setting. It was important for the researcher to avoid creating a possible bias in the results by choosing one of the two school sites, as it would have been more familiar to four of the eight teachers.

The eight (8) elementary teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group confirmed their consent by signing a letter of agreement previously approved by the University of Southern Queensland (see Appendix E). The process was explained in detail to the eight (8) elementary teachers.

All eight (8) participants met at a neutral school site. The researcher wanted to ensure that all participants were comfortable with the surroundings, so the focus group meeting was set in the school library. At the focus group phase of the research study, the names of each of the participating schools needed to be disclosed to the elementary teacher participants, however, it was requested by the researcher that this information remain confidential.

The researcher provided food and beverages for the participants to ensure that they were comfortable and well fed as eating prior to the focus group also provided a forum for informal discussions and socialization to occur. The researcher purposefully orchestrated the informal pre-focus group session with the goal that the participants would become more comfortable and at ease with each other prior to beginning the focus group discussions.

The researcher began the formal focus group session and continued to facilitate the focus group by providing a series of open-ended statements that were intended to begin the discussions between the focus group members. The topics for the open-ended discussions came from emergent understandings from phases one, two and three of the research study. The emergent understandings used in the focus group are located in Chapter five of this research study.

The researcher facilitated the focus group and the entire session was audio recorded and transcribed word-for-word at a later date. The researcher also recorded observations and interpretations from the focus group session. The researcher acted as the facilitator during the focus group session. The researcher began each discussion by stating the emergent understanding and then invited the eight (8) participants to voluntarily discuss the emergent understandings. The focus group participants willing became actively involved. The researcher would begin each discussion topic, however, would then “fade” into the “background” allowing the focus group members’ ideas and understandings to continue the flow of the discussion. The time period for the entire focus group session was approximately four (4) hours in length.

3.11 Research instruments used in data collection - Secondary data

Secondary data were used in the inter-mixing methodological approach throughout the entire collection and presentation of data in all phases of the research study. Secondary data were used to conduct dependability and confirmability audits, while writing the final report. It was used for corroboration and assisted in clarifying interpretations and identifying possible sources of bias (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Secondary data sources used in the research study are outlined in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 in this chapter.

During phase one of the research project, secondary data sources that were employed were externally reported systemic data and socio-economic statistics from official Ontario Ministry of Education and School Board documents. The secondary data were required during phase one of the research project to initially select the two elementary schools used in the research project and in later phases to conduct dependability and confirmability audits, while writing the final report.

3.11.1 Externally reported systemic data from the 'Education Quality and Accountability Office' (EQAO)

EQAO data were used to select the two participating schools during phase one of the research project. During the most recent five year period of time, when the research project was initiated, two elementary schools in the district needed to show sustained significant improvement in grade three and grade six literacy and numeracy as measured by EQAO.

3.11.2 School board documents

School board documents were used to confirm that both principals at the two schools had been the administrator of the school for more than three out of the five years during the sustained significant improvement in grade three and grade six literacy and numeracy scores, as measured by EQAO. School board documents also contained the socio-economic areas that the students lived in.

During the remaining phases (phase two, three and four) of the study, the following secondary data were continually used for corroboration and assisted in clarifying interpretations and identifying possible sources of bias (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

3.11.3 Researcher's reflective journal

The researcher's reflective journal was used throughout the research process. The researcher kept a reflective journal from each stage of the research. This reflective journal helped in the sequential gathering of information to inform the next phase. As well, the journal assisted the researcher to better understand each teacher's interpretation of their social reality. The researcher used the written notes and reflections from the journal to make further links to current research and practices. The research journal also helped to form themes and patterns to inform later stages of the research.

3.11.4 Colleagues, peer debriefing and member checking

Colleagues, peer debriefing and member checking were used throughout phases two, three and four to help with the cross-checking of data and to help support the interpretation and recording of the findings. Member checking is a very crucial technique for establishing credibility, to test categories, interpretations and conclusions. It is a continuous informal and formal cross-checking of data with participants, such as at the end of the in-depth interviews and the focus group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Peer and colleague debriefing was also used as a method to keep the researcher “honest” and helped the researcher to reflect on the answers to the research questions, find alternative understandings and explore emerging understandings through formal and informal discussion with principals, elementary teachers and colleagues (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Erlandson et al., 1993).

3.12 Working with the data

Following the techniques of using a sequential mixed methodological approach this methodological framework further provided data from both quantitative and qualitative research which would enhance the final outcomes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). The initial stages of data collection and analysis informed the later stages of data collection and analysis. The analysis from the earlier stages helped to form patterns or sets of inter-relationships and similarities/differences between the two sites. These were analyzed and used to further explore the next phases, the voluntary in-depth interviews and the focus group. The later phases provided a follow-up to previously asked questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). The sequential mixed methodological approach provided thick description and links to theorists, research and current practices. An imperative of this study was that a range of data collection tools, both quantitative and qualitative, be used – mixed questionnaire, voluntary in-depth interviews, focus group, member checking and peer and colleague debriefing – to ensure that the analysis conducted later through the lenses of the varying perspectives would be valid (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008).

3.13 Validity

Due to the difficulty in achieving proper validity in a quantitative study, Zeller (1997, as cited in Keeves, 1997) advocates the use of both quantitative and qualitative strategies in the search for validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

As more investigations have been conducted over time, it has been discovered that research participants would, at times, lie to researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The validity and reliability of scientific methodological research was being questioned due to the determination that the research participants were not always accurately reporting their accounts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). There was also debate over the detached observer, who is unable to fully represent the experiences of the participants without inserting some aspects of self (Patton, 2004). Thus, the difficulty with representation of data is three-fold. First, the researcher cannot fully capture the lived experiences of the elementary teachers because it is mediated through the written discourse of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Secondly, the issue of legitimation undermines the legitimacy of research, that is, its interpretation, validity and reliability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Finally, the difficulties associated with praxis asks, how is it possible to bring about change if society is only ever a text?

For these very reasons, the researcher chose to triangulate both the qualitative and quantitative data to strengthen and enrich the results, as there is an epistemological shift from the detached observer to more participatory forms of research (Angrosino, 2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Along with this shift, there

is a shift to human inter-subjectivity that focuses on interactions (Holman-Jones, 2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In the research field, there has also been a move towards interpretive, narrative and critical forms of inquiry (Holman-Jones, 2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In other words, there has been a shift from representation to presentation; that is, using personal stories as a means of altering contexts (Holman-Jones, 2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Performance is advantageous as it allows for a strong notion of agency with the assumption that teachers' identities and actions are a series of improvised choices made within the social and cultural guidelines of the school setting (Holman-Jones, 2005, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.13.1 Trustworthiness

Was the researcher able to accurately represent the experiences of elementary teachers and principals by allowing the three perspectives on meaning to prevail, the teacher's meaning, the principal's meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's and principal's social reality? (Berger & Luckman, 1966). This view deviates from traditional notions of scientific validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) as the perspective of the naturalist is employed in this research study (Patton, 2002). As part of this shift, the researcher combined both qualitative and quantitative data, as there was a need to contrast facts with the object of traditional measures of validity, with meanings and interpretations attached to experiences. This created a problem with validity (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010), which resulted in the researcher using a more appropriate term, trustworthiness (Ellis et al., 2010). The research study was one of trustworthiness, where elementary teachers' and principals' meanings - which are attached to their experiences - needed to be presented with minimal bias or distortion.

3.13.2 Rigour in the research study

The research study was approached from the interpretive paradigm. As the researcher adopted the approach of a naturalistic researcher, it was important that rigour be addressed to ensure the naturalistic process and the quality criteria of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Erlandson et al. (1993) propose that the conventional criteria for trustworthiness – internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity – be replaced with 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability', and 'confirmability' respectively (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 219). The naturalistic techniques used to establish trustworthiness in this study are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Naturalistic techniques to establish trustworthiness

Conventional Term	Naturalistic Term	Naturalistic Techniques
Internal Validity	Credibility	Mixed Questionnaire In-depth interviews Focus Group Triangulation Peer debriefing Member Checking Reflective Journal
External Validity	Transferability	EQAO Results (official documents/Ministry data) SES Data SPSS Quantitative Data Thick Description Purposive Sampling Reflective Journal
Reliability	Dependability	Dependability Audit* Reflective Journal Mixed Questionnaires In-depth Interviews
Objectivity	Confirmability	Reflective Journal Peer Checking Member Checking

(Adapted from Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 133)

* The dependability audit refers to an external check on the processes by which the study was conducted. This was done by employing an audit trail that provides documentation and a running account of the process of the inquiry (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 133).

These techniques, with indications of each and examples of how they were evident in this study, are then presented in Table 3.4. The researcher determined that trustworthiness was established in the research study.

Table 3.4: Applied techniques for establishing trustworthiness in this study

Naturalist Technique	Indication	Evident in this study
<i>Engagement</i>	Develop rapport; build trust; build relationships; understand the culture.	Researcher is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. Trust, rapport, relationships and access to data was established on a continual basis. Able to 'capture snapshots of the life' of the two schools.
<i>Observation</i>	Open to multiple influences – mutual shapers and contextual factors; Obtain in-depth and accurate data; Sort relevancies from irrelevancies; Sort accurate from inaccurate data.	Ability to engage in purposeful and assertive investigation. Access to data and informers. Researcher as interactive observer to process under investigation.
<i>Triangulation</i>	Verify data.	Uses different or multiple sources and methods (see Table 3.1).
<i>Referential Adequacy</i>	Provide a 'slice of life'.	Access to unobtrusive measures such as handbooks, yearbooks, memos, newsletters, emails.
<i>Peer Debriefing</i>	Keep researcher 'honest'; Reflecting on answers to research questions; Find alternative understandings; Explore emerging design and understanding.	Formal and informal discussions with elementary teachers and principals.
<i>Member Checking</i>	Most crucial technique for establishing credibility Test categories, interpretations, or conclusions (constructions).	Continuous informal or formal cross-checking of data with participants, such as, at the end of an interview, reviewing of drafts/notes.
<i>Reflective Journal</i>	Record information about self, interpretations and methods; Document researcher's understanding and interpretations.	A reflective journal written over a two year period.
<i>Thick Description</i>	Provide database for transferability and understanding; provide patterns and themes.	Relevant data and rich descriptions in the study that provide sufficient base to make comparisons of similarity.
<i>Purposive Sampling</i>	Generate data for emergent design and emerging understanding to research questions. Occurred simultaneously as data were generated and coded.	Access to useful sources and maximum variation sampling. Allowed for uncovering of multiple realities as they emerged. Patterns and themes were generated.

(Adapted from Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 328; and Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 161)

3.14 The ethics and politics of the study

Ethical clearance for this research study was sought through the University of Southern Queensland (see Appendix A). At the two school sites, the researcher requested an appointment with each principal. The researcher explained the intent of the research project and sought permission to conduct data collection at the school through the form of an anonymous questionnaire and one-on-one interviews. It was explained that all participation was voluntary in nature. The two principals confirmed their consent by signing a letter of agreement (see Appendix B).

The researcher then attended staff meetings at both sites and discussed the intent of the research project with all of the elementary teachers. It was also explained to the teachers that all participation was voluntary, and that there would be anonymity of names of schools and participants. The researcher also emphasized to all of the elementary teachers that there would be anonymity with all data collected, recorded, organized, stored, retrieved, analyzed and reported on. The elementary teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in the job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaire, confirmed their consent by signing a letter of agreement previously approved by both principals and University of Southern Queensland (see Appendix C). The process was explained in detail to the teachers.

The researcher promoted anonymity with all data collected, recorded, organized, stored, retrieved, analyzed and reported on. All identifiable names of the schools and the participants were changed to preserve anonymity. The researcher also emphasized and promoted anonymity with all participants in each phase of the study. Developing positive and trusting relationships with each participant during the one-on-one interview process and the focus group session was an essential role of the researcher. The researcher took the time to make each participant comfortable, at ease with the process, and to build a supportive environment. All participants in the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups also signed a letter of agreement (see Appendices D & E). The researcher discussed with each participant that they could stop the interview process or focus group participation at any time and/or discontinue the study without penalty. Collecting, recording, organizing, analyzing, interpreting and reporting on data were conducted in an ethical and accountable manner. The researcher assured each participant, at every phase, that vital information would not be disclosed to school leadership and/or school board personnel and that there would be complete anonymity of people and schools.

3.15 Chapter summary

The premise of the study was that perceptions are personally constructed by each individual, impacting on views of job satisfaction, as well as the underlying theme that realities of each school culture are socially constructed through words, symbols and behaviours, thus creating learning environments that are linked positively, or negatively, to student achievement. The research study attempted to interpret these socially constructed realities through qualitative data collection methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, conducting member checks and the researcher's research

journal, as well as mixing quantifiable data collected through questionnaires. Constructivism and collaborative inquiry were the prominent approaches as they involve the sharing of ideas and individual strengths by enhancing interactive questioning, investigation and learning. Constructivism and collaborative inquiry help to build positive relations. It is research 'with' people rather than 'on' people (Nelson et al., 2008).

CHAPTER 4 : DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS FROM PHASE ONE AND PHASE TWO

4.1 Overview of the chapter

Chapter four begins with an introduction to the presentation and analysis from phase one and phase two of the four phase data collection process used in this study. This is followed by an overview of the context of the research study and background to the Ontario, Canada school system. Next is a schedule of the data collection phases presented and analyzed in this chapter. This section is followed by an explanation of phases one and two. A thorough presentation and analysis of the quantitative data findings from the anonymous mixed questionnaire are described in the next sections through the use of tables of descriptive statistics and an explanation and summary of the quantitative findings. The quantitative data are then presented and discussed in the context of research question number one and the overall research problem. Emerging themes and emerging understandings are outlined from phases one and two that are further explored in Chapter five. Limitations as to the quantitative portion of the research study are discussed ending with a chapter summary.

4.2 Introduction

The data presentation and analysis in this chapter were taken from two sources: an anonymous mixed questionnaire (primary source) and the researcher's reflective journal (secondary source). The questionnaire focused on the research project themes, that is, job satisfaction, school culture, student achievement, and was distributed to teacher volunteers from two elementary schools in Ontario, Canada. Secondary data sources were: the researcher's reflective journal, colleagues/peer debriefing sessions and official documents.

The phases of data collection are important to the overall analysis and conclusions. A sequential mixed methodological approach was used in the data collection and analysis so that the first stages of data analysis informed the next phases of the data being collected. The researcher applied the sequential mixed methodology approach so that the data analysis was continuous throughout the entire research project. Themes generated from phase one and phase two helped to frame the questions of inquiry and analysis applied in phase three and phase four.

The data presentation and analysis were completed on both schools separately so that the development of themes and emerging understandings could be analyzed and compared to determine if there were any similarities and differences in the two school settings. The data presentation and analysis were also completed as a whole sample, to further determine and compare prominent re-occurring themes and understandings.

The development of major themes occurred out of the data from both the primary and secondary sources, viewing both schools as separate data sources, as well as a whole sample source. The themes are discussed in more detail throughout the chapter. The data

presented in Chapter four, are primary and secondary data from phase one, phase two and secondary data from phase three and phase four of the research study. Phase one of the secondary data collection is the externally reported systemic data from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). It helped the researcher to determine two schools that would be appropriate sites for the research study.

Socio-economic status data from Ministry and board documents were used during phase two to help determine a school in a lower socio-economic area and a school in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area. Also during phase two, an anonymous mixed questionnaire was used to collect data.

Secondary data sources utilized in phases two, three and four were the researcher’s reflective journal, colleague and peer debriefing and member checking. As outlined below in Table 4.1, are the phases of the data collected, presented and analyzed in Chapter four. An overview of the entire schedule of data collection for this research study is found in Chapter three, Table 3.2.

Table 4.1: Schedule of data collection for Chapter four

Phases	Research Tools	Methodology and Participants
Phase One	Externally reported systemic data (secondary data)	Showing sustained significant improvement in grade 3 and grade 6 literacy and numeracy as measured by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The principal has been the leader at the school for more than three years (during the time the EQAO data were collected) and agrees to participate in the study.
Phase Two	SES data Ministry and board documents (secondary data)	The first school was located in a lower socio-economic area; the second school was located in a middle-to-upper middle socio-economic area. There were 34 full-time equivalent teachers in total at both schools.
Phase Two	Mixed Questionnaires (primary data)	Total = 31 out of 34 questionnaires returned = 91% of elementary teachers returned completed questionnaires.
Phases Two, Three and Four	Researcher’s Reflective Journal (secondary data)	The researcher kept an on-going reflective journal of the entire process of data collection, presentation and analysis. Observations from interviews and the focus groups were recorded, as were school visits.
Phases Two, Three and Four	Colleague and Peer Debriefing and Member Checking (secondary data)	The researcher used colleagues, peer debriefing and member checking to help with cross-checking of data and to help support the interpretation and recording of the findings.

4.2.1 Broader Context - Ontario, Canada school system

The schools in this study are situated in the Canadian school system. In 2003, the achievement levels of students across the province of Ontario had flat lined, as results had stagnated. Teacher morale and job satisfaction were low, and schools in Ontario were being characterized as being without focus (Fullan, 2013).

A new premier, Dalton McGuinty, was elected in Ontario in 2003. Premier McGuinty embraced “whole-system reform” not by directing reforms from the centre. Instead, the Ontario provincial government encouraged schools to set their own targets. Every school in Ontario had to be improved by reforms, and had to show that it was making progress. One of the major ways of demonstrating progress was through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments conducted at the grade 3, 6, 9 and 10 levels. All students in Ontario, Canada at these grade levels must participate in EQAO assessments. Schools set targets for reform, in part, based on their EQAO assessment results (The Economist, 2011).

Since 2004, these provincial government reform efforts have increased the total funding for education in Ontario by 30%. The extra government funding has paid off, as the Ontario school system’s progress has been noted worldwide as student achievement levels have increased. In a report conducted by McKinsey and Company, Ontario’s school system ranked fourth in the world for sustained improvement with three or more data points over five years or more. The data were collected from 2003 to 2009 (The Economist, 2011). In early 2013, the overall performance of the almost 5,000 schools in the province of Ontario had dramatically improved over nine years on most key measures, including student achievement levels. According to international measures and independent expert assessments, Ontario is recognized as and is proven to be the best school system in the English-speaking world (Fullan, 2013).

4.3 Phase one - School identification

The researcher reviewed the Education Quality and Accountability Office’s (EQAO) data on elementary schools in the area where the research was to be conducted, to locate two elementary schools who met the first criteria for selection: 1) sustained, significant improvement in grade 3 and grade 6 literacy and numeracy scores as reported by EQAO. Once several schools were chosen, the researcher then needed to further narrow the selection to two schools based on the remaining two criteria: 2) SES data linking one school to a lower socio-economic area and one school to a middle-to-upper middle socio-economic area; and 3) the principal had to have been at the school for more than three years during the time of the EQAO data collection showing a sustained significant improvement. After careful consideration and investigation, the researcher chose two schools based on the above criteria. Two urban elementary schools were chosen and names changed to Willow Tree Public School (lower socio-economic area) and Lake Dore Public school (middle to upper-middle socio-economic area).

4.4 Phase two – Anonymous mixed questionnaires

All thirty-four elementary teachers accepted the invitation to participate in the job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement questionnaire. This questionnaire was previously piloted in the pilot research study that was conducted by the researcher. The student achievement component was added to the questionnaire after the analysis and interpretation of the pilot research study.

Teacher participants confirmed their consent by signing a letter of agreement previously approved by both principals and the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The researcher emphasized that anonymity of staff and school would be kept. In keeping with the promise of anonymity, the researcher distributed the one questionnaire and one stamped envelope with the researcher's addresses on it to each teacher. The researcher requested that the teachers use the stamped envelope to mail the completed questionnaires.

Initially twenty-six (26) questionnaires were completed and returned to the researcher, which represented 76% of the elementary teachers approached. After discussing, with her supervisors, the number of returned questionnaires, the researcher returned to each school to request additional teachers to voluntarily complete the mixed questionnaire. Extra copies were left at each school site. The researcher requested that only the teaching staff who had not initially completed a questionnaire and mailed it to the researcher complete one. Five (5) more questionnaires were returned to the researcher, totaling thirty-one (31) out of thirty-four (34) questionnaires that were originally distributed. Therefore 91% of the staff in both schools returned completed questionnaires. All thirty-one (31) questionnaires were used in the data presentation, analysis and interpretation stages of the research study.

4.5 Data analysis from the anonymous mixed questionnaire

A quantitative data analysis from the anonymous mixed questionnaire was conducted on all thirty-one (31) questionnaires. Results of the analysis are found below from sections 4.5.1 to 4.6.7.

4.5.1 Descriptive statistics for Willow Tree Public School

Table 4.2, below, provides the descriptive statistics for each of the continuous variables included in the study for Willow Tree Public School.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of Teachers from Willow Tree Public School

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Age	25.00	59.00	41.69	9.90
Total number of years in the teaching profession	2.00	33.00	16.19	8.48
Number of schools taught in during your teaching career	1.00	6.00	3.13	1.36
Total number of years teaching at your current school	2.00	18.00	9.06	4.31
Total number of years teaching at this level	2.00	21.00	10.38	5.71
Total number of students in your class	19.00	28.00	22.23	2.77
Number of days absent this current school year	0.00	15.00	3.00	3.52
Total number of days absent during the last school year	0.00	10.00	3.44	2.85
School culture scale – mean	3.73	4.96	4.46	0.39
Job satisfaction scale – mean	3.25	5.00	4.59	0.48
Student achievement scale – mean	3.53	4.89	4.37	0.38

A total of sixteen (16) elementary teachers, 52%, participated in the mixed questionnaire phase of the research study from Willow Tree Public School. The sample of elementary teachers was composed of twelve (12) females and four (4) males. Their mean age was forty-two (42). They had been teaching, on average, for sixteen (16) years. Approximately 50% taught primary grades (JK to grade 3), 31.25 % taught junior grades (grade 4 to 6), 6.25% were resource teachers, 6.25% were French teachers, 6.25% were English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, There were no teachers from Willow Tree Public School that were both an ESL and a French teacher. Participants had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine (9) years, and had been teaching at their current level for an average of ten (10) years. The average class size was twenty-two (22) students.

Teachers had been, on average, absent three (3) days in the current school year. A majority of elementary teachers surveyed, 87.5%, felt that compared to other years, this was an average amount of time for them to be absent. In the previous year, participants reported being absent, on average, three (3) days. Approximately half of the sample population, 43.75%, had been away for an extended period of time at some point in their teaching career, while the other half had not, 56.25%.

Elementary teachers reported maternity leave, illness, illness of spouse and illness of child as reasons for an extended period of absence at some point in their teaching career. At Willow Tree Public School, teachers did not report stress or unhappiness as a reason for an extended period of leave from teaching.

The mean score on the job satisfaction scale was 4.59, the mean on the school culture scale was 4.46, and the mean score on the student achievement scale was 4.37.

4.5.2 Descriptive statistics for Lake Dore Public School

Table 4.3, below, provides the descriptive statistics for each of the continuous variables included in the study for Lake Dore Public School.

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of Teachers from Lake Dore Public School

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Age	26.00	54.00	38.73	9.92
Total number of years in the teaching profession	1.00	30.00	13.80	9.65
Number of schools taught in during your teaching career	1.00	5.00	2.40	1.18
Total number of years teaching at your current school	1.00	20.00	9.53	6.32
Total number of years teaching at this level	1.00	20.00	8.87	6.27
Total number of students in your class	19.00	29.00	22.50	3.94
Number of days absent this current school year	0.00	50.00	6.00	12.29
Total number of days absent during the last school year	0.00	25.00	6.67	5.92
School culture scale – mean	3.73	4.96	4.49	0.41
Job satisfaction scale – mean	3.50	6.63	4.62	0.70
Student achievement scale – mean	4.05	4.89	4.54	0.27

A total of fifteen (15) elementary teachers, 48%, participated in the anonymous mixed questionnaire phase of the research study from Lake Dore Public School. The sample of elementary teachers was composed of ten (10) females and five (5) males. Their mean age was thirty-nine (39). They had been teaching, on average, for fourteen (14) years. Approximately 46.67% taught primary grades (JK to grade 3), 33.33% taught junior grades (grade 4 to 6), 6.25% were resource teachers, 13.33% were French teachers and

6.67% were both an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and a French teacher. There were no ESL-only teachers in this sample. Participants had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine and half (9.5) years, and had been teaching at their current level for an average of nine (9) years. The average class size was twenty-three (23) students.

Teachers had been, on average, absent six (6) days in the current school year. A majority of elementary teachers surveyed, 86.67%, felt that compared to other years, this was an average amount of time for them to be absent. In the previous year, elementary teachers reported being absent, on average, seven (7) days. Approximately half of the sample population, 53.33%, had been away for an extended period of time at some point in their teaching career, while the other half had not, 46.67%.

Elementary teachers reported maternity leave, illness, illness of spouse and illness of child as reasons for an extended period of absence at some point in their teaching career. One teacher reported having cancer and another teacher indicated that stress created in the work environment, at a previous school, lead to a prolonged leave of absence.

The mean score on the job satisfaction scale was 4.62, the mean on the school culture scale was 4.49, and the mean score on the student achievement scale was 4.54.

4.5.3 Summary of descriptive statistics for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

All survey respondents indicated that they received support from additional school and district staff to help with at-risk learners/exceptional learners. This was a key link to school culture, job satisfaction and thus student achievement levels, as working in a supportive environment was explored in the qualitative data collection to determine if it is an important characteristic of working in a positive school culture and also enjoying job satisfaction as an elementary school teacher. This key piece of evidence was further investigated throughout the research study.

Differences in the responses of elementary teachers from the two different schools were not noticeable, and as further discussed below, not statistically significant, thus a whole sample of descriptive statistics was performed in order to achieve a better analysis of the data using a larger sampling.

4.5.4 Descriptive statistics for both schools (whole sample)

Table 4.4, below, provides the descriptive statistics for each of the continuous variables included in the study for the whole sample which included, all participating elementary teachers from both schools.

Table 4.4: Descriptive statistics of whole sample (both schools)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Age	25.00	59.00	40.26	9.86
Total number of years in the teaching profession	1.00	33.00	15.03	8.99
Number of schools taught in during your teaching career	1.00	6.00	2.77	1.31
Total number of years teaching at your current school	1.00	20.00	9.29	5.29
Total number of years teaching at this level	1.00	21.00	9.65	5.94
Total number of students in your class	19.00	29.00	22.36	3.32
Number of days absent this current school year	0.00	50.00	4.45	8.89
Total number of days absent during the last school year	0.00	25.00	5.00	4.81
School culture scale – mean	3.73	4.96	4.48	0.39
Job satisfaction scale – mean	3.25	6.63	4.61	0.59
Student achievement scale – mean	3.53	4.89	4.46	0.34

A total of thirty-one (31) elementary teachers participated in the mixed questionnaire phase of the research study, of which 52% were from Willow Tree Public School and 48% from Lake Dore Public School. The sample of elementary teachers was composed of 70.97 % females and 29.03% males. Their mean age was forty (40). They had been teaching, on average, for fifteen (15) years. Approximately 48% taught primary grades (JK to grade 3), 32 % taught junior grades (grade 4 to 6), 3 % were resource teachers, 9.5% were French teachers, 3 % were ESL teachers, and 3% were both an ESL and French teacher. Participants had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine (9) years, and had been teaching at their current level for an average of nine and a half (9.5) years. The average class size was twenty-two (22) students.

Teachers had been, on average, absent four and a half (4.5) days in the current school year. A majority of elementary teachers surveyed, 87.10%, felt that compared to other years, this was an average amount of time for them to be absent. In the previous year, participants reported being absent, on average, five (5) days. Approximately half of the sample population, 48.89%, had been away for an extended period of time at some point in their teaching career, while the other half had not, 51.61%. Table 4.5 below provides descriptive statistics for elementary teachers who had been absent for an extended period of time and elementary teachers who had not been absent for an extended period of time.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics for absenteeism rates

	Mean- Age	Std. Deviation - Age	Mean – Total Years Teaching	Std. Deviation – Total Years
Elementary teachers who had been absent for an extended period of time	41.67	9.15	16.47	8.37
Elementary teachers who had not been absent for an extended period of time	38.94	10.60	13.69	9.61

In addition to running the descriptive statistics, two independent t-tests (Howell, 2002) were run to see if there were any significant differences in the age and years teaching for those elementary teachers who had been absent for an extended period of time compared to those who had not been absent for an extended period of time. The results of the analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the age of those elementary teachers who had been away for an extended period of time and those who had not ($t(29) = 0.765, p = .451, ns$). In terms of years teaching, there was also no significant difference in the number of years teaching for those who had been away for an extended period of time and those who had not ($t(29) = 0.856, p = .399, ns$).

The mean score on the job satisfaction scale was 4.61, the mean on the school culture scale was 4.48, and the mean score on the student achievement scale was 4.46.

The mean scores are all very high scores, and for the purposes of the research study and the research questions, the data presented as very positive. The scale used in the questionnaire (see Appendix F) was a five (5) point Likert (1932) scale, with five (5) being the highest rating possible, as indicated by ‘strongly agree’. Therefore, the researcher looked at the average mean scores for the whole scale, and compared it against five (5) to assess how ‘good or bad’ the results were. In the case of the research study, the findings suggested that, overall, elementary teachers were very satisfied with their jobs, felt that they had a very positive school culture and believed that their work environment was characterized by factors that support and/or facilitate student achievement.

Differences in the responses of elementary teachers from the two schools were not noticeable, and as outlined in the tables above, not statistically significant.

4.5.5 Preliminary analyses

a. Internal reliability of scales. The internal consistency reliability was computed for all three scales included in this research – school culture, job satisfaction and student achievement. Cronbach’s α (1951) for job satisfaction

was 0.97 and for student achievement it was 0.90. This indicates that both scales have good internal reliability. A high α indicates that the items in the questionnaire 'hang together' and measure the same general idea. Thus, it can be assumed from the results of the internal consistency that the degree of generalizability is quite high (Weiner et al., 2003).

Cronbach's α (1951) for school culture could not be conducted as the number of items in the scale relative to the number of survey respondents was too discrepant. The statistical software package that was used to analyze the data, SPSS, would not allow analysis of the data in this area, indicating that the sample was too small for the analysis.

4.5.6 Differences between the two schools

In order to assess whether respondents from the two schools were significantly different from each other on a number of outcome variables, independent t-tests were first conducted with school as the grouping variable. T-tests (Howell, 2002) were conducted for all continuous outcome variables studied in the current research including: school culture; job satisfaction; student achievement; total number of years in the teaching profession; number of schools taught in during your teaching career; total number of years teaching at your current school; total number of years teaching at this level; total number of students in your class; number of days absent this current school year; total number of days absent during the last school year.

None of the t-tests were significant: school culture ($t(29) = -.266, p > .05$); job satisfaction ($t(29) = -.117, p < .05$); student achievement ($t(29) = -1.401, p > .05$); total number of years in the teaching profession ($t(29) = .733, p > .05$); number of schools taught in during your teaching career ($t(29) = 1.579, p > .05$); total number of years teaching at your current school ($t(29) = -.244, p > .05$); total number of years teaching at this level ($t(29) = .701, p > .05$); total number of students in your class ($t(23) = .199, p > .05$); number of days absent this current school year ($t(29) = -.938, p > .05$); total number of days absent during the last school year ($t(29) = -1.954, p > .05$).

These findings suggest that the samples from the two schools were sufficiently similar in terms of teacher age, total number of years in the teaching profession, number of schools taught in during their teaching career, total number of years teaching at the current school, total number of years teaching at this level, total number of students in the current class, number of days absent this current school year, total number of days absent during the last school year, school culture scale – mean, job satisfaction scale – mean, and student achievement scale – mean.

As such, participants from both samples were grouped together and the analyses conducted and reported on here (e.g., correlations to determine which continuous variables are related to job satisfaction and school culture) were performed on the entire group. Grouping the two schools together resulted in a larger sample on which to conduct the analyses. Given that the sample of the whole research study was small to

begin with, grouping together respondents from the two elementary schools increased the power and the ability to detect significant findings of the statistical analyses conducted.

4.6 Research question one: What factors are relational between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture in two high performing Ontario, Canada schools?

Correlations (Howell, 2002) were performed to determine which continuous variables are related to job satisfaction and school culture.

4.6.1 Whole sample from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School - Research question one

When combining the entire sample to determine correlations on which continuous variables are related to job satisfaction and school culture, the results are discussed below.

Age was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching ($r(31) = .976, p < .01$); the total number of years teaching at the current school ($r(31) = .835, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching the current grade level ($r(31) = .906, p < .01$).

Total number of years in the teaching profession was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching at your current school ($r(31) = .872, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching at this level ($r(31) = .876, p < .01$).

School culture was positively, and significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r(31) = .662, p < .01$); and student achievement ($r(31) = .713, p < .01$).

Job satisfaction was positively, and significantly correlated with student achievement ($r(31) = .642, p < .01$).

A spurious correlation may have occurred when combining the entire sample to determine correlations. A spurious correlation is a correlation between two variables when there is no causal link between them. It is not the correlation which is spurious, but rather the implicit causal model. If a spurious correlation occurred, further research would need to be conducted to understand the relationship between job satisfaction and student achievement.

4.6.2 Mixed questionnaires sorted by school - Research question one

The same variables were correlated with one another for each school separately, as when the two schools were combined and analyzed as one sample.

4.6.3 Data presentation for Willow Tree Public School - Research question one

When analyzing the data sample from Willow Tree Public School to determine correlations on which continuous variables are related to job satisfaction and school culture, the results are discussed below.

At Willow Tree Public School, age was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching ($r(16) = .969, p < .01$); the total number of years teaching at the current school ($r(16) = .769, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching the current grade level ($r(16) = .847, p < .01$).

The total number of years in the teaching profession was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching at your current school ($r(16) = .796, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching at this level ($r(16) = .792, p < .01$). At Willow Tree Public School, school culture was positively, and significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r(16) = .897, p < .01$); and student achievement ($r(16) = .664, p < .01$).

Also at Willow Tree Public School, job satisfaction was positively, and significantly correlated with student achievement ($r(16) = .784, p < .01$).

4.6.4 Data presentation for Lake Dore Public School - Research question one

When analyzing the data sample from Lake Dore Public School to determine correlations on which continuous variables are related to job satisfaction and school culture, the results are discussed below.

Age was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching ($r(15) = .986, p < .01$); the total number of years teaching at the current school ($r(15) = .955, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching the current grade level ($r(15) = .962, p < .01$).

At Lake Dore Public School, total number of years in the teaching profession was positively, and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching at the current school ($r(15) = .956, p < .01$); and the total number of years teaching at this level ($r(15) = .944, p < .01$).

At Lake Dore Public School, school culture was positively, and significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($r(15) = .517, p < .05$); and student achievement ($r(15) = .847, p < .01$).

Also, job satisfaction was positively, and significantly correlated with student achievement ($r(15) = .620, p < .05$).

4.6.5 Summary of mixed questionnaires sorted by school - Research question one

It is worthwhile to note that the relationship between school culture and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and student achievement was not as strongly correlated at Lake Dore Public School as it was at Willow Tree Public School.

4.6.6 T-test – Categorical variables related to job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement

A t-test was conducted to determine which categorical variables were related to job satisfaction and school culture. In addition to correlational analyses of the continuous variables, t-tests were conducted to determine whether gender, a categorical variable, had any effect on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The analysis found that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female participants in job satisfaction ($t(29) = .880, p > .05$), school culture ($t(29) = -.334, p > .05$) or student achievement ($t(29) = -.246, p > .05$).

It is worthwhile to note that the pilot research involved t-tests and one-way analysis of variances, ANOVAs, (Howell, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) of various continuous variables that were made into categorical variables (i.e., age categories, days absent in the current year categories, days absent in the previous year categories, years teaching category, years in current position category). The researcher chose to employ regressions (Howell, 2002; Pedhazur, 1997) to determine if, and what the affect of these variables was on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement (with the exception of gender, because it is a categorical variable, the researcher conducted t-tests, as reported on above, to determine if it had an affect).

Due to the fact that the correlational analyses indicated that none of these variables were related to job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement, the researcher determined that these variables did not affect, and therefore would not predict, job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. Thus, the researcher conducted a regression to determine the best model for predicting student achievement, based on the two variables that were found to be related to job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

The use of regression over ANOVA is preferable when there are already continuous variables and the sampling is small, as the researcher did not need to use up as many degrees of freedom as in the ANOVAs with many levels of one categorical variable. Thus, the regression is arguably more powerful than the ANOVA, if the variables are continuous. With continuous variables, the researcher was afforded the option to conduct regression or ANOVA because the continuous variable is able to be transformed into a category for use in an ANOVA. If the variables were categorical at the on-set, the researcher would not have had the option and would have been forced to make use of an ANOVA (Howell, 2002; Pedhazur, 1997).

4.6.7 Regression – Job satisfaction and school culture predict student achievement

In order to determine whether job satisfaction and school culture each predicted student achievement, two separate regressions were run.

School culture was found to significantly predict student achievement ($F(1, 29) = 30.041, p < .001$), and accounted for 50.9% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.492$) of the variance in student achievement. Job satisfaction was also found to significantly predict student achievement ($F(1, 29) = 20.290, p < .001$), and accounted for 41.2% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.391$) of the variance in student achievement.

Given the absence of significant differences between the two schools on student achievement, the relationship between school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the affect this relationship had on student achievement was assessed for both schools together.

In order to determine whether both job satisfaction and school culture predicted student achievement, and together accounted for more variance in student achievement, a hierarchal regression was conducted. Job satisfaction was first entered into the model, and was found to account for 41.2% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.391$) of the variance in student achievement ($F(1, 29) = 20.290, p < .001$). In the second block, school culture was entered into the regression analysis, and resulted in a significant increase to the variance accounted for in student achievement (R^2). Specifically, upon entering school culture into the model, an additional 14.8% of the variance in student achievement was accounted for ($F(1, 28) = 9.419, p < .01$). Thus, both job satisfaction and school culture were important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone.

Table 4.6, below, presents the findings of the hierarchal multiple regression. Given that job satisfaction and school culture accounted for only 57% of the variance in student achievement, it is likely that additional variables also influence student achievement.

Table 4.6: Hierarchical multiple regression of job satisfaction and school culture on student achievement

Predictor Variables	β	t	sr^2	ΔR^2
Block 1				
Job satisfaction	.642	4.505***	.412	
Block 2	.301	1.800	.412	
Job satisfaction				
School culture	.541	3.069**	.560	.148

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Other variables (e.g., age, years teaching, days absent, etc.) were not found to be related to student achievement, job satisfaction or school culture in the correlations performed and discussed earlier, thus, they were not included in the model. Without being related, it is unlikely that they would predict a variable or account for a significant proportion of the variance.

Due to the fact that there were no significant differences between the two schools on any variables (e.g., age, years teaching, days absent, etc.), including student achievement, it is not appropriate to run a statistical analyses to assess whether school culture and teacher job satisfaction predict or are related to schools in a different way as a result of the socio-economic area. As the results indicate, there were no differences between the two schools - one being from a low socio-economic and one being from a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area. Thus the relationship between school culture and teacher job satisfaction on student achievement was the same for the two high performing schools located in different socio-economic areas.

The research study did not find there to be significant differences between student achievement in the high performing schools in different socioeconomic areas ($t(29) = -1.401, p > .05$). It would therefore appear that socio-economic status, as captured by the two different schools, was not an influential variable in student achievement.

It is important to note, however, that the fact that the two schools did not differ on student achievement, thus indicating that socio-economic status was not a factor in student achievement, may be a function of the very small sample size in this research study. This was a limitation of the research study. Due to the small sample size, it is possible that there was not sufficient quantity of data to detect any significant affects even if they do in fact exist.

4.7 Research problem

The relationship between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement that emerged during the quantitative data presentation demonstrated that both school culture and teacher job satisfaction were important predictors of student achievement and they accounted for more variance in student achievement together than alone.

The qualitative research data focused more on the possible nuances by further exploring the intricate relationship between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

4.8 Themes emerging from phase one and phase two

The following themes emerged from the data analysis of phase one and two. Using a sequential mixed methodological approach, the themes informed the remaining phases of the research project by helping to frame the in-depth interview questions and the focus group questions.

- a. **Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.** For the qualitative portion of the research study, further questions were formulated to investigate the theme in more detail.
- b. **Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.** Presentation of questions and analyses of data were formed around theme two during phase three and phase four so as to collect qualitative data to further investigate elementary teachers' and principals' interpretation of the emerging theme.

4.8.1 Emerging understandings from theme one and theme two

- a. **Emergent understanding one – Quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture were important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone.** The in-depth interviews and the focus group sessions provided qualitative data to further investigate this significant area of research by exploring why both job satisfaction and school culture together was a more important predictor of student achievement than each one separately.
- b. **Emergent understanding two – Student achievement can be affected by socio-economic status.** During the qualitative data collection and analyses of phases three and four, the researcher set out to determine what effect, if any, socio-economic status has on student achievement. The sample size in phase two was too small to quantitatively analyze the data to determine if any type of relationship exists.
- c. **Emergent understanding three – Longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular level leads to exemplary teaching practices.** The quantitative portion of the study determined that total number of years in the teaching profession was positively and significantly correlated with the total number of years teaching at their current school and the total number of years teaching at a particular level. Both schools were high achieving schools, so these factors were worthwhile exploring in terms of their relationship to student achievement levels.

Howard Gardner (2007) discusses differences between good workers and exemplary workers. Gardner (2007) has researched several criteria that comprise an exemplary worker. He believes that it takes approximately ten (10) years to become an exemplary worker in a particular field. It is interesting to note, that each of the eight (8) elementary teachers interviewed came from a high performing, exemplary school. The elementary teachers who were surveyed had been teaching an average of fifteen (15) years. Participants had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine (9) years, and had been teaching at their current level for an average of nine and a half (9.5) years.

From the quantitative research portion of the study, there was a correlation between the factors; however, they were not quantitatively linked to student achievement, job satisfaction and school culture, due to the small sample size.

The qualitative area of the research study further explored the theme of the teacher as an exemplary worker, and what affect, if any, this factor has on student achievement levels, more positive school cultures and teachers being more satisfied with their jobs. By exploring this emergent understanding, the researcher qualified the assumption by stating that not all elementary teachers who have taught at the same grade level for 10+ years are exemplary, are highly motivated, have high levels of job satisfaction and high levels of student achievement in their classrooms. The emergent understanding was being investigated due to the fact that the two schools studied have high levels of student achievement.

- d. **Emergent understanding four - Longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, a more positive school culture and higher student achievement.** The two schools studied were high performing schools. The average number of years that each participating elementary teacher taught at his or her current school was nine (9) years. Both principals had been at their respective school for at least five (5) years. The timeframe that teachers had worked at their respective schools was also a factor that needed to be explored in further detail to determine if any relationship existed between school culture, job satisfaction and the affect that longevity of teaching staff had on student achievement.
- e. **Emergent understanding five – The relationship between school culture and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and student achievement was not as strongly correlated in Lake Dore Public School as it was in Willow Tree Public School.** Due to these findings, the in-depth interview questions with the elementary teachers and principals were structured around emergent understanding five to further determine possible reasons why the differences occurred in the quantitative data. Chapter five will explore and analyze the qualitative data, from the in-depth interviews, separately for each school.

4.9 Limitations of the quantitative portion of the research study

The small sample size of thirty-one (31) elementary teachers was a limitation directly related to the researcher's ability to quantitatively detect significant affect that socio-economic status may have had on student achievement and how this factor may be affected by teacher job satisfaction and school culture.

Variables such as age, number of years teaching, number of years teaching at current school and days absent were not found to be related to job satisfaction, school culture or student achievement in the correlations performed. Without being related, it was

unlikely that they predicted a variable or accounted for a significant proportion of the variance. These results could, however, be linked to the small sample size, as it consisted of only thirty-one (31) elementary teachers. Had the sample size been larger, the quantitative results may have varied; however, this fact remains unknown.

4.10 Chapter summary

Throughout the research study, three perspectives on meanings prevailed, the teacher's meaning, the principal's meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's and the principal's social reality. The researcher was aware of these three points of view when discussing, comparing and analyzing the naturalistic setting and the critical research aspect of the paper (Patton, 2002). As a responsible researcher, both quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches were incorporated throughout the research study. Chapter four described the quantitative presentation and analysis of data from the mixed questionnaire. Themes and emergent understandings were generated from the analysis; however, the researcher did not merely rely on the quantitative methodological approach to draw out themes and emergent understandings and to present possible conclusions to the research problem and questions. The themes and emergent understandings generated in Chapter four were used in the next phases of the research study to better understand the phenomena being studied. By using the mixed methodological approach, multiple methods were employed to generate themes and emergent understandings and to answer the research problem and questions.

Crucial to the entire research project were the three perspectives on meanings, that of the teacher's, the principal's and that of the researcher's. Also crucial was the understanding of constructivist learning and leading. Constructivism believes that patterns of relationships form the primary basis for human growth and development (Lambert et al., 2002). Communities of learners are generated from the patterns of learning and the patterns of relationships that grow within them. Teachers, administrators and the school organization bring past experiences and beliefs, as well as their cultural histories and world views, into the process of learning; all of these influence how staff interact with and interpret their encounters with new ideas and events. As personal perspectives are mediated through inquiry, teachers and principals construct and attribute meaning to these encounters, building new knowledge in the process (Lambert et al., 2002).

The researcher used the themes and emergent understandings generated in Chapter four to inform the inquiry in phases three and four of the research study. Qualitative data were gathered from in-depth interviews and a focus group to help better understand and interpret the emerging themes and emergent understandings elementary teachers and principals generated through the construction of knowledge together, the professional culture of the school and the focused shared purposes for teaching and learning (Lambert et al., 2002).

Chapter five explores in more detail the use of qualitative data from primary and secondary sources to better understand and to continue to support the emerging themes and understandings generated from Chapter four.

CHAPTER 5 : DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS FROM PHASE THREE AND PHASE FOUR

5.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter, the findings and emergent understandings have been developed through constructivism and collaborative inquiry (Lambert et al., 2002), as the researcher interpreted the perceptions of realities and knowledge constructed by the research participants (Berger & Luckman, 1966) during phases three and four of the qualitative data collection. The collection, presentation and interpretation of data were sequential, in that the preceding phases informed the next phase in the research process.

5.2 Schedule of data collection

In this chapter, phases three and four of the qualitative data collection are presented and interpreted. Constructivism and collaborative inquiry (Lambert et al., 2002) are being emphasized throughout the research project as patterns and themes are being generated, informing the next phase of research. Constructivism is a view of learning based on the belief that knowledge is not a thing that can be simply given by the leader. Rather knowledge is constructed by members of groups, such as elementary teachers and principals, through an active mental process of development; school staff are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge (Lambert et al., 2002).

In Chapter four, as the knowledge was being generated by the research participants in phases one and two of the research process, the development of themes and emergent understandings occurred thus informing phases three and four in this chapter. As is illustrated in the findings, the interactive knowledge generated and the interpretations of this generated knowledge are what sequentially continued to inform the next phases in the research process.

Member checking was also continuously inter-mixed throughout the qualitative data collection in phases three and four, as the researcher continued to check for clarifications of interpretations from the participants. Throughout the data presentation of phases three and four, the researcher's reflections and interpretations, as well as data from colleagues and peers are also evident. Each phase sequentially informed the following phases (refer to Table 3.2).

5.3 Research questions explored

In this chapter, the data collected and analyzed provided a further understanding of the following three research questions:

1. What factors are relational between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture in two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada?
2. What is the nature of the school culture factors that elementary teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?

3. What is the nature of the elementary teacher job satisfaction factors that teachers and principals as perceive contributing to or hindering student achievement?

5.4 Presentation of themes emerging from phase one and phase two

The focus of the data collected in phase three and four was on the themes and emergent understandings outlined at the end of phase two. These are outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Themes and emergent understandings from the end of phase two

Themes	Emergent Understandings
1. Job Satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.	1. Quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone.
	2. Student achievement can be affected by socio-economic status.
	3. Longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular grade level leads to exemplary teaching practices.
2. School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement.	4. Longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, a more positive school culture and higher student achievement.
	5. The relationship between school culture and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and student achievement was not as strongly correlated in Lake Dore Public School as it was in Willow Tree Public School.

5.5 The process and focus of in-depth interviews with the elementary teachers

The eight (8) elementary teachers' voices that will be heard in Chapter five volunteered to participate in the research project. Four (4) teachers were from Willow Tree Public School and four (4) from Lake Dore Public School.

Of the eight (8) elementary teachers who participated in this phase, four (4) were female and four (4) were male. Their mean age was forty-one (41) years and they had been teaching for a mean of fifteen and a half (15.5) years. All eight (8) teachers had been

teaching at their current school for a mean of eleven (11) years and at the current level for a mean of ten (10) years.

Four (4) participants (50 %) taught at the primary level and four (4) participants (50 %) at the junior level. All participants taught in an elementary school in Ontario, Canada. Both schools were located in an urban setting. Willow Tree P.S. was located in a lower socio-economic area and Lake Dore P.S. was located in a middle to upper-middle socio-economic area.

The following elementary teachers were interviewed (names have been altered to preserve anonymity):

Willow Tree Public School

Mya – primary division teacher
Adam – primary division teacher
Pino – junior division teacher
Sara – junior division teacher

Lake Dore Public School

Destiny – primary division teacher
Emma – primary division teacher
Will – junior division teacher
David – junior division teacher

“It is in conversation that we find shared meaning. Conversations give form to the reciprocal process of leadership that make up the sum of the spaces or fields among us; they create the text of our lives” (Lambert, et al., 2002, p. 63). The process of engagement was explained in further detail in Chapter three of this research study.

The focus of the interviews came from the analysis results from the data collected during phases one and two helped to formulate in-depth interview questions focused on the themes (refer to Table 5.2). Results from the quantitative portion of the questionnaire demonstrated that the relationship between school culture and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and student achievement was not as strongly correlated in Lake Dore P.S. as it was in Willow Tree P.S. Due to the significance of these findings, the researcher decided to analyze the qualitative data focused on this theme and these relationships, to discover if there are any differences noted in the qualitative data. Possible similarities and differences in the two school sites emerged throughout this chapter. The qualitative school data were collected, represented and analyzed separately to try to discover qualitatively if any significant differences occurred between the two school sites.

5.6 Phase three (round one) - In-depth interviews with elementary teachers from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School – Exploration of theme one

In the following section there are two tables, Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 representing data from the elementary teachers’ responses to theme one. Interview data are presented alongside the researcher’s reflections and thoughts on the qualitative data collected. The interview data are arranged by school, thus Willow Tree’s teachers’ responses are first, followed by Lake Dore’s teachers’ responses. The researcher’s reflections are centered on the similarities and differences between the two sites. Directly below is Table 5.2 representing the responses to theme one from Willow Tree Public School’s teachers. The

bold type-face words and phrases within the text represent the researcher’s analysis that informed further data collection.

Table 5.2: Theme one - Responses from elementary teachers at Willow Tree Public School

<p>Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers’ Responses Willow Tree Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher’s Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question one:</u> Initially the researcher explored each teacher’s concept of job satisfaction and what it encompassed for them in their current school setting.</p>	
<p><u>Responses:</u></p> <p>Mya: The most satisfying aspect of my job is when the “light bulb” turns on with a student, when they “get a concept” they are having difficulty grasping. I feel as if I have been able to connect with them and teach them. This is very rewarding to me.</p> <p>I like working with other teachers. I like the atmosphere of the school which is very caring. We like to have fun at school! These aspects are important to me and my overall quality of life.</p> <p>Adam: I look forward to coming to work. I enjoy most parts of my job, mainly the interaction with the students and building relationships with them. Also the interaction and relationships with the staff. All four staff members at Willow Tree P.S. noted relationships are key.</p> <p>I like the school environment and the principal. She compliments me on projects that I am working on, she notices and recognizes the hard work that I put into my job, as well as the hard work of all the staff.</p> <p>There are parts of my job that I do not find satisfying such as the paperwork that is involved, or the long hours it takes to sometimes prepare for a lesson.</p> <p>Sometimes dealing with the students’ behaviour, mainly issues on the schoolyard can take away from some of my enjoyment of teaching. The principal has a behaviour code of conduct in place, all staff and students know about it and she</p>	<p><i>Mya seemed very satisfied as an elementary teacher.</i></p> <p><i>Adam was easy to talk with and very engaging.</i></p> <p><i>-relationships</i> <i>-interactions with students</i></p> <p><i>Dissatisfying – paperwork – extrinsic motivator</i></p> <p><i>Students’ behaviour is a dissatisfier</i></p>

<p>really follows through, so students know what to expect and what is expected of them. We have minimal behaviour issues because of this. We could have more problems, as most of the students come from low-income and subsidized housing.</p> <p>Because of the population of students at this school, more is required of us as staff in order to maintain a behaviour code at the school and also to be an advocate for the students. We teach students how to behave, how to socialize and we also provide food and clothing for them. I believe I am making a real difference in their lives.</p> <p>Pino: I see being a teacher as a “calling”, a career rather than just a “job”. I see it as all encompassing and truly a responsibility that I take very seriously.</p> <p>We have a very positive team of teachers that work together and a very supportive principal who cares about us. All four teachers commented on the cooperative environment.</p> <p>The professional development that we receive and the time we are provided to plan as a junior division and also as a school team adds to my satisfaction as a teacher. It provides clear direction and focus, which makes my job more predictable. We also receive leadership opportunities at the school, which provides us with a “voice” in decision making.</p> <p>I am also a voice for my students in terms of supporting them with homework assignments and helping them with social skills. I teach advocacy skills to them, as they do not know how to assertively advocate for themselves.</p> <p>Sara: Students know what is expected of them.</p> <p>I think I have good relationships with teachers on staff. I work with teachers whom I can trust and whom I feel support from.</p> <p>I also like the fact that teaching provides autonomy. I find the autonomy that I receive from teaching is a lot of the reason as to why I enjoy being a teacher. I can plan with others however, I can then take the ideas and run with them! I can use my own creativity to help students be creative and enjoy learning.</p>	<p><i>Code of conduct at school; principal follows through and so do other staff; key to satisfaction</i></p> <p><i>Advocate</i></p> <p><i>Job Satisfaction increased because he feels he makes a difference</i></p> <p><i>Teaching is a calling, not just a vocation; a career</i></p> <p><i>Team support</i> <i>Principal is a support</i></p> <p><i>Professional development</i></p> <p><i>Leadership opportunities at school</i></p> <p><i>Voice for students</i> <i>Teach advocacy skills</i></p> <p><i>Relationships with staff</i> <i>Trust</i></p> <p><i>Autonomy key; likes to plan with others, but then likes creativity piece of being a teacher and ability to refine teaching practices with students</i></p>
<p>Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p>	

<u>Questions and Elementary Teachers' Responses</u> <u>Willow Tree Public School</u>	<u>Researcher's Reflections</u>
<p>Question two: The researcher then explored, with participants, their understanding of job satisfaction and how it relates to student achievement.</p>	
<p>Responses: Mya: I am happy most of the time in my job, this translates to the students in a positive way. If I am happy, they are content and happy. I think if students are relaxed, calm, content and happy, they are less stressed and thus their ability to learn increases.</p> <p>We also team teach and do teacher moderation. This is all possible due to the structures that have been set-up in our board and also the coordinated planning time and support from our principal. We work together when we team teach and during teacher moderation we discuss areas of growth and areas of expertise. All of this translates into targeted learning tasks for all of our students, which leads to an increase in student achievement.</p> <p>Adam: I absolutely think that me being satisfied in my job relates to student achievement. Because I like my job, I plan interesting lessons that engage students and promotes learning. My lessons take into account all different types of learning styles. Because I am motivated in my job, I also differentiate lessons, to help students who are having difficulties, but also assist students to go beyond their current potential. My motivation is contagious to my students. All four teachers discussed these aspects.</p> <p>I like working with other teachers, however, I also like that teaching allows me to be independent and work on my own to solve learning issues.</p> <p>Pino: I believe the ultimate goal for me as a teacher is making a positive impact on student learning in the classroom and a positive impact on learning within the entire school community.</p> <p>I share with students rubrics on assignments and I explain to them what is expected at every level. I use data to inform my lessons and to ensure I am meeting the needs of my students.</p> <p>I share these assessment rubrics with parents, however, due to the high ESL population, sometimes I wonder how much</p>	<p><i>Likes working with other staff, but also likes working on his own; autonomy aspect of teaching and helping students to achieve their best</i></p> <p><i>Positive impact on students learning, school-wide</i></p> <p><i>Likes planning alone and preparing engaging lessons</i> <i>Differentiating the curriculum</i> <i>Rubrics</i></p> <p><i>Autonomy; working alone</i> <i>With autonomy comes accountability and responsibility</i> <i>SIP; set student achievement</i></p>

<p>parents understand, but they are very thankful for the involvement.</p> <p>Sara: I talked about being autonomous in my job as a teacher and finding satisfaction with this. However, autonomy brings on responsibility. I am the teacher in the classroom, and I am responsible for the learning that goes on in my classroom. We plan as a school to set goals in our School Improvement Plan, to target the student achievement levels. We use provincial as well as district and school data to help us set our target goals to improve student achievement. The data are all recorded electronically so that we have continual access to it as a classroom teacher, as well as a school team to look at trends, and areas of improvement. All four teachers discussed this aspect.</p> <p>I am responsible to the students’ parents to explain what I am teaching their children and to report on their child’s progress. I am also responsible to the administration as well this is all part of the autonomy of the job that I find satisfying. I need to be the “best I can be” and be “accountable”, so that I can model this behaviour for my students.</p>	<p><i>goals based on data;</i></p> <p><i>Likes planning with others; ultimately responsible for student learning</i></p> <p><i>Responsibility with autonomy</i></p> <p><i>Accountable to parents</i> <i>Autonomy</i> <i>Best they can be</i></p>
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The researcher highlighted key words and concepts within the text and these were then used to inform the researcher’s reflective process during phase three (round one) of the qualitative data collection, presentation and interpretation. They also helped to generate themes and emerging understandings in the data analysis and interpretation process as they informed phase three (round two) and phase four of this research study.

In summary Figure 5.1 is a pictorial representation of the findings from phase three (round one) of data analysis from the elementary teachers at Willow Tree Public School as they were discussing theme one – Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement. The highlighted words in Figure 5.1 under each category represent what the researcher found to be unique and different in the context of Willow Tree Public School. The two-way arrows depict the inter-relationship between job satisfaction and student achievement.

Highlighted in the data and represented in Figure 5.1 is the advocacy role that the teachers willingly adopted as the terms of their jobs at Willow Tree Public School. All the teachers who were interviewed discussed that working at a school in a lower socio-economic area added to their job satisfaction, as they believed they were making a difference in the lives of the students who attended their school. Being an advocate was very important to the teachers, as they believed that their students were disadvantaged and this led to the possibility of the students being marginalized. The teachers believed that they were a voice for all of the students at the school, both in their classrooms and with the entire student population.

Willow Tree Public School

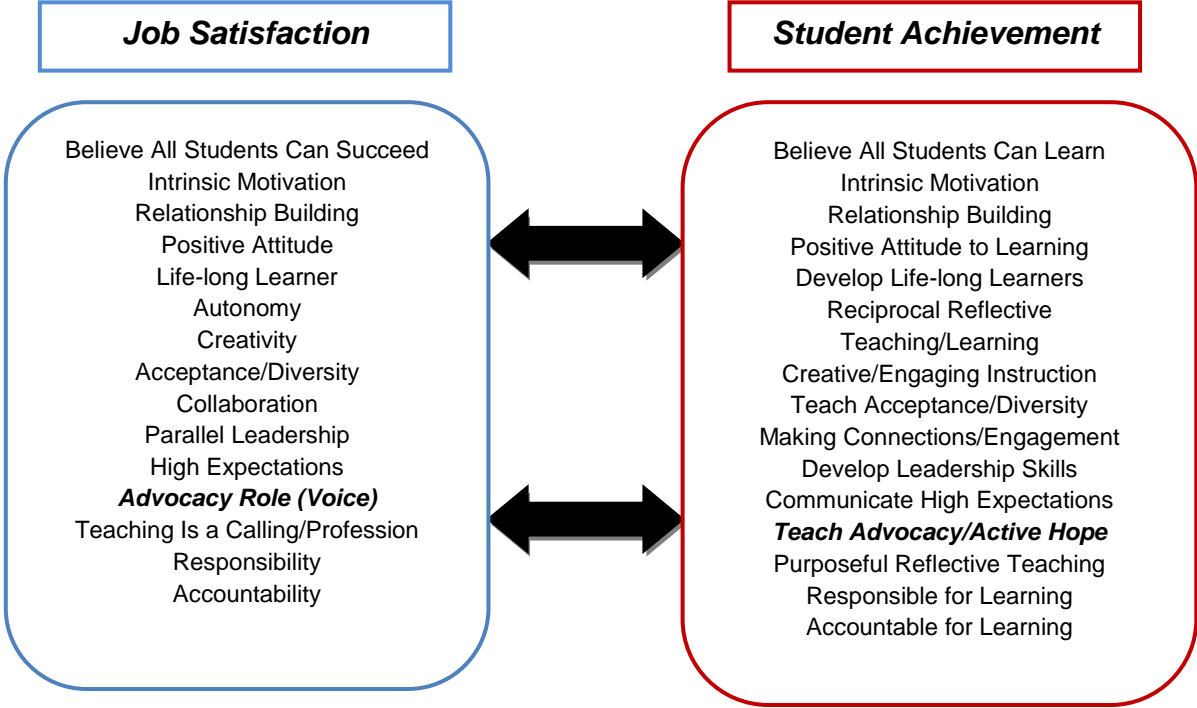


Figure 5.1: Willow Tree Public School – Theme one – Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement

The teachers at Willow Tree Public School saw their role as a calling and that teaching is a profession not just a job. They believed that it was their role as a professional to teach advocacy and active hope to the students at Willow Tree Public School, which they believe is linked to an increase in student achievement. Further analysis of the data can be found in the researcher’s reflection and emerging thoughts in Tables 5.4 and 5.5 at the end of this section. The data from the in-depth interviews were continually used to support the findings throughout the remainder of the research study.

In the following section is Table 5.3 representing qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews with the elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School.

Table 5.3: Theme one - Responses from elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School

<p>Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers' Responses</u> <u>Lake Dore Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher's Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question one:</u> Initially the researcher explored each teacher's concept of job satisfaction and what it encompassed for them in their current school setting.</p> <p><u>Responses:</u> Destiny: I see myself as a facilitator of learning. As a facilitator I define this as a reciprocal process between myself and my students. I am constantly monitoring and refining my teaching practices, as they are constantly monitoring and refining their learning practices through feedback.</p> <p>The challenge of teaching is also something that I find very satisfying about my job!</p> <p>I find working with students to help them do the best they can do every single day very rewarding and satisfying. The fun, the humour, the joy that they bring to learning is exciting and fulfilling.</p> <p>Emma: What makes my job so satisfying is the positive environment and energy that is a part of the student and staff body here at this school. I have worked at other schools that did not have such a positive and upbeat environment and I was not as satisfied with my job as a teacher.</p> <p>Will: I like working with kids and I believe that every kid can succeed. Helping students to learn and grow is very satisfying.</p> <p>I think all teaching staff and the principal at the school go out of their way to provide a safe, caring, accountable and responsible environment for students. This is paramount to our continued successes.</p> <p>I enjoy sports as well and teaching provides me with an opportunity to coach students in sports and to help students not only achieve academically, but also physically and socially.</p> <p>Sometimes I find the administrative aspect of my job to be less than satisfying, although I realize the reason for it.</p>	<p><i>Facilitator of learning</i></p> <p><i>Identification with being a facilitator of learning.</i></p> <p><i>Knowing identity and purpose brings about job satisfaction.</i></p> <p><i>Fun and humour</i></p> <p><i>Positive relationships</i> <i>Team work</i></p> <p><i>Belief that every kid can succeed</i></p> <p><i>All staff provide a safe, caring, accountable and responsible environment for students.</i></p> <p><i>Physical and social support and achievement</i></p>

<p>David: Teaching has been a very rewarding and satisfying career. Helping students to learn, and grow and develop into “little adults” with inquiring minds is what makes my job very satisfying.</p> <p>This school is in an affluent neighbourhood. The kids that come to this school have a lot of support from their homes and this translates into the school receiving a lot of support, both in terms of volunteer time from parents or nannies, and also financial assistance. We are able to do a lot more at this school due to these two factors. I think this enriches the lives of both the staff and the students. Looking at having a partnership relationship with parents is key to working at this school and enjoying your job at this school. If you understand the idea that parents are very involved and welcome this involvement, this can add to your satisfaction as a teacher. If you do not get this aspect, as I have watched some teaching staff and principals who have not, it can be a real stressor and it has made some peoples’ jobs not very satisfying. Working with parents and seeing them as a partner is satisfying to me.</p> <p>We are provided with leadership opportunities here at this school. The principal is really great at helping us to develop our leadership qualities. She is always looking for opportunities on how to build up her staff...through shared decision making.</p>	<p><i>Helping students to learn and to grow</i></p> <p><i>Affluent socio-economic urban area</i></p> <p><i>Partnership with parents, very positive</i></p> <p><i>Can be a stressor if you do not understand the parent partnership and the positive aspects of it</i></p> <p><i>Shared decision making, Distributed Leadership</i></p>
<p>Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p> <p><u>Question and Elementary Teachers’ Responses</u> <u>Lake Dore Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher’s Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question two: The researcher then explored, with participants, their understanding of job satisfaction and how it relates to student achievement.</u></p>	
<p><u>Responses:</u> Destiny: Being a facilitator of learning helps with the reciprocal process of students achieving. If I see myself as a facilitator and a reflective practitioner, then I am always going to try to improve my teaching practices and the methods that I use with students. I am always trying to make learning focused, fun and creative for my students. I am always trying to help my students improve. I am reflective and I teach them to be reflective. We discuss expectations both collectively and individually. We discuss challenges to learning as a class and on an individual basis.</p> <p>I use both anecdotal data as well as quantitative data to help inform me as I work with students to help them succeed. To</p>	<p><i>Reflective practitioner helps improve teaching practices</i></p> <p><i>Teach students to be reflective</i></p> <p><i>Qualitative and quantitative data to inform teaching and</i></p>

<p>do this, it takes plenty of planning and a huge time commitment. If I didn't like my job, I would not be motivated to work as hard, and my students would not benefit as much.</p> <p>Being a life-long learner and modeling this for students also translates into higher student achievement, as I am always keeping up current with current practices.</p> <p>Emma: Working together and planning together is one aspect that I enjoy about my job and that directly translates to student achievement in the classroom. We plan together as a division having more creative, well thought out lessons... tied to students' interests and to the curriculum. The students are very engaged when I plan more interesting, related learning. All four teachers discussed this.</p> <p>To have a team that is committed to each other and to the students is important and it has taken time and trust for us to get to this point. Most of us have at least been at the school for five years. Building the relationships and trusting each other is needed so that we can learn and take risks, and then we promote learning and risk-taking with our students.</p> <p>As a school team and a division team we discuss challenging, at-risk students and how we can meet their needs better, and this really helps with individual student achievement.</p> <p>Will: In these difficult economic times, it has made me even more thankful for the job I have. This has led to my job satisfaction.</p> <p>By liking my job I am also motivated to learn along with my students, I learn from them, I learn from the professional development that we are given at school and in our district networks.</p> <p>I am satisfied with my job, so I want to put in the time it takes to plan interesting lessons, engage students in learning by using differentiation and using data to inform my practice. The data I use is a collection of my observations of students work, their observations/reflections of their own work, data from a school and district data base that is from standardized assessments used by our board. I enjoy teaching and I believe this increases their achievement levels. I also develop rubrics to assess my students' learning. The rubrics are based on the curriculum expectations.</p> <p>David: Liking my job, the students know that I like it, and so they know I am interested in them and their learning. I think this helps them in terms of learning. I put in long hours to plan, and this in turn translates into my students increased learning because I customize the lessons to the curriculum,</p>	<p><i>learning</i></p> <p><i>Life-long learner</i> <i>Modeling for students</i></p> <p><i>Working together and planning together</i></p> <p><i>Creative lessons linked to curriculum</i></p> <p><i>Team committed to student learning</i></p> <p><i>Need to building trusting, positive relationships</i></p> <p><i>Trusting environment</i></p> <p><i>Team discusses challenges, at-risk students</i></p> <p><i>Difficult economic times have led to job satisfaction, thankful for job</i></p> <p><i>Learn from PD</i></p> <p><i>Satisfied with job, therefore motivated to put in time</i></p> <p><i>Students more engaged</i></p> <p><i>Differentiate learning</i></p> <p><i>Use data to inform practices; standardized assessments, observations, Rubrics to assess learning</i></p> <p><i>Satisfied with job, interested, thus motivated ; long hours. students are more engaged, increased learning, customize lessons to interests and needs.</i></p>
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<p>their interests and needs.</p> <p>David as well uses both formal and informal assessments to help with my teaching practices. This leads to higher student achievement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations - Reflections/mine/theirs - Tests - Projects <p>They see I am motivated and like teaching, so this motivates them.</p> <p>The parents at this school realize the long hours and hard work that the staff put in. The parents show their appreciation from time to time by preparing breakfast for us and by making treats. This adds to my job satisfaction, as I realize the parents do understand all of the work we put into the lives of their children.</p> <p>I also reflect on what went well and what didn't go well and incorporate this into my teaching practices.</p>	<p><i>formal and informal assessments</i></p> <p><i>Model motivation, so students are more motivated.</i></p> <p><i>Parents show their appreciation to staff; breakfasts, treats</i></p> <p><i>Reflect on teaching practices</i></p>
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Figure 5.2 is a pictorial representation of findings from phase three (round one) from the interviews with the elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School as they were discussing theme one – Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement. The highlighted words under the job satisfaction category and the student achievement category are what the researcher found to be unique and different in the context of Lake Dore Public School. The two-way arrows depict the inter-relationship between job satisfaction and student achievement.

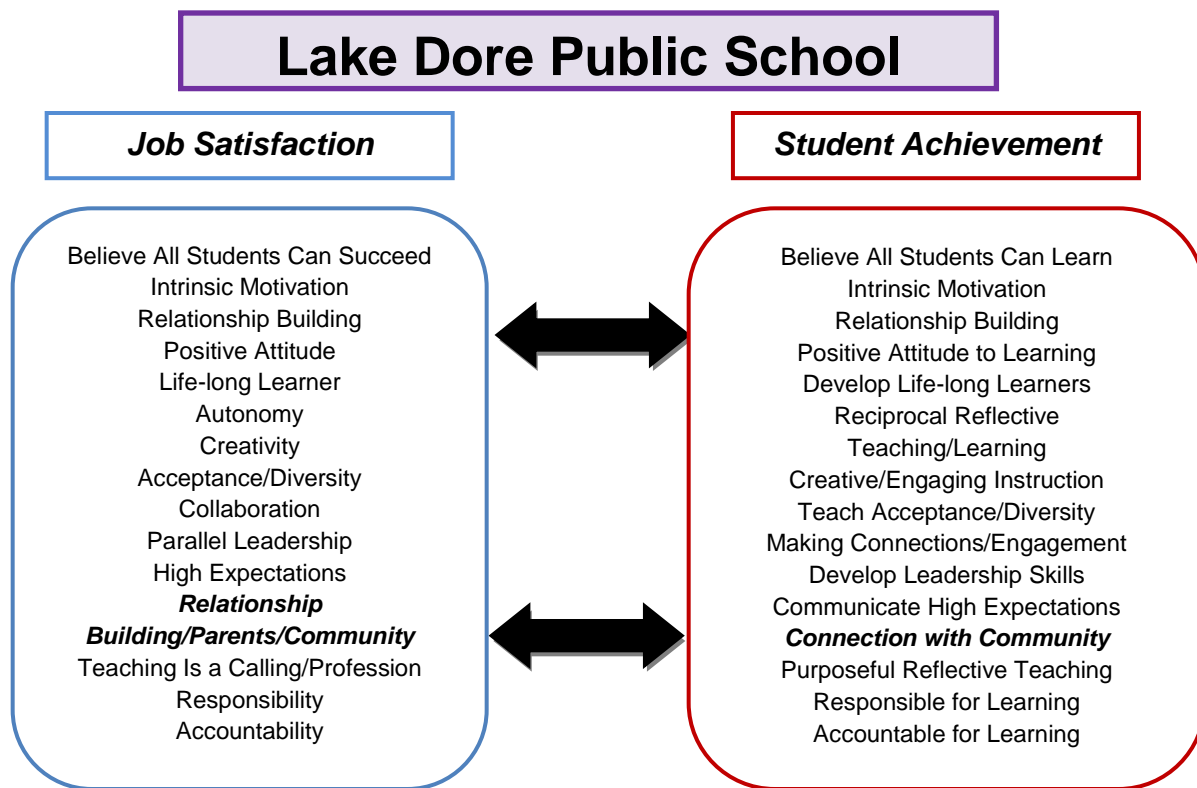


Figure 5.2: Lake Dore Public School - Theme one – Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement

Highlighted in the data and represented in Figure 5.2 is the relationship building among the parents and the community at Lake Dore Public School. Teachers believed that building positive relationships with the parents and the community was essential to their job satisfaction. Due to the nature of the social economic status (SES) area where Lake Dore P.S. resides, the parents are very involved in the education of their children. Teachers believed that to work at Lake Dore P.S., staff needed to understand the positive impact that the parental role does in fact play out in a school such as this. If a person does not understand the dynamics of this relationship, it could lead to dissatisfaction with their job.

The teachers also believed in connecting with the local, national and international communities in order to improve and enhance learning opportunities for the entire student population thus leading to improvements in student achievement. Further analysis of the qualitative interview data that were collected is found in the researcher's reflection and emerging thoughts in Tables 5.4 and 5.5. The qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews were used on a continual basis throughout the research study to support and corroborate findings and to develop themes and emerging understandings.

Table 5.4 is presented to show the researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on theme one from both school sites. The purpose of this reflection was not to compare the two schools, but to look at the two schools that are located in varying socio-economic status (SES) areas and to discuss the similarities from the qualitative interview data from the elementary teachers at both school sites.

Table 5.4: Researcher’s reflections on the similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

<p><i>Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School</i> Researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on theme one Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p>
<p>Teaching is a calling, not just a job, it is a career. Several teachers discussed how they believe that one of the most important aspects of being an elementary school teacher is to view their job as a “calling”, rather than just a “job”. They saw the responsibility of their “calling” as connected to the ultimate goal of making a positive impact on student learning in their classroom and in the entire school community. They all cared about their students and saw teaching as a profession, a commitment that held great responsibility.</p> <p>Mya stated, <i>“I am very content with being a teacher, I could not think of another career that would be more worthwhile and fulfilling.”</i></p> <p>Teachers believed that if they were motivated as a teacher, then this translated into motivating their students to learn as well. All of the teachers believed in the vision statement that “all students can learn”, which was the foundation of their philosophy regarding teaching. This belief statement is found in the Learning for All, K-12 document (2012) used in the Ontario Educational System as a guiding principle for all students in Ontario Schools from K-12. The vision had a profound effect on their attitude and motivation for teaching.</p> <p>Life-long learner. The teachers discussed life-long learning as an intrinsic motivator for them. They believed their desire to continue to learn kept them motivated in their professions and it also led to motivating students to learn.</p> <p>Motivation. All eight teachers collectively were very motivated and this was evident through their body language, tone of voice, and statements that they made. Teachers went out of their way to help students succeed in every aspect, personally, emotionally, socially and academically. They saw this calling as part of their shared vision and purpose. The elementary teachers at both sites put in long hours, as hard work was the norm. The teachers discussed a deep commitment to their students and their beliefs that it is important to make every lesson and every day count. They were all committed to extra hours of planning both collaboratively, as a team, and independently. They saw cooperation as key to their job satisfaction, as well as to student achievement.</p>

Working collaboratively as a team was continuously cited by all eight as being satisfying to them, as well as it helped set a **shared vision** for success in terms of academic achievement. All the teachers talked about having time to plan together and that this led to more **creativity** in terms of their lessons, as a result, they believed that students became more **engaged** in learning. Teachers discussed that student achievement increased due to their heightened interest in the learning process.

Team teaching and teacher moderation. All eight teachers who were interviewed **team teach** together and practice **teacher moderation**. The teachers discussed at-risk students as a school team and decided how to meet their individual needs. The feeling and belief that the **needs of the students** were a **collective responsibility** led to an increase in job satisfaction. The timetables were organized by the principals at the two sites to allow for coordinated planning time with teaching partners.”

Autonomy. Having **autonomy** in their teaching career was discussed as bringing about job satisfaction. Along with being autonomous, teachers believed that this enhanced their **creativity** and helped them become **creative** with their lesson planning. They believed that more creative lessons led to **increased engagement** by their students, thus leading to a deeper understanding of their learning. Being a **reflective practitioner** was all part of the autonomy they gained from their profession. They believed that through **reflection** they **refined their teaching practices**. By refining their teaching practices, the teachers acknowledged the importance of **differentiation** and the importance of incorporating **learning styles** in their lessons on a daily basis. All teachers believed that they had a **responsibility as a teacher** to do the best job they could and that this translated into being **accountable for the learning** that took place both inside and outside the classroom.

Autonomy and **working collaboratively** in a team were cited as important to job satisfaction for the teachers. This could be directly related to a teacher’s **preferred “working style”**. Most teachers admitted to liking both **collaboration** and **autonomy** and preferred that they **had both** in their profession in order to maintain a high level of job satisfaction. It is a blending of **“working styles”** that was cited in the teaching profession as leading to job satisfaction.

Relationships are very important with all key stakeholders and the teachers discussed relationships as being very important to their **job satisfaction** as well as to the students’ **academic success**. The teachers at both sites believed that the **positive interactions** that they had with their **students** were important to **building trust and a rapport**. They believed that this needed to take place before any deep academic learning could occur. Students needed to be **content** and **comfortable** in their environment so that they could believe in themselves and be confident in **taking risks** during the learning process.

Positive relationships with staff members were cited as being key to teachers’ job satisfaction. Being able to **trust** each other and **support** each other was discussed

amongst the teachers as something that they all believed they had at both sites. The teachers noted that when they trusted each other, they took risks, were more **creative** and they believed that this **promoted learning, risk-taking** and creativity amongst their students. They **planned together** as a staff and as divisions to work towards improving the learning of all students. Staff members also talked about socializing with each other as being important to staff cohesion. Emma said, “we have fun as a staff! We plan together, we work together and we socialize together! This makes coming to work fun!”

Relationship with their principals. Part of the relationship building and trust was **the relationship that they had with their principals**. All eight teachers cited this relationship as being key to their job satisfaction, as well as an important factor leading to **student achievement**. The elementary teachers believed that they had a **voice** in their school and that this “**voice**” was also an important factor connected to their **personal job satisfaction**. Having a voice was paramount in terms of **leadership, responsibility and ownership to the students’ learning** in their classroom and also to the **entire school community**. The teachers credited the **leadership** of their principal with empowering them to have a voice by providing opportunities for them to be **teacher leaders** within their own classrooms and within the school. The teachers discussed **distributed leadership** and being provided with opportunities to have leadership growth and development in the school as important to job satisfaction and student achievement. **They believed their principal empowering them with a voice, this brought rise to relationship building, motivation, creativity, autonomy, trust, teamwork and ultimately increased student achievement levels.**

Pino commented, “*it is through relationship building that trust is developed so that deeper learning can take place.*”

Professional development was discussed as adding to the job satisfaction of teachers. Pino stated, “I believe the ultimate goal for me as a teacher is making a positive impact on student learning in the classroom and a positive impact on learning within the entire school community. This is satisfying to me. One of the ways I achieve this is through continuing my own professional development.”

Data. Using **data to inform decisions around student achievement** was key to the teachers’ job satisfaction. The teachers talked about using both **qualitative** and **quantitative** data to inform decisions regarding planning and teaching. They discussed board and district assessments and the quantitative data that were generated from these forums and how these **data** were used in **PLCs** and used when developing their **SIP**. They also discussed using qualitative data in the form of observations and reflections during classroom time. Anecdotal data through the form of observations as well as **test results** and **projects**, were **differentiated assessment methods** used to discover the achievement levels of all students. They believed that all of these factors contributed to their job satisfaction, as they were confident in their decisions.

Extrinsic factors. When the researcher queried the teachers on **extrinsic factors** that may affect their job satisfaction, such as wages, benefits, holidays, hours of work and

union presence, all eight teachers agreed that, these were highly desirable factors that did add to their job satisfaction as an elementary teacher, especially during these difficult economic times. However, all eight stated that this was not the reason that they entered the profession and/or remained in the profession. Each teacher commented on how **grateful** they were to have a profession that they enjoyed so much.

Dissatisfiers. A few **dissatisfiers** were discussed as decreasing job satisfaction amongst the teachers who were interviewed. During the interview process, there were not many negatives shared. One negative dissatisfier that the teachers discussed was the **negative behaviour** that some of the students exhibited. At times, the negative behaviour took away from learning opportunities for students. However, teachers from both sites discussed how the principal of the school had a **code of conduct** that was known by all members of the community. The principals **followed through** on the **negative behaviours** exhibited by the students. The teachers believed that the follow through and **consistency** by the principal added to their job satisfaction.

Even though all teachers were motivated and worked hard, some discussed the **paperwork** and **long hours** as a dissatisfier. However, overall, all eight teachers were extremely satisfied with their career as a teacher.

The following Table 5.5 shows the researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on theme one from the qualitative interview data from the elementary teachers at both school sites. As indicated before, the purpose of this reflection was not to compare the two schools, but to look at the two schools that are located in varying socio-economic status (SES) areas and to discuss the differences at the two school sites.

Table 5.5: Researcher’s reflections on the differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

<p><i>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School</i> Researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on theme one Theme one - Job satisfaction was found to be an important predictor of student achievement.</p>
<p><u>Willow Tree Public School</u></p> <p>Clear and consistent rules of behaviour. Behaviour was discussed as more of an issue with the teachers from Willow Tree Public School. It was important to the teachers in Willow Tree Public School to have clear and concise rules and that these rules were communicated to the entire school community. Several teachers mentioned that the behavioural problems could be more worrisome, due to students’ home situations, if there wasn’t a plan in place and a team effort to implement a behavioural code of conduct. The leadership and implementation of the school-wide behaviour plan needed to begin with the principal in order for it to be effective. The teachers all agreed that they</p>

felt overwhelming support from their principal with regard to behaviour and that increased their job satisfaction.

Advocate for students and need to be their voice. **Advocating** and being a **voice** for the students was cited as a difference between the two schools. At Willow Tree Public School the students were from a lower socio- economic area and for many families English is their second or third language. Teachers believed that due to these factors, it was their responsibility to be accountable and to assist students at a much deeper level academically, socially, emotionally and personally.

Sara said, *“In some respects we take the place of parents, by teaching students how to behave, how to socialize and we also provide food and clothing for some students. My job satisfaction is increased because of this, as I believe I am making a real difference in their lives. I hope someday my students will return the favour to others.”*

At Willow Tree Public School, being an **advocate** and providing a **voice** for students was seen as a **teaching opportunity**. Teachers hoped that the students would also realize that they can make a difference in this world, no matter their social or economic background. Teachers believed that all students can become positive, contributing members of society. This sense of community responsibility and giving back will be discussed with respect to Lake Dore Public School; however, the methodology for teaching this concept varies based on socio-economic status.

Pino stated, *“I also **teach advocacy skills**, as most of my students do not know how to assertively advocate for themselves. I plan some lessons around this and we do role playing. This aspect adds to my job satisfaction because I think I am helping my students become better citizens equipped to give back positively to society.”*

Lake Dore Public School

Community involvement. The teachers at Lake Dore Public School discussed how as a school community they became involved in contributing to the larger community. Through **fundraising** activities they supported **local community** schools by financially helping to fund school projects. They were also involved in the **global community** through sponsoring a school in Africa to assist with buying furniture, school supplies, clothing and shoes for the students. They were also involved in beginning a fundraising project to provide financial assistance to African girls so that they could attend school.

Parental involvement in the school community. The teachers at Lake Dore Public School talked about the positive aspects of parental involvement in the school and how they viewed this involvement as a partnership. Teachers believed that parental involvement increased their job satisfaction. They described the parents who were actively involved in the school life in terms of a **partnership**. The teachers believed and viewed this involvement as very positive to student academic success as well.

David said, *“the school receives a lot of support, both in terms of volunteer time from*

parents or nannies, and also financial assistance. We are able to do a lot more at this school due to these two factors. I think this enriches the lives of both the staff and the students. Looking at having a partnership relationship with parents is key to working at this school and enjoying your job at this school. If you don't see it this way, then you are working at the wrong school. If you get the idea that parents are very involved and welcome this involvement, this can add to your satisfaction as a teacher. If you do not get this aspect, as I have watched some teaching staff and principals who have not, it can be a real stressor and it has made some people's jobs not very satisfying. I happen to get it and enjoy this part of teaching at this school, so working with parents and seeing them as a partner is satisfying to me."

The teachers at both schools believed that it was their **responsibility** to teach students to **give back** and to be **contributing members of society**. Due to the significant differences in the populations at both sites, the teachers varied the methodology that they employed to attain this goal; however, the message and the intentional learning taking place were similar.

The researcher's reflections and emerging thoughts from the exploration of theme one indicated that there are both similarities and differences at both schools. However, there are many more similarities than differences. This key evidence could indicate that although socio-economic factors vary between both sites, the significance is not indicative of job satisfaction and how it related to student achievement.

5.6.1 Phase three (round one) – In-depth interviews with elementary teachers from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School - Exploration of theme two

In the following section are two tables, Table 5.6 and Table 5.7 representing qualitative data from the elementary teachers' responses to theme two. The interview data were arranged by school, thus Willow Tree's teachers' responses are first followed by Lake Dore's teachers' responses. The researcher's reflection and emerging thoughts on theme two are located in Tables 5.8 and 5.9 and are centered on the similarities and differences amongst the two sites, due to the varying socio-economic status (SES). The researcher's reflections are not a comparison of the two school sites. Table 5.6 below outlines the responses from the elementary teachers at Willow Tree Public School.

Table 5.6: Theme two - Responses from elementary teachers at Willow Tree Public School

<p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers' Responses Willow Tree Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher's Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question one:</u> The researcher explored the concept of school culture with the participants.</p>	
<p><u>Responses:</u> Mya: Our school culture is very positive. "Positive" is people working together, high energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trusting relationships - building trust and continuing to keep trusting relationships <p>Other aspects of our school culture include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - common vision - working collaboratively on our SIP (School Improvement Plan); planning in our divisional teams - school mascot - respect from administration - respect from other teachers - leadership opportunities - opportunities to showcase my accomplishments and my students' accomplishments <p>During our Professional Learning Community (PLC) we are provided with professional development. We are also able to discuss and set plans according to our SIP (School Improvement Plan). We are provided time to work as divisional teams. The release time to work as divisional teams is set-up by our principal through our daily classroom schedules.</p> <p>Adam: I like the school atmosphere. It is very upbeat and people really support each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School spirit is high; we have assemblies, sports teams, school choir and concerts. - Fundraising, which involves the school council - All of us working together - Leadership opportunities - Providing students with a safe and caring learning environment. This is reflected in the culture of the school. 	<p><i>Leadership; Distributed Leadership</i></p> <p><i>Culture of caring and support</i></p> <p><i>Researcher queried Pino on his definition of "positive".</i></p> <p><i>Aspect of school community</i></p> <p><i>Other aspects of school culture.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School culture promotes working with parents through venues such as the school council; small number show up due to the school population. <p>Pino: Relationships are important to develop and maintain a positive school culture. Relationships with all key stakeholders, students, staff, parents and the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monthly awards assemblies - Common language for problem solving and safety of all students and staff - Sports teams - School choir - Fundraising activities - Leadership opportunities - PLCs - Working together collaboratively - Reaching out to the community in linking learning to the community <p>Sara: A positive school culture has a lot to do with the leadership at the school, both formal and informal. The principal plays a key role in setting the culture of the school. The principal provides many leadership opportunities for staff and I think this helps to build confidence in staff, as they think the principal believes in them and the work they are doing. This is very motivating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - common beliefs and a vision - our SIP helps us to focus and maintain our beliefs and vision; but it goes beyond the SIP, as our vision needs to encompass all aspects of the school community; building character, student achievement, values, working together collaboratively - belief that all students can learn - safety of all students is important and emphasized - common system set in place for safety; all staff know about this - positive relationships with all, students, staff and parents - school spirit 	<p><i>Other aspects of school culture.</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration Community; linking learning to community</i></p> <p><i>Culture of Learning</i></p> <p><i>Positive School Culture Principal key player in setting the culture of the school; providing leadership opportunities; distributed leadership</i></p> <p><i>Motivation</i></p> <p><i>Common Beliefs</i></p> <p><i>Value learning; value working together</i></p> <p><i>Belief system, vision and motto that all students can learn Safety of students is essential</i></p> <p><i>Sara seems like a very motivated, high energy teacher; intrinsic motivation</i></p>
<p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers' Responses Willow Tree Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher's Reflections</u></p>

<p>Question two: The researcher then explored, with participants, their understanding of school culture and how it relates to student achievement.</p>	
<p>Responses:</p> <p>Mya: We need to believe that all students can learn and that as a teacher it is my job to figure out how to help them learn and achieve. It needs to be a common belief throughout the entire school, that kids and their education matter!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PLCs focused on school-wide and division-wide efforts to increase student achievement, need to plan and set goals - Work together collaboratively - Share ideas - Communicate goals and expectations with students and parents; need to have a culture where communication is clear and concise and that transparency is promoted. <p>Adam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must know your students and where each individual student is at - Students need to know that you care and that you care about their learning - Important to motivate them - Culture of caring and culture of learning - Set academic standards, communicate these with students and parents and follow through - Culture of advocacy, ensure students' voices are heard <p>Pino:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relationship building is essential <p>It is through relationship building that trust is developed with students so that deeper learning can take place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need a focused shared vision, to help bring about school improvement and continued culture building, by having staff work together on their beliefs and values, and then set out a plan on how to improve student achievement. Look at what is important....where are we now and where do we want to go? - Need to use data to help inform our decisions and practices; this leads to higher academic performance; data from ministry/district/school based data from teachers 	<p><i>Belief system that "all students can learn."</i></p> <p><i>PLCs; collaboration</i></p> <p><i>Culture of learning; culture of collaboration and sharing</i></p> <p><i>Know their students</i></p> <p><i>Culture of caring</i> <i>Culture of learning</i> <i>Accountability</i> <i>Culture of advocacy; students' voices</i></p> <p><i>Relationship building and trust are key for learning to take place</i></p> <p><i>Focused vision to help with planning for student achievement</i> <i>Data to inform decisions</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both quantitative and qualitative data need to be used; we use both when we are working on our SIP as a team <p>Sara:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - belief that all students can learn - work together, collaboratively, planning for student success; SIP and PLCs 	<p><i>Both qualitative and quantitative data to be used when looking at SIP</i></p> <p><i>Belief system that, "all students can learn."</i></p>
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Figure 5.3 is a pictorial representation of the qualitative data analysis from Willow Tree Public School teachers as they were discussing theme two – School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phases one and two of the research study. The data were used in a sequential mixed-methodology as previous phases of the research study informed the next phases.

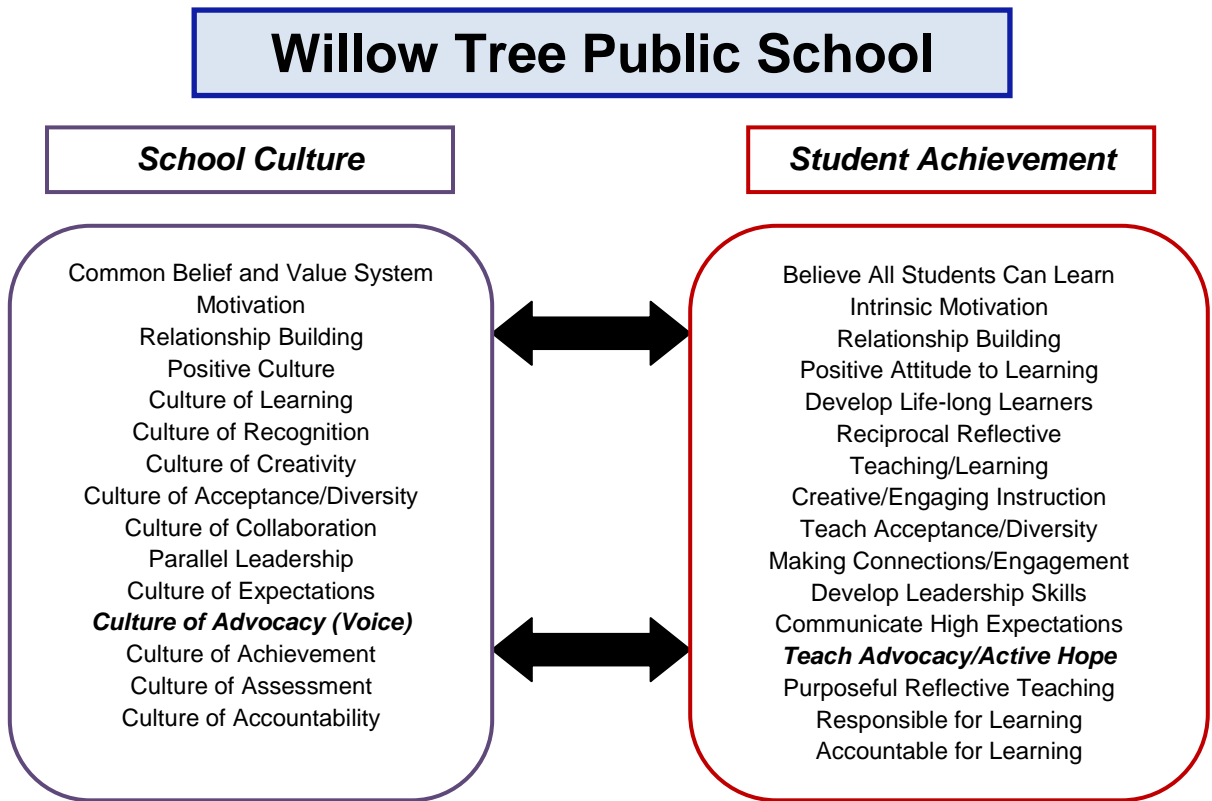


Figure 5.3: Willow Tree Public School - Theme two – School culture is an important predictor of student achievement.

Figure 5.3 highlights the findings that focus on Willow Tree Public School as having a culture of advocacy. Teachers believed it is their responsibility to have a vision and a belief system that understands, teaches and promotes advocacy for all learners at their site. Teaching advocacy and active hope was highlighted as a focus for helping to improve student learning and student achievement. Teachers were confident in the abilities of all learners and believed in them, thus providing an active hope to all students at Willow Tree Public School.

Table 5.7 found in the following section represents data from the in-depth interviews with the elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School. The data represent the elementary teachers' responses to theme two. Further analysis of the quantitative interview data that were collected is found in the researcher's reflection and emerging thoughts in Tables 5.8 and 5.9. The data collected from the in-depth interviews were used on a continual basis throughout the research study to support and corroborate findings as the mixed methodological approach was subscribed to in the research study.

Table 5.7: Theme two - Responses from elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School

<p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers' Responses</u> <u>Lake Dore Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher's Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question one:</u> The researcher explored the concept of school culture with the participants.</p>	
<p><u>Responses:</u> Destiny: To have a school culture that believes that all students can learn. We need a focus and a vision and we need to know what we believe in and what we don't believe in.</p> <p>We believe in working collaboratively and collectively. We work together on our SIP.</p> <p>Good school spirit: -sports events -assemblies - school anniversary, was a focus celebration for staff, students, parents and community members -involved school council, high yield fundraising -musical involving students, staff and community</p> <p>Emma: Same sets of beliefs and values are important.</p>	<p><i>Believe all students can learn</i></p> <p><i>Collaboration</i></p> <p><i>Celebrations</i> <i>Involved parent community</i></p> <p><i>Same sets of values and beliefs</i></p>

<p>We discuss this through our staff meetings and our SIP planning. We also need to trust each other and this takes time.</p> <p>We have developed a culture of caring and a culture of learning. We believe that all students can learn and that we need to help them to reach their ultimate potential. Because of the types of homes these students come from, parents are so involved in their lives and most of them have very enriched lives outside of school. Learning is taking place for them through extra-curricular activities. They bring this learning to the classroom and this enriches the lessons and the types of activities that the students are interested in.</p> <p>The principal provides opportunities for us to learn and grow as a staff. She also gives us the opportunities to take on leadership roles.</p> <p>A prescriptive vision comes from the district/ministry. We still tailor the focus or direction to our school, as sometimes the prescribed direction may not be exactly what we need at the school.</p> <p>At our school we have PLCs that address the focused needs of our staff. We discuss together what we think our PD focuses should be and tie the PD to our SIP. All four teachers agreed with this.</p> <p>Will: I think at this school we all believe in students are we are all here because we like students.</p> <p>We are a learning school, always learning from each other and always transferring this learning to our students. Most of us at this school are life-long learners.</p> <p>If I make a mistake in class, I will admit it. By admitting my mistakes it helps to build trust with my students and it also lets them know that it is OK if they also make mistakes. It helps them to become risk-takers and to ask questions.</p> <p>David: We have developed a culture at this school that promotes deep learning, an inquiry-based learning.</p> <p>We believe in being reflective in our learning by understanding the needs of others and the types of learning styles of our students are unique and diverse. We celebrate</p>	<p><i>SIP</i></p> <p><i>Culture of caring and learning</i></p> <p><i>Extra-curricular activities</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities for us to learn and grow</i></p> <p><i>Prescribed direction</i></p> <p><i>PLCs</i></p> <p><i>PD/SIP</i></p> <p><i>Believe in students</i></p> <p><i>Learning from each other</i></p> <p><i>Life-long learners</i></p> <p><i>Admit mistakes</i> <i>Build trust</i></p> <p><i>Reflective in our learning</i></p> <p><i>Celebrate differences</i></p>
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<p>and value diversity.</p> <p>Teach students to also be reflective learners and to celebrate in their differences. This is done through modeling, through assessment “as”, “for” and “of” learning.</p> <p>Celebrating differences is done through planning lessons around diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - belief that all students can learn - positive relationships with all, students, staff and parents - parents are very active in the school life, this adds to the culture of the school - teamwork, collaborate, outlook is positive - teacher choir - concerts - student choir - career days - recognition assemblies - trophies/awards 	<p><i>“As”, “for” and “of” learning</i></p> <p><i>Diversity</i></p>
<p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p> <p><u>Questions and Elementary Teachers’ Responses</u> <u>Lake Dore Public School</u></p>	<p><u>Researcher’s Reflections</u></p>
<p><u>Question two:</u> The researcher then explored, with participants, their understanding of school culture and how it relates to student achievement.</p>	
<p><u>Responses:</u></p> <p>Destiny: We have a culture at our school that promotes collaboration and trust. We work together to dissect the data that we are provided from the ministry assessments and the district assessments. These results help us to focus on the needs at our school, understand what they are, plan for how we are going to use the data to increase our students’ learning and student achievement levels. As a school we look at the results and decide what areas we are going to target. We then write these target areas into our SIP.</p>	<p><i>Collaboration and trust</i></p> <p><i>SIP</i></p>

<p>If we did not have a culture of trust and collaboration, we would not be able to work as well together to come up with a plan and to execute the plan.</p> <p>Emma: At our school we all believe in students. I get to know my students on a personal, social and academic level. My students know that I care about them, so they are more willing to take risks. This transfers into more authentic learning. They can take risks and ask questions because they feel safe.</p> <p>The teachers and administrators also work together collaboratively to help students succeed. We have PLCs, and plan for our SIP. We use data to help us decide what areas we want to work on as a school and as a division. However, in my classroom I also use observational data, and assessments such as rubrics that help me know how each student is doing during the process of learning. The data that we use to design our SIP are data “frozen in time”, it is just a snap shot of student achievement.</p> <p>Will: Relationships are very important to the culture at this school. I think for the most part, most staff members have a great relationship with each other and we are able to collaborate and freely open up and trust each other.</p> <p>The principal has helped to nurture this culture.</p> <p>By having a positive and collaborative culture, students benefit because we all believe in students and we all believe that they can succeed. With these beliefs we are motivated to help them succeed and do everything in our power to help them succeed. Students, for the most part know that we believe in them, and that helps them to believe in themselves.</p> <p>The rest needs to come from a culture where we believe that we need to plan, assess, plan, assess, plan, assess, plan, assess. It is a continual cycle of taking both quantitative and qualitative data and using them to inform our instruction so that we can best meet the needs of all of our students.</p> <p>David: Our culture at our school is based on believing that all students have a right to an education and the best education we can provide for them.</p> <p>Our principal helps to foster these beliefs and helps to set</p>	<p><i>Know students on a personal, social and academic level</i></p> <p><i>Use data to assist in planning and teaching</i></p> <p><i>SIP</i></p> <p><i>Relationships</i></p> <p><i>Collaborate</i></p> <p><i>Plan and assess Quantitative and qualitative data</i></p> <p><i>Believe that all students must be educated</i></p> <p><i>Principal helps to foster beliefs</i></p> <p><i>PD</i></p>
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<p>the tone at the school for this type of a culture. This is evident through the professional development that she provides for the staff, the way she speaks to the staff and students and the topics she chooses to focus on in our PLCs and our staff meetings.</p> <p>I think her leadership strategy enables all of us to better help students achieve because our PD focuses on learning, assessment and evaluation. She also provides us with articles on these topics. She is serious about student achievement and that is a focus of hers, so this trickles down to the staff.</p>	<p><i>Assessment and evaluation</i></p>
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As can be seen in Figure 5.4 the words, “Culture of Community and Belongingness” are highlighted. At Lake Dore Public School this belief was subscribed to by staff thus promoting a real live “Connection with the Community”. As was interpreted and analyzed from the qualitative data in Table 5.7, through the process of community culture building, the connection led to values and beliefs of belonging to a larger, broader community, and enhanced relationships at all levels with school community members. This, they reported, led to students more actively engaged in the process of learning beyond the classroom walls, which they believed to have enhanced student achievement. Students were being taught to broaden their knowledge and perspectives by thinking beyond themselves and beyond their needs. They were actively connected by being a voice for members of their local, national and international communities.

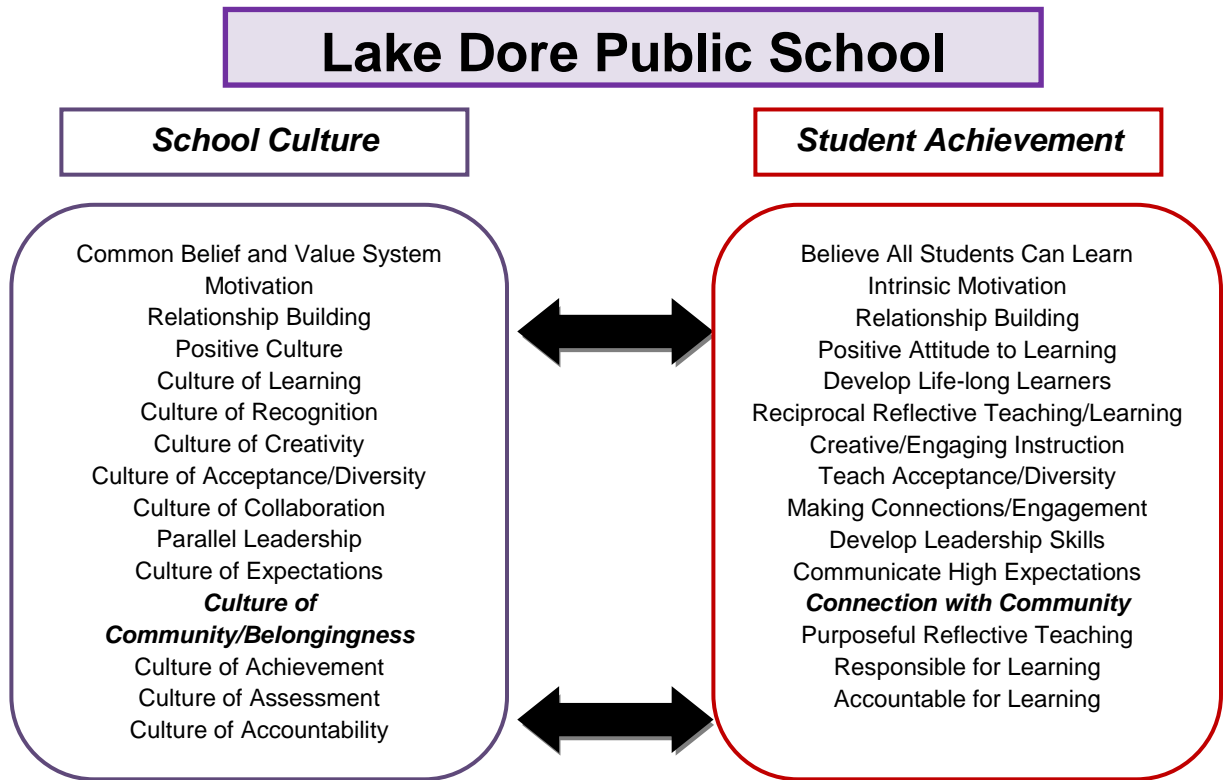


Figure 5.4: Lake Dore Public School - Theme two – School culture is an important predictor of student achievement.

Further analysis of the qualitative interview data that were collected is found in the researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts in Tables 5.8 and 5.9. The data collected from the in-depth interviews were used on a continual basis throughout the research study to support and corroborate findings as inter-mixed methodology is being subscribed to throughout the research study.

The Table 5.8 is representative of the similarities between the teachers’ responses at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School.

Table 5.8: Researcher's reflections on the similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School
<p>Researcher's reflections and emerging thoughts on theme two</p> <p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p>
<p>ME to WE. As the researcher was reviewing the recorded notes, audio recorded interviews and reflections it was discovered that there was a definite shift in language being used by teachers at both sites, from "ME" to "WE". When teachers were discussing job satisfaction they more often used the term "ME". When the teachers were discussing school culture their responses were framed more by using the term "WE".</p> <p>The principal was a key figure in setting the culture of the school. At both sites all eight teachers discussed the key position that their principals played in setting the culture of the school. Both principals had been at their respective schools for at least five years. The teachers believed the longevity of the term their principals had worked at the school, plus the vision, belief system and values that they encouraged led to a very positive and focused school culture. Teachers were provided with leadership opportunities that were distributed based on their strengths and skills. All teachers believed that distributed leadership occurred at both sites and that this led to a more vibrant, healthy and happy school culture. All key stakeholders had a voice and believed in students and believed in helping all children succeed.</p> <p>Belief system that, "all students can learn." The participating teachers believed that all students could learn. Teachers at both schools commented that valuing this belief system helped the positive way they viewed students. Not only did the teachers believe that all could learn, they also believed that all could succeed and live extremely productive lives, regardless of their socio-economic background.</p> <p>Focused vision to help with planning for student achievement. Teachers believed that in order to plan for student achievement and success, they first needed to know their students personally, emotionally, socially and academically. To carry out this vision, activities and lesson plans needed to be focused around assessing and understanding all four areas. It was only after really getting to know the students both individually and collectively that they could move forward and plan to meet the needs of all their students. Teachers discussed achievement not only in terms of academic accomplishments, but also in terms of being successful personally, emotionally and socially.</p> <p>Value and belief in building positive relationships and trust. The teachers who were interviewed believed that when they all worked together, positive high energy was</p>

generated and **trusting relationships** were established and developed. All the teachers interviewed valued and believed in these areas. Their belief and value systems promote **sustainability**. If they did not value building positive relationships, trust would not be established and would not be constantly continuing.

Value learning. All teachers interviewed valued learning for both themselves and for their students. They believed in being **life-long learners** and believed this was an important professional aspect of the career that they have chosen. They believed that **life-long learning** was a part of their **internal value** and **belief system**. It was something that they wanted to do, not something they were being forced to do. Life-long learning was seen as benefiting them **personally, emotionally, socially** and **academically**. Learning enhanced their lives. Due to the fact that all eight valued learning, they believed that this aspect transferred to their students. The participants modeled a keen interest in learning and believed that this motivated their students to learn.

Value working together and value working autonomously. Connected with valuing learning was **working together with the school community**. Teachers valued working and learning from each other as well as from the parent community and the broader community. All eight truly believed that working as a team was of benefit to themselves and to the school community. The teachers also discussed the fact that they valued working **autonomously**. They saw that **autonomy** brought forth a solidification of the learning that occurred. Being autonomous caused the teachers to be reflective in their work and more creative in their work as well.

Culture of caring and respect. All of the teachers interviewed discussed the **culture of caring** and **respect** that was **evident** and promoted **at both sites**. **Care** and **respect** for the students was the centre of all the thinking, planning and executing of activities, from lesson planning, to working collaboratively in teams to working on school-wide projects. Teachers treated students with respect and teachers reported that students treated teachers with respect. Teachers believed that they needed to be the role models to implement a culture of caring and respect at their school. The teachers believed that if their students knew that they cared and respected them that deep learning and understanding would follow. The culture of respect was also evident in dealing with the parent community and the broader community.

Culture of acceptance and culture of diversity. Teachers helped the students celebrate differences through planning lessons around diversity.

Culture of learning. The staff interviewed believed, that a **culture of learning** for all, both students and professional staff, is what greatly contributed to higher student achievement levels. They believed that due to the fact that **learning activities were purposeful** and **promoted increased levels of learning**, a **culture of learning** was evident from class lessons, to assemblies, to guest speakers, to students' work displayed in the hallways, to sports events, to celebrations, to individual projects and assignments.

Culture of expectations was also very evident at both schools. Teachers expected students to do well and so they did. Teachers believed that all students could learn and thus they believed that they could change achievement. They believed that they were change agents.

Culture of achievement. Both sites are **high achieving schools** as evidenced by their **EQAO scores**. Teachers agreed that they needed to believe and have a **vision** that **all students could learn and succeed**. Out of this vision, a **culture of achievement** was created. Teachers expected students to achieve and designed their work environments so that they would achieve. Both schools are living proof that a culture of achievement does exist, regardless of socio-economic barriers. Cultures of achievement aim to develop skills and abilities in each child.

Culture of collaboration and distributed leadership; PLCs; professional development. The belief that **together they were stronger than alone** also enriched their cultural values, and led to higher standards and achievements in academics. The teachers attributed their **professional learning communities** as raising their **personal** and **collective professional understanding** and **standards**. **The idea of PLCs** and **networking** both inside and outside of the school was a key factor that they all agreed led to a **positive school culture**. Teachers believed these factors led to **higher student achievement levels**. At both sites the teachers share in the decisions of what the focus will be and what **professional development** they need. The professional development is directly related to their **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**.

Several teachers did comment that sometimes the professional development that took place off-site was not as focused on what they needed at their school site. Several participants commented that they would like greater input into the professional development that they were receiving off-site. They discussed, that at times, off-site workshops were unfocused and unclear. Several teachers commented that at times, there were too many workshops to attend and that this led to them being out of their classroom.

Data driven decisions/both quantitative and qualitative. School-based decisions, such as the **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**, were made using data so that informed decisions were being made. Data that were used at both sites were both **quantitative** and **qualitative** in nature. The **quantitative data** used came from **Ministry assessment data**, such as EQAO scores. Other standardized assessment tools were PM Benchmarks (primary) and CASI (junior). These assessments were promoted by the Ministry and adopted by the board. **Qualitative data** used to plan for school effectiveness were observational data, student portfolio material, project and test results.

Culture of assessment. By using **data to inform decisions**, a culture of assessment was promoted. Participants discussed that this type of a culture took time to develop, as teachers needed to be convinced and to believe in the reasons why it was beneficial to adopt. A lot of discussion and input centered around ways of using data to inform school-wide and classroom based decisions. It was reported that many philosophical

debates happened around this particular area. Without teachers believing and valuing the use of data to inform decisions, a culture of assessment would not have occurred. They also believed that they had to adopt a **common understanding of how to use data** to inform decisions. This process took time, as teachers varied in terms of their understanding and depth of knowledge when it came to using data.

Accountability. By adopting a **shared, focused vision of success**, teachers believed it made them more **accountable** in their profession. Using **data** to inform decisions also led to being **accountable for learning and for achievement levels**. The accountability aspect looked at planning lessons and activities based on the **curriculum expectations** and assessing using rubrics designed around the curriculum expectations. The teachers acknowledged that accountability also consisted of communicating expectations and learning to both the students and the parents.

The following Table 5.9 contains the researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on the differences from the qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews centered around theme two from both schools.

Table 5.9: Researcher’s reflections on the differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

<u><i>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School</i></u>
<p>Researcher’s reflections and emerging thoughts on theme two</p> <p>Theme two - School culture was also found to be an important predictor of student achievement in the presentation and analysis of phase one and phase two of the research study.</p>
<p><u>Willow Tree Public School – School Culture and Student Achievement</u></p> <p>Teachers at Willow Tree Public School discussed how it was extremely important for them to be a voice for the students at their school, and that the entire school developed a culture of advocacy for the students as Willow Tree Public School is located in lower socio-economic urban area. Advocating for the students in terms of required resources, nutrition, clothing, development of basic skills, safety and security was viewed as part of the school life at Willow Tree Public School.</p> <p>Teachers also talked about teaching students advocacy skills and becoming positive contributing members of society. The teachers recognized that the student population was under-privileged, but the staff expectation was that the students could become productive citizens, and that their backgrounds did not define their students now or in the future. The culture of advocacy provided an active hope and active expectations for the students.</p>

Lake Dore Public School – School Culture and Student Achievement

Teachers at Lake Dore Public School discussed how they recognized that the students at their school came from homes where they had a number of opportunities that other populations may not have. The teachers talked about the **enriched home environments**. They recognized that the students probably started school with more skills and experiences than students from a lower socio-economic environment. The teachers saw their student population and what they had to offer as a real opportunity to continue to challenge their students even further in the areas of personal, social and academic development. The teachers at Lake Dore Public School had adopted a **culture of expectations** as well. They expected all their students to do their best at all times and to set standards and expectations accordingly.

The teachers at Lake Dore Public School discussed how they involved their student and parent population in **community fundraising activities** so that they could give back to the **local and international communities**. The teachers decided to focus on **student leadership skills** in these areas so that all students would become productive members of society.

At Lake Dore Public School, there is an **active parent council**. The parent council helped to fundraise large amounts of money so that resources and extra-curricular opportunities could be provided for their children. There seemed to be a real appreciation and thankfulness from the staff for the involvement of the parents in the school life. The teachers discussed the fact that the **parent involvement** provided a **positive attitude** that **positively affected the entire school community**.

5.6.2 Phase three (round one) - Initial analysis of data from theme one and theme two

The initial analysis of the interview data from themes one and two from Willow Tree Public School is represented below in Figure 5.5. As highlighted in Figure 5.5 an inter-relationship existed at Willow Tree Public School between the advocacy role that had led to an increase in job satisfaction for the teachers and the embedding of advocacy in the culture of the school where the staff promote the teaching of advocacy and active hope on a continual basis. In this research study, each phase is built upon each other, thus further analysis of phase three (round one) qualitative data will be on-going throughout the remaining portions of this research study.

Willow Tree Public School

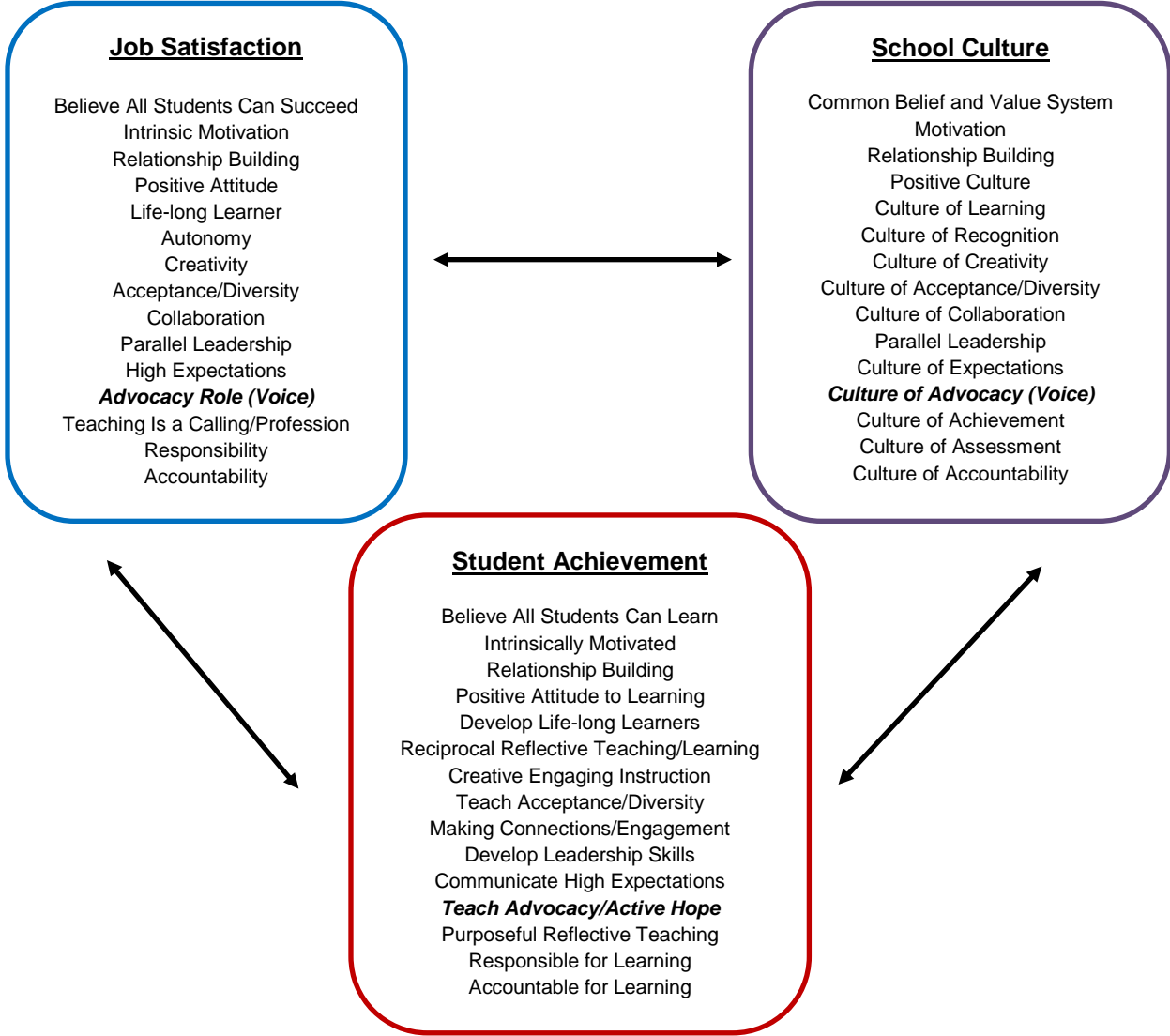


Figure 5.5: Willow Tree Public School - Relationships between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement

As highlighted in Figure 5.6 the inter-relationship that existed at Lake Dore Public School between the relationship building with parents and the community and the strong community connections that were being promoted by the staff at the school were evident in the school culture. All of these strong community inter-relationships led to a deeper sense of community at the school and beyond the school level to the local, national and international communities.

Lake Dore Public School

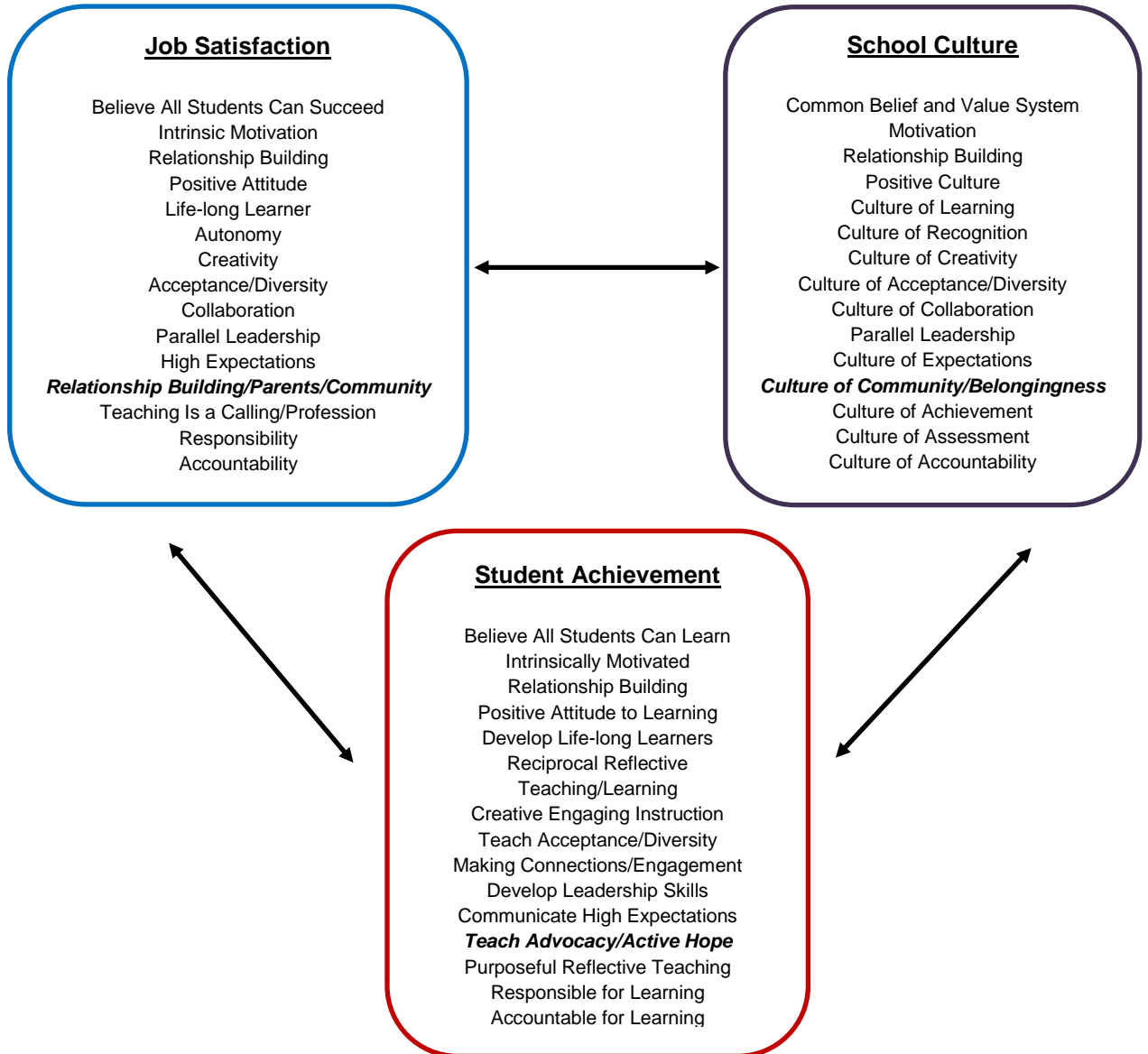


Figure 5.6: Lake Dore Public School - Relationships between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement

From the initial analysis of the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews presented in Figures 5.5 and 5.6 it can be concluded that differences could be due to the contextual factor of the socio-economic status that each school was located in. This understanding was further explored in the next phase of the research.

5.7 Emergent understandings from themes one and two – Phase three (round one)

The researcher had originally conducted an initial analysis of the qualitative in-depth interview data provided by the eight (8) teacher participants focusing on theme one and theme two. Further in-depth emergent understandings taken from the quantitative data were analyzed, using the qualitative in-depth interview data (primary data) and the qualitative data from the researcher’s reflective journal (secondary data). Highlights from the in-depth teacher interviews were incorporated at this stage of the analysis and are found in sections 5.7.1, 5.7.2, 5.7.3 and 5.7.4. Emergent understandings (refer to Table 5.1) were used for this portion of the qualitative in-depth interview phase. Emergent understanding five was analyzed separately and discussed at the end of this section after all the qualitative in-depth interview data had been collected from both the teachers and the principals.

5.7.1 Emergent understandings – Emergent understanding one

Teacher participant responses to this emergent understanding are captured in Table 5.10. This table reported Willow Tree Public School teachers’ responses as well as the responses from Lake Dore Public School’s teachers.

Table 5.10: Emergent understanding one and the elementary teachers’ discussions and reflections

Emergent understanding one: Quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone.

Elementary teachers’ discussions and reflections on emergent understanding one

All eight teachers agreed that both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone. It is as if the three are in a reciprocal relationship and you cannot have one without the other, especially if a teacher works at a high achieving school that believes in the vision statement, “**all students can learn!**”

At Willow Tree Public School, the teachers believed in emergent understanding one, quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone. The teachers’ comments are as follows:

Mya’s comment supports emerging understanding number one, “*Everything that I like*

about my job as a teacher is directly related to the culture of the school and directly affects student achievement. I think they are one in the same, one affects the other.”

Mya went on to say, *“If I like my job as a teacher, for the right reasons, I am motivated to have high achievement levels with all students in my classroom”*.

In response to the first emergent understanding **Adam** commented, *“I want students to succeed. I get great satisfaction out of having a culture focused on learning.” Students at Willow Tree P.S. come from disadvantaged households, but we cannot use this as an excuse. We as a school team need to have a positive culture and a culture of learning that promotes and believes in high academic excellence!”*

Pino also agreed that job satisfaction and school culture are stronger together than alone in order for students to obtain high achievement levels. He stated, *“I like teaching for internal reasons. Sure the external rewards such as health benefits, a decent salary and vacation time all help, but I am motivated by student learning and helping students achieve.”*

“We support each other with setting learning goals and helping students achieve these goals. This is all part of the culture at our school. We have to overcome some significant deficits due to the low income, ESL households that our student population draws from. This is a challenge that motivates me in my work.”

At Lake Dore Public School, the teachers also believed in the emergent understanding one, quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone. The teachers’ comments are as follows:

Emma commented, *“I enjoy my profession as a teacher and a lot of it has to do with the trusting relationships I have developed with my teaching partners and my principal. Also, I have developed strong relationships based on caring and respect with my students and their parents. I think if my students feel safe and respected, they are able to learn more. Because I enjoy my career as a teacher and I work in a healthy, happy culture, I am very motivated to help my students succeed!”*

Will believed that job satisfaction and school culture are stronger predictors of student achievement together than alone. *“My job satisfaction has a lot to do with the culture of the school and it transfers into me planning more interesting, and creative lessons and the students are more engaged in the learning process. I like the positive relationships that are built at school, both with students and staff.”*

David’s view is, *“my job satisfaction is a direct result of the school culture and thus it directly corresponds to student learning in a positive way, with higher student achievement levels.”*

The following Table 5.11 outlines the researcher's reflections on the similarities that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding one.

Table 5.11: Similarities on emergent understanding one

<u>Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding one</u>
<p>Researcher's reflections on emergent understanding one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Help students succeed, very satisfying; belief system</i>• <i>Intrinsically motivated by job, by student learning</i>• <i>Culture of learning, expectation and achievement</i>• <i>Support each other; all staff set high academic standards and help students to achieve these goals</i>• <i>Trusting relationships with staff and parents</i>• <i>Culture of positive relations, relationships are very important to them</i>• <i>Culture of caring and learning with staff and parents</i>• <i>Being satisfied has correlated into more creative and interesting lessons, teachers agreed that if they are motivated and satisfied, this has a direct positive effect on their students.</i>

The following Table 5.12 outlines the researcher's reflections on the differences that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding one.

Table 5.12: Differences on emergent understanding one

<u>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding one</u>
<p>Researcher's reflections on emergent understanding one</p> <p><i>There were no significant differences between the responses of Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School related to the first emergent understanding, "quantitatively, both job satisfaction and school culture are important predictors of student achievement and account for more variance in student achievement together than alone."</i></p>

5.7.2 Emergent understanding two

Teachers' responses to emergent understanding two are presented in Table 5.13. Willow Tree P.S.'s teachers' responses are first, followed by Lake Dore P.S.'s teachers' responses:

Table 5.13: Emergent understanding two and the elementary teachers' discussions and reflections

Emergent understanding two: The effect that socio-economic status may have on the relationship between teach job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

Elementary teachers' discussion and reflections on emergent understanding two

The teachers interviewed all belonged to a community of learners, working at two high achieving schools that believed in the following statement "**all students can succeed!**" By believing in this statement, the teachers at Willow Tree Public School were still fully aware of the socio-economic barriers that students needed to overcome; however, they did not allow the fact that a student who was coming from a household of lower socio-economic status to be an excuse for lower student achievement.

The teaching staff at Lake Dore Public School believed that they could help make a difference in the lives of each of their students and that it was their responsibility to help students give back to the local as well as the broader community especially the advantaged households they come from.

At Willow Tree Public School, the teachers commented on the **emergent understanding two, a potential relationship between the impact that elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and teacher job satisfaction may have on socio-economic status**. The teachers' comments are as follows:

Mya believed that socio-economic barriers can be mostly eliminated by teachers who like their jobs, who advocate for disadvantaged students and who are motivated by intrinsic satisfiers. Mya also believed that there needs to be a culture of caring and a culture of achievement present.

Mya said, "*we need to help them break through the cycle of poverty! That is our job and that is what we believe in!*"our motto is "**all students can learn.**"

Sara commented, "*at Willow Tree Public School we teach our students about **equity and diversity**. We **embed this learning** into the lessons that we teach and the literature and resources that we use. We are preparing our students for the future and equipping them with the necessary tools that they need both now and in the future.*"

Adam discussed an experience when he first started to work at Willow Tree Public School and how he needed to be indoctrinated into the culture of the school, so that he advocated for the students and was a voice for them. Adam's comments were as follows, "*When I first started to work here, I did not realize how much of an advocate I would*

need to be for my students, and all the students here. I previously worked at a school where most students were well taken care of. When I came to this school, I watched how other teachers advocated for their students and helped out in areas where normally a teacher may not need to help out (i.e. provide food and bring in clothing from home). I watched and discussed with teachers and then I learned how to advocate for my students much better. I think it is the caring and advocating that makes my job very satisfying.”

“I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to help these students do the best they can do. It is my responsibility to help out these students in all areas, academics, social and emotional.”

Pino reiterated the belief system that all students can succeed however, he is aware of the disadvantages that come with a population from lower socio-economic status. *“I believe the relationship is multi-faceted. I do believe that students who come from lower-socio economic status are at a disadvantage academically, emotionally and socially.”*

“I do not believe in the excuse that we need to accept lower achievement scores because of lower socio-economic status. Lower socio-economic status does have its challenges, but as a teacher I need to be challenged to help these students overcome these challenges. The district provides us with extra resources as well to combat these deficits. We need to use these resources wisely in order to help students and close the achievement gaps.”

Pino went on to say, *“I believe that as a teacher I can make a difference and that I can plan lessons and work with the school team to overcome these socio-economic barriers. I believe we have to work a lot harder to overcome more obstacles than other students may have to overcome, but all the teachers at this school believe that students can achieve and will achieve.”*

At Lake Dore Public School, the teachers commented on the emergent understanding two, a potential relationship between the impact that elementary teacher job satisfaction, school culture and teacher job satisfaction may have on socio-economic status. The teachers made the following comments:

Destiny believed that the students that went to Lake Dore Public School were definitely at an advantage due to the fact that the majority of them came from middle to upper-middle class households. However, she also believed that “kids are kids” and that no matter their socio-economic status, teachers still need to like their work and continue to build a school culture around caring, learning and achievement.

“We are still very much accountable to ourselves, administration, to the students and their parents.”

Emma’s statements were in agreement with Destiny’s, *“their socio-economic status is a plus, as when students arrive in kindergarten many do not need to be taught how to hold a pencil, or cut paper. As a teacher I am beginning at a higher skill level than a teacher*

who works in a school where their students have possibly never held a pencil or a pair of scissors.”

David stated, *“our students already come to school with loads of experiences outside the classroom. It is my job to expand and enrich these experiences so that students can succeed. I need to view these as opportunities to expand upon their existing knowledge by structuring my classroom so that a lot of differentiated instruction and experiential learning occurs. It is my responsibility to enrich their learning, so that they become even more successful. I see my role as helping them to be life-long learners.”*

The following Table 5.14 outlines the researcher’s reflections on the similarities that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding two.

Table 5.14: Similarities on emergent understanding two

Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on the emergent understanding two

Researcher’s reflections on emergent understanding two:

- *Belief system*
- *Need to believe in students*
- *Need to believe that students can succeed*
- *Motivation needs to be intrinsic; satisfiers need to be intrinsic*
- *Culture of Caring*
- *Believe that all students can learn and help them achieve their academic goals*
- *Motivated to help students learn no matter what. Believe this is their job and their responsibility to help all students succeed and do the best they can do*
- *Planning appropriate and focused lessons and learning from mistakes*
- *Using resources wisely*
- *Purposeful reflective, teaching and lesson planning*
- *Reflective practitioner*
- *Responsibility to help all students succeed no matter what. There is an accountability factor*

The following Table 5.15 outlines the researcher’s reflections on the differences that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding two.

Table 5.15: Differences on emergent understanding two

Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on the emergent understanding two

Researcher's reflections on emergent understanding two:

Willow Tree Public School:

- *Willow Tree Public School is in a lower socio-economic area. Many students live on social assistance and many households are ESL.*
- *Advocate and voice for disadvantaged student population.*
- *Need to learn how to be an advocate for students; need to be indoctrinated into the culture.*
- *Needed to learn through the modeling of other staff how to advocate for students; the culture of advocacy and the unwritten rules were passed along to new staff member.*
- *Teach students about equity and diversity.*
- *Plan lessons, purposeful planning around equity and diversity.*
- *Need to want to work at Willow Tree Public School with the purpose to make a difference personally, socially and academically in the lives of the students and the school community.*
- *Need to be motivated as a teacher to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve academic success.*
- *District provides extra resources for the school in the form of personnel and extra funds to combat the socio-economic barriers.*
- *Socio-economic status can have a profound effect on student achievement. Students start school at a disadvantage. But teachers can help to close this gap!*
- *The teachers are motivated and enjoy their jobs and work at a supportive school, like this one, that promotes and believes in student learning, then many of the affects that socio-economic status may have on student achievement can be overcome. Willow Tree Public School is an example of this!*

Lake Dore Public School:

- *Teachers from Lake Dore Public School realized that students were at an advantage in terms of the households that they lived in, the resources they are provided with and the life experiences that they have.*
- *Students had a higher level of skills when they arrived in kindergarten due to enriched home environments.*
- *Believe that kids are kids no matter what background they come from and that it is a teacher's responsibility to help them succeed and to do their best and to provide a culture of caring, learning and achievement.*
- *Still need and are responsible to build a positive school culture, it does not matter the socio-economic situation.*
- *Cannot take the economic status for granted, still need to believe that all students can succeed and motivate them to do their best and plan and teach lessons and units*

with intention and purpose.

- *Responsibility as a teacher to further enrich their lives and provide experiential learning that builds upon their existing learning.*
- *Help students to be engaged and to be life-long learners regardless of the socio-economic background.*

5.7.3 Emergent understanding three

Teachers' responses to emergent understanding three are found below in Table 5.16. Willow Tree P.S.'s teachers' responses are first, followed by Lake Dore P.S.'s teachers' responses.

Table 5.16: Emergent understanding three and the elementary teachers' discussions and reflections

Emergent understanding three: Longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular level leads to exemplary teaching practices.

Elementary teachers' discussion and reflections on emergent understanding three

At Willow Tree Public School, the teachers shared their beliefs regarding the emergent understanding three, longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular level leads to exemplary teaching practices. The teachers made the following comments:

Mya agreed that longevity can lead to exemplary teaching practices however, **it is only one factor**. She stated, *"I have 12 years experience and all at the primary level. Every year I see the "craft of teaching" improving in me, and it has only been then that it is translated to my students and their learning."*

*"I keep up-to-date on **professional development** and I am motivated to learn and I am a life-long learner. I **know the content** of what I teach and knowing the content has come with years of teaching. It also has come with years of **reflecting on what went well and what did not go well**. I am now better able to **communicate the content** and **outcomes** to my students so that they understand **what they are learning and why**."*

*"I need to be **motivated** for the right reasons to be an exemplary teacher and I need to continually want to improve and to see various ways of improving my learning and my students' learning."*

Adam discussed the emergent understanding, *"I am a better teacher now than what I was when I first started. I have wanted to become a better teacher to help my students learn, this is important. I know some teachers who have been teaching longer than I have been teaching, but they are **not motivated** to be an exemplary teacher, they are not in the profession for the right reasons! It is all about **attitude**."*

Pino commented by saying, *"I believe in being a **reflective practitioner**. This leads to exemplary teaching practices."*

*“Longevity in teaching certainly is important, however, a teacher needs to be **reflective** and **refine** their teaching practices. I also need to continue to take professional development courses and to **network with colleagues** and the **larger educational community**.”*

Sara believes that, *“If a teacher is interested in their students, cares for their students and believes that they can succeed, this is an exemplary teacher.”*

Sara also believes in,

- **Knowing subject matter and enjoying teaching**
- *Enjoying teaching at grade level has lead to exemplary teaching practices*

At Lake Dore Public School, the teachers shared their beliefs regarding the emergent understanding three, longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular level leads to exemplary teaching practices. The teachers made the following comments:

Emma stated that she believed that being a seasoned teacher has helped her to become a better teacher. *“Every year I become better and better. I have put more hours into my job, I have planned more and I have **kept my planning** and I **review my planning** every year to make my lessons better by **updating my lessons** with **new knowledge** that I have attained through professional development and the reciprocal teaching process. I think this method engages the students more. Planning activities to meet students at their level took time to perfect and every year I have a different class, so I must continue to fine tune the lessons to meet their collective and individual needs. The students know I care about them and they know that I want them to succeed and have fun while they are doing it. Connecting with the student is the beginning factor that leads to exemplary teaching.”*

David responded by saying, *“after a number of years, I now find I am more **intentional in my teaching**, that I am more aware of the outcomes and how to meet these outcomes with my entire class and also with each individual student. I am **purposeful** in my **intentions** and I **communicate** what I expect to my students. I also expect that they will do well, and I expect that they will enjoy learning!”*

The following Table 5.17 outlines the researcher’s reflections on the similarities that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding three.

Table 5.17: Similarities on emergent understanding three

<u>Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding three</u>
<p>Researcher’s reflections on emergent understanding three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Many facets to being an exemplary teacher, not just longevity. It is only one aspect.</i>• <i>Longevity is essential, but only if you are a reflective practitioner.</i>• <i>Longevity does not automatically translate into being an exemplary teacher; need to want to refine the “craft of teaching”.</i>• <i>Need to be in the profession for the right reasons.</i>• <i>Need to be interested in students and interested in their learning.</i>• <i>Need to care about students.</i>• <i>Need to want to build relationships with them.</i>• <i>Need to be an excellent communicator.</i>• <i>Communicate the content, and the outcomes, what and why they are learning.</i>• <i>Motivated to learn, this is intrinsic.</i>• <i>Positive attitude about all aspects of teaching.</i>• <i>Motivated to work hard and to work long hours.</i>• <i>Plan lessons with a purpose, differentiate instruction, individualize instruction, incorporate learning styles into lessons.</i>• <i>Intentional and purposeful teaching and learning.</i>• <i>Keep up on current professional development.</i>• <i>Need to be interested in being a life-long learner; implement learning into teaching practices.</i>

The following Table 5.18 outlines the researcher’s reflections on the differences that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding three.

Table 5.18: Differences on emergent understanding three

<u>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding three</u>
<p>Researcher’s reflections on emergent understanding three</p> <p><i>There were no significant differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School’s responses to emergent understanding three, longevity in the teaching profession and longevity teaching at a particular level leads to exemplary teaching practices.</i></p>

5.7.4 Emergent understanding four

Teachers' responses to emergent understanding four are found below in Table 5.19. Willow Tree P.S.'s teachers' responses are first, followed by Lake Dore P.S.'s teachers' responses.

Table 5.19: Emergent understanding four and the elementary teachers' discussions and reflections

Emergent understanding four: Longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

Elementary teachers' discussion and reflections on emergent understanding four

At Willow Tree Public School, the teachers shared their perceptions regarding emergent understanding four, longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. Their comments are as follows:

Mya's comments on the fourth emergent understanding were, "I have been fortunate to have had an extended period of time working with the team of teachers in the primary division. This has led to us building strong relationships built on trust and working together as a team. We have the same goals and vision that has been orchestrated through our School Improvement Plan (SIP), our principal has helped to guide us as to what our focus needs to be. We are committed to making this work for the good of the students."

"We know each other and trust each other. The trust and relationship building have allowed me to take more risks and discuss challenges openly and honestly. Because of this, I have become a much better teacher."

"Longevity has certainly helped to make us more cohesive and collaborative, but it is only one factor."

Adam commented by saying, "Yes, I agree that longevity is a factor in all of this, but you have to have the right combination of teaching staff and administration. At this school, the culture of the school helps with relationships and trust, making me feel satisfied in my job. I have worked at another school where this was not the norm, and I do not think that if I had worked there for 30 years and the culture stayed the same that this statement would be true. The right combination of all these factors needs to be in place, longevity is only one factor, but it does help. Leadership is essential as longevity is only one factor."

Pino further supported his colleagues by his statement, "Longevity on its own does not guarantee all the other factors, there needs to be a culture of caring, respect and learning; a belief that students can learn; trust amongst staff; shared goals and beliefs. All of these need to be in place."

At Lake Dore Public School, the teachers shared their perceptions regarding the emergent understanding four, longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. Their comments are as follows:

Emma agreed with the statement; however, she believed that longevity was not the only reason. *“I think positive relationships and team work are built up over a period of time. Time is only one factor. People here trust each other and we share in helping each other through difficult circumstances as well as celebrating successes. We are active team members supporting each other. In the beginning when our principal first came to the school she set-up team building activities that helped us to collaborate and build up trust. Through these experiences our school culture became more positive and focused. I think all of this has provided me with much more job satisfaction and has led to increased student achievement.”*

Will also believes that longevity is only one factor, as was evidenced by his comments, *“longevity at a school helps with all of these factors, or it can hinder these factors. The main focus should not just be longevity, as I could work at a school for a long period of time where I am not satisfied with my job, where the school culture is negative and student achievement is low. A lot depends on the leadership in the school both from the principal and from the staff. The principal nurtures a positive school culture and helps us plan and focus on high standards and expecting students to achieve. The teaching staff is also motivated to set our standards high and believe that students can achieve. We have positive relationships with students, staff and parents and build a collaborative learning culture.”*

The following Table 5.20 outlines the researcher’s reflections on the similarities that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding four.

Table 5.20: Similarities on emergent understanding four

Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding four

Researcher’s reflections on emergent understanding four:

- *Need a variety of aspects, not just longevity.*
- *Have the same vision and goals.*
- *Positive attitude.*
- *Trust each other, build positive relationships; allows for risk taking to occur and creativity to shine through.*
- *Work as a team, want to be motivated to do this.*
- *Committed to the learning of all students.*
- *Culture of caring, respect and learning.*
- *Both principals helped to develop collaborative and trusting relationships through their leadership.*
- *Need high standards and expect students to achieve.*
- *Positive relations with students, staff, parents and community.*

The following Table 5.21 outlines the researcher's reflections on the differences that were cited between the two schools regarding emergent understanding four.

Table 5.21: Differences on emergent understanding four

<p><u>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School on emergent understanding four.</u></p> <p>Researcher's reflections on emergent understanding four</p> <p><i>There were no significant differences in the responses between Willow Tree Public School to Lake Dore Public School's participants to emergent understanding four, longevity of teaching staff at a particular school leads to more positive relationships, team work, exemplary teaching staff and higher levels of job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.</i></p>

From the interviews with the teachers surrounding the four emergent understandings, it was evident that there were more similarities between the two sites than there were differences. However, the differences were significant in that they spoke to the varying socio-economic contexts and how each staff team best supported the needs of the student body. Another interesting similarity was that the teachers at both sites clearly indicated the need to involve their principals in the research study as they believed that their principals were pivotal in their increased levels of job satisfaction and positive school cultures all relating to increased levels of student achievement.

5.8 Phase three (round two) - Voluntary interviews - Principals

Phase three (round two) of data collection encompassed voluntary interviews with the two principals at both sites. These interviews occurred after some reflection by the researcher. The information collected thus far pointed to the important role the principal plays in the dynamics of the school setting, in particular, the researcher was curious about the leadership role that the principal had in each school and how this role impacted teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The researcher also wanted to discover each principals' views on teacher job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement and what they believed to be their role in all three of these areas.

Table 5.22 outlines the researcher's in-depth interviews with both principals. The information within Table 5.22 is organized into five (5) themes. These five (5) themes had emerged from round one of phase three data collection as being themes that required input from both the teachers and the administrators at both sites. As the data collection and analysis continued, new themes and emergent understandings developed built upon previous knowledge and understanding.

Table 5.22: Data from in-depth interviews with the principals from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School

Researcher's in-depth interview discussion with each of the principals from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School.

Theme one - The researcher explored the perception of each principal with regards to teacher job satisfaction at school and the role they play.

Perceptions from Tricia, Principal at Willow Tree Public School

*"I believe it is my job to ensure that my teachers are **motivated** and **enjoy teaching** at this school. If they are having difficulties, I need to share in these difficulties, and help them with a plan to resolve these difficulties. I never want my teachers to feel they are alone! It is also important that we share and celebrate achievements and accomplishments together, as connections occur over fun and enjoyment."*

"Teachers need to be motivated to enjoy their jobs and need to believe that students can learn. I need to help foster and nurture these concepts with my staff. Motivation is intrinsic and it needs to be developed in some staff more than others. Most of the staff at this school are intrinsically motivated and they model this intrinsic motivation for students."

*"I think **relationship building** is very important. I need to **build relationships** and foster relationship building with all school community members. I must demonstrate that I care about each member on a personal, social and employment level. I think it is the caring for others that helps the teachers to enjoy their jobs at school. They know that I care and they know that they can trust me. I think this further translates into their job satisfaction, as any teacher at this school can feel confident in knowing that I have their best interests at heart."*

"Providing leadership opportunities for staff, I believe, increases their levels of job satisfaction. If staff members can be a part of the decision-making processes at the school I believe their levels of job satisfaction will increase. Being actively involved in all aspects of decision making from ideas, concepts, planning, executing and evaluating the initiatives are important. I must allow my staff to take ownership of initiatives and ideas. I must support them by guiding, directing, providing resources and dedicated time to projects. By providing leadership opportunities, my staff have grown and developed both personally and professionally. I have seen an increase in confidence levels of my staff, and this I believe has a direct, positive effect on their students and the entire student population."

Perceptions from Laurie, Principal at Lake Dore Public School

"There are many reasons as to why a teacher would or would not experience job satisfaction. Some of them have to do with the school setting and some of them would have to do with their own personal situations. I think it is my responsibility to help make the teachers happy and satisfied with their jobs and with the environment here at the school and to support them in personal situations."

"There are both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons as to why the teachers have high levels of job satisfaction. I think most of the teachers at this school are mainly motivated intrinsically."

The teachers teach because they believe it is their calling in life. They teach because they believe all students can succeed and that they can help all students succeed. Teachers at this school have a very positive attitude towards their students, other staff members and the parent community.”

“Positive staff relations are high at this school and I believe it is my job to help continue the positive collaboration that is occurring. The teaching staff collaborates together all the time by sharing ideas and encouraging each other. I try to allow them time to collaborate by the way that I have set-up the timetables as time for teachers to collaborate with their teaching partners. I think these reasons add to staff morale, and staff job satisfaction.”

“Staff also have very high standards with students and they are actively involved in their lives here at the school. I think because teachers have high levels of job satisfaction, this helps the teachers have more positive interactions with students.”

“I provide leadership opportunities for all staff members at the school as, there are always initiatives happening. I believe in shared and distributed leadership. I think distributed leadership promotes job satisfaction with my staff. Our main focus that guides our school’s direction is our School Improvement Plan. There is a SIP committee that meets and discusses the vision and focus for the year. We base our focus on data, the Board Improvement Plan, student assessment results at school and at the Ministry level.”

Theme two - The researcher explored each principals’ perceptions of the relationship with teacher job satisfaction and student achievement.

Perceptions from Tricia, Principal at Willow Tree Public School

“Teachers who like their jobs will build relationships with students, show them that they care, listen to them, respect them and also expect them to do well and set high standards so that they will do well.”

*“I think the belief statement **all students can succeed**, is essential. If a teacher likes their job and believes that all students can succeed then the students know that their teacher believes in them. Knowing that their teacher believes in them this goes a long way to having a student believe in themselves and to take more risks and feel more positive about their learning.”*

“I am guessing from the teaching staff’s behaviour that most if not all of the teachers at Willow Tree Public School have high levels of job satisfaction. The teachers really work hard and are dedicated. They take time to plan out their lessons so that the learning that takes place in their classrooms is focused and with a purpose. Because of this, there are very few behaviour issues in the classrooms, as the students are engaged, enjoying and learning. There is a real passion with teachers and students regarding the learning process. The teachers are positive with their students and are always focusing on win-win situations. The manner in which they speak to students they treat them with high regard. Students in turn treat their teachers with high regard. The teachers have clear expectations for the students and they communicate these expectations to the students. The expectations are also set school-wide and decided by all staff and implemented from administration and staff. All

of these reasons are linked to job satisfaction and I believe are a big part of the reason that our students are doing so well despite the odds.”

“There is not a lot of home involvement and often the teacher takes the place of the parent in terms of the teaching of language skills, appropriate rules and behaviours, problem solving skills and helping them interact with others. If the teachers at Willow Tree Public School did not like teaching this type of a population, I think their motivation and job satisfaction would not be very high. The teachers that work here enjoy the challenge and are motivated to help students learn and do their best because the teaching staff cares about all aspects of the students’ lives. I have witnessed staff that did not want to work with this population and they have since left the school.”

Perceptions from Laurie, Principal at Lake Dore Public School

“The teachers at Lake Dore Public School are actively engaged in the learning process. This has a lot to do with the fact that they have high levels of job satisfaction. I can tell due to observable behaviours, such as the way they speak with each other, the way they address the students, the way they discuss issues at staff meetings and during professional development sessions, it is all with a love of teaching and a respect for the profession. The teaching staff is highly motivated and this translates into high levels of job satisfaction.”

“Discussions that happen informally are done so in a very respectful and professional manner (discussing students, lessons, activities, extra-curricular activities, parental concerns). Other times they are socializing with each other, joking around and having fun, for the most part the staff get along very well here at Lake Dore Public School it is a very strong collaborative team.”

“The teaching staff offer many creative ideas and take time to plan activities that are engaging, enjoyable and focused on curriculum expectations.”

“I think parental involvement here at Lake Dore Public School would have a lot to do with whether a teacher is satisfied or not satisfied with their teaching job. Parents are actively involved. I think most teachers understand that we need to embrace the partnership with the parents. If the teachers understand this aspect, their job satisfaction will be increased. If a teacher does not understand this aspect, this could lead to dissatisfaction with their teaching job as they could view parental involvement as more of a stressor. I try to help my teachers to take on a positive attitude and to embrace the parent community, not resist them. Acknowledging and working with the parental community enhances the learning that takes place both inside and outside the classroom.”

“There has been several teaching staff that have transferred out of Lake Dore Public School because they did not view the parental involvement with a positive attitude and with the idea of developing and nurturing a partnership to help students succeed.”

Theme three - The researcher explored the concept of school culture with the principals.

Tricia, Principal at Willow Tree Public School

“I expect the best of myself, the best of my staff and the best of the students By setting the standard to expect high quality overflows into the general culture of the school. We have all adopted a culture where we expect students to succeed. I believe that what you expect you will get, so we set standards high for everything. This needs to be a belief system adopted by everyone.”

*“I have noticed that when some new staff have started here at Willow Tree Public School they have sat back and watched and experienced how to engage with this population, especially if they have not worked at a school with a lower income ESL population. They have to observe how staff will interact with students and parents. They also need to learn that many of these students need **advocates** and at times this is their main job, to be a **voice for the students.**”*

“When I first started at the school, I noticed that some staff may have been enabling students and providing excuses for their behaviour or their achievement levels all based on their home life. We had many discussions as a staff as to what our expectations and belief systems were for personal, social, emotional and academic success and why these were important. We came up with a list of expectations and we all decided to work towards these expectations. We discussed these expectations and how things are moving a long from time to time now, at the beginning the discussions happened more often. New staff is made aware of these expectations.”

“Relationships and relationship building is very important to school culture. I need to set an example by building positive, trusting, open and honest relationships with the entire school community so that we can move forward with initiatives in a team like manner. I believe that a school culture needs to be warm and caring. I find controversy very difficult to deal with and I do not like it. When conflict occurs, I try to resolve it as quickly as possible so that people’s feelings are not hurt and I try to work at being restorative and empathetic. Being open and honest and working through situations is very important.”

Laurie, Principal at Lake Dore Public School

“When I arrived at this school I quickly noticed that complacency had set in with some of the staff members. Our school is located in an affluent neighbourhood and our EQAO scores, although decent, did not reflect where we should have been at. I knew that I had to tread lightly if I wanted to develop a culture of caring, collaboration, leadership and achievement.”

“I decided that I needed to figure out what needed to be changed with regards to the culture of the school. What did people value, what did they believe in, what were the assumptions? What were some rules that staff just followed without even questioning or thinking about? I needed to determine all of this first and try not to make any type of change too quickly. I believe that change must be a collaborative approach with a real focus from the entire team, not just top down. I listened and spoke with an open mind. I needed to ask critical questions, but always with respect. I also needed to determine what pre-conceived assumptions I was making about the teaching staff and students. I needed to determine if the staff believed that complacency had set in.”

“I quickly learned that the staff really cared about the students and cared about each other. There was a positive attitude and respect. Teachers were extremely motivated. There was a strong staff team that collaborated very well together, however at times they were misguided in their collaboration. Their focus at times was well meaning but not clear. They did not use a lot of data to base some of their decisions on and to guide their School Improvement Plan. Slowly we discussed how using data and observations would help us to focus better on the needs of all learners at Lake Dore Public School. This took some time and some working through to see progress and results with the school team as well as with increasing of achievement levels to where they should be for a school like this one. Working through this process took a lot of give and take from everyone. I had to listen to staff and figure out why they were thinking and believing as they were. They needed to figure out where I was coming from. I think the increase in our achievement levels really helped the staff to realize that using quantitative data and observational data combined to set school goals really worked and helped to keep us focused. We continue to fine tune our school improvement plan and we are always looking for ways to help all students succeed. We use teacher moderation and teachers work together in teams, helping each other plan lessons and at times the teachers will go into each other’s classrooms to observe and provide feedback. To have this type of teamwork takes a lot of trust and relationship building, so that staff members do not feel they are under the microscope. Instead they feel supported and are encouraged by this.”

“Working on relationships on a continual basis is very important to having a positive, healthy and happy school culture.”

Theme four - The researcher explored with each of the principals their perception of how school culture affects student achievement.

Tricia, Principal at Willow Tree Public School

“If I expect the best of the teachers and students, the teachers are more likely to want to expect the best of the students and to challenge and encourage them. As a staff we need to model respect and togetherness. We need to be collaborative so that the students are collaborative with each other. The culture needs to promote problem solving and caring. The students at Willow Tree Public School need a lot of modeling as to how to problem solve. The students’ behaviour has decreased due to our expectations and problem solving approach, therefore more learning can take place as the teachers can focus on learning instead of inappropriate behaviour.”

“Due to the nature of our population, the classrooms and the learning that takes place needs to be very child-centered with a lot of interaction and experiential hands-on learning. I walk into classrooms and the teachers and students are very engaged in the learning process.”

“We work together as a staff to set goals and our vision throughout the SIP process. Our SIP helps us to align with district goals and direction as well as to collaboratively work together to set goals and direction for our staff and school community. Out of our SIP plan comes discussions and further planning for meeting the needs of professional development for the staff to be better able to meet the goals and needs of our SIP. Working

collaboratively together on these focus areas has helped improve student learning and achievement. All of this has had a positive effect on school culture and student achievement.

Laurie, Principal at Lake Dore Public School

“Our teachers are very focused on the learning process, it is a learning culture, where students are the focus of their attention. Students are engaged and are enjoying learning. This definitely improves student achievement.”

“Being collaborative and building relationships at school is also a very important part of our school culture that continues to grow and flourish. Without collaboration and building of trust the staff would not work together and would not be cohesive and student achievement levels would not be as high. All of the team work that happens builds school spirit and a positive, healthy school culture focused on achievement both academically and socially.”

“We also work collaboratively on our SIP, PLCs and PD. Our SIP provides focus and direction for the school and it has enhanced our student achievement levels as well as our school culture. Staff work together to actively plan out the goals for the school.”

“Building partnerships and relationships with parents is a very important part of our school culture. It is a vital aspect to student achievement, as parents enrich their children outside of the school environment. Parents also help out with a lot of activities at the school and they help with fundraising on a fairly large scale. Because of the fundraising money our students are able to participate in activities that enrich and expand their learning beyond the classroom. All of these activities enrich our school culture.”

Theme five - The researcher explored the concept of leadership with each of the principals and how decisions are made at each school.

Tricia, Principal from Willow Tree Public School

“Most decisions are collaborative decisions, discussions with staff in formal and informal meetings. Constant communication and transparency is essential if I am going to continue to develop a positive, collaborative school culture and if I want to continue to develop positive relationships with my staff. I believe in transparency and building trusting relationships, this is part of my leadership style. I want to be as open and honest and professional as I can be, so communication is very important.”

“Some decisions cannot be made collaboratively due to the nature of the type of decision that needs to be made such as operational decisions and some budgetary decisions. I get input on staffing, but essentially the final decision is mine. This is difficult as I try to listen to the requests of the teaching staff however I need to make a final decision based on what is best for the students and what is best for the school community. I try my best to balance out these decisions and to be fair and equitable. This is when as a leader I need to be courageous and confident, yet respectful and humble.”

“As a principal I need to earn respect. I need to listen and be respectful and show that I

care if I expect this in return from the staff. I must want to build positive relationships with my staff. I need to be the role model for this. When I make a mistake, I need to admit it and try to mend any relation that may have been strained. This I believe is my main goal as the administrator of this school. Relationship building needs to include the entire school community.”

“I also believe that I need to be the best instructional leader I can be. Most students begin school at Willow Tree Public School with less experiences and skills than your average student. As a collective group of professionals we have decided that we cannot use this as an excuse as to why these students are not achieving. Instead we need to expect that they can learn and achieve high standards, so we set the bar high. I need to be prepared to be an instructional leader at the school, by modeling and supporting good teaching practices. I need to support my teachers by helping them in the classrooms with their practices, providing planning time with each other so that they can collaborate and provide much needed resources and professional development. Instruction needs to be a focus in our SIP and we need to follow-up and continue to re-adjust our practices based on the needs of our students. I must be present at these sessions.”

Laurie, Principal from Lake Dore Public School

“I lead by example. I figure if I am going to ask my staff something or require something of my staff, I also better be prepared to live up to the same standard or request.”

“I also lead by involving others in decision making during meetings, during informal conversations by asking opinions and ideas of staff. I also need to accept that my way is not always going to be the way things go. I need to be aware that I have a very bright, creative and engaged teaching staff, and if I value their talents I also need to value their leadership and ideas. I need to respect my staff and their opinions and beliefs, and realize that they may not always be the same opinions and beliefs that I have. As the formal leader of the school I need to foster a culture of leadership at all levels, and recognize that all opinions and ideas count.”

“I think clear, concise, open and honest communication is important to being a good leader. I communicate to the staff during information sessions, formal meetings, on the e-mail, newsletters, formal and informal discussions. I also place notes in teachers’ mailboxes to ask them something, congratulate or thank them for something. All these forms of communication has helped develop positive relations.”

“I always need to know when something is working well, when we are off course, I need to be able to course correct. To have this insight, I need to reflect on decisions and plans, and discuss the process with staff. I think it is important as a leader to be able to step back and try to figure out what is working and what is not working. Admitting mistakes, correcting them and then moving forward is important to me as a leader.”

“Part of being a leader in a school is to be an instructional leader. Sometimes there is a lot of pressure from the Ministry, district and parents, and not always in that order. If as a leader I continue to view the “pressure to perform” as a problem, then it will only get worse. Instead, I view it as a challenge and I see that it is our job, and starting with me, my

job is to ensure that students do the best that they can do. This needs to begin with focused, thoughtful, creative and engaging instruction happening in each and every classroom. I need to be the model and help my teachers with instructional practices if I expect them to also be good instructional leaders in their classrooms and throughout the school. We have on-going professional development on instructional practices, teacher moderation, teachers planning together and it needs to be a focus on our SIP. I need to participate in these activities as an active member of staff working towards student achievement.”

The following Table 5.23 outlines the similarities of the researcher’s reflections on the five (5) themes as presented by the principals from both sites.

Table 5.23: Similarities regarding the researcher’s reflections on the five (5) themes

<u>Similarities between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School</u>
<p>Researcher’s reflections on the principals’ emerging understandings of the five (5) themes that emerged from round one of phase three data collection:</p> <p><i>Theme one – teacher job satisfaction at school and the role the principal plays.</i></p> <p><i>Theme two – relationship with teacher job satisfaction and student achievement.</i></p> <p><i>Theme three – the concept of school culture.</i></p> <p><i>Theme four – how school culture affects student achievement.</i></p> <p><i>Theme five – concept of leadership.</i></p> <p><u>Job Satisfaction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe it is their job to ensure that teachers are motivated, happy and enjoy teaching. • Share and celebrate achievements. • Relationship building is important with teachers, students, parents and community. • Listening. • Showing empathy. • Caring for staff is important, personally, socially and academically. • Good communication skills both verbally and written. • Being reflective. • Motivation needs to be intrinsic and needs to be developed in some staff more than others. • Autonomy and motivation. • Both extrinsic and intrinsic reasons as to why the teachers like their jobs. • Providing leadership opportunities increases their levels of job satisfaction. • Positive staff and positive collaboration. • Teaching staff collaborate all the time; timetables are organized so that collaboration can occur. • Staff had high standards and were actively involved.

- Teachers have high levels of job satisfaction and therefore have more positive interactions with students.
- Distributed Leadership enhances job satisfaction for teachers. The SIP plan provides school focus and leadership opportunities.

School Culture

- Expect high standards from staff and students, set an example.
- Expect students to succeed, it is part of the school culture.
- Belief system that all students can succeed needs to be adopted by everyone.
- Building relationships is important to having a positive school culture. Principal needs to set an example by building positive, trusting and open and honest relationships with the entire school community.
- Culture of Caring.
- Culture of Learning.
- Instructional leadership.
- Culture of Learning
 - PLCs
 - SIP
 - PD

Student Achievement

- If teachers like their jobs, they will work hard, plan out lessons that are purposeful and engaging and creative so that students enjoy learning.
- The teachers believe all students can succeed. By the teachers believing that all students can succeed their students know that this is their belief and they realize that they care for them. Students are more willing to take risks due to the fact that their teachers believe in them.
- Teachers are actively engaged in the learning process and this has a lot to do with high levels of job satisfaction.
- Teachers love and respect the profession, so their end goal is to help students learn and achieve the best they can achieve.
- Teachers have a clear focus on student learning and achievement. It is evident in their discussions both formal and informal. They are positive, and professional seeking to figure out what is best for the learning of their students or a particular student.
- Enjoying their teaching career helps them to focus on the real issues and not be distracted.
- Working with the parental community and having a positive attitude about this partnership only enhances the learning that takes place both inside and outside the classroom.
- Discuss problems with parents in a problem solving manner with the focus of building a community of learners.
- Data to drive decisions and planning for success.

The following Table 5.24 outlines the differences of the researcher’s reflections on the five (5) themes as presented by the principals from both sites.

Table 5.24: Differences regarding the researcher’s reflections on the five (5) themes

<u>Differences between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School</u>
<p>Researcher’s reflections on the principals’ emerging understandings of the five (5) themes that emerged from round one of phase three data collection:</p> <p><i>Theme one – teacher job satisfaction at school and the role the principal plays.</i></p> <p><i>Theme two – relationship with teacher job satisfaction and student achievement.</i></p> <p><i>Theme three – the concept of school culture.</i></p> <p><i>Theme four – how school culture affects student achievement.</i></p> <p><i>Theme five – concept of leadership.</i></p> <p><u>Willow Tree Public School:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for students. • New staff watched how to work with the ESL population by observing and discussing with other staff. They have realized that they needed to be advocates for the students, a voice, because they often do not have one. • Principal and teachers mentored new staff in the culture of advocacy and being a voice. • Needed to recognize inaccurate thinking, beliefs and perceptions regarding student population. As a whole staff needed to come up with expectations. <p><u>Lake Dore Public School:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community networks. • Developed partnerships with parents and other community members local, national and international.

From the analysis of phase three (round two) data, it was the leadership of the principal that was a key factor in the inter-relationship of the three research areas job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. The leadership will be further discussed and analyzed in Chapter six and Chapter seven. The following figure depicts the principal’s role in the inter-relationship between the three areas of research.

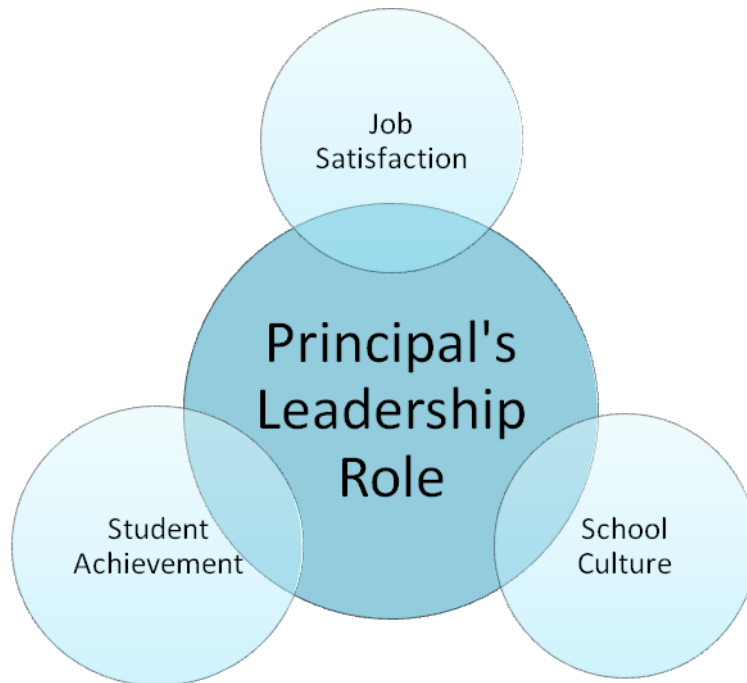


Figure 5.7: The principal's leadership role in the inter-relationship between job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement

5.8.1 Emergent understanding five

Emergent understanding five is *the relationship between school culture and job satisfaction, and job satisfaction and student achievement was not as strongly correlated in Lake Dore Public School as it was in Willow Tree Public School*. It has come about due to a culmination of all the data presented thus far and is addressed by the researcher's reflections and responses from the data and analysis of the interviews of both the elementary teachers and the principals and the quantitative data analysis. Due to these findings from emergent understanding five, the in-depth interview questions with the elementary teachers and principals were structured around emergent understanding five to further determine possible reasons as to why these differences occurred in the quantitative data. After careful reflection and analysis, the researcher determined that the qualitative data did not demonstrate that there was a stronger relationship between school culture and job satisfaction and job satisfaction and student achievement at Willow Tree Public School than at Lake Dore Public School. It was determined that at times the relationship looked different due to the varying socio-economic reasons, however, qualitatively the relationships were not stronger at Willow Tree P.S. when compared to the relationships at Lake Dore P.S.

5.9 Phase three (round one and round two) - Presentation of emerging understandings from in-depth interviews with the teachers and the principals

The following section discusses nine (9) emerging understandings that evolved from the data analysis for phase three (round one and round two). The nine (9) emerging understandings were explored in the focus group setting. They centered on the three areas of research - job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement. Three emerging understandings are categorized under each of the main research topics which are, job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

5.9.1 Job Satisfaction

The following Figure 5.8 depicts emerging understanding number one, two and three all under the job satisfaction category. The understandings have emerged out of the phase three research and analysis. Explanation of Figure 5.8 follows in the next three sections a., b., and c.



Figure 5.8: Job satisfaction - Emerging understanding number one, two and three

- a. **Emerging understanding number one - Motivation/intrinsic vs. extrinsic**
All eight (8) elementary teachers interviewed seemed highly motivated and often discussed intrinsic motivators as reasons for their job satisfaction. Two of the eight teachers discussed extrinsic factors; however, they were not the reason for their high levels of job satisfaction. Extrinsic motivators were merely additional aspects that they enjoyed while belonging to the teaching profession (i.e. summer holidays, benefits).

b. Emerging understanding number two - Happiness factor

All elementary teacher participants discussed the factors that made them happy in their jobs and discussed areas such as low levels of stress, good mental and physical health, longevity in the teaching profession and interpersonal relationships. If these areas were in balance, they were more satisfied and if these areas were out of balance, the teachers discussed how this could lead to dissatisfaction with the teaching profession.

c. Emerging understanding number three - Autonomy and collaboration

The majority of elementary teachers (80%) who were interviewed discussed the fact that they liked working alone, as well as working collaboratively. They thought they needed both autonomy and collaboration in order to have job satisfaction, as well as to be able to effectively plan and reflect on teaching and learning. All of the participants seemed highly motivated and engaged in their work. These high levels of motivation brought about an increase in job satisfaction and led to very positive attitudes.

5.9.2 School culture

The following Figure 5.9 depicts emerging understanding number four, five, and six all under the school culture category. The understandings have emerged out of the phase three research and analysis. Explanation of the diagram follows in the next three sections a., b., and c.

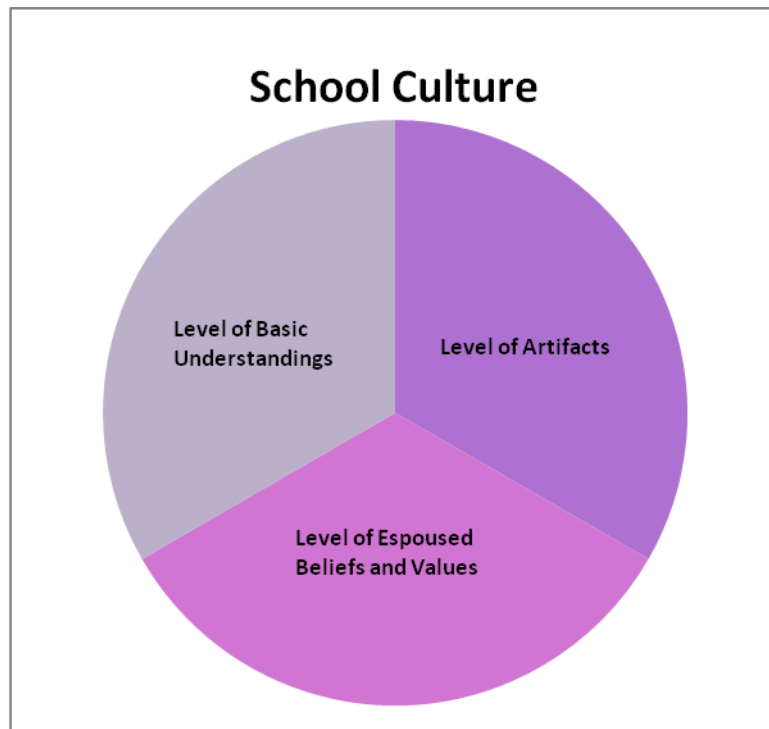


Figure 5.9: School culture - Emerging understanding number four, five and six

a. Emerging understanding number four – Level of artifacts

Various artifacts were discussed as being important factors in achieving the overall positive school cultures that were evident at both sites. Relationships were essential at all levels with all key stakeholders. Positive relationships were what all the elementary teachers seemed to note as the number one factor that increased their job satisfaction, bringing about a positive school culture. The principals discussed the fact that through their leadership they needed to set the example by building positive, trusting, open and honest relationships. The language that was used by all the elementary teachers as they discussed job satisfaction issues was often in the form of “ME”. However, when all the elementary teachers discussed school culture, they often used the term “WE” to describe a community setting, where all members were important and vital to the decision-making process.

b. Emerging understanding number five – Level of espoused beliefs and values

Various levels of espoused beliefs and values were discussed as being very important factors in achieving the overall positive school cultures that were evident at both sites. All teachers and principals believed that all students could and would succeed! They also believed and expected that the students would succeed. The teachers discussed programming for students to meet their individual needs through differentiation and by designing engaging lessons centered on various learning styles and multiple intelligences. All participants believed in collaboration and valued working together and being a part of the school community.

c. Emerging understanding number six – Level of basic understanding

Leadership was identified as a vital factor in teacher job satisfaction as well as school culture. The majority of elementary teachers from both sites discussed a form of distributed leadership and parallel leadership that occurred at both schools and this added to their belief that their voice mattered and that they were affecting change within their schools in a positive manner. The teachers talked about feeling respected when they were provided with leadership opportunities. Both principals discussed sharing the leadership role in their schools and how much they respected and valued the decision-making processes which included active involvement of teachers.

5.9.3 Student achievement

The following Figure 5.10 depicts emerging understanding number seven, eight, and nine under the student achievement category. The understandings have emerged out of the phase three research and analysis. Explanation of the diagram follows in the next three sections a., b., and c.

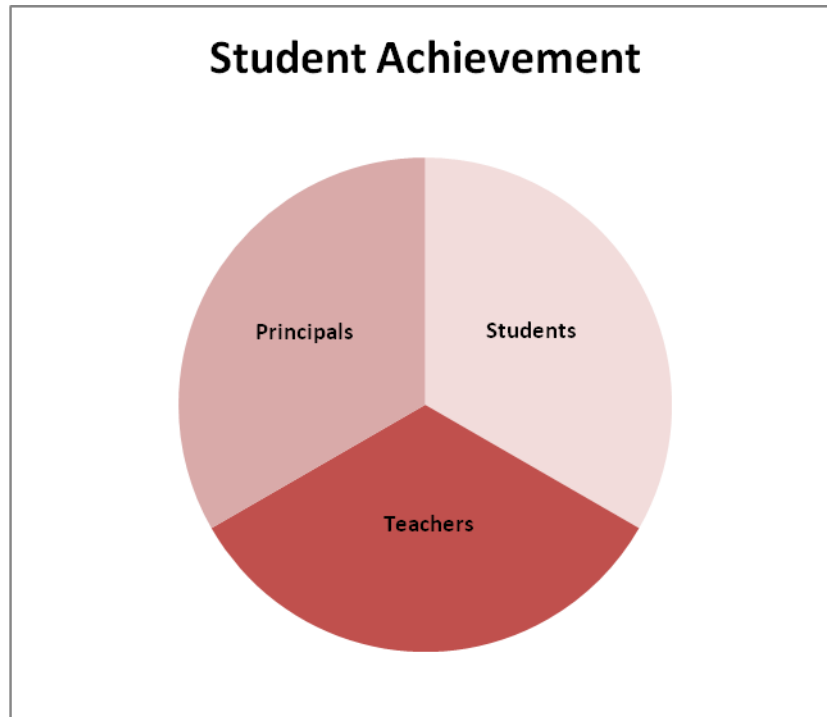


Figure 5.10: Student achievement - Emerging understanding number seven, eight, and nine

a. Emerging understanding number seven - Students

The belief statement that all students could succeed and learn was evident at both schools. The teachers and the principals were firm believers that no matter the socio-economic background, all students could succeed and all students could learn. This led to a positive attitude throughout both schools that positively affected the way students saw their learning and also positively affected the school culture, teacher job satisfaction and student achievement.

b. Emerging understanding number eight - Teachers

Purposeful, reflective teaching and learning were evident at both sites, as teachers discussed the importance of working collaboratively with teams of teachers, as well as on their own, to develop authentic and engaging activities/lessons linked to the curriculum. They also discussed that part of their role was reflecting on their teaching practices, revising their practices, differentiating instruction, providing meaningful feedback to students, and helping students reflect on their own learning. All teachers held high expectations for their students academically, socially and behaviourally.

c. Emerging understanding number nine - Principals

Being an advocate was a key component at both sites; however, it was affected in different ways in the two sites due to the differing nature of the socio-economic environments. At Willow Tree Public School, staff was a voice for the students, and they also taught them advocacy skills. By believing in students and making strong positive relationship connections, they believed in themselves and each

other. At Lake Dore Public School, students, teachers, administration, and parents worked together and became advocates for the broader local, national, and international communities. The principals believed that it was their leadership role within the school to provide the opportunities for a culture of advocacy to be created and continued. Both principals as well promoted communities of belongingness for all members. The principals also believed that their role was one of parallel leadership, where they worked side-by-side with teachers, sharing the leadership role.

5.10 Focus group feedback

After collecting, reviewing, and analyzing the data from the questionnaires and in-depth interviews, the researcher allowed this informational qualitative data to be reflected upon and to inform the direction and structure of the focus group. All the elementary teachers who were selected to participate in the focus group had not participated in the in-depth interviews, although there was a possibility that some or all had participated in the anonymous mixed questionnaire portion of the research study. The focus group participants were selected by the researcher with the assistance of each of the principals from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Further explanation as to the process of the focus group participants' engagement is outlined in Chapter three of this research study.

5.10.1 Participants in focus group

The following elementary teachers from each of the two schools who participated in the focus group (names have been altered to preserve anonymity):

Willow Tree Public School:

- Jean
- John
- June
- Gordon

Lake Dore Public School:

- Maureen
- Trenton
- Shekinah
- Gabriel

5.10.2 Focus group with elementary teachers – Purpose and process

The purpose of the focus group has been outlined in Chapter three, however it should be noted that the role of the researcher was to be a facilitator providing structure to the focus group, however, the group participants were to provide the knowledge generation through their discussions. The participants were so passionate about each of the topics that the flow of the conversation was spontaneous and collaborative. The participants made it very easy for the researcher to just act as the facilitator and “fade into the background”. The focus group members' conversations and discussions remained focused and positive throughout the entire session. Each teacher participant acted in a professional, engaging and collaborative manner.

The researcher also provided a time at the end of each emergent understanding for member checking, ensuring that the researcher's interpretations were the actual perceptions and emerging understandings of the group members.

5.11 Exploration by the focus group of emerging understandings from phase three

Table 5.25 outlines the discussion that occurred with the researcher and the eight (8) participants of the focus group. The recorded data in the table explored the nine (9) emergent understandings and the discussion that resulted.

Table 5.25: Focus group discussion

<p><u>Job Satisfaction</u></p> <p>Emerging understanding number one - The researcher explored with the participants their concept of job satisfaction and how it encompassed the concept of motivation/intrinsic vs. extrinsic.</p> <p><i>Gordon – Money and benefits from teaching is only a partial motivator. I am intrinsically motivated by the challenge of the teaching profession as well as the profound responsibility that comes with it. I am motivated to see my students succeed. This brings me great satisfaction, more than the money and the benefits. The other participants agreed with Gordon.</i></p> <p><i>June – I am motivated by serving others, helping others, this is what satisfies me. I am sure that if our salaries were not adequate I may not be as satisfied, but they meet a comfortable standard. I enjoy a comfortable standard of living, so I am not worried about not being able to pay my bills, I can focus on the altruistic reasons that I enjoy teaching such as helping students to read and write, working with colleagues, planning activities for the entire school and working parents.</i></p> <p><i>Maureen – I am motivated by intrinsic reasons. I like teaching because I can actually help to change the lives of my students in a positive way. It provides me with a purpose each and every day.</i></p> <p><i>Jean – The students at Willow Tree Public School are quite needy personally, socially and academically. If I was not motivated intrinsically I would not be teaching at this school and I would definitely not be in the teaching profession. I cannot imagine not enjoying what I do, as I spend so much time at work.</i></p> <p><i>Gabriel – I am motivated to help my students learn and to help them succeed in life. Most of the students at Lake Dore Public School come from very fortunate circumstances. So I believe that it is my purpose and calling to enrich their lives and meet their needs to achieve better than what they are currently achieving. I am motivated to help them set goals and to surpass the goals that they set. I teach to encourage their learning, guide them and help them to focus and set high standards. All of this motivates me intrinsically to be a better person and a better teacher.</i></p>
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Jean – *Teaching is just plain fun. What other job do you get to teach kids math, laugh with them, prepare, plan and execute a science experiment, run around the gym with them, sing with them and dance with them. It is the best! I am **motivated** by **creativity** and **variety**.*

Shekinah – *I am motivated by **both- intrinsic and extrinsic** - the pay, as I know myself if I did not make a certain level of pay I would not be in this career, as I also want to travel, wear nice clothes and have a comfortable life style. That is not the only reason I went into teaching, but it was a factor for me, as I do look at the great vacation time that we get. However, I also put in very **long hours at work** I am **constantly thinking about my job and my students**. I am definitely motivated to help them learn and to be the best they can be! That is my **responsibility** and I take it seriously. Salary did enter into my decision to become a teacher would be false however there are so many other reasons that I love teaching, kids are the best!*

Emerging understanding number two - The researcher then explored with the teachers their concept of job satisfaction and how it relates to the “happiness factor” (linked to stress levels, mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships and longevity).

Trenton – *I find the **better physical condition** I am in and the healthier I eat, the **happier** I am in my personal and professional life. If I were not to work out or eat healthy, I think it may affect my mental health, but I am not sure because I have always been motivated to work out and eat well. I do not get stressed very easily and I think this affects how I view myself, my teaching career and my relationships with people at work.*

Shekinah – *I think staying healthy effects how I deal with stress and also my overall mood. I am more vibrant when I work out and I see situations in a more positive light. It effects my **interactions** with my students and with my colleagues at work.*

Jean – *I eat well and I watch the **amount of sleep** I get. When I am tired, I am not as affective with my students or with other teachers.*

Maureen – *If I was not satisfied and happy with my career choice I would have never stayed teaching for 24 years. I think **longevity** as a teacher helps with becoming an **expert teacher**, as I can redefine my craft and reflect on my mistakes and change how I teach and interact with my students. Longevity is not the only factor that makes me an expert teacher, there are other factors as well; **building relationships** with students, caring for my students, reflecting on my teaching practice, refining my teaching practice, helping my students to succeed by differentiating the curriculum.*

Gordon – *Differentiating the curriculum is important to being an expert teacher. I want to differentiate for my students so that they can succeed and be the best they can be. I have been teaching for 15 years and I really enjoy it! With **years of experience** I have **developed a knowledge and understanding of teaching methods** much better than when I first began, however, I made it a point to continue to grow and learn. I **reflect on my practices** so that I can incorporate what I have learned as a teacher and my students benefit because of it. If I did not grow and learn, I would not be an expert teacher. It is an **attitude**, a **mind set** to become an **expert teacher** I had to have wanted to become one.*

Emerging understanding number three - The researcher explored the teachers’ concepts of job satisfaction and how it encompassed the concept of autonomy and

collaboration.

Jean – *I am satisfied with the levels of freedom that teaching provides as well as the level of collaboration with colleagues and administration.*

John – *I enjoy teaching because it meets so many needs for me in terms of what I need out of employment. I am able to be creative and yet also be collaborative. I believe that my job as a teacher is to create conditions for students to do their best work. I also have a responsibility to create conditions for my colleagues to do their best work as well, both independently and collaboratively. I am able to make decisions and help students make decisions.*

Shekinah – *There is a sense of **freedom in teaching**, but as a teacher I also need to be **responsible** and **accountable** to my profession and the students. It allows for me to be free to work with others and also free to be creative on my own with what has possibly been discussed in group work sessions.*

Gordon – *The teaching career is very satisfying for me. I like interacting with students on a daily basis. They make my day! I look forward to coming to work every day just to discover what and how each student is learning.*

June – *The school that I work at has students who come from disadvantaged households. It is very satisfying to me to be there for them, to demonstrate that I **care** about them as a **person** and also as a **student**. I care about their **learning**, but I also care about what happens in their lives. I try to make their lives better.*

Maureen – *Most of the students at my school are well taken care of and have a strong support system outside of school. It is satisfying for me to work with this population of students and parents, as it encourages me to help students be the absolute best they can be. I also find it satisfying working with the parent community.*

Gabriel – *The students at Lake Dore P.S. come with so much background information that they are picking up constantly from their home environments. It is satisfying to me to help enrich their environment at school, to help them all succeed beyond their current levels.*

Trenton – *I am very satisfied as a teacher. I could not think of a better career to have! I am able to be both autonomous and collaborative in my job.*

June – ***Autonomy** in my teaching job is important to me. I believe that I am inherently self-directed, and that teaching provides satisfaction in terms of providing me with the responsibility to be self-directed. **Responsibility** to my students and to their **learning is essential**. Autonomy allows me to work together with my colleagues, working on the focus for our **school's SIP**, as well as towards the Ministry directives, but it also allows me to be creative with what I know needs to be accomplished; it is accountability as well.*

Gabriel – ***Autonomy** in teaching needs to be **combined** with **collaboration** and working with others. I cannot assume that I am going to just be working on my own with my door shut. I need to take direction from my principal in terms of the direction the board and the Ministry is taking as well as to be part of the decision-making processes in the school to plan for student success. The decisions of the school focus and our team focus are used as I plan and*

focus on what I intend to teach and how I intend to teach it.

Maureen – *I like teaching because I can **combine** the **autonomy** piece with the **collaborative** piece. I think to be an effective teacher I need to be **self-directed, self-motivated** and also work as a team. I like planning with other teachers and then going away and putting my own twist on the material. I believe I am a very **creative person**, so I use my creativity when working in a team and then I take what we have brainstormed as a team and make it unique, using my own talents and abilities. I am unique and only I can deliver a lesson the way I deliver it, no one else can completely copy me. Teaching can be a nice balance, if set in the proper culture and environment. The principal of a school needs to trust in a teacher displaying autonomy; he or she cannot micro-manage.*

School Culture

Emerging understanding number four - The researcher then explored, with the participants, their concept of school culture and how it relates to the Level of Artifacts.

Jean - *We have many students who are being raised with unique cultural experiences that have been adopted from other countries outside of Canada. Many of their traditions and customs are not Canadian. Many of the students' parents continue to socialize with people from their countries and it is sometimes difficult to break through the cultural barriers and also the language barriers. Our school promotes a community of acceptance, equity and tolerance. Most if not all of the staff understand the unique circumstances that our students come from and embrace this uniqueness. Some staff have found working under these unique circumstances difficult and have left the school due to not being satisfied working with a very needy high ESL population.*

June – *We teach students to be understanding and accepting of others. We provide avenues that they can speak out and we teach them to respect all. We teach students how to be assertive and not aggressive through our Character Education Program. We are constantly teaching problem solving and conflict resolution skills, as some of the students do not receive this type of socialization at home.*

John – *Students are also taught to advocate for themselves and to have a voice. Because many come from an under privileged circumstances and they often are not taught how to have a voice, how to be positive and how to believe in themselves due to the poverty that they live in. I think it is due to the leadership of our principal and staff in this area of developing a cohesive school community that promotes respect, tolerance and acceptance.*

Gabriel – *My school's population is exactly the opposite. Many of our families are Canadian born with Canadian values and traditions. The majority of our students come from fairly well off homes. They come to school well equipped. I think this has helped our school to reach out into the broader community and to help others. We take on special projects, assisting community and school organizations in our city and around the globe.*

Maureen – *By our school community reaching out to the larger community it emphasizes leadership development for our students. Our students take on a sense of responsibility not only for themselves but for others.*

Shekinah – *By taking on these leadership projects it provides all of our school community*

with a sense of social responsibility. Our kids and our school families are better off because we teach and promote a community of acceptance and diversity that is part of a global community.

***June** – Willow Tree Public School is not at this stage yet. It would be good for us to reach out more into our local and international communities, to give back. I think even though our students are from disadvantaged homes that it would teach them leadership and responsibility for others, not just themselves.*

Emerging understanding number five - The researcher explored with the participants their concept of school culture and how it relates to the Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values.

***Shekinah** – Our school culture is very positive in nature. I think this is mainly because we are all motivated by similar things and we get along so well. Our principal sets the tone throughout the school. She is very professional and yet she also is friendly and builds trusting relationships. By our principal modeling trusting relationships her behaviour is evident and it is **consistent** with her belief system and the **belief system** of the **school community**.*

***Maureen** – Our principal does little and big things to **show appreciation** and to help us all work together. She sets our schedules so that we have time during the working day to work in teams to plan for student success. This helps to create a collaborative team and it provides us with time that we can spend **focusing** on our **SIP goals** to meet the needs of all learners. She provides us with PD that focuses on our SIP goals and also helps to further build positive relationships.*

***Jean**- I think that by having a belief system that all students can succeed is very pivotal to our school culture and to what we all believe is important. By our school community embracing the **belief that all students can succeed**, we then believe that we can make a difference. I believe that our students would not be succeeding as well as what they are if we did not believe in them.*

***John** – Our school is thriving because of the **positive interactions** between **adults** in the building and this translates into **positive interactions** with the **students**. Having positive relationships clearly defines who we are as a school community and it clearly defines our school culture.*

***Trenton** – We are also involved in **teacher moderation** and **team teaching** at Lake Dore Public School. I think this will happen the way it happens due to the positive culture and the trusting relationships that have been built at our school. Due to this, teacher moderation and team teaching is very effective.*

***Shekinah** – If we as a staff did not trust each other, we would not be trusting enough to watch one of our colleagues teach and then discuss the facilitation of the teaching methods and the engagement of the students.*

Emerging understanding number six - The researcher explored, with the participants, their understanding of school culture and how it relates to the Level of Basic Understanding.

Trenton - Our principal has helped us to jointly come up with a common vision for the school. By her leadership, she has us working **collaboratively** together on our **SIP** and we also plan in our **divisional teams**. She trusts us and that is important. Our principal provides opportunities for us to take on various leadership roles throughout the school. If she did not trust us, I do not think that she would so freely share the leadership of the school.

Gabriel – Our principal is a very positive leader who **shares the leadership roles** with us. She is always asking for our **input on decisions** and depending on the project or the situation, she is fine with us planning and making decisions for the school (i.e. assemblies, fun days). We are trusted.

June – Because we feel trusted and we feel as if our opinions and decisions matter, then we also **project these beliefs** onto our students in our classroom. This entire **belief system and leadership effects the school culture**, and luckily for us, it affects it in a positive manner.

Gordon – We have **PLCs** at our school where we are able to focus on our **SIP** and we are provided with **PD** focused on our SIP goals. We are able to plan with our principal what **PD** is important and what we would like to focus on during our PLCs. So we feel as if we have a voice in our PD and in our growth both personally and professionally. Meeting in PLCs has really helped our staff to work more collectively together and to be able to share and take risks.

John – Our principal provides us time when we can share our accomplishments or the accomplishments of our students. Through monthly assemblies we recognize student success, and it is not just academic successes.

Trenton - Our **SIP** provides us with a **common vision** and a **common set of goals** that we can work towards as a staff to meet the needs of the students. It provides the teaching staff with an opportunity to share in the decision-making process that affects all of us as a school. **The leadership is shared.**

Student Achievement

Emerging understanding number seven - The researcher then explored, with the participants, their understanding of student achievement and how it encompasses “Students” and the belief that “All Students Can Succeed”.

Trenton – We believe and promote that **“All Students Can Succeed”**. I think this belief is very important because it sets an attitude and a mindset that no matter what, we believe in all of our students, not just some of them. This belief has helped with our student achievement levels.

Maureen - This belief does transfer into student achievement, because the students know that we believe in their abilities and skills and that we will help them succeed no matter what. I think this belief helps students to be motivated to learn and succeed because they know that a caring adult believes that they can succeed. I believe they try harder because of this.

Jean – At Willow Tree Public School, it is crucial that we believe and promote that All Students can Succeed. Due to this belief statement our student achievement levels are where they are because our students know that adults believe in them and believe in their skills and abilities.

Gordon – We believe and care in their skills and abilities not just academically, but socially and emotionally as well.

John – Some of our parent population also believe in their children’s success and some do not know how to. It is the leadership at the school level that is promoting and believing in these students, this is important for consistency in their lives.

Gabriel – Many of our parents from Lake Dore Public School believe that their child can succeed. Sometimes this belief by parents is also a barrier because they may project unrealistic expectations onto their child and they may push them and push beyond what is reasonable. It is our responsibility as the educators to work with parents to set realistic goals and expectations for their child and to understand developmental stages of childhood and adolescents.

Trenton - If parents set unrealistic expectations for their child this can actually hinder their progress and also hinder their relationship with the school. Sometimes parents will try to blame the school for their child not performing the way they think they should perform. Working at a school with this type of a population we have to be aware of this dynamic and be able to work with all parents and all students for the good of the child.

Emerging understanding number eight - The researcher then explored, with the teachers, the concept of student achievement and how it relates to the “Teacher” - purposeful, reflective teaching and learning.

Maureen – If you believe all students can succeed that is only step one. As a teacher it is my responsibility to help my **students succeed and to learn**, believing in them is important, but setting up a learning environment where I (and a team of teachers) have reflected on the expectations from the curriculum that need to be taught and then as a school team we decide how to teach these expectations to the diverse population of learners in each of our classrooms is the next step in student achievement.

Shekinah – We need to be creative with our lessons and our planning and our re-planning. When we are creating lessons we need to know where our students are at in the beginning, and where we need to take them. I always do a pre-test to discover their skills and abilities prior to beginning a unit of study. I also continually assess and re-assess and look for their feedback as well. It is an on-going process. At the end of a unit I do a post-test to see how much they have learned and what still needs to be re-enforced. To me this is purposeful, reflective teaching and learning.

June – Creativity is important in teaching. I think by planning as a division to meet the needs of our students is key to keeping focused on common goals and our common vision for the school. I then like to take these ideas and goals and make them my own, using my teaching and learning styles to meet the collective and individual needs of all my students.

Gordon – The Ontario Ministry of Education sets out what we need to teach in the various

curriculum documents. It is up to us individually and as a school to then decide how and when we will teach it. At Willow Tree Public School we have a SIP that outlines our common goals and vision for the school related to the goals of the board. As divisional and grade level teams we then meet to decide what and when we will teach certain units. We then look at how we will teach these units. When I teach lessons in class I ensure that my students know why I am teaching particular skills and what I am looking for from their work. We discuss this by reviewing rubrics and anchor charts. Daily they know what I am teaching, why and what I am looking for from them. They surprise me all the time with their creativity. I am then able to discuss with them collectively and individually their learning and I am able to refine my practices in the process.

Emerging understanding number nine - The researcher then explored their understanding of the Principal as being a leader and an advocate.

Jean - At our school I believe that we advocate for the students. Our principal supports this and provides us with resources and leadership opportunities to provide the students with opportunities to have their opinions expressed and heard. We demonstrate and model for them how to advocate for themselves. Teaching advocacy is tied into leadership. The principal at our school helps to set the tone for advocacy and provides all of us with opportunities to better support our community and to make everyone feel as if they belong.

Gordon – Often our students do not have a voice and believe that even if and when they speak they are not heard. So our school culture embraces a caring and respectful culture that promotes student leadership and students advocating for themselves and for others. All staff, including administration, needs to be confident in their roles before they are willing to yield power to students. At Willow Tree Public School we are comfortable and confident in doing so. It is a must in order to teach our students skills that they will use for a lifetime. The principal is very comfortable sharing the leadership role with us.

Trenton – We have a community focus at our school, helping our local and international communities. Our principal is a strong supporter of this. It provides our students with a purpose beyond themselves and it is developing responsibility and leadership skills within our students.

Gabriel – By taking on various causes and supporting local and international organizations our students are developing advocacy skills for themselves and others. They are providing opportunities for their voice to be heard in causes that they believe in.

Gordon – At Willow Tree Public School we have several multi-cultural events throughout the year designed to bring all cultures together and to celebrate their unique traditions (i.e. multi-cultural dinner). This helps to promote a culture of unity and belonging and it demonstrates tolerance and acceptance. Our principal models these attributes for us and for the entire community.

Table 5.26 discusses in brief detail the researcher’s reflections on the focus group session. Further detail and analysis of the data collected during phase four will be emphasized in Chapter six.

Table 5.26: Researcher's reflections on the focus group – Phase four

Researcher's Reflections on the focus group and the discussion that resulted from the nine (9) emergent understandings:

- The central ideas and discussions that emerged from the focus group emphasized and corroborated the findings from phases one, two, and three.
- The teachers emphasized caring and compassion for their students. They discussed the fact that their belief system was that All Students Can Succeed and that this was one of the main guiding beliefs of their staff.
- All eight teachers discussed relationships as being extremely important to the building of job satisfaction, school culture, and student achievement. Relationships were a central theme to all key stakeholders at the school and they emphasized them as being “the glue” that held everything else in place.
- The teachers seemed very committed and compassionate about their jobs and saw their teaching jobs as a career and as a calling, not just a job that they were performing from 9 o'clock to 3 o'clock every day.
- The teachers seemed intrinsically motivated and enjoyed having autonomy in their careers as well as collaboration. They believed both were important and led to job satisfaction and a more positive school culture.
- One teacher discussed that she was motivated to serve others and that by helping others this led to an increase in her job satisfaction. Another teacher discussed being motivated to help students achieve and learn in order to enrich their lives and the lives of others around them.
- There was a real sense of community during the discussions and this was evident in conversations with all teachers. The teachers did discuss the differences in their two schools and that the socio-economic factors had an impact on their interactions with students. However, all teachers believed that socio-economic factors were not an excuse that they believed in setting high expectations for all students regardless of the socio-economic barriers.

5.12 Summary of findings

Many key concepts and emergent understandings were taken from data presented in both Chapters four and five. One of the key concepts that emerged in the presentation and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data is that what teachers do matters. All the teacher participants in this study reported to have positive effects on the lives of the students, staff, and parents in each school community. Through the data analysis and interpretation from Chapters four and five a reciprocal relationship was found to have occurred affecting the interactions of school community members in a positive way. Job satisfaction and school culture were found to be important predictors of student achievement both quantitatively and qualitatively. Research study participant teachers and principals reported that they were motivated intrinsically and viewed teaching as a

career and a calling. The teachers and principals discussed the importance of building relationships centered around caring and collaboration, thus building a positive school community where the members feel as if they belong.

The participant teachers and principals all stated that they believed that they could make a difference in the lives of every student and that they believed that every student could succeed and learn. These teachers and principals believed in these statements even given the understanding that student characteristics, such as lower socio-economic status, or affluence cannot be changed. A belief that they can all make a difference in the lives of every individual student, no matter their characteristics was what seemed to motivate and drive the research participants.

The researcher used the data presentation and analysis from Chapter five to help answer research questions one, two and three in Chapter six and research question four in Chapter seven. The summary of these findings was further explored in Chapters six and seven.

5.13 Chapter summary

Chapter five is a culmination of the qualitative data collection and analysis from phases three and four of this research study. The data were sequentially collected, analyzed and interpreted demonstrating that the findings from each phase affected the process of the later phases. Chapter five continued the sequential process of explaining the inter-relationships between job satisfaction and school culture, and whether this relationship affects student achievement. Chapter six explores in further detail the results of the analysis from phases one, two, three and four. Several diagrams are presented in Chapter six that subscribe to the inter-relationship between the three concepts: job satisfaction, school culture, and student achievement. Chapter six provides an explanation for research questions one, two, and three.

CHAPTER 6 : INTERPRETATION OF DATA: RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE, TWO AND THREE

6.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter reports on the emergent understandings from the data that provide a response to the first three research questions in sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 respectively. These understandings are explored in detail based upon similarities and differences in the findings between the two schools in the study. The study found that the differences between the two schools are related to the distinctly different socio-economic contexts of the two schools. Current related research literature is reviewed throughout the chapter.

A summary of the relational findings of the study is discussed in section 6.5. An understanding of the relational aspects between school culture, elementary teacher job satisfaction and student achievement reveals the critical role of a collaborative form of leadership to ensure sustained increases in student achievement in the schools involved in this research.

6.2 Response to research question one

Concluding a response to the research study's first question is paradoxical in nature. The question is as follows:

1. *What factors are relational between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture in two high-performing elementary schools in Ontario, Canada?*

From the research literature, it would seem that at times the messaging on job satisfaction varies in nature from the messaging on developing and maintaining school culture. Job satisfaction research touts autonomy, personal achievement and personal recognition as areas employees cite as positively increasing their levels of job satisfaction, whereas, the research on building and developing positive school cultures discusses the collective and the collaborative. Moreover, this research study found that the development of elementary teacher job satisfaction is relational to the development of school culture, as a need exists for stability, structures and sustainability in order for teachers to be satisfied with their jobs.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below represent the relational findings from Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School participant responses regarding job satisfaction and school culture. The classification of this synthesized information was derived from the analysis of the data from phases one, two, three and four. The data show a high degree of similarity between the results for the two schools with some specific differences. Bolded italics are used in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 to indicate responses that were unique to the respective schools.

Willow Tree Public School

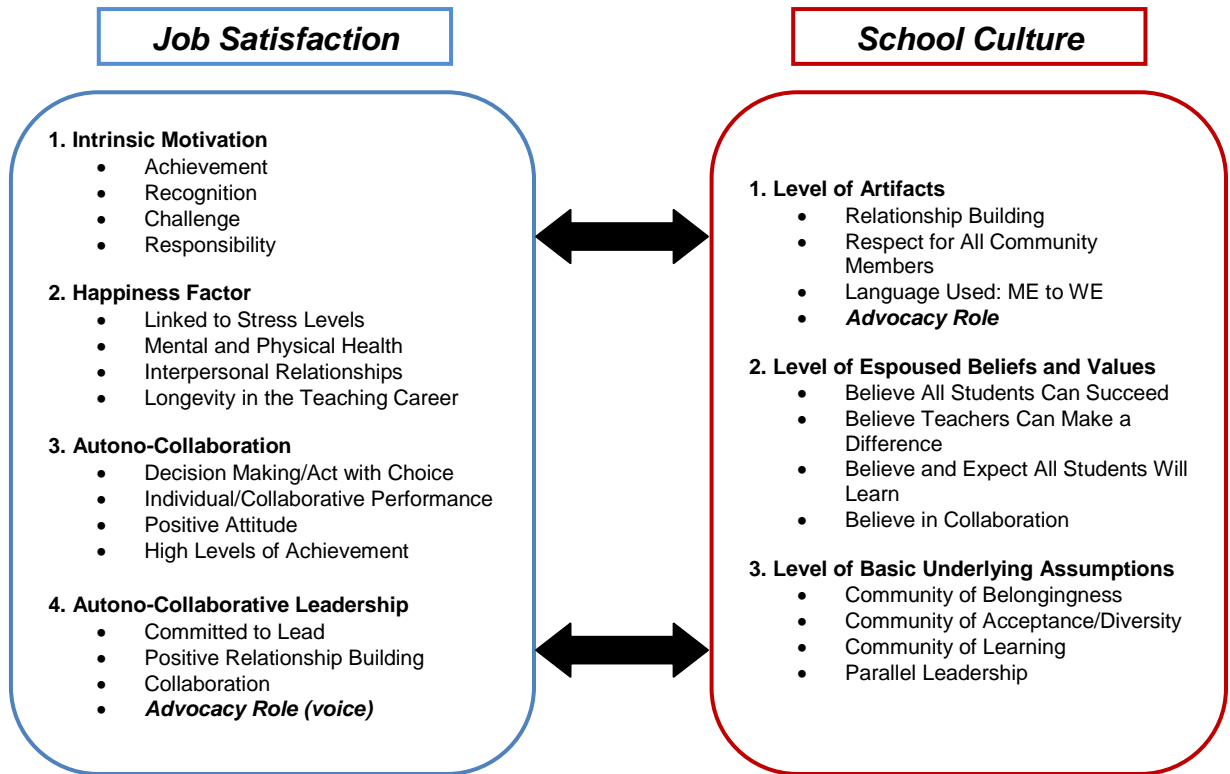


Figure 6.1: Relational factors between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture at Willow Tree Public School

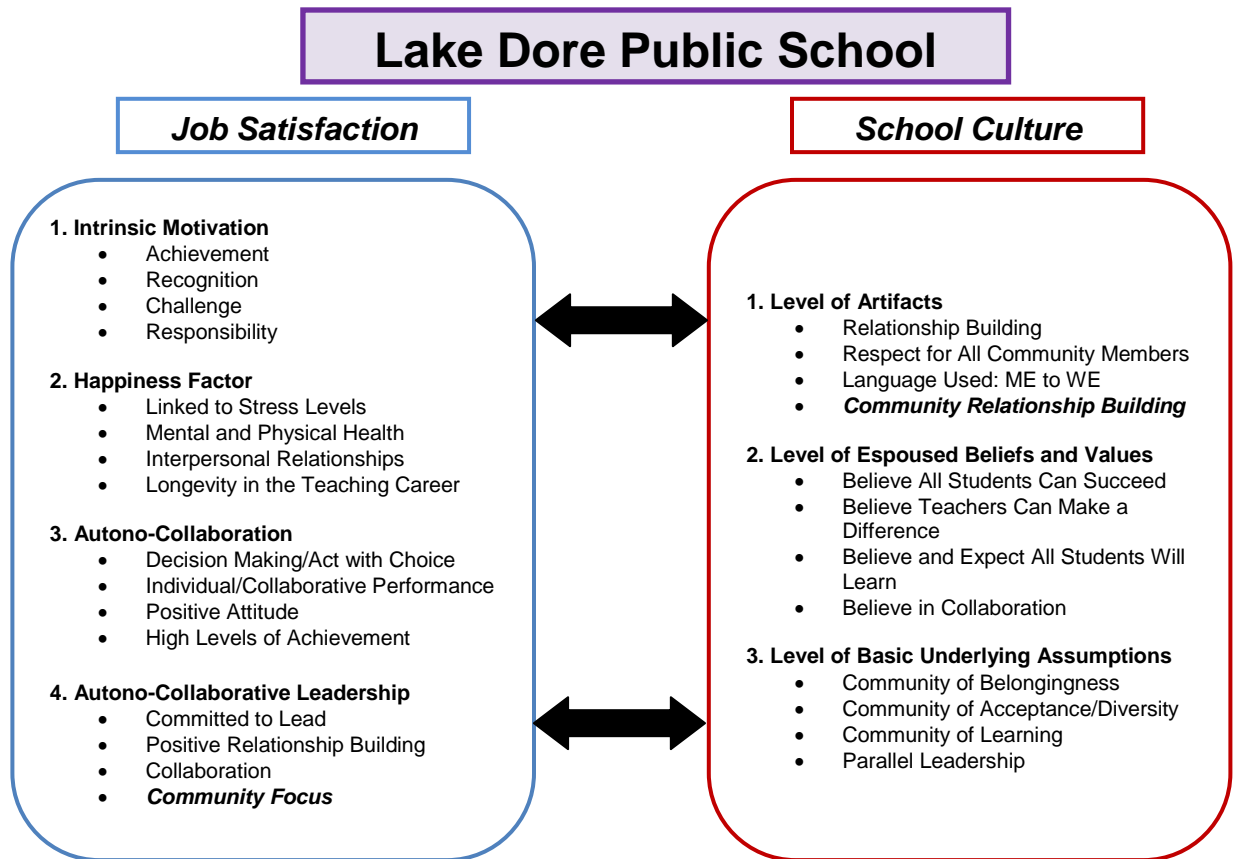


Figure 6.2: Relational factors between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture at Lake Dore Public School

As can be seen from Figures 6.1 and 6.2, the relational factors in response to research question number one under job satisfaction presented four major categories: **Intrinsic Motivation, Happiness Factor, Autono-Collaboration** and **Autono-Collaborative Leadership**. There are four sub-categories under each of these four major categories of factors which together culminate to strengthen job satisfaction. All four main categories and the four sub-categories are holistically equal and overlapping to job satisfaction. However, depending on the context, the leadership style or the main features of an elementary teacher or principal’s personality, from the data analysis and interpretation, at times some of these factors were found to be more dominant than others.

The relational factors in response to research question number one under school culture at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School presented three major categories: **Level of Artifacts, Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values** and **Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions**. There are four sub-categories under each of these categories.

The discussions in sections 6.2.1 through 6.2.7 explore the similarities in response to research question number one between Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School regarding the major categories of factors and their subsequent sub-

categories under job satisfaction and school culture, as well as the relational aspects in response to research question number one between these two central themes. Section 6.2.8 explores the differences between the two schools in response to research question number one.

6.2.1 Similarities between the two schools related to the job satisfaction factor of Intrinsic Motivation

One of the most-used research definitions of job satisfaction is by Locke (1976) who defined it as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experience” (Locke, 1976, p. 134). Locke’s definition emphasizes the importance of both effects, that is, both feeling and cognition, or thinking. When people think, they have feelings about what they think. When both thinking and feeling are involved with regards to job satisfaction, it is through the interpretivist lens that teachers perceive and evaluate their jobs based on their assessment of what is important to them. One teacher in the study commented on how he woke up every morning looking forward to coming to work. Another teacher discussed her love for the job! The researcher was cognizant that while collecting data on job satisfaction, it was the interpretation of the teachers’ and principals’ perceptions that was observed, recorded and analyzed. It will also be discussed that their perceptive thoughts and feelings towards job satisfaction are relational to the school culture.

The first main concept in response to research question number one under job satisfaction for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Intrinsic Motivation**. This classification came about from the data analysis of the previous phases in the research study. Elementary teachers involved in the interviews, survey and focus group all reported job satisfaction to be intrinsic in nature and that extrinsic rewards were less important to them. The teachers subscribed to the idea that intrinsically motivating and satisfying jobs led to higher levels of commitment and performance. A few teacher participants discussed the fact that they found teaching to be a very motivating career as they were able to do what they did best every single day. They discussed that teaching was very rewarding for them. Two of the elementary teachers did discuss extrinsic rewards such as pay, benefits and vacation, and they seemed happily satisfied with the levels that they were receiving, thus the remaining motivating factors were intrinsic in nature. According to McGregor (1960), the level of pay and additional extrinsic rewards must be adequate to meet a certain level of compensation before a person who would normally be intrinsically motivated does in fact become intrinsically motivated.

The main **intrinsic motivators** that the majority of elementary teachers (85%) discussed in response to research question number one were **achievement, recognition, being challenged** in their jobs, having **responsibility** and being responsible to themselves and others. Each of these constitutes a sub-category in the data for the job satisfaction factor of intrinsic motivation and will be discussed in terms of their relational aspects with regards to school culture.

Achievement has been studied by Carol Dweck (2006), a psychology professor from Stanford University, who states *that what people believe, they will achieve*. She thinks that people's beliefs about themselves and the nature of their abilities determines how they interpret their experiences and can set the boundaries on what they accomplish. Dweck (2006) applies her research to most human capabilities, and she yields the belief that *mastery is a mindset*. From the researcher's interpretive perspective, the teachers and principals believed in their own capabilities to achieve and thus transferred the intent of these beliefs in the form of high expectations of the student achievement levels in both schools. Believing in achievement and being motivated by this belief improved both their job satisfaction and the culture of the school. Indeed, the teachers exuded a positive upbeat confidence.

Recognition was noted by all the elementary teachers as a form of feedback, but not as a goal in and of itself. Recognition for teachers at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School helped them to gauge where they were at and where they needed to go. It was used as a self-reflective tool. The teachers seemed to be aware that they would not always receive recognition, but enjoyed it when they did and discussed it as leading to higher levels of job satisfaction. The teacher participants at both sites discussed recognition as being important in also motivating their students and other staff members. They discussed how they believed in both personal and collective recognition as a form of feedback and as evidence of meeting goals and expectations set out as a school.

Both principals discussed giving immediate feedback and recognition and its importance in building positive relationships and a stronger more cohesive school culture. By being recognized, the principals believed that teachers tended to feel more satisfied with their jobs and more appreciated for their efforts. Being recognized in big and little ways was key, as being recognized did not need to always take place at an assembly or in front of peers; little thank you notes and kind words went a long way when developing staff relations and improving job satisfaction. The principals also provided feedback on assignments and tasks throughout the school. They believed that providing feedback was important to staff growth and development, and the more immediate the feedback the better.

Within the Ontario public school system there is a mandatory, formal evaluative feedback process entitled the "Teacher Performance Appraisal" (TPA). A teacher is required to have a TPA every five years. It is a formal evaluative process that is to be interactive between the principal and the teacher. The principal initially meets with the teacher and a time is set up for an observation. The principal then observes a lesson and provides formal feedback to the teacher. Once the feedback is discussed, a TPA report is written by the principal and then reviewed and signed by both parties. The two principal participants discussed this formal evaluative feedback process as a time to celebrate the work and accomplishments of the teacher as well as to discuss future goals. Due to the fact that the TPA process only occurs every five years, the Ontario system has also put into place an Annual Learning Plan (ALP) that every teacher must complete and discuss with his/her principal. The teacher is required to choose two goals that he or she will work towards throughout the school year. Often the goals are linked to the School

Improvement Plan (SIP). The principals and the teachers discussed the importance of this formalized feedback process, however, both the principals and the teachers believed that informal, consistent and immediate feedback was the most useful to their daily work as well as to their own personal professional growth.

Being *challenged* in their work as a teacher was important to overall job satisfaction and thus led to a positive school culture. The teachers were challenged and motivated to share a common cause and a common mission. The more that the teachers spoke about their teaching career, the more they discussed the *deep satisfaction* that they had with their careers. With increased satisfaction, they in turn increased their desire to *accomplish outstanding work* for both themselves and for their students.

The teachers discussed various challenges in their teaching profession such as meeting individual student needs, differentiating the curriculum and also embedding various learning styles into their lesson and unit plans. At times they found this area of their work to be stressful and to have the potential to be daunting due to the long hours of preparation and planning time, especially the teachers at Willow Tree Public School, as the students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds and their toolkits were not as full as the students from Lake Dore Public School. Teachers also reported that writing report cards and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) was at times challenging. Due to the nature of their jobs, this extra paperwork needed to be accomplished outside of their teaching day.

However, most of the elementary teachers (90%) discussed these various challenges as an opportunity to grow and reflect upon their teaching practices. They used language in terms of growth language and as collective language when speaking about challenges. The language used by all of the elementary teachers encompassed the collective “WE”, not “ME”. Language used to describe job satisfaction and school culture was spoken with a very positive attitude and belief system.

The principals discussed providing leadership opportunities and sharing in leadership roles as providing extra challenges to the teacher’s daily responsibilities. According to the principals, providing teachers with an opportunity to challenge themselves to grow in areas that they would not necessarily have the chance to explore if they were just a classroom teacher was essential to job satisfaction. It was also important in building of relationships and creating a positive school culture. The elementary teacher participants agreed with these statements.

Having *responsibility* and being responsible to themselves and others was a key component to job satisfaction and an overall cohesive school culture. Howard Gardner (2007) discusses this form of work-related responsibility as a calling, when “one feels an imperative to do specific work” (Gardner, 2007, p. 135). The implicit responsibilities of the teaching profession were seen by the participants as a mission. They believed that their mission was to do good work and they were responsible for the quality of their work (Gardner, 2007). Several teachers did speak about their jobs not just in terms of jobs, but in terms of a “career” and a “calling”. Infused within this notion of

responsibility is that of a personal as well as a collective responsibility. The teachers believed that they had an explicit responsibility to carry out the tasks of being a teacher. The positive attitudes could be interpreted as simply high levels of job satisfaction, yet what clearly underlies their work is a deep belief in something beyond themselves. They viewed their work as a service to others, and that it was not just necessarily about fulfilling a goal for themselves, but instead about being bound by a deep sense of collective responsibility to do their work effectively and to help others in the process, thus continuing to build upon their satisfaction as well as a positive school culture.

6.2.2 Similarities between the two schools related to the job satisfaction factor of Happiness

The second category classified under the theme job satisfaction in response to research question number one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is the **Happiness Factor**. The researcher coined the term “Happiness Factor” to describe what she saw as evidence from the participants as being *happy* and *satisfied* with their work. This classification came about from the data analysis of the previous phases in the research study. Affective job satisfaction for teachers reflects the degree of pleasure or happiness their job induces (Weiss & Daus, 1999).

For the purposes of the research study, happiness with their jobs equals satisfaction with their work, as many participants described these very aspects as synonymous during the in-depth interview phase and the focus group phase. Happiness with their teaching career was linked to *stress levels*. The less stress teachers felt with regards to their jobs, the happier and more satisfied they seemed.

Stress is not unusual or abnormal. It is an everyday occurrence that every teacher and principal reacts to in either a positive or a negative manner. Stress is the effect a teacher’s body experiences as it adjusts to ever-changing circumstances (Butts, DeJoy, Schaffer, Wilson & Vandenberg, 2009).

The concept of *stress* may be confused with *challenge*, however, these concepts are not the same (Butts et al., 2009). The teachers discussed their jobs as being challenging. They saw a challenge as energizing them psychologically and physically, and the challenge motivated them to learn new skills and master their jobs. When a challenge was met, the teachers felt satisfied with their jobs and felt a sense of achievement. Thus, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. The importance of challenge in elementary teachers’ work lives is probably what one teacher referred to when making the comment “a little stress is good for you.” Recently, fifteen percent of Canadian workers cited poor interpersonal relations as causing workplace stress (Statistics Canada, 2001). Fortunately, staff at both sites were committed to building and maintaining *positive relationships* with all school community members which they cited as actually decreasing the stress level of the entire school community.

While *some stress is normal*, research has shown that stress can lead to the development of chronic mental, physical and psychological conditions within a few years (Statistics

Canada, 2001). There are numerous physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms associated with workplace stress. Absenteeism is a behavioural symptom resulting from workplace stress. Of all the 31 teachers who returned their mixed questionnaire, the average number of days that teachers were absent at Willow Tree Public School was three (3) days and the average number of days that teachers were absent at Lake Dore Public School was six (6) days. These numbers are lower than the district school board average of 8.4 days of absenteeism per year. According to a Statistics Canada study (2006), workers who rated their *physical and mental health* as fair to poor were more dissatisfied with their jobs. The dissatisfied workers took off an average of three times the number of days as did workers who were satisfied with their jobs (Statistics Canada, 2006). All of the elementary teachers who participated in the interviews, questionnaire and focus group reported having very good mental and physical health as well as low stress levels and absenteeism rates. They all seemed *happy* and *satisfied* with their jobs and this led to a more *collaborative* and *positive school culture*.

The **Happiness Factor** was in abundance at both sites and positively affected participants' *interpersonal relationships* at work. All of the elementary teachers discussed interpersonal relationships as being very important to their levels of job satisfaction as well as to the school culture. According to the research participants, interpersonal relationships were key to all areas of job satisfaction and school culture. As discussed with the teachers and administrators at the two sites, relationships seemed to be the glue that held job satisfaction and school culture together. Positive and collaborative interpersonal relationships were discussed as vital to all aspects of school life, which encompassed personal, social, emotional and academic areas. Relationship building and maintenance of positive relationships were essential for all stakeholders. Positive relationships led to more positive school cultures and more satisfied teachers who felt as if they could trust each other.

The principals clearly stated that it was their responsibility to demonstrate leadership in the area of relationship building with all members of the school community. Both principals cited positive and collaborative interpersonal relationships as the number one area that was required for job satisfaction and a positive school culture. Positive interpersonal relationships were seen as the foundation that everything else was built upon.

Longevity in the teaching career was an indicator that teachers enjoyed their jobs and were satisfied with a career in teaching. The elementary teachers at Willow Tree Public School had been teaching for an average of sixteen (16) years and had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine (9) years. The elementary teachers at Lake Dore Public School had been teaching an average of fourteen (14) years and had been teaching at their current school for an average of nine and a half (9.5) years. Longevity as a single factor does not ensure that a teacher is an exemplary expert teacher, however it is one indicator that teachers are satisfied with their careers, as dissatisfaction with a job leads to high levels of staff turnover (NIOSH, 1999). Other factors need to accompany longevity for job satisfaction to be relational to a positive school culture. Gardner (2007) discusses longevity as being crucial in developing expert skills, abilities

and talents in a certain area. However, Gardner (2007) acknowledges that longevity alone does not make a person an expert, and many other factors need to accompany the longevity factor.

6.2.3 Similarities between the two schools related to the job satisfaction factor of Autono-Collaboration

The third concept classified under the theme job satisfaction in response to research question number one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Autono-Collaboration (AC)**. Autono-Collaboration (au-to'-no-col-lab'-or-a-tion) is a term that was created by the researcher. It is defined as *“the motivation of an individual being able to act with choice, thus being autonomous, and the individual is also agreeably motivated to be collaborative with others”*. The researcher created the term to describe what she saw as evidence from the participants as being both satisfied and happy working autonomously and yet also recognizing the need to be willing and wanting to work collaboratively. There is a sense of collective responsibility when a person is displaying Autono-Collaboration. Being socially responsible to collaborate with others and to also be creative both individually and as a group is primary to a person having Autono-Collaboration.

Through Autono-Collaboration, the individual is motivated to reflect on the collaborative efforts and use the collective understanding and information to complete job tasks that also require individual time and effort, for example, a teacher facilitating a lesson in a classroom, or an executive preparing and making a presentation.

By employing Autono-Collaboration, the individual teacher remains motivated to focus on the vision, beliefs and values of the school community, however, the individual teacher reflects on and uses the collaborative efforts and becomes autonomously creative with the collective in order to facilitate the intentional learning within the individual classroom. In essence, the teacher individualizes the collaborative efforts by using his or her talents and teaching style to present the content of the lessons to students. The teacher's individual creativity is then shared with staff in collaborative working sessions. There is a committed social responsibility to collaborate with others in a community environment. Autono-Collaboration is circular in nature. Teachers are constantly working collaboratively and autonomously to create and re-create understandings and knowledge by being motivated to focus on the vision and purposes of the school community. The individualized re-creation of knowledge and understanding is the teacher's individual perceptions of their social reality. Teachers individually and autonomously reconstruct the collaborative knowledge.

When different individuals execute a similar task, each will do so in a unique manner using various methodologies depending on his or her talents, abilities, efforts, past and present experiences as well as his or her own perceptions of reality that are associated with the task. There is an individual component within the collaborative component that cannot be denied. This statement does not suggest that people work in isolation; in fact, quite the opposite. It emphasizes a symbiotic relationship between collaboration and

autonomy, for in the workforce one cannot exist without the other. People bring to their jobs their own individuality all the while being motivated to act collaboratively.

An additional job satisfaction component cited by all of the elementary teachers was being a part of the *decision-making* process within the school. They saw the decision-making process as a collaborative process, but also recognized that they were able to *act with free will and choice* as to whether or not to participate in the decision-making process within the school. Due to their high levels of job satisfaction and the fact that they all cared about the students and cared to help them succeed, the teachers wanted to be involved in the decision making within the school, as they believed that their voice affected the entire school community. The teachers saw it as their responsibility to be involved and so actively chose to become involved. They believed that their principals' leadership style is what led to their involvement in collectively making decisions and wanting to act with choice to help make decisions, thus positively affecting the school culture. All the elementary teachers spoke of a leadership that was shared between them and their principal, based on each of the principal's willingness to collaborate.

By sharing the decision making and also wanting to share in the decisions of the school, both the principals and the teachers recognize that there is no single person who has all of the necessary skills and knowledge to lead a school organization. All of the staff at both sites were willing to acknowledge that they needed one another in order to make the school run efficiently and effectively so that the school culture continued to be positively enhanced and that student learning was prioritized (Marzano et al., 2005). This was cited by the teachers as providing them with job satisfaction and making them feel as if their opinions and ideas really counted. No one leader can be exemplary in all dimensions of leadership as it is virtually impossible (Reeves, 2006).

Each of the two principals discussed how they actively shared the decision-making process with the teachers and their leadership styles reflected a parallel leadership approach (Crowther, 2011). The principals believed in collaboration and working together as a team to problem solve individual as well as school-wide issues. Teachers and principals also needed to be on "the same page" in terms of a shared vision for what success at their school looks like and sounds like. Without a shared vision, both parties would have been working in silos. Sharing decision making is crucial to moving the school forward with the belief that all students can succeed (Crowther, 2011).

Coupled with Autono-Collaboration is the notion of *individual and collaborative performance*. Most of the elementary teachers (85%) discussed both individual and collaborative performance as leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and they discussed how both are reciprocal in nature. Collaboration was important in order to work towards school goals, district goals and ministry goals thus affecting change at the school level. These components were cited as being very important to their job satisfaction. Surowiecki (2004) discusses that when decisions are made collaboratively they are more accurate and less risky even if the formal leader (principal) has significant expertise.

Teachers discussed both collaborative and individual performance as leading to job satisfaction. According to Reeves (2006), collaboration implies shared decision making and a willingness to put aside one's own agenda, while leadership may imply asserting a vision, accomplishing a mission, and where necessary and appropriate, exerting authority and making unilateral decisions (Reeves, 2006).

The teachers at each of the sites where the research was conducted were provided with individual discretion in terms of choosing their teaching practices and using their strengths and teaching styles to facilitate the learning in their individual classrooms. This brought them great job satisfaction and enhanced their school cultures. The teachers and principals also worked collaboratively on decisions that sought to find common ground for the school organization both on a macro and a micro level. However, the principals did discuss that at times they needed to make unilateral decisions as the formal leader of the school on issues involving staffing, safety and values. They hoped that by being transparent the teachers would continue to trust them and trust their judgment, as they were making decisions in the best interest of the entire school community.

The majority of elementary teachers (85%) believed that due to their high levels of job satisfaction, they held a *positive attitude* towards their work-life responsibilities and their interactions with others. Teachers discussed and reported both quantitatively and qualitatively that their *positive attitude* led to higher levels of job satisfaction. One teacher reported that in all situations, whether it was with a student, parent, staff member or while planning curriculum, she always tried to see the "the glass half full".

The researcher observed a very high degree of positive attitude towards work and others in both schools and believed that this attitude led to many positive factors affecting job satisfaction and school culture. The teachers and principals were positive towards their work and towards the students, *believing that all students could succeed!* Their very positive attitudes led to the belief system that all the teachers and principals can make a difference both collectively and individually. This led to an overall belief system that positively affected the school culture and job satisfaction.

If both formal and informal leaders in a school recognize that perfection is often not attainable and acknowledge that in every circumstance there will be flaws and imperfections, their attitudes will reflect this. They will have the positive attitude to magnify strengths in themselves and in others, and thus will make the school organization stronger. People will work together as a team instead of in opposition to each other (Reeves, 2006).

According to the teacher participants, their belief in Autono-Collaboration, being autonomous yet also freely choosing to act collaboratively, led to *higher levels of achievement* for themselves and their students. They believe that their collective efforts together as a staff will have a positive effect on students. Ross and Gray (2006) also found that teachers who have high expectations about their own abilities in fact affect an increase in student achievement. They call this perception held by teachers "collective teacher efficacy" (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 182).

The teachers' collaborative efforts were evident when working on the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and professional development activities/sessions through Professional Learning Communities. The teachers used the knowledge gained through these collaborative efforts to autonomously and actively reflect on how to apply this knowledge in the classroom setting, thus in effect leading to *higher levels of achievement* for both themselves and the students. The teachers were very motivated to set higher expectations and goals for themselves and collectively as a group. This translated into higher expectations set for students and thus it could be argued led to *higher levels of achievement* on the part of the students due to the fact that the teachers were very satisfied with their jobs. According to Goleman et al. (2002), leaders with strength in the area of achievement also have high personal standards that drive them to constantly seek performance improvements, for themselves and for the people they lead.

6.2.4 Similarities between the two schools related to the job satisfaction factor of Autono-Collaborative Leadership

The fourth concept classified under the theme job satisfaction in response to research question number one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Autono-Collaborative Leadership (ACL)**. Autono-Collaborative (au-to'-no-col-lab'-or-a-tive) Leadership is derived from the term *Autono-Collaboration*, also created by the researcher. It is a term that the researcher created to describe both collaborative and individual leadership efforts.

Autono-Collaborative Leadership is defined as “*a commitment to a role to mobilize others in which an individual is able to act with choice, thus being autonomous, and the same individual is also agreeably committed and motivated to work collaboratively with others, thus sharing their roles*”. By displaying Autono-Collaborative Leadership, the individual is committed to the leadership role and is committed and motivated to work in a positive, collaborative relationship with others. Social and community responsibility, calling to mind the concept of altruism where there is a sense of personal responsibility to take action, was clearly evident at both sites. When the principals and teachers discussed their school communities, the researcher developed the understanding that they were motivated to act in accordance with the social, personal and academic needs of themselves and others. Throughout the research project the teachers and principals discussed their individual responsibility to the entire school community. They discussed a personal responsibility and accountability to their work that fostered within them both individually and collectively community beliefs and values.

During the decision-making process, the individual reflects on the collaborative efforts and uses the collective understanding/information to complete job tasks that require both individual and collaborative time and effort, for example, a principal writing a school report or finalizing the school's School Improvement Plan (SIP), or a teacher acting in the capacity of a divisional leader.

By displaying Autono-Collaborative Leadership, the individual teacher or administrator remains motivated to focus on the vision, beliefs and values of the school community,

but also reflects on and uses the collaborative efforts and shares leadership by becoming creative within the collective so as to help advance the intentional vision, beliefs and values of the school community. The individual teacher or administrator autonomously reflects on the collaborative efforts of others and uses their individual reflections and ideas to further work in a collaborative leadership role. The teacher or administrator's individual creativity is then shared with staff in collaborative working sessions.

Autono-Collaborative Leadership (ACL) is circular in nature. Teachers and administrators are constantly working collaboratively and autonomously to create and re-create understandings and knowledge by being motivated to focus on the vision and purposes of the school community. The individualized re-creation of knowledge and understanding is the teacher or principal's individual perceptions of their social reality. They then autonomously reconstruct the collaborative knowledge through the sharing of committed leadership roles within the school community. In any job capacity, people first enter a job experience on an individual basis, starting with the interview process and continuing on through the hiring process and the beginning to work phase. It cannot be denied that people are individuals first and that they enter any life experience that way. It is through the active choice of wanting to interact and work with others that they display Autono-Collaboration and Autono-Collaborative Leadership.

The majority of elementary teachers (80%) who participated in the research study believed that it was their individual as well as collective responsibility to make a ***commitment to lead***. They discussed having a choice as to whether they wanted to participate in leadership opportunities within the school and within their own individual classroom. They saw leadership as an opportunity to be both accountable and responsible for their job satisfaction, for the learning of their students, and for the school culture. A commitment to lead carried with it an ownership component, an ownership for the collective as well as for themselves.

This response is reflected in findings of Andrews and Crowther (2002), who state, a new philosophical world of teacher professionalism is emerging, one that they label neopedagogical – a world where teaching enhances the lives of children through knowledge creation, sustainable values, and the development of futures-oriented capabilities. Neopedagogy is associated with the power of teachers' collective engagement in the processes of holistic school development and the realization in their workplaces of their talents and gifts as individual professionals. The work of teachers of this caliber is that of teacher leaders – they are the teachers of the future (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

Positive relationship building was discussed by all elementary teachers in both the focus group phase and the in-depth interview phase as being a common element that all believed led both to their job satisfaction and to their leadership abilities within the school. They saw the positive relationships as a main factor as to why the school's culture was so vibrant and positive. Positive relationship building led to wanting to collaborate with others due to trust and respect. Both principals saw their role as instrumental in creating and maintaining positive relationships.

Collaboration was a theme that was continually discussed throughout the interviews and focus group. It seemed to be quite a focus and very important to all areas of school life at the two sites. Teachers at both sites believed that due to the collaborative nature of the school culture their job satisfaction was increased. Teachers enjoyed being collaborative with others and scheduled many opportunities both formal and informal to work collaboratively together. The researcher noted that as teachers spoke about job satisfaction they used language emphasizing the ‘ME’, however, when they discussed school culture, they shifted their language and spoke in terms of ‘WE’. The language shift from ME to WE was due to the collaborative nature of the school culture and the positive interpersonal relationships that occurred at all levels. Trust and respect seemed to be paramount with all relationships and this was discussed as important to building and maintaining positive relationships and a positive school culture, which all led to increases in job satisfaction.

6.2.5 Similarities between two schools related to school culture factor of Level of Artifacts

The first concept classified under the theme school culture in response to research question one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Level of Artifacts**. Artifacts as discussed by Schein (2010) are at the surface of any school culture. Subscribing to Schein’s (2010) classification came about from the data analysis of the previous phases in the research study, as Schein’s description of levels of school culture helped the researcher to contextualize the information reported by the participants. Artifacts include all the phenomena that teachers and administrators see, hear, and feel at school. It includes manners of address, emotional displays, published list of values, observable rituals, visible behaviour of members, climate of school, and organizational processes that explain how a school operates (Schein, 2010). Essential to understanding Level of Artifacts is recognizing that artifacts are easy to observe but difficult to decipher (Gagliardi, 1990). Mitchell and Sackney (2009) also highlight the importance of cultural artifacts, particularly language, in managing school development processes successfully.

Relationship building is essential to the development and maintenance of a positive school culture and to high levels of job satisfaction as cited by the participants in the research study. The elementary teacher participants discussed that relationships needed to be built on trust. Building trusting relationships at all levels is essential. The principals saw it as their responsibility to build a school based on positive interactions with all key stakeholders. The principals discussed that they needed to be the role models for positive relations.

Trust was also discussed as being essential to building and maintaining positive relationships. The teachers discussed that by having a sense of trust with their colleagues it gave them a safe place at school to experiment, try out new creative ideas and receive helpful feedback in a no-risk setting. The teachers acknowledged that these positive relationships led to collaborative efforts that enhanced their teaching craft and thus enhanced the lives of their students. The teachers modelled trust and respect and built positive relationships with their students and also with their students’ parents. The

positive trusting interaction at both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School led to the enhancement of both their professional and personal growth, as they discussed how they openly talked about work as well as home life issues.

The support and trust that was developed and worked on with the teachers at both sites provided them with hope for change, and also the confidence in their abilities to embrace that hope. The teachers discussed change in positive terms and believed they could change and also their students could change. Choi, Price and Vinokur (1999) discuss how positive groups help people make positive changes, particularly if the relationships are filled with candor, trust, and psychological safety. Teachers working within a negative school culture may become defensive and more than likely would rely on their most familiar habits instead of looking to continuously improve and change (Goleman et al., 2002).

Barth (2001) stated that the relationships amongst the adults in a school have more impact on the quality and the character of the school – and on the accomplishments of students – than any other one factor. The positive relationships begin with the adults in the school building and district (Bryk et al., 1998). Positive relationships with adults in the school and with students were reported to add to teacher job satisfaction and to be an essential feature to building a strong cohesive school culture.

Respect for all community members was evidenced by the manner in which the teachers and principals spoke about their inter-relations with each other. There was definitely a language of respect with the understanding that respect was essential for the building of a positive school culture at all levels, with staff, students, parents and the community. Respect for each other was held in high regard and was also cited as a reason for high levels of job satisfaction.

All of the elementary teachers and the principals at both schools believed in being responsible for others, and they believed that this led to happiness and satisfaction with their work. It also led to their physical and mental well-being and a positive upbeat culture at both schools. The staff looked beyond themselves and had a high regard for the members of the entire school community. The belief in a higher calling and a sense of responsibility to their teaching profession led to an ease with behavioural and emotional displays of respect. The respect for all community members helped to foster a positive community school culture.

Language used: ME to WE was evident. Often as the teachers spoke about job satisfaction they would use the term ‘ME’. However, when teachers and principals discussed school culture there was a real shift in language usage from ‘ME’ to ‘WE’. Teachers and principals discussed school culture as a collaborative, group effort; they did not see it as an individual effort, but rather a collective one. The shift to using the collective ‘WE’ took time to occur as the teachers and principals worked at developing trusting relationships with each other and worked collaboratively on school projects through venues such as the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

The principals also had a direct effect on the language usage of ‘WE’. Both principals were committed to sharing leadership and saw their role as encouraging others to take on leadership roles and responsibilities by providing growth opportunities. The principals at both sites believed in parallel leadership and thus they believed and valued the ‘WE’ much more than the ‘ME’. By the principals providing and encouraging leadership opportunities, the teachers developed and maintained school-wide initiatives built on collaborative efforts of the entire school community, thus valuing the ‘WE’ more than the ‘ME’

6.2.6 Similarities between two schools related to the school culture factor of Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values

The second concept classified under the theme school culture in response to research question number one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School staff is **Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values**. In every school and school system it could be argued that the following belief statements “ought to be”:

Believe All Students Can Succeed

Believe Teachers Can Make a Positive Difference

Believe and Expect All Students Will Learn

Believe in Collaboration

All the elementary teachers and both principals who participated in the study believed in the above belief statements which were a source of identity for their schools. These belief and value statements are what drove their school’s mission and vision. The staff at Willow Tree Public School and at Lake Dore Public School discussed the process of transformation that led to these beliefs and values as it was through the collaborative efforts of working together as a team that led them to establish and value these belief statements. The principals’ leadership at both schools was pivotal in setting up and scheduling situations for staff to work collectively and cohesively together so that these beliefs and values could be recognized, understood and established as a platform for their school’s vision and mission.

Espoused beliefs and values derived from Schein’s (2010) research are what actually is happening and believed and valued at a school site. The Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values of a school community may undergo many transformations, until the group finally determines that the beliefs and values that they are espousing are valid and reliable and work within their particular school setting. The process of transformation helps to distinguish what “ought to be”, which with time does become visible from “what is” as a group works together to solve problems and to find solutions (Schein, 2010). If the espoused beliefs and values align with the underlying assumptions, then they will serve as a source of identity for the school and will become their mission (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

The data from this research study found that principal leadership becomes very important in helping the school community to espouse values and beliefs that are

reliable. The principals in the study helped to guide discussions and have their staff set reasonable and attainable goals to change the beliefs from espoused to “what is actually happening”. If the beliefs and values were only espoused, then the levels of beliefs and values would be less embedded into the central theme of school culture.

6.2.7 Similarities between two schools related to school culture factor of Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions

The third category classified under the theme school culture in response to research question number one for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions**. Basic underlying assumptions are implicit assumptions that direct behaviour (Argyris, 1976; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Subscribing to Argyris and Schon’s (1974) classification resulted from the data analysis of the previous phases in the research study.

Basic assumptions are very close in nature to what Argyris (1976) has described as “theories-in-use” – the implicit assumptions that direct behaviour, that tell elementary teachers and principals how to perceive, think and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Basic assumptions are most likely non-confrontable and non-debatable, and are often difficult to change (Argyris, Putnam & Smith., 1985; Bartunek, 1984).

A *community of belongingness* was very evident in both schools and it helped to define certain basic underlying assumptions held by staff, parents and students. In both schools, creating and sustaining a community of belongingness took time. It was sparked by the leadership of both principals and their ability to ask questions, to listen, to reflect and then to work collaboratively with staff to make changes where they needed to be made. When both principals first began to work at their respective schools, a sense of a community of belongingness was evident. However, through their leadership they helped to solidify and sustain the process of further establishing a community of belongingness at both sites. Having created a community of belongingness was evident in the inclusive, respectful language used by all staff who understood the needs of learners, as well as the need for relationship building, safety and a caring community.

A *community of acceptance and diversity* was embedded in the school cultures at both sites. Both schools confronted various roadblocks in their school’s culture and organizational structures by working collaboratively to find solutions to issues of equity, fairness and acceptance (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3). This was done through discussions and networking with staff both at their own and other sites, through the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process and their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). By recognizing and confronting these roadblocks, the collective leadership at both sites used language that endorsed an all-inclusive accepting culture. Leadership also planned for and promoted diversity through the cultural events that were held at both schools; the on-site recognition assemblies and the achievements that were promoted and accomplished by all the student body, not just a select few. Fairness and acceptance

were taught to students through the use of problem solving strategies and curriculum used to solve discipline issues and negative behaviour.

A *community of learning* was also evident at both schools. It highlighted the importance of school leadership and culture in continuing professional development amongst staff which led to higher levels of job satisfaction. It also highlighted the belief system that all students can succeed and learn and that teachers can make a positive difference. Developing and sustaining a community of learning was linked to teachers having a positive attitude, and having high expectations for levels of achievement for both themselves and the students. These beliefs were deeply embedded into both school cultures. Through relationship building and holding the belief that they were responsible to themselves and their students, teachers gleaned high levels of job satisfaction which translated into the development and sustainment of a culture of learning.

Parallel leadership was also evident at both sites and defined the cultures at each school. Parallel leadership is characterized as encouraging a relationship between teacher leaders and administrators which in turn activates and sustains the knowledge-generating capacity of schools (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). The two schools in the research project subscribed to the view that leadership does not reside with one individual at the top, the principal, but instead leadership is in every person at every level who, in one way or another, acts as a leader and that together they collectively engage in action to build school capacity (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

Parallel leadership in both schools was made coherent through a common culture and was the glue that held together tasks, such as the School Improvement Plan (SIP) process or teams of teachers planning for instruction in their classrooms. “Parallel leadership is a distinctive educational concept that has the potential to decisively advance the cause of schools and the teaching profession in the twenty-first century” (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 58). The type of leadership that was apparent embodied respect for each other, a shared purpose and also individual and collective recognition. Parallel leadership provides an avenue for individuals to be creative and express themselves (Andrews & Crowther, 2002).

The power of parallel leadership is its connection to organizational capacity (King & Newmann, 2000). The principals and teachers at both sites helped to create a common culture of expectations around the use of the teachers’ individual skills and abilities as well as collectively creating meaning from teaching and learning (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). Both principals, through the use of parallel leadership, were very effective at maximizing the human capacity within their schools (Crowther, 2011).

6.2.8 Differences between the two schools

In response to research question number one, the two high performing schools in this research study were located in distinctly different socio-economic areas. While the data indicate that each school promotes social justice and consciousness raising among staff

and students, the means by which this occurs within the two school communities differ somewhat.

At Willow Tree Public School where many students were from low socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds, an *advocacy role* was evident as staff collectively shared in the decision to confront barriers in the school's culture and structure. The teacher leaders and administrators stood up for the students who were from disadvantaged households as they were often marginalized due to their backgrounds. The staff taught and encouraged students to have a voice, always being sensitive to their developmental stages and circumstances (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3).

Terry Wrigley (2006) discusses the power of collective professional engagement that occurs when teacher leaders and principals think about advocacy of a cause: "Together our voices will be stronger and our efforts will bear fruit. We can overcome the limitations of today's schools. Through collective struggle we can fulfill our dreams of a better education and a better world." (Wrigley, 2006, p. 11). This was a definite focus for the mission and vision of the school at Willow Tree Public School. The staff taught the students how to have a voice and how to advocate for themselves.

At Lake Dore Public School where students were generally from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds, *community relationship building* and *community focus* were very evident. "Strategic networks in modern organizations can be either internal or external (Limerick et al., 2002, p. 62). At Lake Dore Public School, students were provided with leadership opportunities that linked the school and student body with the external local, national and international communities. School-wide and classroom projects were taken on by staff and students that exposed students to real-life issues and problems currently confronting disadvantaged groups, such as a local women's shelter or a school in Africa in desperate need of school supplies. By building community relations and having a community focus, students were able to understand the relevance of these projects both now and in the future, as they advocated and became the voice for the less fortunate. Such purposeful interaction developed leadership capacity within students as well as empathy for the marginalized groups that inhabit the globe. It allowed students to focus less on themselves and more on others, thus promoting external community networking and building a sustainable school culture focused on the external community.

6.2.9 Concluding remarks

The research study did indeed find that the development of elementary teacher job satisfaction is relational to the development of school culture. The teacher and principal participants' perceptive thoughts and feelings towards job satisfaction were relational to the culture in their respective schools.

Factors cited by teachers as essential to their job satisfaction included a sense of achievement. Believing in their own ability to achieve and being motivated by this belief improved both their job satisfaction and the culture of the school. Furthermore, a highly positive attitude towards their work was translated into a positive attitude towards their

students and a belief that all students could succeed. These job satisfaction factors were therefore clearly related to the establishment of a positive school culture that supported high levels of student achievement. However, it was positive interpersonal relationships together with effective leadership that seemed to be the glue that held job satisfaction and school culture together.

Effective leadership in the form of parallel leadership emerged as an essential factor for high levels of teacher job satisfaction and a positive school culture. Conclusive evidence from the present study points to the need for a collaborative form of leadership in which the teachers and principals not only share in decision making but also have a shared vision for what success at their school looks like and sounds like. Through Auto-collaborative Leadership, the individual teacher is motivated to work collaboratively and autonomously to create and re-create understandings and knowledge while focusing on the vision and purposes of the school community. It is the intersection of the autonomous and collaborative self as reflected in the language shift observed by the researcher as teachers spoke about job satisfaction in terms of 'ME' and about school culture in terms of 'WE'. It is a form of distributed (parallel) leadership that emphasizes a symbiotic relationship between collaboration and autonomy and recognizes that there is no single person who has all of the necessary skills and knowledge to lead a school organization.

In conclusion, teachers in the two high performing elementary schools in this study experienced high levels of job satisfaction within positive and vibrant school cultures. Positive interpersonal relationships combined with a form of parallel leadership in which teachers individually and autonomously reconstruct the collaborative knowledge were shown to contribute to the development of a positive school culture in which members share a deep belief in the potential of every student to achieve. The varying socio-economic contexts of the two schools did not create hindrances to student achievement, but instead each site responded to its particular context with a school culture that promoted and sustained student success. An advocacy role was evident at Willow Tree Public School where staff shared in the decision to confront barriers in the school's culture and structure, while community relationship building and community focus were more emphasized at Lake Dore Public School.

6.3 Response to research question two

The second research question explores the concepts of school culture and student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Research question number two is as follows:

2. *What is the nature of the school culture factors that elementary teachers and the principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?*

To fully explain and discuss the concepts when answering research question number two, the researcher first explored the *similarities* of the school culture factors that contribute to or hinder student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Secondly, the *differences* were explored between the school culture

factors that contribute to or hinder student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School.

Figures 6.3 and 6.4 represent the nature of the school culture factors that elementary teachers and the principals perceive as contributing to student achievement at Willow Tree Public School Lake Dore Public School respectively. The data show a high degree of similarity between the results for the two schools with some specific differences. Bolded italics are used in Figures 6.3 and 6.4 to indicate responses that were unique to the respective schools.

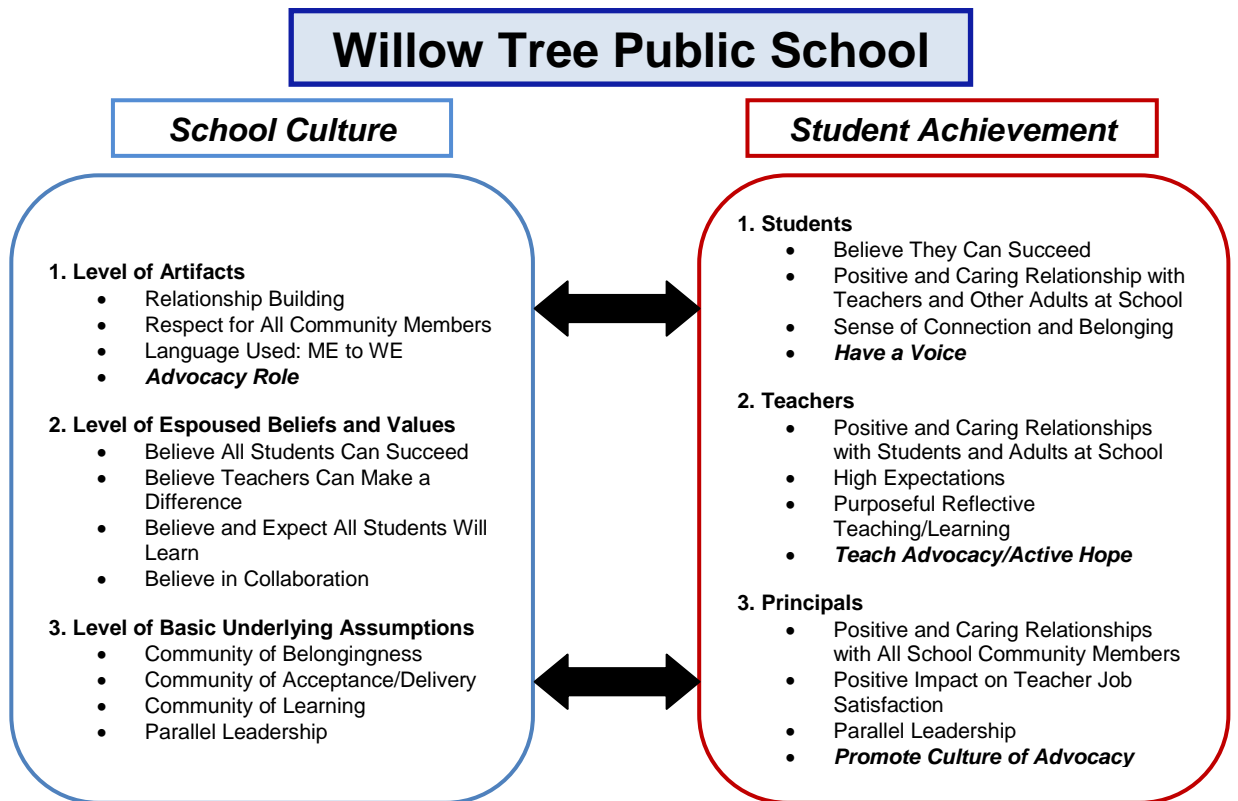


Figure 6.3: School culture factors that teachers and the principal perceive as contributing to student achievement at Willow Tree Public School

Lake Dore Public School

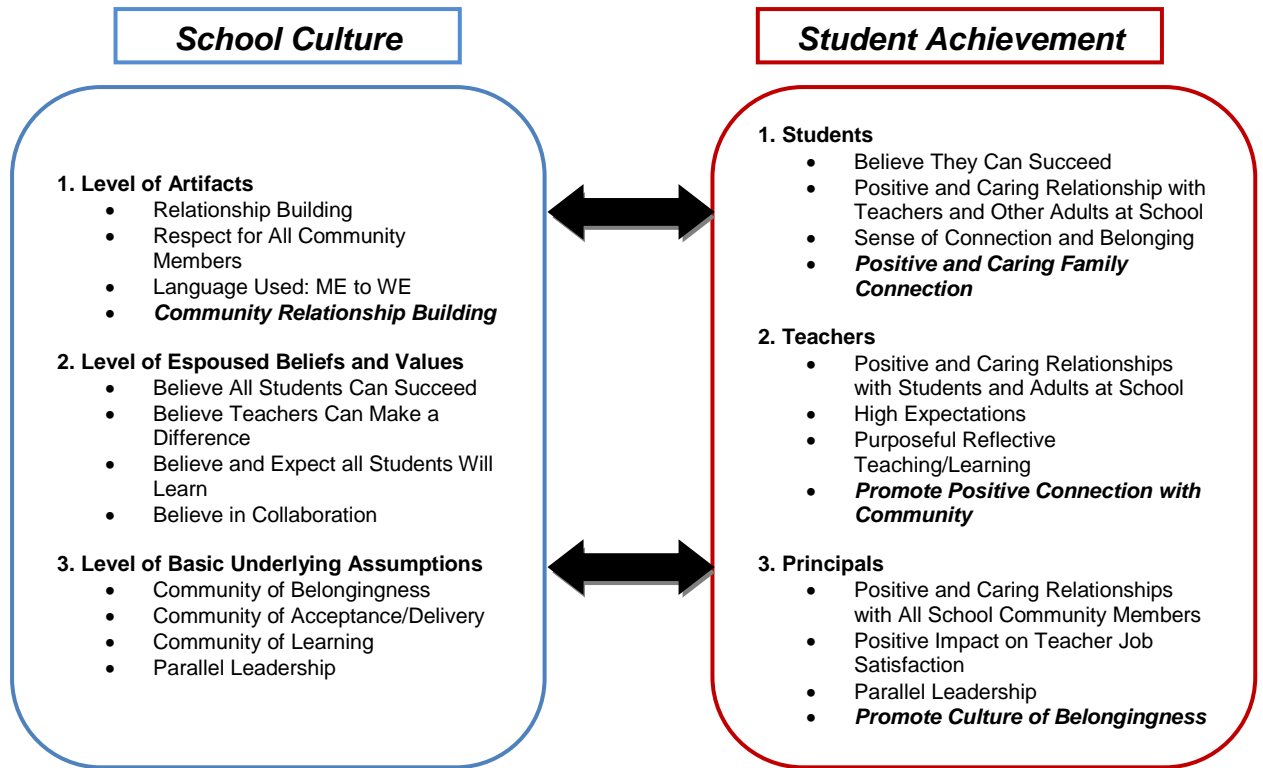


Figure 6.4: School culture factors that teachers and the principal perceive as contributing to student achievement at Lake Dore Public School

As can be seen from Figures 6.3 and 6.4, factors related to school culture in response to research question one are grouped into the same three major categories at both schools: **Level of Artifacts, Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values, and Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions**. There are also four sub-categories under each of these categories. The data presented with three categories under student achievement: **Students, Teachers and Principals**, each further classified into sub-categories. The classification of this synthesized information was derived from the analysis of the data from phases one, two, three and four.

The following discussions in sections 6.3.1 through 6.3.3 explore the similarities between the two schools in the study for each category of school culture factors that contribute to student achievement. While research question number two also sought to establish the nature of school culture factors that hinder student achievement, the data did not reveal any significant elements of school culture which could be viewed as hindrances to the sustained increases in student achievement experienced at both schools in the study. The data also revealed differences between the two schools in how school culture related to student achievement. These differences are explored in section 6.3.4.

6.3.1 Similarities between the two schools related to school culture factor Level of Artifacts

The first cultural level analyzed for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School in response to research question number two is **Level of Artifacts**. The researcher made a conscious effort to try to not infer the deeper assumptions from the artifacts alone, due to a danger of projecting feelings and inferences onto the artifacts (Schein, 2010).

Every facet of life at Willow Tree and Lake Dore Public Schools produces numerous artifacts, which created somewhat of a problem of classification for the researcher. The artifacts inter-connected with the school culture that emerged through the data analysis are: *relationship building*, *respect for all community members*, *language used: ME to WE*, and *advocacy role/community relationship building*. From the data collected and analyzed, the researcher determined all four as essential to the building of a positive school culture and to high levels of student achievement as cited by the participants in the research study. The researcher recognized that there are many other artifacts from both school sites that could be analyzed, however the study concentrated on the areas listed above, due to the focus and nature of the research questions.

Relationship building is the first sub-category found in Level of Artifacts in response to research question number two. Relationship building with *students* was determined in the study to be very important and all those who participated in the research project agreed that the positive and caring relationships that develop between *students* and their *teachers* and *all stakeholders* in the school community are essential to building a positive school culture and increasing student achievement. *Relationship building* with *teachers* was cited in the study as being important as was the development and continuation of on-going *positive and caring relationships with students and all stakeholders* in the school and in the community. “To have high expectations and to share a common conception of progress requires teachers to be concerned about the nature of their relationships with their students” (Hattie, 2009, p. 128).

Hattie (2009) also suggests “the power of positive teacher-student relationships is critical for learning to occur. This relationship involves showing students that the teacher cares for their learning as a student” (Hattie, 2009, p. 128), can “see their perspective, communicate back to them so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 123). This was definitely evident through the research conducted at the two schools.

Research participants believed that positive relationships are what helped to build and maintain a positive school culture and increases in student achievement. In order to have a positive and caring school culture that promotes high levels of student achievement, the *principals* at both sites indicated that they must also develop and maintain the *positive and caring relationships with all school community members*. Sparks believes that “the quality of relationships among adults in schools is a predictor of student learning” (Sparks, 2007, p. 171), particularly in schools that are challenged by socio-

economic factors and racism. High levels of trust, respectful and honest exchanges of views, and a shared commitment to worthwhile goals are some of the most important characteristics of these relationships. Without such relationships, few schools take full advantage of available resources (Sparks, 2007). All of these efforts and the motivation required are what the staff at both schools believed helped to promote positive and vibrant school cultures as well as what helped lead to higher levels of student achievement.

In the research study, creating school cultures where all stakeholders trust each other and are motivated to create schools where students and adults *respect all community members* and experience success was noted as being essential. Robert Marzano and Jane Marzano (2003) discuss that relationships in schools cannot be left to chance, and Jonathan Erwin (2003) describes the power of warm, trusting human relationships, brought about by respect for all. Students at both schools were taught, through modelling from the adults around them, to develop empathy and to look at a situation from another person's point of view. These types of beliefs and values were definitely embedded in the classrooms and the school cultures at both schools as there were sustainable elements evident in the artifacts, such as the language used, by which all members demonstrated that they respected and valued each other.

Throughout the research it was noted that as teachers and principals talked about school culture and student achievement there was a significant and definite shift in the *language used from ME to WE*. The language highlighted the focus on the collective community of learners and the collegial relationships between them. At both sites teachers shared how they benefited from close personal interactions with their principals. They saw them as co-professionals. The teachers talked about the fact that they worked alongside their principals, using phrases such as, "we don't work under the principal, we work with her." They spoke in collective terms, not individual terms.

When connecting the language used for discussing student achievement and the school culture, the teachers and principals seemed clear about their vision for students at each school site and they were clear on their roles for accomplishing the vision. A teacher at Willow Tree Public School made the statement, "If it's good for kids, it's possible. If it's not good for kids we don't need to do it". Notice the emphasis on the "WE"; teachers and administrators often talked in collective terms when they spoke about their role in student achievement and moving students along a continuum. Teachers and administration used the language of "WE" as they believed that collectively they were responsible for the achievement levels at their individual schools. This language shift came about due to the nature of the adult relationships at the schools and due to the fact that they believed in and were motivated to help each other out. They saw their roles in a collective form as well as an individual form; however, when speaking about school culture and student achievement and the inter-relationships, the language used was "WE".

Mitchell and Sackney (2009) highlight the importance of cultural artifacts, particularly language, in managing school development processes successfully. They assert that "by

being present to a new set of root metaphors and a new set of images for schools, educators can let go of old identities, release the need to control, participate in the larger field for change, and construct schools as living systems.” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 8)

Indeed the role of language in effecting change and sustaining school improvement is acknowledged by virtually all change authorities. Bucholtz and Hall (2004, p. 369-370) note that a group’s process of establishing identity involves the invention of similarity in descriptions by downplaying difference. At both sites in the present study, the language used emphasized similarities and the collective efforts of all.

Mitchell and Sackney (2009) assert that when school activities and curricula are built around communication strategies that nurture an overall school image through the integration of educational and community values, they both align and energize the lives and learning of people within the organization (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). This sense of energy was definitely evident as the researcher collected data from the research participants. Staff were aligned with the community beliefs and values and positively promoted them, thus enhancing the school life.

A sense of connection and belonging among students was determined in the study to be very important. All participants agreed that the positive and caring relationships between students and their teachers and all stakeholders in the school community are essential to building a sense of connection and belonging among students. When students feel as if they belong, they help to create a positive school culture and increases in student achievement occur. Building connections and a sense of belonging among students was cited in the study as being important to the development and continuation of on-going positive and caring relationships with students and all stakeholders in the school and in the community. In order to have a positive and caring school culture that promotes high levels of student achievement, students need to feel safe and secure and know that others care for them. These efforts to build a sense of connection and belonging are what the staff at both schools believed helped to promote positive and vibrant school cultures as well as lead to higher levels of student achievement.

6.3.2 Similarities between the two schools related to school culture factor Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values

The second level to be analyzed under the theme school culture for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School in response to research question number two is their **Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values**. The level of espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2010) refers to what is actually happening and believed and valued at a school site. When analyzing the beliefs and values, the researcher needed to discriminate carefully between those that are congruent with underlying assumptions and those that are either rationalizations or only aspirations for the future. Often such lists of beliefs and values are so abstract that they can be mutually contradictory (Schein, 2010). Espoused values and beliefs may leave large areas of behaviour unexplained, leaving the researcher or the staff with a feeling that a piece of the culture is understood but the

overall culture is still not quite understood. To get to a deeper level of understanding, to decipher the patterns, and to predict future behaviour correctly, the researcher needed to also understand the third level which is the basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010). The researcher subscribed to Schein's (2010) second level when defining culture in the research study, as the results from the data analysis of the previous phases in the study clearly indicated the need to use the classification.

The level of espoused beliefs and values of a school community may undergo many transformations, until the group finally determines that the beliefs and values they espouse are both valid and reliable and that they work within their particular school setting. The process of transformation helps to distinguish what "ought to be", which with time does become visible from "what is" as a group works together to solve problems and find solutions (Schein, 2004). If the espoused beliefs and values align with the underlying assumptions, then they will serve as a source of identity for the school and will become their mission (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

The espoused beliefs and values inter-connected with the school culture that emerged through the data analysis are: ***believe all students can succeed, believe teachers can make a difference, believe and expect all students will learn, and believe in collaboration.***

To ***believe all students can succeed*** was the general consensus at both sites. There was an overall belief that any student could succeed given the appropriate social and academic learning conditions. The aim with the ***teachers*** was focused on what ***students*** could do. The teachers ensured that they developed multi-level and appropriate scaffolding teaching strategies to help all students succeed. Emphasis was on viewing learning and teaching from the students' perspective. Lessons and units were purposefully developed and were creative, engaging, differentiated and enriched, incorporating varying learning styles to meet the multiple needs within the classroom setting. Believing that all students can succeed places the focus on what students can do, not on what they cannot do!

All teachers who participated in the study ***believe teachers can make a difference*** and that they did make a difference every day in the lives of their students. "The most critical aspects contributed by the teacher are the quality of the teacher" (Hattie, 2009, p. 126). Teachers at both schools were high quality teachers who believed that they have the power to develop warm socio-emotional climates in their classrooms. They discussed that it is their responsibility to foster efforts for planning and facilitating creative lessons and units and to differentiate instruction for the learners who require additional support. Through their motivation to make learning enjoyable and interactive for all students, engagement of students was done with a purposeful methodology. Hattie believes that "this requires teachers to enter the classroom with certain conceptions about progress, relationships, and students. It requires teachers to believe that their role is that of a change agent – that all students can learn and progress, that achievement for all is changeable and not fixed, and that demonstrating to all students that they care about their learning is powerful and effective." (Hattie, 2009, p. 23). When a teacher conceives

their role and responsibilities in this manner, they are able to be accountable and they are able to make a difference.

Teachers do matter, especially the teachers who teach in a purposeful manner. The teachers in the study practiced *purposeful, reflective teaching and learning*. They reported that they would observe whether learning was occurring or not. When they did not see learning occurring, they would reflect and intervene in a calculated, meaningful way to help alter the direction of the learning. The teachers reported that they would differentiate their instruction, process and product to provide their students with multiple opportunities and alternatives for developing learning strategies based on scaffolding both at the surface and at deeper levels of learning content. Learning is a very personal journey for the teacher and the student, although there are some commonalities. The teachers in the study were very skillful and able to demonstrate to all their students that they could see the students' perspective, and communicate it back to them so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 23). Their teaching methods and practices were both purposeful and reflective, enabling student engagement and interaction, and thus possibly resulting higher student achievement levels and a positive culture.

That teachers *believe and expect all students will learn* was evident in the school culture as well as in the improvement and sustainability of student achievement scores at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. The teacher-student relationship is one of the most critical aspects contributed by each teacher, and teachers at both sites had positive effects on all of their students by holding high expectations that they all would learn. "Often... what constitutes quality in teachers emphasizes their personal and professional attributes. We should constrain our discussion from talking about qualities of teachers to the quality of the effects of teachers on learning" (Hattie, 2009, p. 126). Teaching methods need to address the belief and expectation that all students will learn. This belief and expectation was evident at both schools and thus a culture embracing a *positive attitude* towards learning and high expectations was generated and sustained as was student achievement.

Finally, the fourth category under the school culture factor **Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values** is to *believe in collaboration*. The idea of collegiality between teachers and principal can cause uncertainty with teachers because they often naturally think in terms of hierarchy (Hord, 2004). To enter into a mutual collaborative relationship with the principals at both sites, the teachers discussed how they knew that they had to let go of former habits such as criticizing the principal with other teachers and instead had to learn to openly discuss questions and concerns in the presence of the principal. The principals at both sites knew that the best way to effectively establish *collaboration* was to serve alongside the teachers. The principals discussed that at times they needed to put aside their own preferences to agree with the larger group's consensus for action. Teachers at both sites believed that their principals trusted and respected them as professionals. All of the teachers and both of the principals believed in collaboration, which led to a collaborative learning culture.

6.3.3 Similarities between the two schools related to school culture factor Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions

The third level that needs to be analyzed under the theme school culture in response to research question number two for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School is **Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions**. Basic underlying assumptions are so taken for granted that teachers who do not hold them may possibly be dismissed as a foreigner or as having odd ideas and ways (Schein, 2010). The essence of a culture lies in the level of basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010). Without understanding the basic underlying assumptions, it is impossible to interpret the artifacts correctly or know how much credence to give to the level of espoused beliefs and values. Understanding these assumptions has helped the researcher to understand the more superficial levels and deal appropriately with them.

Basic underlying assumptions are often non-confrontable and non-debatable, thus they are extremely difficult to change. For teachers to learn something new requires them to resurrect, reexamine, and possibly change some of the more stable portions of their cognitive structures – a process Argyris and others have called “double-loop learning”, or “frame breaking” (Argyris et al., 1985; Bartunek, 1984). Such learning is intrinsically difficult because the reexamination of basic assumptions temporarily destabilizes our cognitive and interpersonal world, releasing large quantities of basic anxiety (Schein, 2010). Rather than tolerating such anxiety levels, teachers tend to want to perceive events around them as congruent with their assumptions. Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various situations (Schein, 2010).

The four basic underlying assumptions that emerged through the data analysis are: *community of belongingness*, *community of acceptance/diversity*, *community of learning* and *parallel leadership*.

During the research, teachers and principals discussed their school communities in ways that denoted belongingness. The staff at both sites had gone through the process of asking the question, “How do we create a culture where a *community of belongingness* develops?” Due to this shared objective, all of the staff were focused on developing and maintaining a community of belongingness and respect. As members of a community of belongingness, teachers were highly motivated to work with each other and the school culture reflected a sense of belongingness for everyone. Teachers connected to the school improvement goals and worked towards common goals and visions for the entire community due to this well-established sense of belonging. Furthermore, teachers discussed having higher levels of job satisfaction due to the creation and maintenance of a community of belongingness.

At both sites the teachers overwhelmingly reported, both quantitatively and qualitatively, *high levels of job satisfaction*. They enjoyed teaching collaboratively with their colleagues, as well as enjoying a certain level of autonomy. Teachers discussed what the researcher has coined, **Autono-Collaboration**, which is a balance between

creatively collaborating together, and then taking the process and products from the collaboration and autonomously being creative with the process and products in their individual classrooms so as to meet the needs of all students by having engaging, enriching learning taking place. The participant teachers in the study indicated that it was a combination of both concepts, collaboration and autonomy, that raised their levels of job satisfaction.

At Lake Dore Public School and Willow Tree Public School, creating a *community of acceptance and diversity* originated from staff members developing trusting relationships focused on collective responsibility. It was noted throughout the research that all staff members took collective responsibility and thus each teacher's practice was enhanced in a school environment that encouraged colleagues to consistently bring and learn new skills and knowledge that met their students' needs and ensured student success. Both schools were able to move beyond the traditional roles to one that actively *shared leadership* and encouraged a community of acceptance and diversity.

Even though Willow Tree Public School is located in a lower socio-economic area as compared to Lake Dore Public School, both schools emphasized social justice and consciousness raising. By doing so, each of the schools created a culture that confronted barriers to fairness and embraced and accepted the diversity in their school community. It was recognized, acknowledged and accepted that students entered the school from very diverse backgrounds in terms of social, personal and academic attributes. The teachers and principals as well were all diverse in terms of skills, knowledge, and years of experience, and their combined personal and professional attributes were accepted and celebrated. Principals and teachers at both schools recognized that a certain level of knowledge, skills and attributes are essential for a school to build and develop as a community; however, acceptance of the diversity of the community was necessary for a positive school culture and increased student achievement (Crowther, 2011).

Teachers at both sites agreed on a vision of authentic and high-quality intellectual work for students that included challenging tasks and clear goals for high-quality learning. This vision of *high expectations* was continually communicated to students and parents. "It is teachers using particular teaching methods, teachers with high expectations... and teachers who have created *positive student-teacher relationships* that are more likely to have above average effects on student achievement" (Hattie, 2009, p. 126). High-quality student learning and expectations from staff were achieved in the classrooms at both sites through authentic pedagogy (instruction and assessment). Students at both schools descended from varying backgrounds yet they benefited equally, regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status, because their teachers had high expectations for all of them. This was a basic underlying assumption at both schools.

The principals at both schools were key in helping to promote *positive collaboration* amongst their staff. They were essential in scheduling time throughout the instructional day for teachers to collaborate on student learning issues, by providing additional release time. The principals also had timetabled into the teachers' regular schedules preparation time for grade/division level teachers to plan and collaborate together on student

learning. This collaborative effort was evident in the themes being taught throughout the divisions, as teachers had collaboratively planned units of study together. Teachers believed that this collaborative time provided them opportunities to become more creative, as two heads are always better than one!

The capacity of the staff to work together as a *community of learning* was well established at Willow Tree Public School and at Lake Dore Public School, with both schools recognizing the importance of collective intelligence. “Culture carries the community’s historically generated and collectively shared solutions to its new and inexperienced membership. It forms a framework for occupational learning.” (Schein, 1992, p. 2). The schools were successful not only in student achievement but in terms of a very positive and vibrant school culture due to the fact that they functioned as professional communities of learning, with staff mentoring each other to grow and develop as professionals. Schools that have strong professional learning communities offer more authentic pedagogy and are thus more effective in encouraging student achievement (Hord, 2004). *Teachers* helped each other out and they often took collective responsibility, not just individual responsibility, for student learning, and worked continuously to improve their teaching practices.

The fourth and last sub-category of the school culture factor **Level of Basic Underlying Assumptions** is *parallel leadership*. At both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School all teachers who participated in the research project and the two principals have an immense amount of expertise and dedication. All participants seemed to have a clear vision and focus as to what their goals were, working collaboratively together in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) on their school’s School Improvement Plan (SIP) to improve student achievement for all learners. Leadership was required by both the elementary teachers and the principals to achieve their goals and to remain focused on their vision. Linda Lambert (2007) defines leadership in different phases of school capacity building, maintaining that leadership requires different functions.

The principals at both schools led “in parallel” in that they understood and accepted the importance of shared leadership by successfully building capacity in their schools, despite being aware of the changing teaching profession that encircles the elementary teachers at their sites. The principals led through parallel leadership (Crowther, 2011) methods whereby they ensured that their leadership responsibilities were closely associated with their teaching staff’s capabilities for school-wide pedagogical enhancement (Crowther, 2011, Crowther et al., 2013). The principals at both schools understood the importance of allowing teacher leadership by providing opportunities and strategies for potential teacher leaders, and saw all teachers as leaders or potential leaders. Principals helped to facilitate networks within their schools to encourage teachers to work and lead together on pedagogical initiatives with same grade teachers and with cross-grade teachers and subjects. They provided time for teachers to meet and share by building schedules around a network based system of teacher leadership all with the focus of increasing student achievement, building capacity and developing a positive school culture. Both principals also provided opportunities for dialogue by facilitating purposeful and dynamic group situations and ensuring the teachers’

autonomy by allowing them the rightful ownership and responsibility for certain procedures within their teaching roles (i.e., report writing, assessments) (Crowther, 2011).

The *principals* at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School practiced parallel leadership and culture building by operating across all three of Schein's (2010) levels of organizational culture: artifacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions. The principals encouraged both collaboration and autonomy among teachers by providing a clear and focused vision and promoting school-wide pedagogical practice (Crowther, 2011, Crowther et al, 2013).

The *teachers* at both schools were parallel leaders (Crowther, 2011). They engaged collaboratively with their principals to achieve student success school-wide and willingly assumed responsibility for the school's pedagogical enhancement. The participant teachers believed that they needed to adhere to a high standard for their teaching roles and believed that as professionals they could make a difference in the lives of the school community. They displayed shared beliefs and values that were visible in their approach to pedagogy as well as in their respectful, professional interactions with others. They were continually refining their teaching practices to meet the needs of individual students as well as to respect the well-being of all. All participant teachers believed in continuously reflecting and refining the craft of teaching and seeking more in-depth understanding of teaching methodologies and practices. As *parallel leaders*, all the elementary teachers believed in developing and maintaining a culture of success for all students by providing opportunities to meet with accomplishment and by setting high standards (Crowther, 2011, Crowther et al., 2013). Through parallel leadership, the teachers and the principals were focused on building positive and collaborative school cultures while motivating students to achieve.

6.3.4 Differences between the two schools

In response to research question number two, the researcher found that while both schools had a clear focus on student success, there were certain differences in how school culture factors related to student achievement. These differences can be traced to the distinctly different socio-economic levels of the areas served by the two schools and the associated needs of each student population.

An *advocacy role* was evident at Willow Tree Public School as the participating elementary teachers discussed school culture and student achievement. By focusing on student achievement, the teachers at Willow Tree Public School had to learn to become advocates for what they believed the students needed most in order to be successful in the short-term and in the long-term. All teachers believed that all students could succeed and could learn, adopting an advocacy leadership role to confront the barriers to fairness imposed by society. Teachers at Willow Tree Public School realized that they needed to be moral and political leaders by not accepting that the students at their school were possibly being short-changed by society. The teachers embraced the advocacy role by being accountable and responsible for student learning at their school, by recognizing

the barriers that existed, and by programming for students accordingly. As Crowther (2011) discusses, “a quality of advocacy is to be particularly grounded in both intolerance of the disadvantaged and hopefulness in the face of adversity” (p.11). Accepting this position enhanced the school culture and led to many positive interactions with both staff and students.

Encouraging *students to have a voice* was at first a challenge for the teachers at Willow Tree Public School. However, they believed that it was their responsibility to not only be a voice and advocate for the students but also to educate and empower students to have a voice. A recent international report suggested that the “best leaders take responsibility for improvements in weaker schools” (Limerick et al., 2002, p. 63). The participant teachers did exactly that. They engaged in collaborative problem solving methods to meet the unique needs of the students at their school who came from very disadvantaged backgrounds. The teachers believed that if they worked together by standing up for the students that their collective efforts could overcome the many barriers their students faced. Through creative lesson planning and various content materials used to develop problem solving and critical thinking in their classrooms (i.e. themes in novel studies, debates in social studies), the students were encouraged and taught how to have a voice. All of these efforts led to increases in positive relationships, student achievement and a positive, collaborative school culture.

Teaching advocacy and active hope to all students was high priority for all the elementary teachers and the principal at Willow Tree Public School. The teachers fostered and taught inclusiveness, and they encouraged collective and collaborative action with their students. They noted that the lower socio-economic conditions that their students came from constituted a barrier; however, they did not allow this barrier to be an excuse for lowering their expectations. They discussed with their students the possibilities that could exist for them both now and in their future. Through providing the students with social, academic and emotional support, students were able to see beyond their current circumstances and gain active hope for now and in the future. As Crowther (2011) states, “an organization’s members, particularly its leaders, can create meaning out of their culture to fashion public perceptions, to frame members’ understandings of themselves and of their organization, and to shape futuristic direction” (p. 146). The underlying assumption of the participating teachers and the principal was that all students at Willow Tree Public School could succeed and this assumption was transferred to the student population.

The *teacher* participants and the *principal* at Willow Tree Public School formed a professional learning community that consciously pursued improvement through collaboration and *promoted a culture of advocacy* for both themselves and for the students. They had well established trusting relationships with each other, with the students and with the parent community. This allowed for staff to become more intrinsically motivated to improve the advocacy role at the school and believing that they could and would collectively advocate for their needs as well as the needs of their students. The staff worked together with their principal to find solutions to problems involving issues of equity, fairness and justice. They “encouraged student voice in ways

that are sensitive to students' developmental stages and circumstances" (Crowther et al., 2009, p. 3).

In the middle to upper-middle class setting of Lake Dore Public School, much of the belief in a *culture of community and belongingness* could be considered to be founded in Alfred Adler's (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979) work, as Adler considered himself the first community psychologist. Adler's work pioneered attention to community life and emphasized the need and ability to create positive social change and impact. His work also stressed the importance of nurturing feelings of belonging and striving for superiority (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979). These beliefs were evident in the culture that was created at Lake Dore Public School. The entire school community worked together to create an atmosphere of belongingness as well as achieve high expectations for both themselves and others around them. The school community accomplished this through the language they used when they talked about their school, as well as the language of respect that they used when they talked with one another. Respect, trust and belongingness were paramount at the site and all members believed they were responsible and accountable for this. All members believed in working collaboratively and collectively towards a common vision and goals, and that creating a community of care and belongingness was vital to the well-being of all community members and of the school as an organization.

Another factor in student achievement at Lake Dore Public School is to *promote positive connection with community*. All of the participating staff believed in promoting positive social change both within the internal school community and the local, national and international communities. Events, extra-curricular activities and projects taken on by the staff and student body, as well as the parent community, emphasized social interests leading to practical actions exercised for the social good. By focusing on promoting positive connections with the community, staff and students were advocating for themselves as well as for the broader community. *Promoting a positive connection with the community* actively engaged students and staff in concern and care for others. Staff reported that placing an emphasis on community helped to promote empathy, belonging, respect for others, and developed skills that students could carry with them for a lifetime. Placing emphasis on the needs of others was reported to take the focus off the self and promote social change and social action.

Evidence of *positive and caring family connections* at Lake Dore Public School was also gathered by the researcher. The participants acknowledged that many of their students came from families that supported the school community academically, socially, personally and financially. The teachers and the principal discussed the linkages between students' school life and family life, as the families valued the school community and all that it had to offer. Parents and guardians often volunteered for projects to help fund raise, or to assist in their child's classroom. Many were members of the School Council, which was very active in the school community. Parents and teachers shared the holistic view of individuals, as well as a belief in social equality for all. These aspects enhanced the school culture and assisted in supporting and promoting student achievement.

6.3.5 Concluding remarks

The findings clearly point to the significant impact of school culture on student achievement in elementary schools. It is through building positive relationships and a collaborative learning culture within a community of belongingness that teachers and principals can create a positive school culture that supports sustained school improvement.

Research participants believed that positive relationships are what helped to build a positive culture in their respective schools as well as increase student achievement. They agreed that positive and caring relationships between students and their teachers and all stakeholders were fundamental to student success in school.

Believing and expecting all students will learn was evident in the school culture at both sites in the study. This positive attitude towards learning accompanied by high expectations for all students in a community of acceptance and diversity was necessary for a positive school culture and increased student achievement. Believing that all students can succeed places the focus on what students *can* do and not on what they *cannot* do, making space for each student in a learning environment infused with hopefulness and engagement. The teacher is thus a change agent who believes that each student *can* learn and progress.

The principals at both schools understood the value of shared leadership in building capacity in their schools. The teachers engaged collaboratively with their principals to achieve student success school-wide. Through the pursuit of building and maintaining parallel leadership, teachers and principals together were focused on building positive and collaborative school cultures while motivating students to achieve.

Differences in socio-economic level between the two school communities did not present a barrier to developing effective school cultures that support student achievement. While certain differences were observed in how each school's culture related to student achievement, these were clearly due to how each school strived to serve the community according to its particular needs and spoke to how the underlying beliefs and values were the same in both schools. Student learning was a collective effort within positive and vibrant cultures where staff mentored each other to grow and develop as professionals. Teachers in both high performing schools were parallel leaders who engaged collaboratively with their principals to increase the student achievement levels school-wide.

6.4 Response to research question three

The third research question explored the concepts of job satisfaction and student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Research question number three is found below:

- 3. What is the nature of the elementary teacher job satisfaction factors that teachers and principals perceive as contributing to or hindering student achievement?*

To fully explain and discuss the concepts when answering research question number three, the researcher explored the *similarities* of the job satisfaction factors that contribute to or hinder student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Next, the *differences* between the two schools were explored for the job satisfaction factors that contribute to student achievement.

Figures 6.5 and 6.6 below represent the nature of the job satisfaction factors that elementary teachers and the principals perceive as contributing to student achievement at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School respectively. The data show a high degree of similarity between the results for the two schools with some specific differences. Bolded italics are used in Figures 6.5 and 6.6 to indicate responses that were unique to the respective schools.

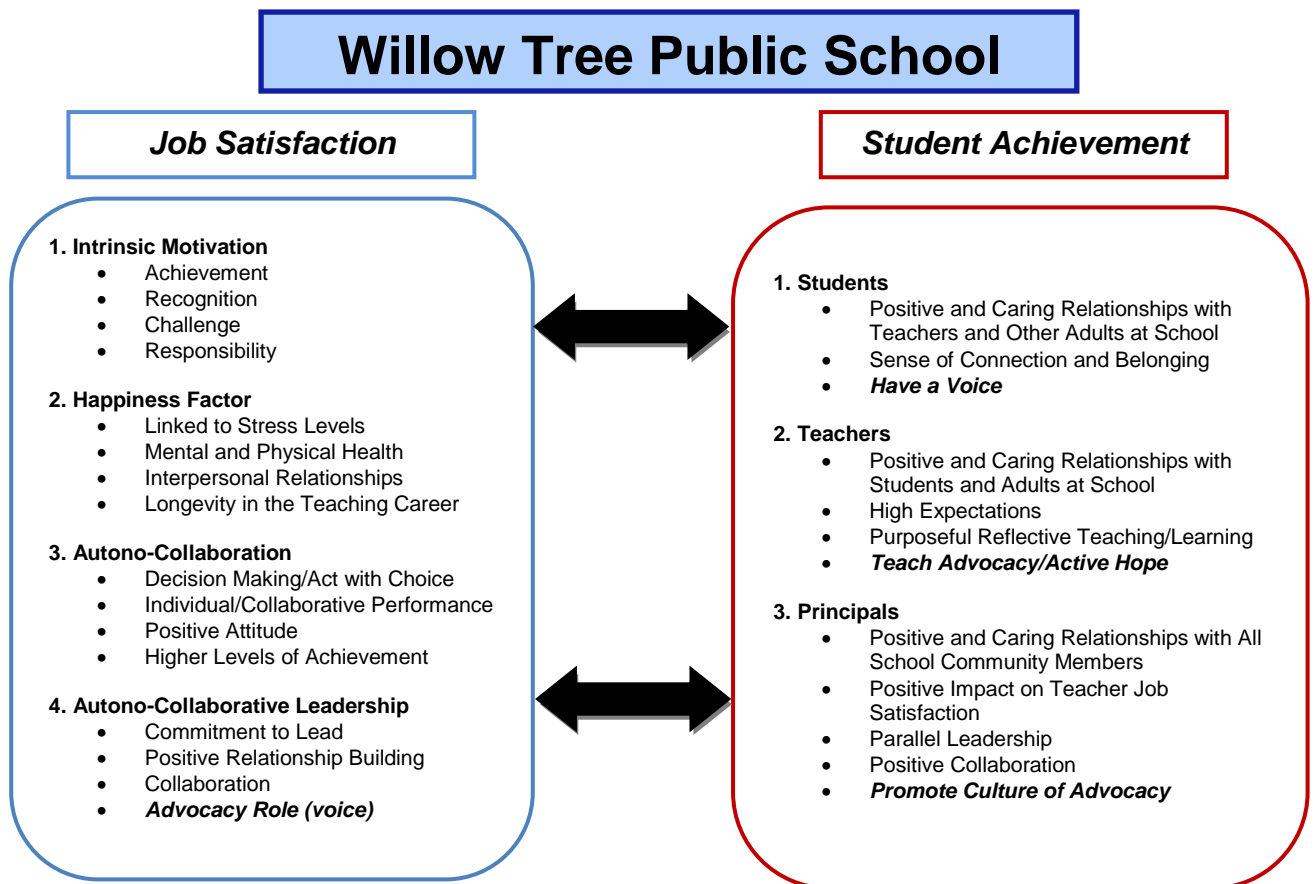


Figure 6.5: Job satisfaction factors that teachers and the principal perceive as contributing to student achievement at Willow Tree Public School

Lake Dore Public School

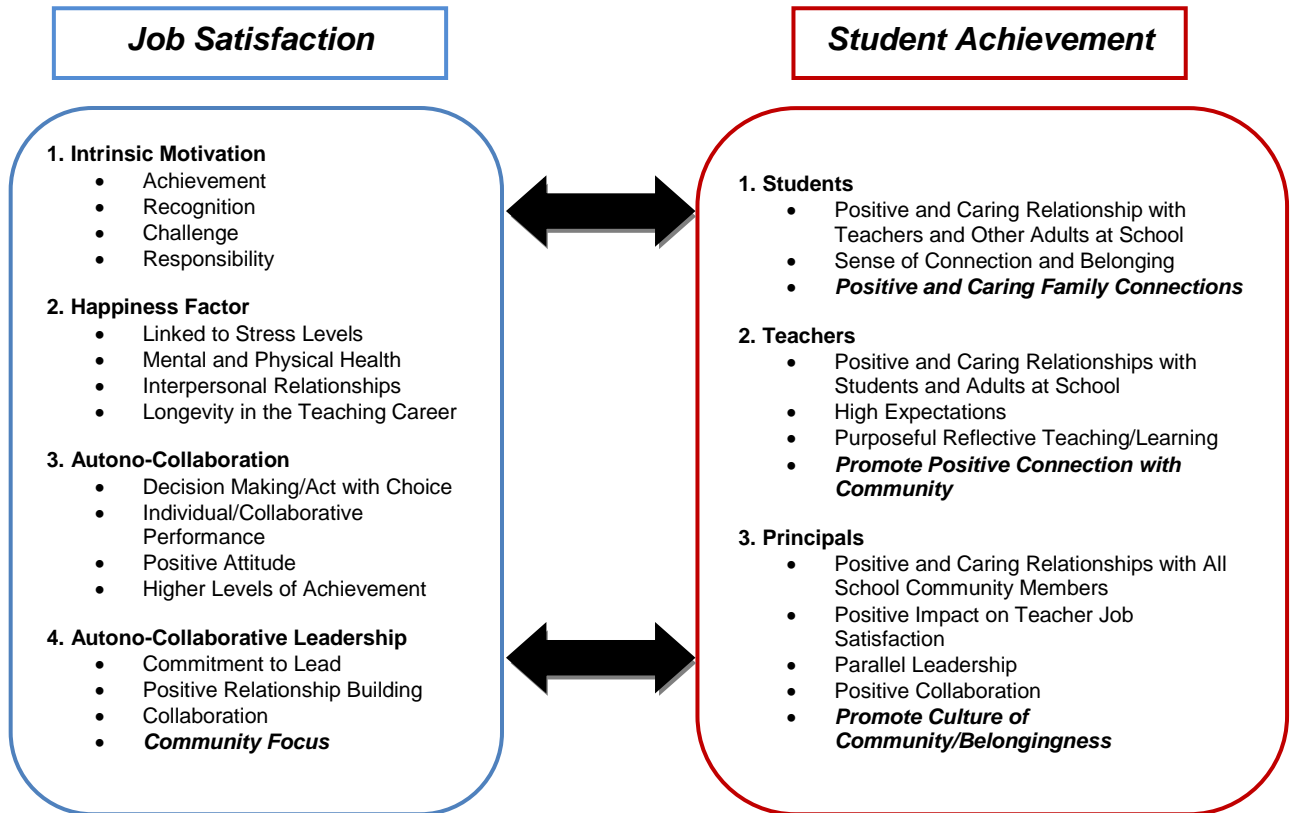


Figure 6.6: Job satisfaction factors that teachers and the principal perceive as contributing to student achievement at Lake Dore Public School

As can be seen from Figures 6.5 and 6.6, factors related to job satisfaction in response to research question number three are grouped into four major categories: **Intrinsic Motivation, Happiness Factor, Autono-Collaboration** and **Autono-Collaborative Leadership**. There are four factors under each of these categories. The data presented with three categories under student achievement: **Students, Teachers** and **Principals**, each further classified into sub-categories. The classification of this synthesized information was derived from the analysis of the data from phases one, two, three and four.

The following discussions in sections 6.4.1 through to 6.4.4 will explore the similarities between the two schools for each category of job satisfaction factors and their relational aspects with regards to student achievement. Research question number three sought to identify elementary teacher job satisfaction factors that contributed to or hindered student achievement. However, the current study did not uncover hindrances in either of the two schools involved in the research, and the following discussions are therefore focused on how job satisfaction factors contribute to student success. Finally, section

6.4.5 explores the differences between the two schools in how job satisfaction factors relate to student achievement.

6.4.1 Similarities between the two schools related to job satisfaction factor Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation was proven in the study to be a very significant factor that led to teacher job satisfaction. Nonetheless, from a practical point of view, teachers must work to earn a living, and so they need the extrinsic reward of salary, benefits and perks such as vacation time. All of the teachers and the principals surveyed and interviewed seemed to indicate that they were satisfied with their current extrinsic compensation for their work. Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999) also found that if a teacher's baseline rewards are met, then they become more intrinsic in nature regarding their work and view their profession as a calling rather than just another job.

At the time of this research study, the Ministry of Education in the Province of Ontario was providing much needed support to the educational system through extra funding for programming to help raise student achievement levels across the province. Teachers and schools were benefiting greatly, as extra professional development was occurring during the regular work day, so teachers were not expected to attend workshops after hours to improve knowledge and skills. The government provided extra funding for school-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) stemming from the School Improvement Plans (SIPs). The teachers in the survey noted that this government support led to an increase in their job satisfaction and their intrinsic motivation, as they believed that they had support from the Ministry of Education, from their school board and from their schools.

In response to research question number three, in this study, the researcher found that *achievement* is closely linked with how a teacher perceives his or her beliefs and abilities. The study discovered that teachers' professional achievements are interconnected and inter-related with their beliefs about their job satisfaction. The researcher also discovered that there is a strong link between the beliefs that a teacher holds and the achievement of his or her students. Dweck (2006) also found that if a teacher holds the belief that she or he has high levels of job satisfaction, this will shape what she or he achieves within their professional career.

According to Dweck (2006), teachers can hold two opposing views of their own intelligence and the intelligence of their students. The teachers who have an "entity theory" believe that intelligence is just that, an entity. It exists within a finite supply and people cannot increase it. The second view of intelligence is the "incremental theory". Teachers who believe in this theory believe that intelligence may vary slightly from person to person; however, it is ultimately something that, with effort, people can increase (Dweck, 2006).

If teachers believe that intelligence is a fixed quantity, then every educational and professional encounter becomes a measure of how much each teacher and student has.

All of the elementary teachers in the study believed that intelligence is something that can be increased, and they saw every encounter as an opportunity for themselves and their students to grow. The “incremental theory” (Dweck, 2006) states that intelligence is something that every person has the capacity to develop, that it is not just something to demonstrate thus limiting intelligence to merely a measure of how much a person has. The teachers in the study believed that intelligence is something that can be continuously developed and thus held *high expectations* for all of their students, providing them with continuous opportunities to learn and grow.

The teachers were *purposeful and reflective in their teaching and in the learning* by both their students and themselves. Teachers stated that they were life-long learners and they modeled this for their students. In order to assist with achievement of students, the teachers developed lessons and units of study that were tailored to the needs of their class as a whole and also to each individual student. They differentiated the lessons by providing instruction that touched on the various multiple intelligences and also by catering to the learning styles of their students. The majority of the elementary teachers (90%) reported that seeing students achieve brought them great satisfaction in their jobs, and they believed that this added to all students’ achievement.

Recognition, both individual and collective, increased the job satisfaction of the participants. As discussed earlier, both principals reported recognizing teachers and the teacher participants reported that being recognized for all the little and big things helped to increase the desire to continue to be a teacher and to work at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Furthermore, *recognition* helped to continue the development of *positive and caring relationships with each other*. The teachers reported that they transferred the positive nature of relationships among the adults to the students in their classrooms and to students school-wide. The teachers subscribed to the idea that relationship building and recognition are key to helping set *higher expectations*, thus believing that all students will achieve success. For all of the elementary teachers and principals who participated in this study, *recognition* was not a goal in itself, but rather just “icing on the cake” that went a long way in terms of their work being significant to their lives as well as the lives of their students.

Challenge with their work was viewed by the elementary teacher participants and the principals at both sites to bring about both *job satisfaction* and also a *higher level of expectations* for their students. The teachers at both sites looked at challenges not as roadblocks but instead as opportunities to grow and to stretch their abilities, understandings and skills for specific situations. They often would collaborate with each other to work through issues and difficulties. One participant in this study who was a relatively new teacher to the field, discussed the fact that she never felt alone at work, she always knew that no matter what challenges lay in front of her that she had co-workers willing to support her and help her to solve whatever problem arose.

The teachers at both sites discussed the challenges of balancing work and home commitments and how they supported each other on these issues by listening and helping out (e.g. by taking a colleague’s yard duty when they knew they were having a

particularly difficult day at home or at school). Both principals were empathetic to the home/work-life balance, as both site administrators have families of their own. They would make a conscious decision to have a finger on the “pulse” of the issues involving staff. They would try to discover if a staff member was becoming too overwhelmed and would talk with them about it and try to brainstorm solutions to help them cope. The *positive collaboration* that occurred around staff members assisting each other with challenges both inside and outside the classroom was reported by most of the elementary teachers (80%) as leading to a greater sense of job satisfaction.

All of the teachers believed in setting the bar high so that their students would be challenged, but not too high so that the students would become frustrated. The majority of elementary teachers (90%) discussed that they needed to know their students’ ability levels, learning styles and multiple intelligence preferences so that they could plan and program learning activities that were *challenging*, yet reasonably and appropriately so. Teachers discussed the importance of assisting students with personal, social and academic challenges. They taught and modeled for students how to problem solve, and they helped students believe that no problem was too great. They provided hope for students and *a sense of community* within each classroom where challenges were seen as ways to grow and develop and not viewed as insurmountable barriers.

Responsibility takes on the sense of moral responsibility in the findings of this study. The teachers in the research study viewed their teaching profession as a calling; they saw teaching as a life commitment to both themselves and their students. The majority of elementary teachers (75%) discussed the responsibility that they believed they had to help their *students succeed* and be the best that they could be. The teachers themselves were life-long learners and noted that it was their responsibility to instill within their students a love for learning that would also last a lifetime. *Building strong connections* with their students, personally, socially and academically, allowed students to feel a *sense of belonging* to their classroom community and to their school community and therefore to be more willing to take risks with their learning, to make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes.

The teachers in the research study believed that it was their moral purpose and responsibility to *build positive and caring relationships with their students* and with *other members of the school community*. They believed that through relationship building, *higher levels of student achievement* could be accomplished. One teacher stated, “If there is not a positive relationship of trust and caring amongst myself and my students, I cannot expect my students to be comfortable enough to actively engage in the learning process.” The teacher went on to say, “My students need to feel confident to ask questions and to be comfortable to encourage others when mistakes are made.”

All of the elementary teachers in the research study discussed having a sense of *great satisfaction with their jobs* as they saw their teaching profession as a calling, as a *responsibility* to a higher purpose in life. They believed they were responsible for the lives that walked through the school doors every single school day. Gardner (2011) also found that the more teachers perceive their teaching job as a profession and central to

their lives, the more satisfied they are. Gardner (2011) continued to discuss, “Moral identity as defining the self in a way that includes not only work-related skills and interests, but also the purpose of one’s work, one’s sense of ethical restrictions, and one’s responsibility to one’s community” (Gardner, 2011, p. 25). Gardner (2011) attributes personal responsibility in the workplace as being fostered by a strong moral identity.

The principals and elementary teachers participating in this research study defined themselves in terms of their moral goals and saw moral problems in everyday events. Participants from both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School saw themselves as being responsibly implicated and accountable to deal with problems and situations that arose on a daily basis. As with any school community, problems and issues arise regularly. The staff believed that viewing problems through this lens was a direct step to taking responsibility for seeking solutions (Colby and Damon, 1992). Colby and Damon (1992) also found that the people who participated in their research were moral exemplars. These people were convinced that the work they were doing fulfilled both their personal and moral goals.

6.4.2 Similarities between the two schools related to the job satisfaction factor of Happiness

The second factor contributing to job satisfaction in response to research question number three, the **Happiness Factor**, was clearly linked to *stress levels* for the majority of the elementary teachers (90%) in this study. In small doses stress is a good thing and can energize and motivate a teacher to deal with challenges. The teachers who participated in the research discussed that at certain times they felt more stress mainly linked to work load, feeling as if they had too many expectations and deadlines to meet. These times were noted during report card writing and Individual Education Plan (IEP) deadlines. Parent/teacher interviews also caused some teacher stress. Overall, the teachers indicated that they were able to maintain perspective with their work-related responsibilities.

As discussed earlier, the teachers had *built trusting, positive and caring relationships* with each other, and colleagues were noted as a very big support system in the school. Teachers felt as if they could trust each other with confidential information and at the same time be open to listening and seeking advice and suggestions for coping with certain stressful situations. Taking care of themselves and having an outlet helped them relieve stress and contributed to the low absenteeism rates, as well as the overall health and well-being of the staff.

High *stress levels* have been linked to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal problems, impaired immune response and cancer (Mayo, 2011). Job stress can affect people’s professional and personal relationships, their work life and their health. Prolonged or excessive stress that overwhelms a person’s ability to cope, can take a severe psychological and physical toll (Mayo, 2011). The teachers and principals who participated in this research study did not discuss stress in terms of being

overwhelmed by their current lives at work. They did discuss that from time to time they do have stress in small quantities, but it was not a disabling type of stress.

In a study conducted by Gardner (2007) he discusses that leaders are highly intrinsically motivated, however, many leaders also reported stress and more than a few had reported early warning signs in the form of disease and depression. These early warning signs appeared to correlate inversely to the degree to which self-regulation was possible. If, for example, there was a misalignment between organizational aims and personnel resources, obviously it would be necessary for the leader to be able to regulate these aims. However, if the leaders were unable to regulate these aims and misalignments, and the state continued for an extended period of time, the ultimate consequence was to reduce their *sense of responsibility, commitment to their job* and their *achievement* levels as well as that of their students (Gardner, 2007).

Mental and physical health is linked to happiness, intrinsic motivation and thus job satisfaction. Maintaining physical health and well-being was important to all the research participants. The teachers also reported that it was important to stay connected with their colleagues and their students at work, and equally as important to maintain on-going positive relationships with friends and loved ones. Nurturing friendships and maintaining family ties was high priority for many of the participants. They believed that this is what continued to keep them physically and mentally healthy. Relationships were important both inside the school and outside the school, as a balance must be achieved. Other studies have also found that people who are oriented towards autonomy and intrinsic motivation have higher self-esteem, better inter-personal relationships and greater general well-being than those who are extrinsically motivated (Pink, 2009).

Interpersonal relationships were cited as being extremely significant to all of the elementary teachers in terms of their job satisfaction. They discussed the importance of the interpersonal relationships that they held with their students and how they believed that this was a significant ingredient to helping each student *achieve high standards* and to set *high expectations*. There is an emerging school of research, known as Positive Organizational Scholarship (Cameron & Caza, 2004), that explicitly values the primacy of interpersonal relationships as a key to organizational effectiveness.

The teachers and the principals in the study seemed to have fundamental characteristics of caring and concern for others, as they described these characteristics as being essential to their *happiness* and *satisfaction* at work. Participants had a concern for relationships and for creating *connections* and a *sense of belonging* for the entire school community. The teachers and the principals had a concern for others, for building interpersonal relationships with community members and they extended their interpersonal relationships to include creating and maintaining a caring community. They discussed the essential need to build interpersonal relationships and how this brought about satisfaction for themselves and for others, as they consciously approached assisting each student to achieve the best they could achieve, through *purposeful, reflective teaching and learning*.

A form of *parallel leadership* (Crowther, 2011) was evident and it was formed out of an extension of the interpersonal relationships forged at both schools. Teachers and principals were committed to share responsibility and to engage in collective knowledge gathering and sharing. They collectively and collaboratively maintained a focus on their School Improvement Plan, however, they were committed to re-adjust and re-align the plan as they went along (Crowther, 2011). *Parallel leadership* was apparent in the tendency by the teachers and the principals to essentially “reject” the power differential between each other and to meet others where they were at instead of imposing their agenda onto one another (Gardner, 2007).

Longevity in the teaching career seemed to be a positive based on the quantitative data that were analyzed in this study. The longer that the participant teachers remained in their teaching career, the more satisfied they seemed to be with their teaching profession. This is a very positive outcome, as it indicates that teachers in the study stayed in their careers for the *intrinsic reasons* of caring about students, helping students succeed and believing that they were changing lives.

Huling-Austin (1986) found that 15% of all new teachers leave the profession after one year of service, “in excess of two-thirds of those leaving will do so in the first four years” (Huling-Austin, 1986, p.3), and by year seven 40 to 50% of a beginning teacher cohort had left the profession. It appears that the profile of today’s entry-phase teachers may be changing rapidly, as some of the beginning teachers seem to be approaching their work as a job, possibly focusing primarily on the financial rewards and benefits, thus being extrinsically motivated in their work.

Fortunately, the teachers involved in the research study reported that they believed their profession was a calling, and the longer the teachers were in the profession, the more socially responsible they seemed to be. It was all about community: connecting with a purpose much larger than themselves.

6.4.3 Similarities between the two schools related to job satisfaction factor Autono-Collaboration

Responding to research question number three, this study determined that the next major factor contributing to job satisfaction, **Autono-Collaboration (AC)**, encompasses *decision making/acting with choice*. Elementary teacher participants rated this sub-factor very high in terms of their own job satisfaction at their current school. The teachers discussed the fact that they were provided with the confidence and empowerment from their principals to make decisions autonomously and also collaboratively. The teachers believed that they were respected and treated as professionals, and were *motivated to act with choice* both *autonomously* and *collaboratively*. Due to the fact that they were part of the decision-making process, the teachers discussed *having a voice* at their schools. They believed that their opinions and suggestions were valued. The teachers’ perception was that their principals believed in and cared about them, and this increased their job satisfaction.

The principals stated that during meetings or Professional Learning Communities they would have certain ideas or preconceived notions of how a project or a process could be executed, however, both principals reported that as the formal school leaders they needed to sometimes “take a back seat” to the creative ideas and solutions of their staff. They had to trust their staff enough to provide them with the ability and the leadership capacity to make decisions, even if the resulting decisions differed somewhat from what they would have implemented. The principals admitted that at times it was a challenge to not always have it “their way”, however, they believed in the “*parallel leadership model*” (Crowther, 2011) and so together with the teaching staff they led side-by-side.

Being empowered to make decisions and act with choice encouraged *positive collaboration* with members of the school community. Teachers reported feeling satisfied with their teaching career due to this positive collaboration at work which helped to increase their quality of life and boost their work performance.

Individual performance and collaborative performance are essential components to teacher job satisfaction and overall happiness at work as cited by the participants in the study. The teachers had what Daniel Pink (2009) discusses as three ingredients necessary for self-directed behaviour to occur in the workplace: autonomy, mastery and purpose (Pink, 2009). The participant teachers exhibited these behaviours and commented on how their “craft of teaching” was continually improving, thus assisting the students to meet with success. Becoming better and better was something that really mattered to the teachers and the principal participants, as it was essential to their well-being. The three elements cited above, autonomy, mastery and purpose, are what the teachers believed led to their successful individual and collaborative performance as professionals, impacting both their personal lives and their school lives.

Individual and collaborative performances were reflected in the high student achievement levels at both schools, despite the socio-economic differences. All of the elementary teachers were intrinsically motivated to perform, plan and reflect individually and collaboratively and they believed this is what helped improve both their performance as a teacher and the performance of their students. Collaboratively, teams of teachers would plan and discuss units of study and how to differentiate lessons for individual students. After the collaborative sessions, most of the elementary teachers (90%) reported that they would reflect upon the plans and ideas from their collaborative efforts with colleagues. Autonomously, they would then incorporate their own creativity to suit their unique teaching style and the unique learning styles of their students. After teaching the lessons, they would individually reflect on what went well and what did not go well. During subsequent collaborative sessions with their colleagues, they would share their reflections as well as their unique and creative ideas. Through this cyclical process the teaching staff continued to improve both their individual and collaborative performance, remaining focused and reflective on the pedagogical needs of their students and indeed all the students in the school community.

Positive attitude has a lot to do with job satisfaction, as was indicated by the participants in the research study and was also observed by the researcher during the interview and

focus group phases. All of the elementary teachers and principals who participated in the study were very positive about their jobs and held a positive outlook and attitude towards themselves, their students and all members of the school community. Both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School held **high expectations for their students** in all areas, personally, academically and socially.

A breakthrough study looking at a person's disposition and the influence it has on job satisfaction and thus attitude at work was conducted by Staw and Ross (1985). This study demonstrated that a person's job satisfaction scores have stability over time, even when he or she changes jobs or companies, thus suggesting that in general teachers either have a positive attitude towards their jobs or they do not.

Researchers have also explored the psychological processes that underlie dispositional causes of job satisfaction. For example, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996, as cited in Staw & Cummings, 1997) suggest that disposition may influence the experience of emotionally significant events at work, which in turn influences job satisfaction. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996, as cited in Staw & Cummings, 1997) thus imply that elementary teachers have a personality disposition that can either see the "cup half empty" or the "cup half full". In this research study, all of the teachers and the two principals who participated saw the "cup half full" and carried this positive attitude with them throughout their day whether they were teaching students, collaborating with their peers or discussing important issues with administration.

Higher levels of achievement were linked to teachers' job satisfaction, as noted by the participants in the study. All of the elementary teachers and principals discussed feeling more satisfied with their work when they had achieved something. Determining what had been achieved through the acts of teaching and learning is sometimes hard to decipher; however, with **feedback** from colleagues and their principal, the teachers discussed how this helped them to determine their **levels of achievement**. Not having feedback is "bad news" especially in the teaching field where it is often hard to perceive one's own **accomplishments** and **achievements**. A significant amount of process occurs in a school day and having feedback can help teachers determine what they have achieved and what they should be doing better.

Both principals discussed the formal feedback process that occurs every five years called the "Teacher Performance Appraisal" (TPA). The Ontario educational system also has an "Annual Learning Plan" (ALP) process that must be completed by every teacher at the beginning of each school year and discussed with their principal. These formalized feedback methods are essential to the growth and learning of the teaching population, however, both teachers and principals discussed how informal feedback is essential for growth and learning to occur. Having frequent and on-going constructive feedback was essential to the job satisfaction of the teachers at both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School.

Teachers discussed the **need for feedback** so that they could figure out next steps for themselves and their students. They recognized the importance of feedback in terms of

their job satisfaction. Teachers also realized that students as well required on-going, continuous feedback, both formal and informal, so that they were well aware of their achievement levels. Providing continuous feedback assisted in determining how to provide support for areas of concern. Feedback sessions provided a time for the teacher to talk one-on-one with students about their work. Teachers reported that reviewing and discussing achievement levels with their students helped to set *high expectations* and facilitate *higher levels of achievement* for their students. Rubrics and expectations were also shared with the parents/guardians of the students so that they also knew what was expected and how students could achieve these expectations.

6.4.4 Similarities between the two schools related to job satisfaction factor Autono-Collaborative Leadership

Autono-Collaborative Leadership is the fourth factor classified under job satisfaction for Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School in response to research question number three. *Autono-Collaborative Leadership* encompasses both individual and collaborative leadership efforts and includes the sub-category *commitment to lead*. The emphasis of the commitment carries with it an ownership for the collective as well as for themselves. Such commitment was evident at both sites and was a belief that was held by the teachers and the principals. By the time the researcher had started collecting data, each of the principals had been working at their respective schools for more than three years. Positive relationships had been established, student achievement levels were increasing and people were essentially happy at work. The school culture was positive and the staff were committed to lead.

Positive relationship building was high priority for all school staff members at both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. Teachers and principals saw this as an essential component of leadership that continually requires on-going motivation both individually and collaboratively in order to achieve it. Through a commitment to continually build and improve upon relationships at each school site, the teachers believed that their students greatly benefited. One teacher in the study commented that “the most important relationship at school is between a teacher and a student, this relationship helps to foster a safe and trusting learning environment where students feel as if they can take risks and learn”.

To build *positive relationships* at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School, the teachers and principals looked to leadership effectiveness and capacity building. The pioneer in this area is Daniel Goleman et al. (2002), who popularized the term “emotional intelligence”. His applications to leadership are compelling, particularly when he synthesizes a substantial body of evidence that suggests emotional intelligence has a relatively stronger influence on leadership effectiveness and organizational results than do traditional measures such as analytical ability (Goleman et al., 2002). The staff at both sites held a deep level of commitment as they valued and demonstrated emotional intelligence. According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002), the most successful leaders “tune in to people’s emotions, inspiring them and guiding them in the right direction” (Goleman et al., p. 26).

With all of the leadership demands that running a school community entails, they will almost invariably exceed the capacity of one single person to meet all of the needs (Reeves, 2006). Both administrators at the schools involved in the research study understood this very concept. They knew that they could not single handedly run their schools. They needed a community to lead the school together. That is why both principals discussed the importance of developing and maintaining positive relationships with all stakeholders, based on trust and respect.

Relational leadership was promoted at both schools. The teachers and principals were motivated to build positive relationships with members of the school community. The type of relational leadership that was evident was built on a strong foundation of trust and integrity (Reeves, 2006). Kouzes and Posner (2000, 2003a, 2003b) found that in studies of more than one million leaders, the trust and credibility that stem from meaningful relationships are essential for leadership success.

Collaboration is essential to building and maintaining leadership capacity in a school community and requires positive relationship building, “intellectual commitment” (Crowther, 2011) and “emotional intelligence” (Goleman et al., 2002) on the part of teachers and administrators. The staff team has to believe in what they are doing and be committed to trusting, learning and growing together. Teachers and administrators at both Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School believed in collaboration as a necessary ingredient for the promotion and maintenance of high expectations and standards as well as positive and caring relationships.

Autono-Collaborative Leadership was evident and helped nurture student success at both sites in this study. Autonomy can be both positive and negative. It is positive in that teachers are able to be **creative, make their own decisions**, and be **responsible for the learning** of their students and all of this can provide a much needed **challenge** that brings with it satisfaction with one’s work. However, if a teacher is to stand up in front of a classroom all alone, or is expected to work with a group of students on guided reading while the other students work independently, this teacher had better be equipped with the necessary pedagogical knowledge to be able to **purposefully and reflectively teach**, as well as **provide on-going, meaningful feedback** to their students. The only possible way for this to happen is if the teachers in the school work together, collaboratively leading and guiding each other to **develop and maintain learning goals** for individual students, for classrooms and for the entire school community.

The formal leadership at both sites understood the necessity of providing scheduled time during the school day for effective teacher collaboration. When teachers **positively collaborate** because it is a way that “business is done”, not only does the quality of collaboration improve, but also the time required for collaboration will be reduced (Reeves, 2006). The teacher participants and principals at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School were intellectually committed to common goals and common revitalization of the school community. Due to this form of shared commitment, student achievement was positively affected and both schools were high achieving schools despite the variances in socio-economic status.

6.4.5 Differences between the two schools

When responding to research question number three, the researcher found that there were certain differences in how elementary teacher job satisfaction factors related to student achievement in the two schools located in distinctly different socio-economic levels of the areas.

Teachers working at Willow Tree Public School, located in a lower socio-economic area, indicated that having an *advocacy role* and *teaching students to have a voice* were very important to job satisfaction. The teachers maintained *positive and caring relationships* with these students and made all students feel connected by providing them with a safe place to belong. In addition, the staff advocated for resources from the school board and local businesses, and some staff also helped to write grant proposals to purchase technology equipment such as SMARTBoards and hand held computers so that their students could learn on the most modern technology. By providing much needed technological equipment to the school through networking with local businesses, *active hope* was demonstrated to the students. The teachers at Willow Tree Public School purposely showed the students that no matter the circumstance there is always a way, it just takes determination. They taught the students that no *challenge* is too great!

The teachers and principal at Willow Tree Public School set high academic and behavioural standards for all the students and they were consistent with follow-through. The staff did not accept the idea that socio-economic status was equated to achievement levels. All staff participants were cognizant of the barriers that the students faced in terms of not having the same type of support from their home environments, therefore they decided to “fill the gap” by providing some of that support at the school level. There was a breakfast program offered on-site so that all students started their day well nourished. There was a homework club at recess time and after school and teachers volunteered their time to support this effort. Students were encouraged to participate, and fun activities such as sports were a regular component so that students would not perceive the homework club as a punishment but rather as something fun to be involved in. Pizza parties were a part of the homework club but they were random occurrences so that students would not become extrinsically motivated. The homework club was a place where students could have fun and yet learn at the same time.

Through these various activities, teachers tried to close the gap between the students who attended Willow Tree Public School and those who came from much more advantaged areas of the district. Students realized that the teachers believed in them and that they cared about them. Teachers *taught advocacy and active hope* and discussed that through this modeling, the students developed their own advocacy skills, thereby increasing their confidence and providing them with *a voice* to begin to advocate for each other.

Promoting a culture of advocacy in the school community was very much a priority for all of the elementary teachers and the principal at Willow Tree Public School as the parent community was not very actively involved in the life of the school. Teachers and the principal believed that they were accountable for setting the climate and tone of the

school community. The parent community was always made to feel welcome and activities were planned to encourage their participation and to become more involved in the culture of the school. The staff decided that Willow Tree Public School was a school that *valued diversity* and *transformed barriers*. They believed that all students could succeed and therefore provided support systems and resources so that this would happen. They did not accept that lower socio-economic status was equated to lower student achievement scores. Thus, by building and maintaining *a culture of advocacy*, they motivated and inspired their students to become better, and better, and better.

Promoting a culture of advocacy requires unique leadership skills. It required the principal at Willow Tree Public School to share the leadership, working in collaboration as well as autonomously, and so *Autono-Collaborative Leadership* was evident. To display Autono-Collaborative Leadership required the staff to be motivated to *collaborate* with each other as well as to be *autonomous* and *creative*. The staff also displayed empathy, social awareness and other emotional intelligence skills that were vital to promoting a culture of advocacy in an environment that confronts socio-economic barriers. The *teacher* participants discussed that being an advocate for their students and *building a culture of advocacy* enhanced their personal and professional lives, as they really believed that they were making a difference!

At Lake Dore Public School where students were from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds, *community focus* was promoted by the teachers and the principal and brought about job satisfaction. Having a community focus helped with *higher student achievement levels*, as students and staff had *positive caring relationships* that prompted a sense of connection and belonging to the school. Ensuring a community focus requires a collaborative style of leadership that explores the possibilities of how to involve the entire school community in various aspects of school life. The *principal* and the *teachers* had a vision to build a school community, however, a vision is not enough. The principal at Lake Dore Public School decided to build capacity within the school community by sharing leadership with its members through the process of building trust and leading through collaboration.

By *promoting a positive connection with the community*, the staff at Lake Dore Public School demonstrated *Autono-Collaborative Leadership* through emotional intelligence, empathy, social awareness and collaboration. Both teachers and the principal realized that they alone cannot prepare the students of Lake Dore Public School to be productive citizens for both now and into the future. It was evident through dialogue that they believed that schools and the wider school community needed to work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals. The staff collectively displayed leadership skills connecting them with the community by being both autonomous and collaborative. The teachers' autonomy within their classroom environment determined job satisfaction associated with their work, and thus satisfaction equated to increased levels of job performance (Newmann et al., 1989).

Sergiovanni (1994) argues that communities are important because people and connections between them are important. The staff at Lake Dore Public School believed

in developing relationships and connections with people within the inner and outer school community. They believed in and promoted a positive connection with the community and had systematically developed many methods to approach such positive connections.

Positive and caring family connections were evident at Lake Dore Public School. As discussed earlier, parent volunteers were active in the school community and several teachers commented that the positive family connections at Lake Dore Public School promoted their job satisfaction. They enjoyed working very closely with the parents, as they saw the relationship as seamless. The teachers understood the positive influence the parents contributed to the overall school community and to the educational life of their children. The very strong family connections are what made this possible as well as the acceptance and embracement of this aspect by staff at Lake Dore Public School.

Promoting a culture of community and belongingness was acknowledged by the teachers and the principal at Lake Dore Public School as a key contributor to their job satisfaction and increased motivation to achieve the academic goals of the school. Teaching can be isolating, as several teachers described in the study. They are often separated from other staff members when they are teaching in their classrooms. Lake Dore Public School had school organizational functions that exhibited a strong sense of purpose and a shared value system about learning and provided scheduled times for communication to take place. By making collaboration and communication a priority, staff were able to create a social consensus about the academic mission of the school and how to translate this mission into active learning within the classroom setting. The staff also communicated this mission to the parent community and the wider school community.

In communities, writes Thomas Sergiovanni (1994) in his book *Building Community in Schools*, “we become connected for reason of commitment rather than compliance” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 58). “People are bonded to each other as a result of their mutual bindings to shared values, traditions, ideas and ideals” (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 61). It was important for the staff at Lake Dore Public School to develop and promote a *culture of community and belongingness* that was *social* rather than *formal*. The staff at the school had social and communal bonds, and they were *committed to this connection*. They did not create connections or compliance due to legal or contractual reasons, but instead were committed to building relationships with students, teachers, parents and community members seeking to improve teaching and learning. Communication and willingness to remain connected and work towards common goals are what led Lake Dore Public School teachers and the principal to promote a *culture of community and belongingness* in which members were flourishing.

6.4.6 Concluding remarks

This study determined that elementary teachers from both schools in this study were intrinsically motivated to work hard and to help their students achieve, viewing their careers as a calling, as a life commitment to both themselves and their students. Seeing

students achieve brought them great satisfaction in their jobs, which they believed added to all students' achievement. Teachers subscribed to the idea that relationship building and recognition are key to helping set higher expectations for all of their students and continually providing them with opportunities to learn and grow. Teachers had a positive view of the challenges in their work as bringing about job satisfaction and would also set the bar high for their students so that they too would be challenged. Teachers modeled problem solving and provided hope for students in a classroom where challenges were seen as ways to grow and develop.

Positive relationship building in both schools was an extension of Autono-Collaborative Leadership that encompasses both individual and collaborative leadership efforts and a commitment to lead. Emphasis is on both the collective and the individual commitment. The principals in the study believed in parallel leadership and together with staff they led side-by-side. Teachers reported high levels of job satisfaction due to the positive collaboration in their workplaces, but also saw this collaboration as a necessary ingredient for the promotion of high expectations and the development of positive and caring relationships. Teachers in the schools worked together to develop and maintain learning goals for individual students.

The positive and caring relationships among all stakeholders in the school community, combined with active hope and a culture of advocacy, provided increased job satisfaction for teachers and supported increased levels of student achievement in spite of socio-economic differences between the two schools. The conditions that provided for high levels of job satisfaction for all of the elementary teachers were also foundational to student achievement in both high performing schools involved in this study.

6.5 Chapter summary

The first three research questions in this study sought to establish the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture, as well as how the factors for each of these two themes related to student achievement. Responses from teacher and principal participants from the two high performing elementary schools provided conclusive evidence that these three concepts are closely inter-related and what affects one will have a significant impact on the other two.

Positive relationship building was central to all three areas and combined with parallel leadership created the basis for a school culture that supported both high levels of teacher job satisfaction and high levels of student achievement. The leadership role of teachers in these schools where all staff embraced parallel leadership is a critical element to the sustainability of school improvement. The researcher coined the term 'Autono-Collaborative Leadership' to describe the leadership capacity of an individual who is committed to lead and is committed and motivated to work in a positive, collaborative relationship with others. Social and community responsibility, calling to mind the concept of altruism where there is a sense of personal responsibility to take action, was clearly evident at both sites in this study. These responsibilities were manifested in slightly different ways within the cultures of the two schools due to the different socio-

economic contexts; however, there was a shared set of underlying values at the core of the two school cultures which emphasized social justice and consciousness raising. Teacher participants saw their work as a calling and as a responsibility to a higher purpose in life. Their sense of personal responsibility to the entire school community fostered by a strong moral identity led to great job satisfaction and also to high levels of student achievement. They worked within school cultures where community leadership was shared among all staff and respectful, positive relationships formed the foundation for collaborative efforts to promote high expectations for all students to achieve. Guided by teachers who believed in students' abilities and modeled how challenges are opportunities to learn and grow, students had a sense of belonging and confidence to achieve to their potential in a community of learning.

Figure 6.7 below illustrates the relational aspects that emerged in the research between school culture, elementary teacher job satisfaction and student achievement. The findings of the study support the conclusion that a collaborative form of leadership in which teachers work in parallel leadership with principals is critical to the sustainability of student success in these high performing schools. This collaborative leadership combined with the creativity of autonomous individuals motivated to make a difference in the lives of their students provides for high levels of job satisfaction and student achievement within a positive school culture in which teachers and principals work together to realize their shared belief that *all students can succeed*.

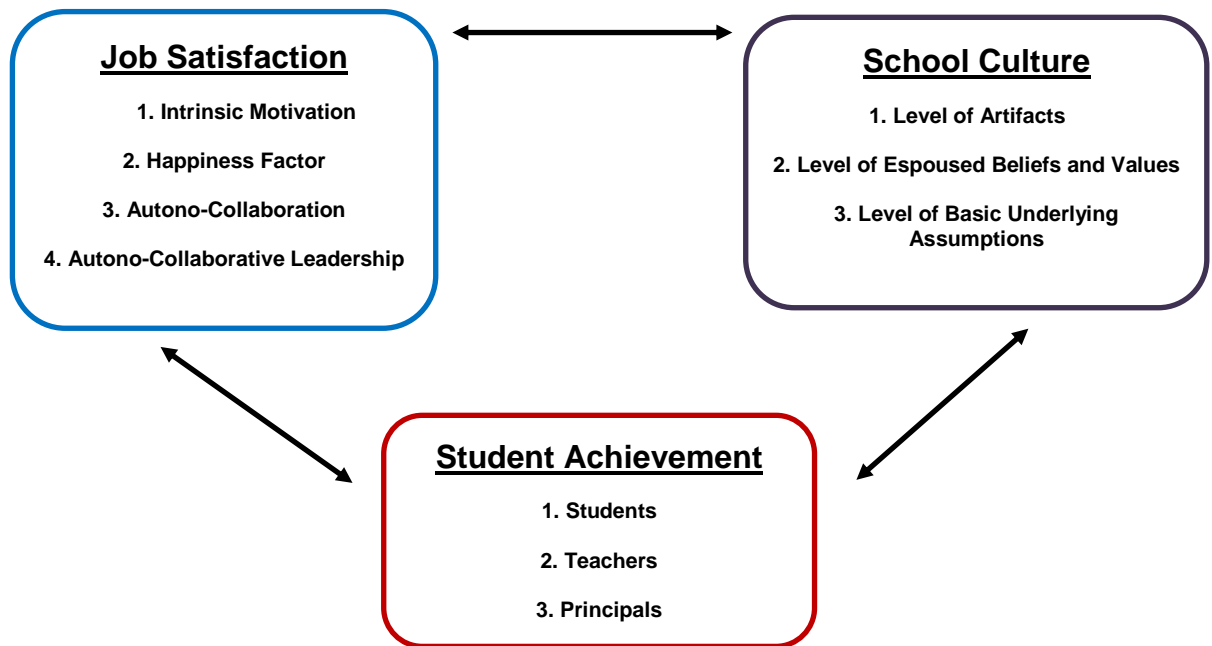


Figure 6.7: Relational aspects that emerged in response to research questions one, two and three

CHAPTER 7: EXEMPLARY PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER LEADERSHIP

7.1 Overview of the chapter

The research problem explored in this study was:

What emerges as the interconnectedness between school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the impact this interconnectedness has on student achievement in two high-performing Canadian elementary schools located in distinctly different socio-economic areas?

This chapter provides a response to the overall research problem by first addressing research question number four through the presentation of a **Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL)** model. Discussion as to the significance of the study in the context of recent international research is included. The final part of this chapter includes limitations to the research project and future research possibilities. The chapter concludes with the researcher's personal reflections on her doctoral studies journey.

7.2 Leadership and student achievement

The relational findings of the research study provide contextual evidence that a form of effective parallel leadership is essential to creating positive school cultures and supporting high levels of elementary teacher job satisfaction which together contribute to sustained improvement in student achievement. Guided by the overall research problem, and in consideration of the relational findings as discussed in Chapter six, the researcher turned to research question four:

What model might emerge to explain the interconnectedness between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this interconnectedness affects student achievement?

The model that emerged from this study is an evolution of exemplary teacher and principal leadership and represents leadership that is dynamic in nature. Despite varied socio-economic factors, the leadership model that evolved throughout this research study emphasizes a relationship between positive school culture, job satisfaction and leadership. This relationship I have called **Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL)**.

Figure 7.1 is a representation of the impact of the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model on the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this relationship enhances student achievement. Figure 7.1 helps to visually explain the significance of research question number four regarding *“the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and how this relationship affects student achievement.”*

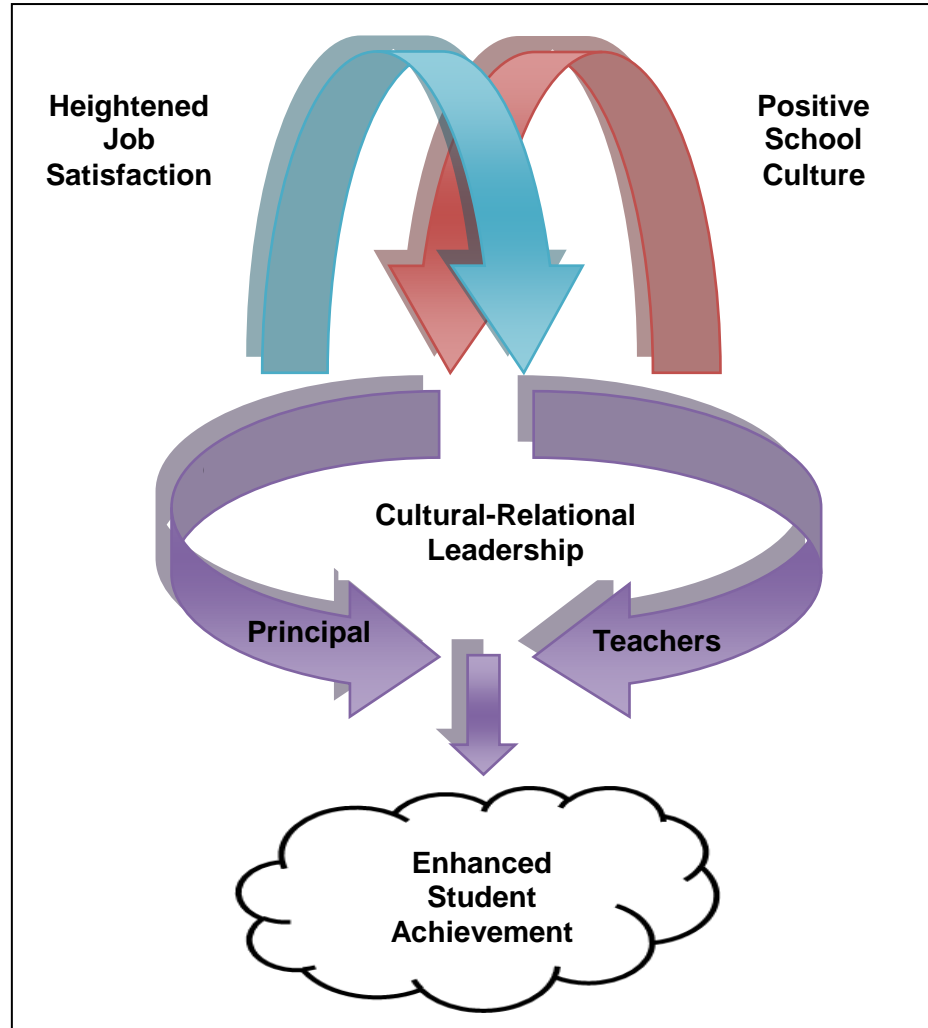


Figure 7.1: Impact of Cultural-Relational Leadership on the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and school culture that enhances student achievement

As can be seen in Figure 7.1, the arrows at the top represent the inter-connected relationship between job satisfaction and school culture that creates positive synergy flowing into the middle arrows. The middle arrows represent the relationship between principal and teacher leadership that continually builds and develops as the school culture and the elementary teachers’ job satisfaction continues to grow and flourish.

The middle arrows representing Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) encompass the leadership characteristics that are unique and essential to principal leadership as well as leadership characteristics that are unique and essential to teacher leadership. The CRL model that emerged from this study, (later expanded in Figure 7.2), is needed for on-going teacher job satisfaction and for continuous school culture building, shaping and re-shaping.

The final arrow points to the cloud formation at the bottom of Figure 7.1 which envelopes student achievement. The cloud formation is also representative of a dynamic flow of energy, as exemplary Cultural-Relational Leaders are always aspiring to improve student achievement levels. The increased student achievement levels are a result of the on-going positive outcomes from the inter-relationship of school culture and teacher job satisfaction.

7.2.1 Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model

Teachers and principals need to engage in collective action where shared purpose and trust are valued (Andrews & Lewis, 2007, p. 135). The Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model extends this concept by deepening the allowance for autonomy and collaboration through mutual respect and creativity sustained by the symbiotic inter-relationship of the principal and the teacher leaders. The CRL characteristics enable effective leadership in the context of school culture by combining the dynamic inter-relational leadership between the principal and the teachers. Figure 7.2 presents a deeper explanation of the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model.

The Cultural-Relational characteristics that comprise the CRL model, as outlined in Table 7.1, are inter-relational between teachers and principals. The CRL characteristics of both the principals and the teachers combine to create a culture of belonging, a culture of learning, a culture of expectations and a culture of advocacy. Figure 7.2 represents the continuous flow of positive synergy created in the CRL model that fosters these cultures and characteristics within the school community.

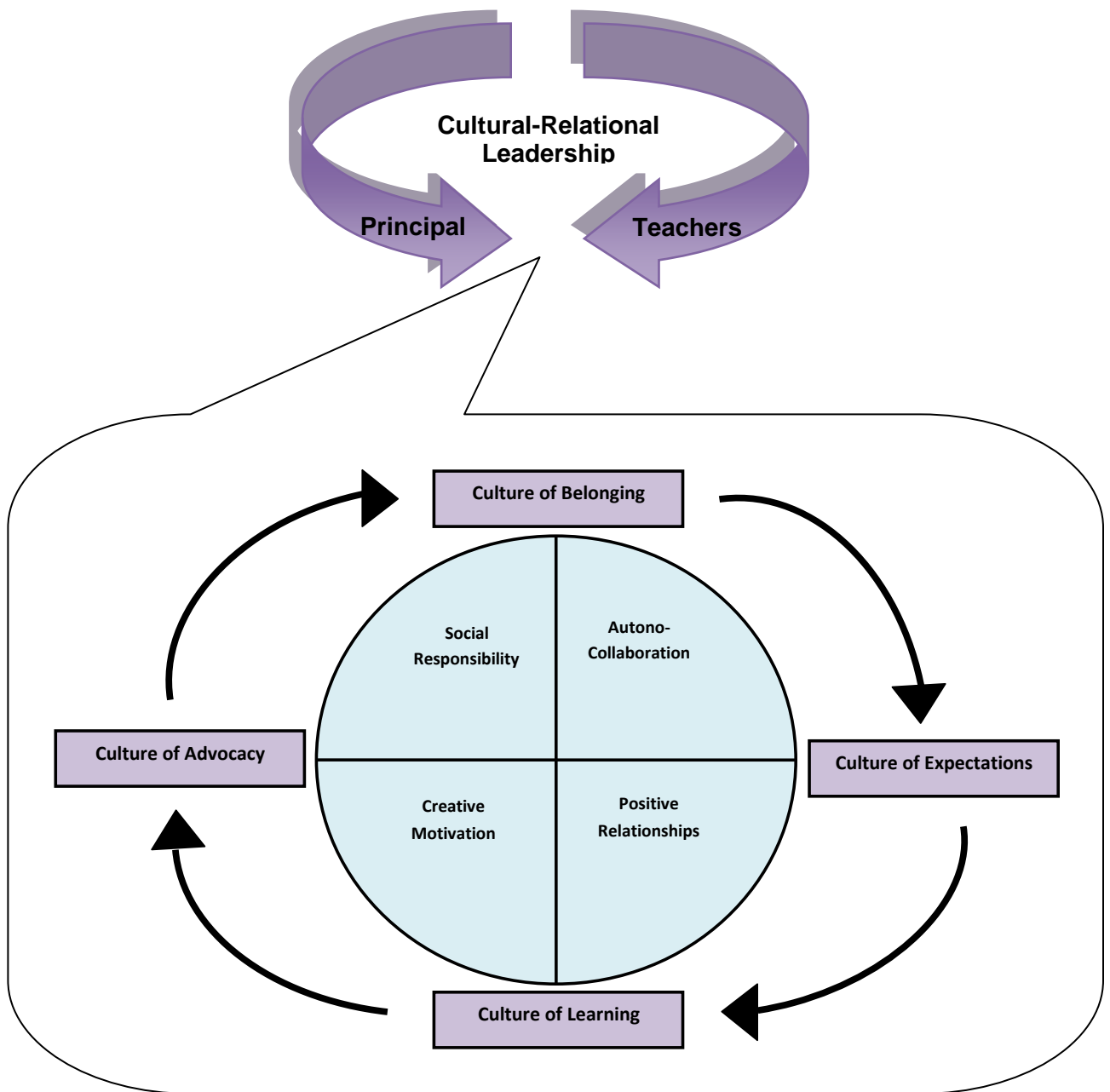


Figure 7.2: Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) Model

Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) is a model that has the potential to be applied to any context; however, depending on the context, its operationalization varies. For the CRL model to be effective, a strong emphasis on creative motivation, that is, individuals wanting to work autonomously and collaboratively, to get along and to build relationships by intrinsically possessing and demonstrating social responsibility.

Leadership within the model is dynamic and is defined by the researcher as “*a commitment to a role to mobilize others in which an individual is able to act with choice, thus being autonomous, and the same individual is also agreeably committed and motivated to work collaboratively with others, thus sharing their roles*”.

For CRL to be present, three conditions must be fulfilled. The individual must be motivated and committed to:

1. working autonomously and collaboratively,
2. developing a culture that is dynamic and continuous, and
3. taking social and community responsibility.

This leadership model illustrates the circular dynamic nature of the relationship between the teachers and the principals. CRL is not a “top-down” or a “bottom-up” form of leadership. Instead, it is a dynamic, creative, shared, collaborative and autonomous leadership approach. The results are high levels of job satisfaction, a positive school culture and high levels of student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic factors. The CRL model is an expression of the dynamic inter-relationship of job satisfaction and school culture and how this relationship positively affects student achievement. Job satisfaction and a positive and collaborative school culture are the driving forces that continually create the dynamic energy required for the sustainability of the CRL model with the outcome being enhanced in student achievement. The CRL model is ever changing, depending on the context and the characteristics, abilities, skills and features of the exemplary teacher and principal leaders. Both principals and elementary teachers, who have a heightened level of committed responsibility to their careers and to their school cultures, produce high levels of motivational energy which translates into further enhancement of student achievement.

Discussed in sections 7.2.3 and 7.2.4 is the principal as a Cultural-Relational Leader and the teacher as a Cultural-Relational Leader. These two sections explain how the cultures and characteristics formulated in Table 7.1 and Figures 7.1 and 7.2 are exemplified by the principal and teacher leaders in the school community.

7.2.2 Cultural-Relationship Leadership (CRL) characteristics

The Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model that evolved out of this research study encompasses a commitment to a role to mobilize others to social and community responsibility. Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) fosters cultures and relationships that emphasize the dynamic nature of belonging, expectations, learning and advocacy.

The following table defines the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) characteristics of a principal leader and a teacher leader, as well as the cultures that are continuously created through the dynamic, on-going mutual relationships between the principal and teachers. CRL is not all about principal leadership, but instead it is a cultural-relational model representing a symbiotic relationship between the principal and the teachers. The Cultural-Relational characteristics that comprise the CRL model are outlined in Table 7.1. Principal leadership and teacher leadership characteristics share identical categories; however, the descriptors listed under each category vary based on the roles that the principal serves within the school community and the roles that the elementary teachers serve within the school community.

Table 7.1: Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) Characteristics

Principal Leadership Characteristics	Cultural Characteristics	Teacher Leadership Characteristics
<p>Demonstrate Autono-Collaboration (AC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> display leadership effectiveness by motivating self and others to be both <i>autonomous</i> and <i>collaborative</i> foster <i>emotional intelligence</i> by valuing self-awareness, self-reflection, high levels of achievement and recognition display <i>intrinsic motivation</i> and encourage it with all school community members commit to leading others by engaging in shared decision making by enacting choice 	<p>Nurture a Culture of Belonging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulate and demonstrate a <i>belief</i> that all students and school community members <i>belong</i> develop and maintain <i>connections</i> with <i>all students</i>: personal, social, emotional and academic foster a <i>sense of harmony</i> in the learning community create and maintain a <i>value system of acceptance</i> and <i>respect</i> value and accept the <i>unique learning styles</i> of all school community members understand that maintaining their own <i>personal health</i> and <i>well-being</i> helps to maintain the <i>health</i> and <i>well-being</i> of the <i>school organization</i> 	<p>Demonstrate Autono-Collaboration (AC):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> display leadership effectiveness by being motivated to work both <i>autonomously</i> and <i>collaboratively</i> foster <i>emotional intelligence</i> by valuing self-awareness, self-reflection, high levels of achievement and recognition commit to valuing and nurturing <i>intrinsic motivation</i> demonstrate decision-making abilities by being able to act freely, and wisely with choice
<p>Encourage Positive Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus all relationships around belonging, caring and collaboration model and ensure <i>flexibility</i> and <i>adaptability</i> throughout on-going interactions with others foster <i>resiliency</i> in self and others provide <i>reflective, honest feedback</i>, thus promoting <i>transparency</i> throughout the school community 	<p>Facilitate a Culture of Expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop, communicate and reinforce a school-wide approach to being called to a <i>higher standard of practice</i> for <i>behaviour, academics</i> and <i>social interactions</i> engage in a process of developing and maintaining a school-wide approach to creating and <i>using a common language</i> believe in and promote <i>professional learning</i> with the concept that <i>all students will succeed</i> commit to choose <i>priorities</i> and <i>remain focused</i> based on the impact each priority will have communicate and be consistently decisive in <i>solving a problem</i> or <i>providing new opportunities</i> ensure <i>accountability</i> and <i>responsibility</i> for the entire school community 	<p>Encourage Positive Relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> center all relationships around <i>belonging, caring</i> and <i>collaboration</i> nurture <i>adaptability</i> and <i>resiliency</i> in self and others respect <i>loyalty</i> and <i>integrity</i> by regarding their <i>careers</i> and the <i>careers of their colleagues</i> understand and accept that <i>abilities are unique</i> and that their <i>level of attainment varies</i> from individual to individual
<p>Promote Creative Motivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> value and respect <i>autonomy</i> and <i>collaborative creativity</i> amongst the school community listen and reflect on the <i>novel ideas</i> from the school community engage in the creative process of <i>managing issues</i> and <i>time</i> facilitate creativity throughout <i>school-wide operational</i> and <i>pedagogical issues</i> 	<p>Emphasize a Culture of Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a <i>social consensus</i> about the <i>academic mission</i> of the school, by <i>believing</i> and <i>valuing</i> that <i>all students will succeed</i> develop and maintain a <i>school-wide belief</i> and <i>value system</i> promoting a <i>shared approach to pedagogy</i> commit to always <i>creating connections</i> to teaching, learning and assessment facilitate <i>learning tasks</i> in a deliberate manner by ensuring they are <i>authentic, engaging</i> and <i>relevant</i> with <i>intentional interventions</i> that ensure cognitive changes in all students coordinate the efforts of <i>school resources</i> and <i>materials</i>, focusing on <i>purposeful teaching, intentional learning, current technology, student achievement</i> and <i>well-being</i> nurture the importance of and participate in <i>on-going, relevant, professional development</i> 	<p>Promote Creative Motivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe, value and recognize creativity in <i>themselves</i> and <i>others</i> engage in the <i>creative process</i> in order to <i>solve a problem</i> or act upon a new opportunity maintain and value a <i>creative focus</i> when <i>planning</i> with colleagues and when <i>facilitating learning</i> with students know and value how each individual <i>student creatively demonstrates success</i>
<p>Convey Conviction regarding Social Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe and value <i>social justice</i> for all create a vision and adopt an <i>inner sense of responsibility</i> and <i>overall well-being</i> for the lives of the students and families they serve value being <i>responsible, committed</i> and <i>motivated</i> to be of <i>service to others</i> foster a <i>sense of optimism, courage</i> and <i>strength</i> for all school community members 	<p>Confront Barriers and Promote a Culture of Advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop, communicate and reinforce a <i>shared vision</i> ensuring <i>advocacy for all</i> create and maintain a <i>safe</i> and <i>caring</i> place for all school community members demonstrate and incorporate a <i>moral and political purpose</i> value <i>diversity</i> and <i>transform barriers</i> by committing to be a voice for all, especially the marginalized provide <i>valuable resources</i> such as current technology to encourage <i>active hope</i> in the <i>future</i> of all staff and students understand the value and impact of shifting language usage back and forth from ME to WE 	<p>Convey Conviction regarding Social Responsibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> value and demonstrate <i>social competence</i> create a vision and adopt an <i>inner sense of responsibility</i> and <i>overall well-being</i> for the lives of the students and families they serve focus on <i>their needs</i> as well as the <i>needs of others</i> strive to close the <i>learning gap</i> for the <i>marginalized learners</i> by programming to meet their <i>individual needs</i>

7.2.3 The principal as a Cultural-Relational Leader

The principal's role as a Cultural-Relational Leader is to model, for the school community, CRL characteristics that cultivate the foundation required to ceaselessly promote an ever changing positive and collaborative school culture. For a concerted team approach to be established throughout the entire school community, the principal is the key driving force who believes in and values CRL. The principal's leadership is the cornerstone of effective, dynamic change upon which all else is being continuously built.

As CR Leaders, principals have a deep belief that it is their responsibility to display and promote CRL characteristics in the areas of: Autono-Collaboration (AC), positive relationship building, creative motivation, and social responsibility. A CR principal Leader believes that his or her role is to be of service to the school community by fostering a shared and parallel leadership approach with the teaching staff. A principal's commitment to sharing leadership is pivotal to providing opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively on school-wide initiatives that develop a sense of the collective in the school culture which is also manifested by a shift in language from 'ME' to 'WE'. As a Cultural-Relational Leader, the principal plays a critical role in the development of trusting relationships focused on community responsibility, valuing the 'WE' however also recognizing the necessity of the 'ME'.

The principal's CRL characteristics are paramount in combining to create the cultures of belonging, expectations, learning and advocacy that are essential for enduring high levels of job satisfaction, positive school cultures and increased student achievement levels. Without the principal's CR Leadership, the school community would not experience the lasting flow of positive energy that is constantly needed to create collaborative inter-personal relationships required for the continuous generation of parallel leadership with the elementary teachers.

Socio-economic factors often determine how a principal displays CR Leadership, and what, when, and why particular emphasis is placed on certain CRL characteristics. In a school community located in a lower socio-economic area, the principals of this study were committed to being a voice for the marginalized and assisting the teachers to help the student body by facilitating and fostering advocacy skills. The principals recognized the need to promote the teaching of advocacy skills all the while confronting barriers and ensuring a culture of advocacy was ever present. This presents an opportunity for CR principal Leaders of schools with lower socio-economic status to rise to the challenge of creating a safe and caring school community. The creation of such a community ensures acceptance of diversity and belonging for all.

An emphasis on a culture of expectations must be evident in a school located in a lower socio-economic area. It is the principal's responsibility to commit to guiding and collaborating with a team of educators to develop, communicate and reinforce a school-wide approach to being called to a higher standard of practice for behaviour, academics and social interactions. Maintaining high expectations for behaviour and academic

scores in any school environment needs to be a priority. Regardless of the socio-economic factors and the context, a principal displaying CRL sets high expectations and believes that all students will succeed by providing a standard of practice and resources, promoting professional learning, and ensuring accountability for learning throughout the entire school community.

However, cultural advocacy and respect for diversity must also be present in middle to upper-middle socio-economic neighbourhood schools. The CRL principals of this study worked to ensure that a vision for advocacy was created and communicated so that the school community could assist in advocating for the needs of others locally, nationally and internationally. Overall, being of service to others is emphasized in the culture of learning and culture of expectations of these schools.

It is argued that a culture of belonging and a culture of learning are evident in any school where a principal is a CR Leader. Demonstrating the belief that all students and community members belong is the responsibility of the CR principal, as is recognizing the need to develop and maintain connections with all students and community members. How connections are made personally, socially, emotionally and academically vary depending on the socio-economic status, however, the goal remains the same. The goal is to create a sense of harmony in the learning community so that the unique learning needs of all students are met. This goal is the responsibility of the principal, working in a collaborative and trusting relationship with CR teacher Leaders.

7.2.4 The teacher as a Cultural-Relational Leader

As CR Leaders, both teachers and principals engage in trusting, collaborative relationships where a shared intention and the incorporation of a moral and political purpose in the school community are valued. Teachers who are committed to CRL believe in and value working both autonomously and collaboratively with others. They view school culture as a collaborative effort, and seamlessly shift their language from 'ME' to 'WE' in discussions of school-wide initiatives and school culture, embracing a sense of collective commitment to social and community responsibility.

Teachers displaying CRL characteristics are responsible for promoting high levels of job satisfaction, as well as positive and collaborative school cultures. These teachers believe in setting high expectations for all students so that they continually have increases in their achievement levels. CR teacher Leaders believe that they can make a difference and believe that all students can succeed.

In conjunction with their CR principal Leaders, CR teacher Leaders continuously develop and re-create cultures of expectations setting high standards for appropriate student behaviour, academic achievement and social responsibility. Lowering expectations due to socio-economic factors is not permitted, as CR teacher Leaders support creating a social consensus about the academic mission of the school. CR teacher Leaders believe and value that all students will succeed.

In any socio-economic context, CR teacher Leaders promote student achievement and well-being, along with their principals, as they coordinate the efforts of school resources and materials, focusing on purposeful teaching, intentional learning and current technology to facilitate effective pedagogy. By providing students with resources, such as current technology, they ensure active hope for the future of students, specifically students who may come from disadvantaged households where technology may not be as prevalent as students from middle to upper-middle socio-economic households. CR teacher leaders nurture the creative process, and help students creatively demonstrate success.

In lower socio-economic areas, CR teacher leaders promote a culture of advocacy by committing to being a voice for the marginalized. They provide active hope and help to transform barriers. In areas of middle to upper-middle socio-economic status, the CR teacher leaders foster advocacy skills by promoting and enabling the school community to be advocates for others locally, nationally and internationally.

7.3 Concluding Comments

The research problem explored in this study is:

What emerges as the interconnectedness between school culture and elementary teacher job satisfaction and the impact this interconnectedness has on student achievement in two high-performing Canadian elementary schools located in distinctly different socio-economic areas?

The results from this study demonstrate that teachers and principals believe that they have the ability to positively influence their school culture and their job satisfaction, thus affecting the outcome of increases in student achievement levels. The explanation regarding this inter-relationship is the exemplary Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) employed at both sites.

The two schools in this study were located in distinctly different socio-economic areas. Although the socio-economic features that influenced the school culture and teacher job satisfaction led to varied uses of Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) characteristics, the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model presented in response to the research questions emphasizes that leadership has the same purpose, which is doing the best for students by enhancing student outcomes, despite the socio-economic context.

This research study has demonstrated that the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model has the potential to be applied to a diversity of contexts, as it is the combined richness of job satisfaction and school culture that has created the on-going dynamic energy enhancing the levels of student achievement, which is not conditional on socio-economic factors. However, it is conditional on the willingness of the school leaders to be motivated to work autonomously and collaboratively, all the while creating cultures that are dynamic and that serve the needs of others.

7.4 Significance of study

This research study is significant in terms of the theoretical framework that was applied. Both qualitative and quantitative data were employed to provide for a more thorough investigation of the data. The interpretive findings from the data were also reinforced by international researchers in this field of study.

A Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model evolved as a result of the rigour from this research study. This is a significant outcome of the study in that the model discusses relational leadership between a principal and teachers in the context of culture. Through the creation of a Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model the concept of autonomy and collaboration are deepened through the symbiotic inter-connected relationship between the principal and the teachers. The word, Autono-Collaboration (AC) was created by the researcher to explain the concept that a school leader can be motivated to act with choice, thus being autonomous however they are also motivated to be collaborative with others. The participants in the study were both satisfied to work autonomously and yet also recognized the need to be willing and wanting to work collaboratively. It is the concept that both autonomy and collaboration are what make teachers satisfied with their work.

7.4.1 The significance of the employed theoretical framework

The development of the theoretical framework for this research study was adapted from the work of Berger and Luckman (1966) and encompassed the research design for collection, analysis and representation of the data. Berger and Luckman's (1966) social constructivism is the theoretical framework upon which the research study is founded. The research study is framed from the interpretivist paradigm perspective.

The significance of adopting and employing social constructivism and the interpretive paradigm throughout the research study is that three perspectives on meanings prevail: the teacher's meaning, the principal's meaning and the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's and the principal's social reality. The researcher was continually aware of these three points of view throughout the entire research process (Patton, 2002, 2004). These perspectives constantly provided more insight and understanding into the research problem and the four research questions, as the study is based on the belief and assumption that reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs (Patton, 2002, 2004).

The Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model that emerged as an outcome of this study, developed as a result of the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the teachers and principals' perspectives. Emphasis and value were importantly placed on these social realities. The researcher listened to the voices of the teachers and principals and interpreted their perspectives and through this interpretive lens, the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model evolved.

7.4.2 The significance of international research

The study is built upon the work of Schein (2010) on cultural frameworks in organizations. He states that the underlying assumptions of a culture exist at the unconscious level of an organization (Schein, 2010). The researcher therefore had to view the elementary teachers and principals' perceptions of their school culture through the interpretive lens. This understanding was crucial as it tied in with the study's theoretical framework.

The present study is further founded on Alfred Adler's (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1964, 1979) consideration of the importance of community life that fulfills the need to create positive social change and nurture feelings of belonging. Adler's theory provides the essential concepts required to discuss the need for creating and maintaining school cultures built upon social responsibility, connections and community. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory is a motivation theory that assists the researcher in explaining how individuals seek to satisfy the need to be social (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1968, 1971) and thus how it is essential for schools to create cultures of belonging.

Herzberg's (1966, 1968) model of intrinsic motivation, as well as Goleman et al.'s (2002) emotional intelligence theory, explains the importance of inter-relationships in the workplace and how positive relationships motivate teachers and increase job satisfaction. Motivation is a key concept explored in this study, as it is discovered that teachers and principals who have high levels of job satisfaction are intrinsically motivated by a sense of achievement and recognition. Having a sense of responsibility for their jobs and for the lives of the school community led to increases in job satisfaction and being more self-motivated in their work (Sergiovanni, 2000).

This study discovered the need for teachers and principals to display leadership effectiveness by motivating themselves and others to work both autonomously and collaboratively. Deci and Ryan (2008) discuss that people who have autonomy in their work are happily interdependent but also able to act with choice. Having autonomy increases teachers and principals' overall well-being and happiness with life (Chirkov et al., 2003).

Distinguishing between the features of the leadership roles of an elementary teacher and an elementary principal within the concluding CRL model presented in this study is both evident and essential. The teachers' and principals' unique roles and responsibilities within the school organization dictate how these characteristics are demonstrated with all school community members.

To assist in distinguishing the teachers and principals' roles as well as to acknowledge the need for both parties to work side-by-side, this study is also built upon the works of Crowther (2011) and Andrews and Crowther (2002), incorporating the concept of parallel leadership by demonstrating the necessity for the sharing of principal and teacher leadership roles and their commitment to lead the school organization together. The leadership model presented in this study distinguishes the principal and teacher roles within the school organizational structures, contexts and socio-economic factors.

This study is also built upon Lambert et al.'s (2002) work surrounding the constructivist leadership approach. It articulates a sense of school community where teachers and principals need to lead the work together through building distributed (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Hulley & Dier, 2005; Murphy, 2005) and parallel leadership capacity (Crowther, 2011; Andrews & Lewis, 2007) by continuously constructing new school organizational realities. This study extends these concepts by determining the cultural characteristics that contribute to these relational leadership attributes.

The research study is further founded upon the work of Ross and Gray (2006), and their term known as "collective teacher efficacy" (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 182). This is a belief held by teachers that their collective efforts as a staff will positively affect students and student achievement levels. This study further explores the belief of CRL teachers that all students will succeed and the important role that teachers contribute to the success of students academically, socially and behaviourally.

Morgan's (2006) acknowledgement that teachers and principals need to understand and value that the school's culture is an on-going process of constructing reality is further extended in this study. The researcher looks at the essentialness of teachers and principals working together, questioning and reflecting upon the knowledge generated through the daily on-going interactions of all school community members (Crowther et al., 2013). This questioning and reflecting is required so that schools can motivate staff towards sustained improvements in student achievement levels. This study is intentionally purposeful in being committed to recognizing the need to hear all voices in schools, not just those voices heard on a regular basis, such as the principals' and the teachers'. The research study also acknowledges that the voices of the marginalized must be provided with opportunities to share and to be heard, through modelling and facilitating the advocacy role of teachers and principals.

7.5 Limitations of the research study

The small sample size of thirty-one (31) elementary teachers limited the researcher's ability to quantitatively detect significant effects that socio-economic status may have on student achievement and how this factor may be affected by teacher job satisfaction and school culture. However, the deeper richness of their lived experiences that they cited throughout the qualitative data does support the positive effects that the elementary teachers had on students who were from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Variables such as age, number of years teaching, number of years teaching at their current school and number of days absent were not found to be related to job satisfaction, school culture or student achievement in the quantitative correlations performed. Without being related, it was unlikely that they predicted a variable or accounted for a significant proportion of the variance. These results could however be linked to the small sample size, as it consisted of only thirty-one (31) elementary teachers. Had the sample size been larger, the quantitative results may have varied, however this fact remains unknown. Only two schools were used in this research study:

one from a middle-to-upper middle socio-economic area and one from a lower socio-economic area.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

Four specific recommendations are offered for the consideration of scholars, researchers and postgraduate students whose specialized interests include job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement.

Recommendation one: A larger scale research study designed to investigate the implementation of the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model in the educational field/school setting.

Recommendation two: A larger scale research study designed to investigate the implementation of the Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) model in other service organizations as well as the field of business organizations.

Recommendation three: A future study to probe Autono-Collaboration (AC) in the field of teaching. One goal would be to try to determine the relationship Autono-Collaboration (AC) has on the overall job satisfaction of elementary teachers.

Recommendation four: A future study to probe Autono-Collaboration (AC) in the field of business and organizations. One goal would be to try to determine the relationship Autono-Collaboration (AC) has on the overall job satisfaction of employees.

7.7 Final Reflections

The journey leading me to this final reflection has been one of incredible perseverance. It has been a journey of personal as well as professional growth in that it has allowed me to view myself as a researcher as well as a principal, colleague, wife, mother, daughter, aunt, cousin and friend. I will be forever changed by this process. I started this journey with certain characteristics, skills and abilities and I am ending this journey with added richness in all areas of my life of which one includes becoming a deeper more reflective researcher.

Throughout this study I was always striving to represent the thoughts, reflections and interpretations of the participants to the very best of my ability, ensuring transparency in the collecting, observing, analyzing and reporting of the vital information that all participants so willingly gave. Viewing the two principals and elementary teachers through an interpretive lens afforded me a distinct opportunity to delve into their professional lives in such a unique manner. This entire experience left me with an enormous sense of social responsibility and accountability as I continually strived to report their messages accurately.

I am very grateful for the kindness demonstrated to me by the research participants. As well, I was left feeling humbled in their presence as I listened to them discuss their

passion for teaching, their purposeful facilitation of learning and their social commitment towards their chosen profession. As the research process unfolded, I was reminded of a re-occurring theme that continuously resurfaced. The theme was that of Autono-Collaboration (AC) as I have established. Teachers discussed their profession as being one that provided creativity as well as autonomy. However, they were all motivated to work collaboratively with others and noted that they could not function without the reciprocal process of being both autonomous and collaborative.

The teaching profession has undergone incredible scrutiny in the area of working autonomously. It is as if autonomy, when coupled with teaching, is a very, very bad word. However, viewing the teaching profession in a realistic and practical sense, a teacher stands up every single day in front of his or her classroom, alone, autonomously facilitating learning and collaboratively gathering and producing knowledge with his or her class of students.

Yearly, teachers in Ontario, Canada must individually and autonomously complete an Annual Learning Plan (ALP) in which they set individual learning goals. Every teacher must be accountable for these individual goals, as their teaching performance is dependent upon it. Every five years teachers in Ontario, Canada must autonomously participate in a Teacher Performance Appraisal (TPA) process. The TPA process occurs between the individual teacher and the principal. The principal individually meets with the teacher, individually observes the teacher, and from the classroom observation, as well as collected artifacts, the principal holds a discussion centering around the teacher's individual strengths and areas for growth. Resulting from the TPA process is an individual written report completed by the principal, reviewed with the teacher and placed in the teacher's individual employment file, to be reviewed again, individually, in another five years.

It is no wonder that the teachers who participated in this research project could not wait to discuss job satisfaction and how they perceive job satisfaction by working both autonomously and collaboratively. The autonomous piece of their profession is reinforced by the individual performance appraisal systems that are currently in place and that govern the teaching profession in the province of Ontario, Canada. A teaching career in Ontario is dependent on remaining in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers through the TPA process. In Ontario, systems of evaluation for both teachers and students are ranked on individual performance. Autonomy should not be a bad word in education as it is exactly what happens every single day. The educational field needs to acknowledge this known reality and encourage and promote both autonomy and collaboration in the teaching profession, as the current systems of evaluation reinforce individual performance based on individual achievement and recognition and a willingness on the part of the individual teacher to collaborate with members of the school community.

This journey has exemplified for me the meaning of both Autono-Collaboration and Autono-Collaborative Leadership. These two terms I created during the research and writing process. Autono-Collaboration is defined as *“the motivation of an individual*

being able to act with choice, thus being autonomous, and the individual is also agreeably motivated to be collaborative with others". Autono-Collaborative Leadership is defined as "a commitment to a role to mobilize others in which an individual is able to act with choice, thus being autonomous, and the same individual is also agreeably committed and motivated to work collaboratively with others, thus sharing their roles".

When I embarked upon this doctorate in education I was acting with choice and I was very motivated to do so. However, I was also very aware of the fact that I would need to collaborate with others and I was agreeably motivated to do so. I also knew that others needed to be agreeably collaborative with me, such as the teachers and the principals at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School. However, I also knew that I was not acting alone and that my family had to also be agreeable to this choice that I was making and be collaborative in the process. Being both autonomous and collaborative is parcelled into the package of being motivated to begin, to continue persevering and to finally complete a doctorate. Dr. Dorothy Andrews and Dr. Joan Conway have always been agreeable to be collaborative with me and to challenge me beyond my current thoughts and ideas.

At the end of this study, it is clearer to me why using both quantitative and qualitative data in the mixed-methodological approach is what actually led to the rich collection of data that precipitated an understanding that there is a strong commitment from both teachers and principals to community and social responsibility. The commitment to community and social responsibility looked similar in some instances and different in other instances, due to the varying socio-economic factors at both school sites. Regardless of the socio-economic factors, the characteristics of leadership remain the same although at times greater emphasis is placed on certain Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) characteristics depending on the influence of the varying contexts and socio-economic factors.

The participant elementary teaching staff and principals at Willow Tree Public School and Lake Dore Public School believed that what they did each and every day made a real difference. Both schools were successful in closing the achievement gap, one from a lower socio-economic area and one from a middle-to-upper middle socio-economic area. The difference is the exemplary Cultural-Relational Leadership (CRL) of the teacher leaders and the principal leaders. They all believed that every student could succeed and learn, they were all highly motivated, and they all believed in building positive relationships and working both autonomously and collaboratively. All research participants held high expectations for every student irrespective of their background. Knowing this fact deepened my belief and knowledge that reflective intentional teaching and leadership are very important variables in the overall success of students in any school.

Exemplary CRL teacher leaders and exemplary CRL principal leaders believe that they can make a difference in the lives of every student and believe that every student can succeed and learn. If exemplary teacher leaders and exemplary principal leaders believe and value these guiding statements and are motivated to work together both autonomously and collaboratively, then by applying the Cultural-Relational Leadership

(CRL) model, they can make a difference in the achievement levels of every student, even with the understanding that certain student characteristics, such as socio-economic status, cannot be changed.

If every educational leader would value and believe that they can make a difference in the lives of every individual student no matter their pre-existing circumstances, it would motivate more school leaders to be exemplary as they would value the belief that they can influence students' lives and achievement levels in a positive way. Every educator needs to ask the following questions: "What is the relationship of leadership to job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement?" and "What can be done about it?"

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Appendix A: Ethics approval from the University of Southern Queensland

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics approval from the University of Southern Queensland



University of Southern Queensland

TOOWOOMBA QUEENSLAND 4350

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OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND HIGHER DEGREES

Ashley Steele

Ethics Officer

PHONE (07) 4631 2690 | FAX (07) 4631 1995

EMAIL steele@usq.edu.au

Friday, 26 February 2010

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1, Canada

Dear Cheryl

Thankyou for submitting your project below for human ethics clearance. The USQ Fast Track Human Research Ethics Committee (FTHREC) assessed your application and agreed that your proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. Your project has been endorsed and full ethics approval granted.

Project Title	Exploration of the Inter-connectedness of two Canadian Elementary Schools – Focusing on Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction, Student Achievement and School Culture
Approval no	H10REA019
Period of Approval	26/02/2010 – 26/02/2011
FTHREC Decision	Approved

The standard conditions of this approval are:

- conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC;
- advise the HREC (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately if any complaints or expressions of concern are raised, or any other issue in relation to the project which may warrant review of ethics approval of the project;
- make submission to the HREC for approval of any amendments, or modifications to the approved project before implementing such changes;
- in the event you require an extension of ethics approval for this project, please make written application in advance of the end-date of this approval;
- provide the HREC with a written "Annual Progress Report" for every year of approval. The first progress report is due 12 months after the start date of this approval (by 26/02/2011);
- provide the HREC with a written "Final Report" when the project is complete;
- if the project is discontinued, advise the HREC in writing of the discontinuation.

For (c) to (f) proformas are available on the USQ ethics website: <http://www.usq.edu.au/research/ethicsbio/human>

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Ashley Steele in black ink.

Ashley Steele
Ethics Officer
Office of Research and Higher Degrees

Appendix B: Letter of information and agreement to the school principals

Appendix B: Letter of information and agreement to the school principals

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1
613-314-4298/cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca

March, 2010

Dear Principal:

Research Study: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Achievement?

As a researcher working towards the completion of a doctoral thesis, I would like to explore with you and your teachers the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship affect student achievement? The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an outline of guidelines and safeguards that will be in place during this confidential research project and to receive your informed consent.

In my researcher's role, I am requesting permission to attend several staff meetings to provide information to your staff regarding my research study and to ask for voluntary participation. I am also requesting permission to distribute and collect a voluntary questionnaire to your teaching staff members as well as to conduct voluntary individual in-depth interviews on-site with yourself and with some of your teaching staff. At times I may also need to interact with individuals as required for interviews. After the completion of the in-depth interview phase, I will also be requesting voluntary participation from several teachers for a focus group session.

All information and data collected throughout this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will not disclose, verbally or in written format, participant names, names of schools, and/or names of principals from the selected schools. Characteristics of schools will be described in terms such as: geographical location; socio-economic factors; immigrant population(s); and cultural factors. Characteristics of participants will be described in terms such as: age; gender; total number of years in the teaching profession; and grade level currently teaching.

The researcher will discuss the nature of the information being disclosed only with her academic supervisors in a professional manner with the intention of seeking direction with study findings and report writing. Participant names, school names and/or principals' names will not be disclosed.

Participation in this research will be voluntary and participants may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. Moreover, if at any time participants feel uncomfortable with any questions/statements being asked, they can decline to respond. The researcher will keep all documentation in a locked filing cabinet at her home office. If you wish to further discuss the research study in further detail at any time, please e-mail the researcher at cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca, or please feel free to call her at 613-314-4298.

If you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland at the following telephone number (07) 4631 2956.

Yours truly,

Cheryl Bauman

Please show your consent by signing below if you agree with the above conditions and are willing to participate in and have your staff participate in the research study on: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?


Principal's Signature

01/03/10
Date

Appendix B: Letter of information and agreement to the school principals

Appendix B: Letter of information and agreement to the school principals

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1
613-314-4298/cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca

March, 2010

Dear Principal:

Research Study: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Achievement?

As a researcher working towards the completion of a doctoral thesis, I would like to explore with you and your teachers the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship affect student achievement? The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an outline of guidelines and safeguards that will be in place during this confidential research project and to receive your informed consent.

In my researcher's role, I am requesting permission to attend several staff meetings to provide information to your staff regarding my research study and to ask for voluntary participation. I am also requesting permission to distribute and collect a voluntary questionnaire to your teaching staff members as well as to conduct voluntary individual in-depth interviews on-site with yourself and with some of your teaching staff. At times I may also need to interact with individuals as required for interviews. After the completion of the in-depth interview phase, I will also be requesting voluntary participation from several teachers for a focus group session.

All information and data collected throughout this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will not disclose, verbally or in written format, participant names, names of schools, and/or names of principals from the selected schools. Characteristics of schools will be described in terms such as: geographical location; socio-economic factors; immigrant population(s); and cultural factors. Characteristics of participants will be described in terms such as: age; gender; total number of years in the teaching profession; and grade level currently teaching.

The researcher will discuss the nature of the information being disclosed only with her academic supervisors in a professional manner with the intention of seeking direction with study findings and report writing. Participant names, school names and/or principals' names will not be disclosed.

Participation in this research will be voluntary and participants may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. Moreover, if at any time participants feel uncomfortable with any questions/statements being asked, they can decline to respond. The researcher will keep all documentation in a locked filing cabinet at her home office. If you wish to further discuss the research study in further detail at any time, please e-mail the researcher at cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca, or please feel free to call her at 613-314-4298.

If you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland at the following telephone number (07) 4631 2956.

Yours truly,

Cheryl Bauman

Please show your consent by signing below if you agree with the above conditions and are willing to participate in and have your staff participate in the research study on: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?


Principal's Signature

March 2010
Date

Appendix C: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – Questionnaire

Appendix C: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – Questionnaire

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1
613-314-4298/cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca

March, 2010

Dear Participant:

Elementary Teacher Questionnaire

As a researcher working towards the completion of a doctoral thesis, I would like to explore with you and your colleagues the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship affect student achievement? The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an outline of guidelines and safeguards that will be in place during this confidential research project and to receive your informed consent.

All information and data collected throughout this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will not disclose, verbally or in written format, participant names, names of schools, and/or names of principals from the selected schools. Characteristics of schools will be described in terms such as: geographical location; socio-economic factors; immigrant population(s); and cultural factors. Characteristics of participants will be described in terms such as: age; gender; total number of years in the teaching profession; and grade level currently teaching.

The researcher will discuss the nature of the information being disclosed only with her academic supervisors in a professional manner with the intention of seeking direction with study findings and report writing. Participant names, school names and/or principals' names will not be disclosed.

As a participant in the anonymous questionnaire portion of the research study you will be asked to rate statements on job satisfaction, school culture and student achievement using a 5 point scale. A portion of the questionnaire will also request your response to specific information about your teaching job and your reflections on the research study topic.

Participation in this research will be voluntary and you may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. Moreover, if at any time you feel uncomfortable with any questions/statements on the questionnaire, you can decline to respond. The researcher will keep all documentation in a locked filing cabinet at her home office. If you wish to further discuss the anonymous questionnaire at any time, please contact the researcher at cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca or at 613-314-4298.

If you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland at the following telephone number (07) 463 1 2956.

Yours truly,

Cheryl Bauman

Please show your consent by signing below if you agree with the above conditions and are willing to participate in this anonymous questionnaire portion of the research study on: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?

Teacher's Signature

Date

Appendix D: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – In-depth interview

Appendix D: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – In-depth interview

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1
613-314-4298/cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca

May, 2010

Dear Participant:

Elementary Teacher In-depth Interview

As a researcher working towards the completion of a doctoral thesis, I would like to explore with you and your colleagues the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship affect student achievement? The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an outline of guidelines and safeguards that will be in place during this confidential research project and to receive your informed consent.

All information and data collected throughout this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will not disclose, verbally or in written format, participant names, names of schools, and/or names of principals from the selected schools. Characteristics of schools will be described in terms such as: geographical location; socio-economic factors; immigrant population(s); and cultural factors. Characteristics of participants will be described in terms such as: age; gender; total number of years in the teaching profession; and grade level currently teaching.

The researcher will discuss the nature of the information being disclosed only with her academic supervisors in a professional manner with the intention of seeking direction with study findings and report writing. Participant names, school names and/or principals' names will not be disclosed.

As a participant in this portion of the research study you will be involved in a one-on-one in-depth interview with me. The in-depth interview process will be tape recorded. I will also be taking notes outlining your reflections. Throughout the entire research process I will be recording observations and reflections in a journal as part of the data collection component to this study.

Participation in this research will be voluntary and you may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. Moreover, if at any time you feel uncomfortable with any questions/statements, you can decline to respond. The researcher will keep all documentation in a locked filing cabinet at her home office. If you wish to further discuss the in-depth interview at any time, please contact the researcher at cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca or at 613-314-4298.

If you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland at the following telephone number (07) 463 1 2956.

Yours truly,

Cheryl Bauman

Please show your consent by signing below if you agree with the above conditions and are willing to participate in the in-depth interview portion of the research study on: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?

Teacher's Signature

Date

Appendix E: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – Focus Group

Appendix E: Letter of agreement to elementary teacher participants – Focus group

Cheryl Bauman
122 James Cummings Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario
K2H 8E1
613-314-4298/cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca

October, 2010

Dear Participant:

Elementary Teacher Focus Group

As a researcher working towards the completion of a doctoral thesis, I would like to explore with you and your colleagues the relationship between elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship affect student achievement? The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an outline of guidelines and safeguards that will be in place during this confidential research project and to receive your informed consent.

All information and data collected throughout this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will not disclose, verbally or in written format, participant names, names of schools, and/or names of principals from the selected schools. Characteristics of schools will be described in terms such as: geographical location; socio-economic factors; immigrant population(s); and cultural factors. Characteristics of participants will be described in terms such as: age; gender; total number of years in the teaching profession; and grade level currently teaching.

The researcher will discuss the nature of the information being disclosed only with her academic supervisors in a professional manner with the intention of seeking direction with study findings and report writing. Participant names, school names and/or principals' names will not be disclosed.

As a participant in this portion of the research study you will be involved in a focus group involving eight (8) elementary teachers and myself. The focus group process will be tape recorded. I will also be taking notes outlining the reflections and discussions amongst the focus group members. Throughout the entire research process I will be recording observations and reflections in a journal as part of the data collection component to this study.

Participation in this research will be voluntary and you may decide at any time to withdraw from the study. Moreover, if at any time you feel uncomfortable with any questions/statements, you can decline to respond. The researcher will keep all documentation in a locked filing cabinet at her home office. If you wish to further discuss the focus group process at any time, please contact the researcher at cheryl.bauman-buffone@ocdsb.ca, or at 613-314-4298.

If you have a concern regarding the implementation of the project, you should contact The Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland at the following telephone number (07) 4631 2956.

Yours truly,

Cheryl Bauman

Please show your consent by signing below if you agree with the above conditions and are willing to participate in the focus group portion of the research study on: An Exploration of the Relationship Between Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?

Teacher's Signature

Date

Appendix F: Elementary teacher questionnaire

**An Exploration of the Relationship of
Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction,
School Culture:
Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?
*Elementary Teacher Questionnaire***

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Male/Female: ____ Age: ____ Total number of years in the teaching profession: ____

Number of schools taught in during your teaching career: _____

Total number of years teaching at your current school: _____

Grade level currently teaching: ____ Total number of years teaching at this level ____

Total number of students in your class ____

Do you receive support from additional school and district staff to help you with your at-risk learners/exceptional learners? Yes or No: _____ If yes, explain the nature of support, by whom, and how often:

What are the positive aspects of teaching this grade level? _____

What are the less positive aspects of teaching this grade level?

Is it your choice to be teaching this grade level? Explain your answer.

Number of days absent this current school year: _____

Total number of days absent during the last school year:

Compared to other years, is this an average amount of time for you to be absent? Yes or No: _____ If no, explain why:

Have you ever been absent for an extended period of time from teaching?
Yes or No: _____ If yes, explain why:

In your own words, define *school culture*:

In your own words, define *job satisfaction*: _____

SCHOOL CULTURE

Please respond to the following questionnaire by indicating on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 - being strongly disagree, 2 - disagree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 4 - agree 5 - strongly agree) your thoughts on school culture. This information will be anonymous and the results will be shared in a written report where all participants will remain anonymous. Please add any comments at the end of the questionnaire.

I have a clear and shared understanding of the school's mission and goals	1	2	3	4	5
The school's vision and/or mission confirm the importance of my work	1	2	3	4	5
I have been an active member, participating in the continuous development of our school's mission and goals	1	2	3	4	5
The school's culture is an active, living phenomenon through which people create and re-create their own understandings	1	2	3	4	5
I am treated with respect, equity, fairness and understanding by school leadership	1	2	3	4	5
All teachers are treated with respect, equity, fairness and understanding by school leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Students are treated with respect, equity, fairness and understanding by school leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are treated with respect, equity, fairness and understanding by school leadership	1	2	3	4	5
School leadership is treated with respect by teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Students are treated with respect by teachers	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are treated with respect by teachers	1	2	3	4	5
My Principal cares about me as a person	1	2	3	4	5
My Vice-Principal cares about me as a person	1	2	3	4	5

I care about my Principal as a person	1	2	3	4	5
I care about my Vice-Principal as a person	1	2	3	4	5
Someone else at work cares about me as a person	1	2	3	4	5
I regard the school as a caring and inviting place	1	2	3	4	5
Other staff regard the school as a caring and inviting place	1	2	3	4	5
Students regard the school as a caring and inviting place	1	2	3	4	5
Parents regard the school as a caring and inviting place	1	2	3	4	5
There is visible evidence the school cares about students	1	2	3	4	5
There is visible evidence the school cares about parents	1	2	3	4	5
We speak positively of one another and about our staff at every opportunity	1	2	3	4	5
Staff and students are involved in school activities and programs	1	2	3	4	5
Good citizenship is highlighted and recognized	1	2	3	4	5
School spirit and pride are high among staff and students	1	2	3	4	5
There is a positive attitude in the school	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I feel satisfied with the culture at the school I am presently working at	1	2	3	4	5

JOB SATISFACTION

Please respond to the following questionnaire by indicating on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 - being strongly disagree, 2 - disagree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 4 - agree 5 - strongly agree) your thoughts on job satisfaction. This information will be anonymous and the results will be shared in a written report where all participants will remain anonymous. Please add any comments at the bottom.

I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday	1	2	3	4	5
In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for good work	1	2	3	4	5
Clear guidelines are consistently implemented when dealing with discipline problems	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioural expectations are clearly communicated to staff	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioural expectations are clearly communicated to students	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioural expectations are clearly communicated to parents	1	2	3	4	5
The school leadership encourages my professional development	1	2	3	4	5
I feel valued at school	1	2	3	4	5
My opinions count at school	1	2	3	4	5
At school, formal leadership believes in distributed leadership	1	2	3	4	5
My co-workers are committed to doing quality work	1	2	3	4	5
I have a friend at work	1	2	3	4	5
In the last six months, I have talked to someone at work about my progress as a teacher	1	2	3	4	5

At school, I get opportunities to learn and grow	1	2	3	4	5
At school, cooperation is fostered in daily activities	1	2	3	4	5
At school, collaborative working relationships are established and on-going	1	2	3	4	5
At school, we look for ways to make new ideas work	1	2	3	4	5
At school, we help one another succeed	1	2	3	4	5
We have fun at school	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I feel satisfied with my job at the school I am presently working at	1	2	3	4	5

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Please respond to the following questionnaire by indicating on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 - being strongly disagree, 2 - disagree 3 – neither agree nor disagree 4 - agree 5 - strongly agree) your thoughts on student achievement. This information will be anonymous and the results will be shared in a written report where all participants will remain anonymous. Please add any comments at the end of the questionnaire.

Academic excellence is given a high focus throughout the year	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging expectations for learning for all students are set and supported	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are engaged in systematic approaches that lead to increases in student learning	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are engaged in collaborative approaches that lead to increases in student learning	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging expectations for learning for all staff members are set and supported	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching practices that build a sense of community are emphasized	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are supported in their efforts to individualize instructional strategies	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are involved in collaboratively confronting data related to student achievement	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are involved in the decision-making processes with regards to improvement in student achievement	1	2	3	4	5
Regular communication with parents and teachers regarding expectations pertaining to academic achievement	1	2	3	4	5
At school, student attendance is not an issue	1	2	3	4	5
At school, staff attendance is not an issue	1	2	3	4	5

At school, there are positive, collaborative adult-to-adult relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Parents regularly communicate with the school	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are actively involved in their child's education	1	2	3	4	5
Parents are actively involved in supporting their child's achievement at school	1	2	3	4	5
Students need to feel they belong at school	1	2	3	4	5
At school, teachers care about students	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers are the single most influential factor directly linked to student achievement	1	2	3	4	5

Considering your views on school culture, job satisfaction and student achievement, are there any other comments you would like to make? If so, please include these below:

Appendix G: In-depth interview questions

In-depth Interview Questions For An Exploration of the Relationship of Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?

The researcher approached the in-depth interview process in a semi-structured manner rather than with a complete set of structured questions. The researcher outlined questions that would be asked of each participant however, much allowance was permitted for interaction between the interviewer (researcher) and the interviewees (participants). Thus, more open-ended questions were asked.

Background Information Name: _____ Male/Female

Can you please tell me how many years you have been in the teaching profession?

Can you tell me how many schools you have taught in during your career and how many years you have been teaching at your current school?

Can you please describe the geographical location of your school and the surrounding community?

What grade level are you currently teaching and for how many years in total have you taught at this grade level?

Can you describe some of the positive aspects of teaching this grade level? Some of the negative aspects of teaching this grade level?

How many days have you been absent during this current school year? How many days were you absent last year? Compared to other years, was this an average time for you to be absent? If no – can you please describe the reason for the unusual absence?

Throughout your entire teaching career, have you ever been absent for an extended period of time? If yes, can you explain why.

Can you tell me how you feel in the morning prior to coming to work? How do you think these feelings affect the outcome of your overall day? How do you think these feelings affect student achievement and outcomes? Can you please tell me what factors contribute to making you feel this way?

School Culture

As you are aware, the study that I am conducting is an exploration of the relationship of elementary teacher job satisfaction and school culture and does this relationship effect student achievement? In your own words, can you define school culture and what it means to you?

Can you please tell me about an incident that for you illustrates what you think about your school's culture and your job satisfaction in it?

Can you please tell me how you think vision relates to school culture? Please tell me about an incident that for you illustrates what you think about vision and how it relates to your school's culture?

Can you please tell me how you think values, beliefs and norms relate to school culture? Please tell me about an incident that for you illustrates what you think about this school's values, beliefs and norms and how they relate to your school's culture and your job satisfaction in it?

Can you please tell me your thoughts about the following statement and how it relates to your school culture?

“....the essence of the school culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions, and once this is understood the other more surface levels can more easily be understood and dealt with appropriately” (Schein, 2004, p.36).

Please tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Do you think that your job satisfaction is directly related to school culture? *If the interviewee responds yes*, please explain why by telling me of an incident that illustrates this.....*If the interviewee responds no.....* please explain why....

Ultimately, who do you think is responsible for the overall school culture? Please explain your answer and tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Explain what you find satisfying about your teaching job. Please provide me with illustrations that support this.

Explain what you do not find satisfying about your teaching job. Please provide me with illustrations that support this.

Are there non-work related issues that you think directly affect you job satisfaction? If yes, can you please tell me what they are and provide illustrations of them?

Ultimately, who do you think is responsible for your overall job satisfaction? Please explain your answer and tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Ultimately, who do you think is responsible for the collective overall job satisfaction of all the elementary teachers in your school? Please explain your answer and tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Can you tell me of an incident that illustrates how school leadership motivates you at work?

Can you tell please tell me of an incident when you did not feel respected at work? Does this type of situation happen quite frequently, occasionally or rarely? Please explain.

Can you please tell me of an incident that reflects how school leadership is treated by staff?

Can you please tell me of an incident that reflects how school leadership treats you?

Can you please tell me of an incident that reflects how students are treated by staff...and then how school leadership is treated by students?.....and how staff are treated by students?

Do you feel that your school is a caring and inviting place to work? Please provide an illustration that demonstrates this.

Do you think that a school that is a caring and inviting place to work has any affect on student achievement? Please provide an illustration that demonstrates this.

Do you feel connected with and supported by co-workers in your school? Please tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Can you describe what support feels like and looks like at your school? Please tell me of an incident that illustrates this.

Can you describe how planning for student achievement and outcomes takes place at your school?

Can you describe how professional development takes place at your school?

Can you describe a situation where there is visible evidence that the school leadership cares about teachers?

Can you describe a situation where there is visible evidence that the school leadership cares about students?

Can you describe a situation where there is visible evidence that the teachers care about students?

Can you provide an incident that would illustrate the affects that a caring teacher has on student achievement. If possible, please provide several more illustrations that demonstrate this.

Describe student achievement at your school.

Describe how a teacher influences student achievement. Please provide several illustrations that demonstrate this.

Can you describe an incident that would illustrate how the school leadership encourages your professional development?

Are you provided with opportunities to learn and grow at school Please provide several illustrations that demonstrates this.

Can you describe the overall attitude in the school where you are currently working in?

Can you describe some positive aspects of school culture and job satisfaction and how they directly relate to you?

Can you describe some less positive aspects of school culture and job satisfaction and how they directly relate to you?

Can you describe some positive aspects of school culture and job satisfaction and how they directly relate to student achievement?

Can you describe what autonomy means to you as an elementary school teacher?

Describe positive aspects of autonomy and how they directly relate to your overall job satisfaction. Describe less positive aspects of autonomy and how they directly relate to your job satisfaction.

Describe positive aspects of autonomy and how they directly relate to overall student achievement. Describe less positive aspects of autonomy and how they directly relate to student achievement.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree or disagree, 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree), how would you currently rate your overall job satisfaction at the school you are presently working at? Can you please provide an incident that illustrates this?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree or disagree, 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree), how would you currently describe how the school culture affects your overall job satisfaction? Can you please elaborate on this response?

Do you have any general comments that you would like to make regarding this interview process?

Would you like to add anything else to the research topic that you feel is important and that we have not covered?

Appendix H: Focus group emerging understandings

Focus Group Themes An Exploration of the Relationship of Elementary Teacher Job Satisfaction and School Culture: Does this Relationship Affect Student Achievement?

The researcher approached the focus group process in a semi-structured manner rather than using a structured framework with structured questions. Below, are the nine (9) emerging understandings that resulted from round one and round two of the phase three qualitative data collection and analysis. The researcher asked the focus group to discuss and respond to these emerging understandings. The researcher allowed for interaction between the members of the focus group. Thus, the interactive process helped to prompt the focus of the group with further discussions regarding the semi-structured emerging understandings. The nine (9) emerging understandings are as follows:

Job Satisfaction

1. **Emerging understanding number one:** The researcher explored with participants their concept of job satisfaction and how it encompasses the concept of motivation/intrinsic vs. extrinsic.
2. **Emerging understanding number two:** The researcher explored with the teachers their concept of job satisfaction and how it relates to the “happiness factor” (linked to stress levels, mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships and longevity).
3. **Emerging understanding number three:** The researcher explored the teacher’s concept of job satisfaction and how it encompasses the concept of autonomy and motivation.

School Culture

4. **Emerging understanding number four:** The researcher explored with the participants their concepts of school culture and how it encompasses the Level of Artifacts (relationships, language, respect, advocacy).
5. **Emerging understanding number five:** The researcher explored with participants, their concepts of school culture and how it relates to the Level of Espoused Beliefs and Values (a) believe all students can succeed; b) teachers can make a difference; c) expect all students will learn; and d) believe in collaboration).
6. **Emerging understanding number six:** The researcher explored with the participants, their concepts of school culture and how it relates to the Level of Basic Understandings (leadership, community, acceptance, diversity, learning).

Student Achievement

7. **Emerging understanding number seven:** The researcher explored with the participants, their understanding of student achievement and how it relates to the student and the belief that “All Students Can Succeed”.
8. **Emerging understanding number eight:** The researcher explored with the participants, the concept of student achievement and how it relates to the Teacher - purposeful, reflective teaching and learning.
9. **Emerging understanding number nine:** The researcher explored with the participants, their understanding of the Principal and how it relates to being an advocate.