CHAPTER TWO
THE PRINCIPAL AND CHANGE IN AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

2.1 Educational Leadership

As I began examining my practice and how it affects both student learning and teaching practices, a critical question evolved: How do I improve my practice if I can't define it? To find answers, I researched the topics of school leadership and transformational change to acquire a deeper understanding of effective school leadership and guidance for my own practice. My review of the literature on educational leadership underpins my action research study. In this chapter the social construct of school reform frames my school leadership and is the lens through which the principal's role is analyzed. In this discussion, tensions arising from reform initiatives will be discussed – tension between corporate and educational leadership models, tension between principal and teachers in sharing leadership are examined.

In my context, change is born directly from Québec's school reform and results from the societal demands: to improve student results, to be publicly accountable, and in essence to change the way the system does business. In this context I find myself being a change agent and therefore explore what critical elements effective change agents possess. In examining this facet of leadership, moral leadership (Fullan, 2003b) becomes a prime focus and I will present, as a significant part of my leadership discussion, how professional values guide my leadership practices in an ethical manner.

My quest for a comprehensive definition of school leadership leads me to the thought that educational leadership is in crisis. Few studies examine the correlation between school

leadership and student success, and the scant research that is available offers limited insights (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) while there is an intensified demand for improvements in student performance and outcomes. If school leaders cannot clearly define their educational role then their ability to effectively meet societal expectations to improve student success becomes very ambiguous.

This examination and my ensuing reflection result in finding a new leadership model for the schoolhouse – professional learning community leadership. This evolving form of school leadership I will offer as a possible solution: one that shifts much of the instructional leadership role away from the principal to share with teachers, making the heavy responsibilities associated with school leadership more manageable. The 'how' to share and distribute leadership leads me to review educational theories to frame my study.

To focus this complex discussion, I will examine: 1) the contextual framing of school leadership; 2) my Québec context; 3) educational leadership through political, symbolic, structural, and human resource frames; and 4) how the roles of school principal and action researcher will be addressed in this study. My research would be incomplete without a discussion of the impact of the power of the principal's role and how teachers' perception of this power influences my leadership practices in conducting action research within the school. I conclude this chapter by confirming my need for action research to assist me in improving my practice as I work to develop my own living educational theory about the role of principal and how it affects literacy-teaching practices.

2.1.1 Societal Context

Today's schools are complex places and their main purpose is to provide education that reflects their unique societal context. Within this societal frame, I struggle with the

dissonance between corporate and educational leadership practices that has added complexity. Corporate leadership practices are often reviewed with the view of transferability to educational leadership. When there is little transferability found, educational leaders become vulnerable to sharp criticism from corporate voices within the same societal context that schools are meant to reflect and support. My view of the school's societal context is bounded by the work of Fullan (1997) who writes, "…societal improvement is really what education is all about" (p. 14). School leaders must view leadership in a bigger social context that fosters learning and changes society (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Senge, 1990). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) further add, "The challenge for educational leaders and change is not to be dismissive of practices in the business world but to learn from those that are most successful and sustainable" (p.9). But to what degree are these practices transferable to the world of education?

There are fundamental differences and unlike business employees, educators find themselves embedded in social systems to a far greater degree. Schools are constantly exposed to societal demands made by parents as their governance partners, leaving educators unable to run their own affairs in the way they see best (Senge, et al., 2000). Adding further to the complexity of school leadership, in the framework of school renewal and reform, there has been a paradigm shift that focuses on a more collaborative and inclusive leadership model that increases the number of stakeholders and strengthens their voices (Williams, 2006). Leadership is evolving into shared leadership that includes parents and community members. To restore public confidence principals must work openly and jointly with all the groups that compose the school's learning community (Dufour, et al., 2006; Fullan, 2006). According to Fullan (2006) in referring to Elmore's work (Elmore, 2004), there is also a

fundamental difference between corporate and education professionals. Educators define professionalism by their degree of autonomy and do not necessarily subscribe to the body of knowledge generated by their fellow professionals while private sector professionals are more open to applying knowledge found by colleagues to enhance their professionalism (Elmore, 2004). With this entrenched distinction, I argue that educators are not likely to subscribe to the knowledge gained by other professions if they do not subscribe to what is generated by their own profession.

Leadership is always context bound (Foster, 1989) but as schools are open and ever changing systems, school leadership is very difficult to define. Principals must enhance instruction by directly working with teachers to ensure that students experience success (Rossow, 1990) and while instructional leadership addresses instruction within the school, this leadership model offers little to address other key components that Foster (1989) describes as critical (reflective), transformative, and ethical that assist in forming a supportive environment to achieve desired goals.

Expanding on the need to form supportive learning environments, Coburn's (2005) study of two Californian principals' work to improve reading instruction demonstrates the importance of principals being informed in literacy instruction to effectively guide teachers in their "sensemaking" (p.476) of students' learning needs. In her study Coburn "… argues that principals influence teacher sensemaking by shaping access to policy ideas, participating in the social process of meaning making, and creating substantively different conditions for teacher learning. These actions are influenced by the principal's knowledge of both instruction and teacher learning" (Coburn, 2005,p.477). Therefore principals need to have a good "working knowledge" to make strategic choices that will increase the effectiveness of

their roles (Kennedy, 1982). This is especially true in times of reform when it is the principal's role to establish for teachers a conceptual understanding of how to change student performance outcomes on a school level (Coburn, 2005).

While Coburn's study (2005) provides a rich understanding of the close working relationship between the principal and the teachers that is required to enhance instruction, and details why principals need to develop and inform their instructional practices to increase their effectiveness; it does not provide insights into how principals inform their own practice. Leaving me with my research question, "How do I improve my practice?" and leading me to conduct an action research study to answer this critical question about my school leadership.

To enhance student instruction, I need to first make sense of my own instructional practice. In this construct of making sense of their leadership roles, how do school leaders become instructional leaders who are informed, critical, transformative and ethical and meet the growing demands for greater parent and community participation and shared decision-making? How do educational reform, the school community's values and culture factor into the learning environment? How do school leaders provide a basic level of continuity for instructional practices to develop and grow when societal demands keep changing what is required and shortening the time frames for turn around?

Given the relentless complexity and intensity of societal demands on schools, school leaders often find themselves leading from the 'eye of the storm' in search of clarity at the center of all the turbulences (Thompson, 2004) Principals cannot conceivably do effectively all that society expects of them and while societal pressure is mounting for school improvement to promptly yield better student results, how best to do this is still largely unknown. I must be able to define the school's learning culture in context, conceptualize the

'big picture' of the societal environment, test ideas in practice and finally, critically reflect on the effectiveness of my actions from an educational perspective (Senge, 1990). Therefore I question what form of leadership provides the best model for educators within the societal context of school reform and accountability.

The numerous recent books about educational leadership by such authors as Fullan, Hargreaves and Marzano (Fullan, 1997, 2001; 2003a, 2003b, 2005b, 2006; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004, 2006; Marzano, et al., 2005) provide many helpful insights for school leaders to improve schools but I do not believe that they provide a leadership theory on how principals can affect student learning. This belief is supported by Marzano et al., (2005, p. 6) in citing Donmoyer (1985) "Recent studies of schools invariably identify the principal's leadership as a significant factor in school success. Unfortunately these studies provide only limited insight into how principals contribute to their school's achievements. (p.31). This is confirmed by their more recent review of more than 5000 studies and articles where only 69 examined this relationship in which two main variables for principals that affect student performance were found: 1) the focus of change (correct identification of the areas that will have the greatest impact on improving students' achievement) and 2) the order of change (comprehension of the magnitude of change). Coburn's study (2005) adds that the degree of the principal's knowledge about effective instructional practices also affects student achievement. But how principals should conduct this work was not studied. Principals do affect instruction through how they influence the key factors that affect learning (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995) but there has been a failure on the part of the educational system (educational ministry, school boards, and educational researchers) to re-examine and to re-define the role of the principal in student achievement

(Fullan, et al., 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). An extensive literature review I have conducted confirms that we are as far away today from defining school leadership, as we were when *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was first written (Childs-Bowen, Moller, & Scriver, 2000).

2.1.2 The Learning Context

My experience leads me to believe that principals are the prime creators of the school's culture and when a culture of learning for all is fostered, teachers will grow and develop as school leaders (Harris & Lambert, 2003; Williams, 2006) . What happens in classrooms is more influenced by the school's learning culture and less by the principal's management strategies (Sergiovanni, 2003) and as principal, this means that I must be attentive to the 'mindscape' of the school (Sergiovanni, 2003) and not just the landscape. I define the school's mindscape as the collective thinking of all of its stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members. This thinking reflects how the school is viewed – its learning culture and climate, and how its success is defined. This awareness of the school's 'mindscape' leads to what Senge (1990) calls 'metanoia'– a shift of mind, a deeper understanding of learning. In this context, learning includes both students and teachers. If I am to enhance instruction then I must develop and foster a learning culture in the school, or my instructional theories will wither without a receptive environment. However, other competing roles can often hinder me from creating an effective and inclusive learning environment. A balance of the competing elements of the principal's complex role must be found, leading me to an ethical debate as I want to do the 'right' thing but cannot be all things to all people. Then whose values get supported and what culture dominates the educational framework?

2.1.3 The Context of My Principal's Mandate

Under the Québec Education Act (Act to Amend the Education Act (c.96) Québec, 1997), I have been given a mandate to make changes at the school level expected by the Québec government, my school board, and the community at large. With this mandate comes a degree of power to effect change and the power and influence of interventions undertaken by school leaders are not to be underestimated. But how to best construct and direct this sphere of influence is a question to which I have found no direct answers in the literature.

In order to understand the extent of power and influence of school principals, it is important to grasp the educational hierarchical structure (Williams, 2006). At the school level, principals have power as senior managers to manage local decisions and adopt leadership styles that are collegial and collaborative. Many directives, however, are initiated by boards of education or, in Canada, by provincial mandates. When decisions are made outside the school as is often the case with school reform initiatives, the principal becomes the middle manager and a messenger who is often left to implement directives within a prescribed timeframe (Stewart, 2006; Wright, 2006) and with little direction as to how to best proceed.

This position of intermediary is nonnegotiable with the policy makers (Clay, 2001) and it is during these periods that the principal's power enters a grey zone. The concept of principals entering into grey zone leadership originates from my experiences as an educational practitioner and leader and not directly from the literature review. I define this grey zone as being a state of professional uncertainty arising from how a principal will carry out directives that have not been clearly defined and where the implementation process has been left open to many interpretations. If the principal is too liberal in interpreting the

directives, then she is open to criticism that she is not doing her job and is implementing actions that run counter to what the 'real' decision-makers had intended. However, if the principal is too narrow in her interpretation, then staff may view her as unreasonable and over-demanding especially when compared to neighbouring schools' principals. The line between the two interpretations is very fine. To add complexity, in the principals' grey zone of power the principal's sphere of influence is perceived by teachers as being far greater than the hierarchical power structure allows principals to have.

I believe, from experience, that principals encounter the greatest ethical dilemmas and experience the most tension when they are operating in the grey zone. This tension heightens in cases where mandated directives run counter to mutually agreed upon goals established jointly by the principal and the teaching staff or are in direct conflict with the moral beliefs of what the principal believes is best educationally (Bolman & Deal, 1991). In these situations, the principal's realm of power cannot perform miracles (Clay, 2001) and dissension may result. When dissension results, tension in the working relationships between the principal and teachers increases and the principal's decision-making may not reflect what is best for the school overall. Further tension is kindled by the distinct differences in the needs of the school and the needs of the larger institution.

Our Québec reform implementation creates an 'institutional needs dimension' that may be in conflict with a 'personal' or 'group needs dimension' (Letiche, Van Der Wolf, & Plooij, 1991) posing additional ethical dilemmas. What this implies for me as a Québec school principal is that, in the name of reform initiatives, I am left to pursue school improvements that will probably generate quick results but not necessarily those that will create the deeper changes society is demanding of our schools or that will allow meaningful

learning to take place (Murray & Murray, 1999). The impatience of legislators and society, who see educational changes occurring too slowly and impeding our ability to compete globally (Leithwood & Prestine, 2002), has quickened the pace of reform efforts. But the rushed pursuit of these goals undermines the instructional journey required to achieve them. In this rush to fix the problems, the principal's mandate to direct instructional change is greatly compromised.

2.2 The Framing of School Leadership

Researchers strive to understand school leadership and its role in making schools better places for learning (Sergiovanni, 2003). Leadership has to be able to answer to societal challenges with new and more in-depth responses (Flanary & Terehoff, 2000) and as such, school leadership wears many faces and has many dimensions. In my search for an appropriate leadership model I reviewed the many facets of the principals' leadership role and leadership models:

- as a change agent (Fullan, 2001, 2003b, 2005b, 2006; Fullan & Ballew, 2004);
- as in the contextual framework of culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1996, 2003);
- as ethical leader (Hester, 2003; Raun & Leithwood, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 1991) ;
- as instructional leader (Foster, 1989; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Rossow, 1990);
- as shared leadership (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Eaker, et al., 2002; Wright, 2006);
- as strategic leader (Hallinger & McCary, 1990; Hughes & Beatty, 2005);

- as transformational leader (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Stewart, 2006)
- as creating sustainable change (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006);

and this list is far from being exhaustive. As evidenced in the great amount of literature, the increasing demands made of today's principals have led to the evolution of a highly complex leadership role (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

School leaders must be able to solve problems at the 'grass root' level (adaptive challenges) that academic experts cannot always solve – this is when school leadership is truly required and principals must be able to adapt their leadership practices (adaptive leadership) on an 'as needs' basis (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). Effective leadership does not have a 'one size fits all' (Senge, et al., 2000) but is a blending of 'best practices' tailored to fit the task at hand as well as the context and learning culture. In my new school my task was to find effective strategies to bring about desired changes.

With only three years of experience as a principal at the time of my appointment, I researched leadership strategies. Bolman and Deal's (1991) *Reframing Organizations Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* greatly influenced me and especially their view, "…that effective leaders and effective organizations rely on multiple frames"… and …"need multiple perspectives" (p. 342). Therefore I set out to construct a leadership style that had elements of their four leadership frames (structural, human resource, political and symbolic) and deployed elements from each to fit different situations. These frames were a better match to the strengths I brought to the school and I believed that only a combination of leadership styles would be effective in turning this school around. My school, with its great need of

fundamental changes to improve learning, challenged the core of my leadership. How to identify the right things to do and proceed effectively became focal points in my research.

Situational leadership that assumes the application of different leadership characteristics and styles for different situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1975) comes closer to defining my work. But I must also take into account the need for me to develop a learning culture to set the stage for on-going professional inquiry (Fullan, 1993, 2001, 2003b; Senge, 1990; Senge, et al., 2000; Sergiovanni, 1995, 2000; Sergiovanni & Corbaly, 1984); to develop a professional learning community that regularly questions professional practices and examines student learning in a collaborative team approach (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Eaker, et al., 2002; Fullan, 2001, 2005b; Williams, 2006) but guards against 'groupthink' (Janis, 1972); and to build leadership capacity that shares leadership practices to provide for the sustainability that allows school improvement initiatives to firmly take hold (Fullan, 2005b; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Senge, 1990). These elements are of paramount importance to me as they reflect what I have come to include in my set of beliefs about my practice and promote what I believe are components of my work.

2.2.1 Educational Reform – Political Frame

There is no right way to effectively lead schools as each school's context requires different types of leadership at different times (Hallinger & McCary, 1990). As my literature review implies that leadership theory for the schoolhouse is an intricately interwoven mix of leadership styles built from a multidimensional construct, I question what are the implications of this in an age of reform practices? In practice does it include a form of situational leadership in which the leader's personal traits are matched to the task at hand (Fiedler, 1997)? Do principals also become servants to serve the educational community

(Crippen, 2005) in the form of Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership? To what degree does transformational leadership (Burns, 1979) get factored into a reform leadership equation? Is leadership of the schoolhouse adequately prepared to meet societal demands?

The voices of educational reform demand that principals become more effective instructional leaders as they implement provincial educational policies (Fullan, 2001); that they adopt versatile and interchangeable leadership styles (Bolman & Deal, 1991) to purposely guide not only what happens in the school and in the classroom, but also shape teachers' professional development (Leithwood, et al., 1992). The degree to which professional development changes teaching practices to improve student learning is determined in part by the learning culture that is encouraged by the principal (Guskey, 2000) and within the school, principals are the gatekeepers of this change (Fullan, 2001). The school principal's role therefore remains a key position that greatly influences climate and learning (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001; National Association of Elementary School Principals & ILIAD Project, 2001) creating the conditions for an effective school (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Newman & Wehlage, 1995; W. Smith & Andrews, 1989).

What is apparent from this literature on school reform is that a defined state-of-being must exist in the school – its learning culture must first be in a state of learning readiness in order for reform changes to take place. Ironically, however: this state of readiness can be hindered by reform expectations that call for immediate 'dramatic departure' from established practices without allowing adequate time to study problems and to identify appropriate solutions (Marzano, et al., 2005). Change in itself is not enough as the educational improvements being sought must be sustainable and meet clear and specific

goals (Fullan, 1993). As Marzano et al., (2005) quote Elmore (2002), "The pathology of American schools is that they know how to change. They know how to change promiscuously and at the drop of a hat. What schools do not know how to do is to improve, to engage in sustained and continuous progress toward a performance goal" (p.1).

I argue that Canadian schools are no different from our American counterparts in this regard (Hulley & Dier, 2005). I believe that numerous schools have met what Marzano et al (2005) describe as first order change but they now need to strive for second order change to reach that breakthrough that Fullan et al., (2006) describe. Second order change dictates that educators move away from relying only on known strategies to solve problems and move to deeper levels of thinking to seek new uncharted ways to solve the increasingly complex problems that schools face (Marzano, et al., 2005). Principals and teachers need to collectively problem-solve how to achieve second order changes. It is this level of interaction that will create deep level changes – deep system transformation (Fullan, 2006) that will enhance learning and assist more schools in moving closer to their targets and when this occurs, second order change will have taken place. School leaders are encouraged to continue in their pursuit of changes to improve schools by Fullan (2001) when he states that "Change is a double-edged sword. Its relentless pace these days runs us off our feet. Yet when things are unsettled, we can find ways to move ahead and to create breakthroughs not possible in stagnant societies" (p. 1).

Although school leaders are considering new practices, there is a "… continuing focus on traditional bureaucratic management and hierarchical structure" (Johnson & Johnson, 1999,p.26) and while many principals are interested in increasing participatory leadership, many continue to follow outdated management practices. I argue that principals cannot

afford ‘to get it wrong’ but when there is pressure applied, they will retreat to comfort zones of old managerial styles (Fullan, et al., 2006). There is little insight into how principals develop political astuteness while engaging all stakeholders (Burns, 1979) to effectively resolve reform issues. Deal and Patterson (1999) advise principals that they will need to balance opposing forces as they contend with educational paradoxes and this must involve planning (Drake & Roe, 1994) that is regularly reviewed and revised (Sergiovanni, 2003). Leadership practices must change but the focus must be on the change process to improve and not just change (Fullan, 1993).

McCay’s (2001) case study of six elementary school principals with three or more years of experience found that school leaders also need to grow and learn in the context of their work while leading reform changes in their schools. They must also be able to focus on teachers’ motivation to change teaching practices to enhance learning outcomes. But in order to improve students’ results and increase accountability, school leaders need to have their jobs re-defined to drop what Fullan (2006) refers to as “distracters” (union and labour, plant, financial and personnel issues) (p. 82) so they can focus on creating the environment for pedagogical exchanges. In this context, growth is designed to be precise and personalized (Fullan, 2006), encapsulated in moral actions determined to reach core goals. While this a logical outline of what needs to be done to free up principals’ time to lead reform changes, in my practice, I have found myself powerless to remove many of these distracters that can greatly reduce the pursuit of pedagogical initiatives, as they are often defined by outside legislative forces that are beyond my sphere of influence.

This suggests that the necessary leadership components for school improvement must be re-examined and that shared leadership within the district or province be developed in order

to build school leadership capacity, improve student learning, and foster skill acquisition; (Fullan, Bertani, & Quinn, 2004). Fullan et al., (2004,p.42-46) identify ten components (compelling conceptualization, collective moral purpose, catching the right bus, capacity building, lateral capacity building, ongoing learning, productive conflict, demanding culture, external partners, and focussed financial investments) that are further discussed by (Fullan, et al., 2006) who argue that this set of criteria is a 'meal' and not a 'menu', meaning that one cannot select items from the list because of the synergy that is created by the interaction of all the criteria. This holistic approach has tremendous implications for effective school leaders as it implies a large scale concerted effort. Successful school leaders cannot dabble in reform efforts.

2.2.2 Moral Leadership – Symbolic Frame

To change school climates, principals need to focus on doing the right things and not only on doing it right (Sergiovanni, 1990, 1996). Schools require principals who have set moral standards that reflect the school's core values (Sergiovanni, 1992) and make a focused effort to tie their personal values and beliefs to those of the school. In doing so, they become ethical leaders who use the cultural fabric of the school to focus on core purposes to motivate teachers and energize learning (Peterson & Deal, 2002). Learning is enhanced when ethical leaders build relationships through modeling and mentoring and create a community within an ethical multidimensional framework that fosters creativity, flexibility, and reflective practice (Hester, 2003; Starratt, 1991).

Sadly however, the literature does not discuss how values stemming from ethical frameworks might be applied in a situational context (Campbell, 1997) and there is a deep sense of a disregard for the kind of moral dilemmas educational leaders face (Willower,

1996). In the reality of their school environments, principals are left making moral choices that are too often guided by strategic and not by ethical standards (Strike, 1993). Campbell (1999) found that principals tended to deny the moral nature of their problems and focused instead on other concerns that were political, practical or strategic or sometimes neutralized problems by using conflict resolution. With these findings in mind, my belief is that principals frequently make daily moral decisions without ethical guidelines outside their own value systems and rules of conduct. To address this dilemma, many principals adopt elements of democratic (open) leadership to provide transparent leadership that is based on shared decision-making and active member involvement (Gastil, 1997). But as Fullan (2003b) argues, in order for educational leadership to be good it must have a moral purpose, and if this is the case, then where does this leave principals who are making moral decisions without ethical guidelines?

As a principal, I have learned to rely on my personal values to guide the many decisions I must make without the time for consultation or reflection. Moral philosophy supports the transfer from personal values to professional ones and this transfer develops over time through one's life experiences (Raun & Leithwood, 1993). Many of the changes I sought reflected the training and the moral beliefs that I brought to the school and became incorporated into my action research. These "professional" values are very important in the design of reliable learning communities and for researchers working with their colleagues (L. M. Smith, 1990). Practitioner researchers should work from their own values to pursue educational goals. This process in action research is about living one's educational values while improving educational practice (Lomax, McNiff, & Whitehead, 1996).

The moral imperative in school reform changes as described by Fullan (2003b) calls for principals to build new cultures based on trusting relationships and on a disciplined approach to inquiry and action. Professional relationships are more likely to be effective when they are based on the notion of shared leadership than on hierarchical leadership (Letiche, et al., 1991). From this, I understand that I must build trusting relationships with my teachers as I continue to explore ways to share leadership to nurture a professional learning community. How I go about building trusting relationships with my colleagues greatly influences how I conduct my practice.

2.2.3 Shared Leadership – Human Resource Frame

I believe that educational leadership is in crisis due to leadership overload. I define this as the state of being that school leaders experience, when the demands made of them are too numerous causing their effectiveness to break down. Leadership overload arises from the imposition of corporate/business models of leadership on education in the contemporary period, as well as the pace of educational reform itself. Principals are endeavouring to address too many issues in a societal context in which their roles are not well defined and inadequately supported. In this reform environment, principals are left to address divergent practices while they review moral, ethical and political questions about how to best 'reform' schools. As there is no single definition of educational leadership (Bates, 1989), there is also no one model that fully captures my multifaceted role that is situated in a highly complex society. With this knowledge, I have viewed emerging school improvement leadership theories that include collaborative and inclusive leadership. Fullan et al., (2004) advise that, "…large-scale reform requires pluralized leadership" (p.43). Effective principals must foster leadership support to adequately address contemporary challenges and this requires a team

approach – pluralized leadership. It is therefore in this framework I have chosen to analyze my practice and foster change.

School change results from good educational leadership that involves lead teacher teams working collaboratively with the principal towards achieving critical school improvement goals (Fullan, et al., 2006). But principals must move away from traditional leadership that directs what teachers do to improve student learning to a new theory that includes teachers in making important decisions about how to improve learning (Stewart, 2006). "If schools are to be significantly more effective, they must break from the industrial model upon which they were created and embrace a new model that enables them to function as learning organizations… professional learning communities" (Dufour & Eaker, 1998,p.15). In the formative leadership theory developed by Ash and Persall (2000), teachers become leaders within the school and in this framework the principal makes a profound leadership change to become a 'leader of leaders' (Childs-Bowen, et al., 2000).

To foster shared leadership, principals must create an environment that supports collaboration among teachers, provides time for professional development and actively encourages teachers to be leaders (Ash & Persall, 2000; Dufour & Eaker, 1998). This shared leadership must also include shared vision (Senge, 1990). Shared decision-making sustains a positive school culture in which everyone leads, not just the principal (Deal & Peterson, 1999). To meet these challenges, the leadership paradigm has shifted to be more collegial, collaborative and inclusive while focusing on improving student learning (Williams, 2006).

Accordingly, there is a growing amount of literature about professional learning communities and the style of leadership encapsulated in this community of learners and leaders. Its underlying central theme is that to improve student learning, teaching practices

must change and in order for this change to occur, teachers too become learners. Teachers need to learn how to develop "critical learning instructional paths" (CLIPs) (Fullan, 2006). Developing CLIPs involves teachers' understanding of how to assess students on a learning continuum and knowing how to move students to their next stage of learning and being able to respond appropriately when students do not master the essential skills and knowledge being taught (Dufour, et al., 2006). These practices are more skilfully developed when principals provide a supportive learning environment for teachers within a professional learning community that nurtures "precision" (Fullan, 2006).This new model of leadership attempts to create a new leadership paradigm based on educational needs. It focuses on students' learning and is based on professional collaboration. It engages teachers for the first time as full partners in the education process to work as an educational team to improve both teaching and student learning while empowering teachers to become leaders.

Additionally, this model of shared leadership comes at a time when changes are accelerating so quickly that it is impossible for one leader to fulfill the mandate set for them. This sharing of leadership is especially critical in smaller schools in which there are no vice principals to share the leadership role. In my practice as principal, I was encouraged that I had critical friends with whom to share my reflections and who could assist me in formulating actions to meet new demands. I believe professional learning communities offer school leaders hope.

Professional learning community leadership will require, however, a major mind shift for educational administrators and I am concerned that many principals who tend to be more traditional in their approach to school leadership will find this paradigm shift to shared leadership and decision-making to be a daunting task. But I firmly believe that a new

leadership model for the schoolhouse is long overdue and that professional learning community leadership appears to be the best model offered to school leaders at this time. Its very construct allows for leadership to grow and evolve in a new dimension. This evolution will not be easy or without challenges and conflict but from this exchange, change will occur (Fullan, 1993) resulting in what I believe will be a stronger educational community led by real school leaders.

2.2.3.1 Professional Learning Communities – Implications for School Leaders

Professional learning community schools have school cultures based on shared mission, vision and values, collective inquiry, collaborative teams, action orientation, continuous improvement, and results' orientation (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Dufour and Eaker (1998) describe the role of school principals in forming professional learning communities as: leading through shared vision, sharing decision-making, providing all necessary information to make good decisions, and focusing on teachers' behaviours and not their attitudes. The principal as chief learning officer, in this environment, encourages and supports teachers to assume leadership roles. Leadership takes place throughout the school through multiple forms of capacity building and professional development exercises (Ash & Persall, 2000; Fullan, et al., 2004; Williams, 2006). Principals initiate this leadership change by starting with a dedicated core group and working towards greater staff participation over time but Sergiovanni (2000) cautions that in order to be effective, regardless of the collaborative model used, teachers need to engage and to examine their practices together.

Mohr and Dichter (2001) advise principals to be prepared for a journey that goes through several successive stages of evolution from what they refer to as the honeymoon stage as a sense of community emerges, the conflict stage, the confusion stage, the messy stage, the

scary stage and finally the mature-group stage in which a learning community is born. To create and sustain a professional learning community requires strong, consistent, and patient leadership.

2.2.4 Sustainable Leadership – Structural Frame

Does creating a professional learning community facilitate sustainability? Hargreaves and Fink (2004) found that sustainable leadership requires principals to pay attention to sustainability from the onset of their appointment to the school. Their study also showed that in order for principals to leave 'a lasting legacy', school leaders must share and develop their vision with others in the school. In essence, school leadership must be shared through professional networks that work to achieve common goals; focus not only on instruction but also on the school's culture to promote on-going improvements to teaching practices so goals can be achieved and sustained. However, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) also caution that setting common goals must not lead to working towards standardization – one template will not fit all students or teachers.

"Sustainable educational leadership develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts, in ways that do no harm to and indeed create positive benefit for others around us, now and in the future" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006,p.17). Sustainable changes are morally driven (Fullan, 2006). They bring about change to the immediate future and stretch into the unforeseeable future. In this model, teachers and principal fully immerse themselves in learning while sharing leadership and working towards sustainable change to improve student achievement in positive and ethical ways. "Leaders develop sustainability by committing to and protecting deep learning in their schools;…by distributing leadership and responsibility to others; …sustaining themselves so they can persist with their vision and

avoid burning out; by promoting and perpetuating diverse approaches to reform…and by engaging actively with their environments" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004,p.12-13). It is clear that the steps required to establish sustainability are closely aligned with those required to create professional learning communities.

Fullan (2006) extends the concept of professional learning communities to three levels: the school, the district and its community, and the state; to create what he calls 'permeable connectivity' (p.96). These connections between the three levels create a learning culture that extends the flow of power and allow for resources to be provided to the local level – the school. This delicate balance of joining the efforts of all three levels to engage in 'lateral capacity building' underpins a supportive context where 'turn around leadership' (Fullan, 2006) can occur to create 'deep level' sustainable change.

The question of sustainable change is one that is very important to me as a school principal as sustainable change is my legacy to the school. If my work unravels with my departure then my work loses its meaning and my effort is valued less. More importantly, if change is not sustainable in the school to which I have been assigned as principal, student learning is unlikely to improve in the long run and ultimately, that is my chief mandate in the school. Professional learning community leadership addresses this point to a greater degree than any other leadership model that I have reviewed.

2.3 Leadership – Combining the Roles of Principal and Researcher

My review of the relevant literature has shown that the change process is very complex and can only result from very carefully chosen and applied strategies that foster shared decision-making in a culture of professional trust. My combined role as principal and researcher complicates my task and the literature does not provide clear answers for researchers in

leadership positions. But there are strategies that leaders can adopt to deal with the perception of power and its sphere of influence. First, in order to share power, leadership barriers have to be broken down and this requires the building of professional trust and caring. Harris and Lambert (2003) suggest that principals provide many individuals with broad-based involvement in sharing leadership and that principals skilfully involve teachers in ways to demonstrate their proficiency in leadership actions.

To further nurture a supportive environment for sharing leadership, school leaders need to view power as an investment and not as a control measure (Mills, 2003). When teachers are invested with power, they learn to participate in leadership roles with their principal as they jointly develop a professional culture for instructional changes to enhance student learning (Lieberman, 1988). Learning communities are collaborative structures and it is the collective approach that must be established in support of teachers' involvement in school decision-making. However, there are times when the principal has a mandate to carry out directives that cannot be changed and under these circumstances the best practice that the principal can put into effect is one of openness and complete honesty (transparency). I have come to learn from experience that if this climate is well established in the school setting then these attributes will carry the principal a long way towards mitigating feelings of coercion and betrayal. This basic approach is supported by Zeni (2001), whose ethical stance is largely based on John Rawls' (1971) "theory of justice", who sees the relationship between the researcher and the researched as complex and the only approach is to attempt to be clear, open and honest.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the literature on leadership and change within an educational context and of models of school leadership that were briefly reviewed. I have proposed that educational leadership is in crisis because of complex societal demands and the additional burdens of school reform. This context requires principals to bring about changes to teaching practices to improve learning and I have argued that change is very difficult to foster in an environment that is filled with social and political demands for immediate results. Principals must be instructional leaders who are able to build and sustain a school culture that improves learning while accommodating change.

As teachers are being asked to change teaching practices and principals are asked to manage this change, many schools are looking to ways of creating professional learning communities that will assist them with their work. The new leadership model that is emerging is that of professional learning community leadership. There is hope that, as this model is being designed for educators, not only will it build leadership capacity in the school but also bring about sustainable changes to the school community. I have presented my belief, based on my research, that this model of shared leadership is the best one to be applied to move teachers to change their teaching practices and improve student learning. It is one that I have embraced in my reflections,

> I do however, hope to remain in my present school to complete the next stage of my work – to create a professional learning community around literacy and to reach my main goal – to establish a culture for sustainability, this being a prime goal that I established when I joined the school in the spring of 2000.
>
> The next stage in our school's development is critical and I feel at this point that I too will be stretched the most as a school administrator as we move forward to grow into a professional learning community for until now, I controlled much of the external changes. Now I must shift gears smoothly and systematically to build leadership capacity in our teachers so they can direct

> the next step in our journey. I worry if they are ready for the challenge and if I am able to let go of the control I have exercised in the decision-making process to date. I believe that the next level of change has to come from the teachers and that my role will become more of a facilitator. Now it is teachers who need to become the change agents as they develop their personal mindset and mastery (Fullan, 1995; Senge, 1990). I can guide, lead, and light a fire but the fire to improve literacy-teaching practices has to be within each teacher and fuelled by him or her. I cannot mandate what is important as Fullan (1993) writes, "The more complex the change the less you can force it. (p.21) *(Excerpt from professional notes January 2004)*

My journey in leading school improvement spanned approximately seven and a half years and I realize as I write this chapter that my staff moved from examining the concept of professional learning community to actually beginning to form one. Many teachers still appeared to be fearful of changes that mean a different way of doing business but I saw a shift. There was a growing focus on how teaching and learning interrelate, and teachers worked diligently to improve our students' success. In spite of the many tensions that existed in the school that I will describe in more detail in Chapters Four and Six, a professional learning partnership did emerge between us. If I can find evidence from my research that we were working towards second order change as discussed earlier in this chapter, I will know that I have been able to create a culture of learning with the teachers that fosters sustainable change. We will not have reached the level of change described by Fullan et al. (2006), but we will have created an environment that is morally guided for a professional learning community to flourish.

As I try to define my leadership style from a theoretical perspective, I still find elements from many frames that I apply in various contexts; that is, I borrow from all of the leadership models on a 'as needed' basis. I view challenges as problems that can be solved and use whatever strategies are required to do so. That fundamental approach to leadership has not changed over time, but what has changed for me is how I use reflection to determine the next

action I take, and the fact that I am seeking ways to share the leadership role and encourage others to be change agents with me. As a principal and an action researcher, I have had to examine and re-examine my practice as to how to best influence and further support our school's learning climate to enhance literacy.

Reading about educational leadership offered me various leadership styles and models but it did not yield answers to the questions I was asking. While I drew knowledge about the "how do I…" as a change-agent I came to understand that what would guide my work and offer solutions to my enquiries would be my reflections, my self-guided professional readings, and the critical conversations I have with colleagues. This realization led me to become interested in action research. In the following chapter, I will discuss action research and describe how "living educational theory" has become the theoretical framework that underpins my practice.