VOICES OF TRANSFORMATION: DELVING TO TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES TO INSTRUCTIONAL INNOVATIONS

Shiela Mae A. Olegario[1]

[1]Researcher, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc

ABSTRACT

This study looked at the leadership style of one public elementary school principal that chose an innovation to manage and improve student behavior and the leadership of the principal during the implementation process. The anticipated outcome was that the researcher would discover that the principal followed steps outlined in professional research, however, what was learned were that some principal do not adhere to those guidelines. In this study, the principal researched, implemented, and oversaw the implementation, and she strategized a short-term plan for teacher training and support. in Tibuloy Elementary School in Toril District, Davao City. Outside complexities, such as the simultaneous implementation of the responsive classroom program and looping, influenced the implementation of the innovation as well as the principal's leadership of the program. Another influential factor affecting the principal's leadership was the lack of long-term planning for ongoing training and support of the initiative. Leading an innovation as unique as single-gender education is a multi-faceted process. These stem from the principal's rationale for the innovation and the methods used to initiate, implement, and sustain it. When leading an innovation, leaders rarely follow a prescribed path as outside factors arise that either enhance or derail the innovation. The leader must also have the ability to analyze individual participant needs during the implementation process and provide re-direction when the innovation deviates from its desired outcome.

Keywords: Single-gender instruction, leadership, innovation, implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

Change is not a new concept in the world of education. Since the inception of public schooling, change has been a fundamental tenet of making education for the nation's children more efficient and effective. Educational change is improved curriculum, better instructional practices, and greater student achievement. This emphasis on increased achievement and closing the achievement gap propelled the call for leadership change throughout the corridors of public education. Authors, researchers, and policy makers are weighing in on the processes and practices that will bring about the changes leaders seek.

With accountability stakes at an all-time high, some school administrators and schools are making significant changes in the delivery of instruction, student groupings, and instructional time allocations to meet the increasing demands for elementary performance in reading and math. The purpose of this study was to examine the style of a specific leader when implementing an institutional change. To be more exact, the study examines the role of leadership in the initiation, implementation, and sustainability of innovative education.

There is a dearth of research on innovative education at the elementary level. The majority of published research involves learners at the elementary level who attend public schools. Therefore, it appears that researchers need to increase the body of research looking at elementary level innovative education to assist educational leaders to ensure the efficacy of an initiative; this study will add to this body of research.

The research and results of this study will assist educators in constructing classroom environments that support the strengths and academic needs of male and female learners. Implementing innovative education into a school that has traditionally offered only educational classes presents difficulties given the uniqueness of the approach. Such an innovative implementation requires a leader adept in the subtleties and nuances of leadership, for example, relationship building and teacher selection. Leaders would need to exhibit skill in the art of marketing the innovation, demonstrate mastery in the ability to negotiate the pitfalls that may occur during implementation, and continuously refer to the program's benefits in hopes of sustaining the program. The development of the research questions focused upon this school administrator's leadership journey; an inquiry into what led to the school administrator's decision to implement particular innovations, the obstacles the school administrator encountered during the implementation phase, and the adaptations the school administrator made to the program to ensure outcomes favorable to the implementation goals.

This study involved elementary teachers – their experiences, observations and perspectives of their school administrator's journey into the innovations implemented, the obstacles they have experienced and observed, and the measures they see to ensure favorable outcomes to the school because of these innovations. The elementary teachers of Tibuloy Elementary School in Tibuloy, Toril District, Davao City will be interviewed in this qualitative study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the style of a specific leader when implementing an institutional change. This study utilized a qualitative methodology to examine in depth how the school administrator began the innovation, the critical factors that led to the selection of instruction over other innovations, teachers and community response to the innovation, challenges the school has faced, and the strategies the school administrator employed to manage the changes resulting from the implementation. All these through the observation, experiences and perspectives of teachers.

Research questions no. I and 3 necessitates the interviews of teachers in their observations and perspectives of their school administrator. The researcher presents the narratives through the teachers' experiences. Research question no. 2 consists of teachers' own sentiments and comments.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What strategies did the school administrator use to manage the changes resulting from initiation, implementation, and sustainability of innovations introduced?

2. How did the teachers respond to the manner in which the school administrator implemented the innovations?

3. What challenges has the school administrator faced and how did she respond?

Children and young people in schools around the world will graduate to face a very different future from previous generations. Technological advances and scientific discovery are significantly accelerating the amount of knowledge and information available. We now live in an increasingly interdependent international community, where success or failure in one country has consequences for many others. There is a growing concern that the role of school principal, designed for the industrial age, has not evolved to deal with the complex challenges that schools are preparing children and young people to face in the 21st century. As expectations of what school leaders should achieve change, so must the definition and distribution of school leadership roles. Succession planning is also a high priority in order to ensure high quality school leadership for the future. This rapidly changing context for schools gives rise a series of issues to which policy and practice on school leadership must respond.

Teaching and learning need to improve. Standards of teaching and learning need to improve and improve continuously if schools are to ensure that children and young people can be successful in the future. School leaders play a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivation and capacity of teachers and affecting the climate and environment in which they work and learn. To increase their influence, school leaders need to play a more active role in instructional leadership by monitoring and evaluating teacher performance; conducting and arranging for mentoring and coaching; planning teacher professional development; and orchestrating teamwork and collaborative learning.

Pedagogy is changing. To be successful in today's knowledge society, children and young people need to engage in more powerful forms of active, constructivist learning that teach understanding and independence. There is also a growing demand for individualization and personalization that can offer inclusive and multicultural sensitive learning opportunities for increasingly diverse groups of students. School leaders need to master these new forms of pedagogy so that they can monitor and evaluate their teachers' practice. Principals as leaders of learning can establish communities of effective practice in which continuing professional development becomes more sophisticated and is embedded into the fabric of the working day.

Centers of autonomy and accountability are shifting. School leaders can only have an impact on student outcomes if they have sufficient autonomy to make important decisions about the curriculum and teacher recruitment and development and if their major areas of responsibility are focused on improving student learning. Countries are increasingly opting for decentralized decision making, and balancing this with greater centralization of accountability regimes such as standardized testing. Decentralization has disadvantages as well as benefits. For example, school-level control over devolved budgets creates opportunities for school leaders to allocate resources to priority development areas, but it increases the burden of financial administration, leaving less time to focus on teaching and learning. School leaders are now often accountable for learning outcomes for teachers and students, where previously their accountability was for input into learning processes.

Policy and practice need to work better together. Government policy designed to change practice in schools can only work when it is coherent with school-level processes, systems and priorities. Effective implementation depends on the motivation and actions of school leaders. Policy makers need to engage school leaders in meaningful and continuous dialogue and consultation on policy development and formulation. School leaders who feel a sense of ownership of reform are more likely to engage their staff and students in implementing and sustaining changes.

Schools are confronted with an increasingly complex environment. In rapidly changing societies, the goals for schools and the means to achieve them are not always clear and static. Schools are under tremendous pressure to change and school leaders must enable teachers and students to deal effectively with the processes of change. Leaders of the most successful schools in challenging circumstances are typically known to, engaged with and trusted by both parents and

the wider community. They seek to improve achievement and well-being for children and young people by involving businesses, sports clubs, faith-based groups and community organizations. School leaders are also increasingly collaborating with leaders of other schools and with the district to share the resources and skills needed to deliver a diverse range of learning opportunities and support services.

Three main barriers must be overcome for schools to successfully address these challenges:

Principals' roles are intensifying. As the job of leading a school has expanded and become more complex, it has become increasingly apparent that the roles and responsibilities expected of principals far exceeds what one person alone can achieve.

The profession is ageing. The average school leader in OECD countries is 51 years old and will retire over the next five to ten years. In addition to improving the quality of current school leadership, it is also imperative to develop clear plans for future leadership and effective processes for leadership succession.

Working conditions are unattractive. Many countries are facing decreasing numbers of applications for principal positions. Negative images are attached to a job which is often viewed as overburdened, offering insufficient training and preparation, inadequate salaries and poor working conditions. In particular, deputy principals and teachers feel that the additional rewards offered to principals are too small to compensate for the large increase in workload.

Leadership for Change

School systems are struggling to meet state and national mandates for student performance, particularly in reading and math. Currently, many education publications describe the need for transformational school reform, outline a systematic process to lead for change, or lay the groundwork and extol the benefits of change leadership.

Schmoker (2019), Fullan (2019), Reeves (2019), and Durlak and DuPre (2019) have written extensively on the concept of change, highlighting the virtues and pitfalls inherent in the process. Based on decades of national and international education research, Schmoker (2019), Fullan (2019), Reeves (2019), Durlak and DuPre (2019) have found commonalities in the change process faced by many well-intentioned school leaders. While many reformists have initiated, implemented, and sustained innovations with few impediments, research also points to other reformers whose ideas never moved beyond the initiation stage. These researchers have learned that one or more impediments derailed the change process at some point or prevented the change from ever reaching the starting gate (Reeves, 2019).

Factors Related to Program Implementation

In meta-analyses of over 500 studies, Durlak and DuPre (2019) examined individuals in a leadership role across different disciplines, the impact of implementation on program outcomes, and the identification of factors affecting the implementation process. Durlak and DuPre (2019) noted that transferring innovations into real world settings "is a complicated, long-term process that requires dealing effectively with the successive, complex phases of program diffusion."

The researchers further stated: These phases include how well information about a program's existence and value is supplied to communities (dissemination), whether a local organization of group decides to try the new program (adoption), how well the program is conducted during a trial period (implementation), and whether the program is maintained over time (sustainability).

Dane and Schneider (2021) described five implementation phases. The first is fidelity, and refers to the extent an innovation corresponds to the originally intended program. The second is identified as dosage, and refers to how many of the program components have been implemented. The third phase, quality, describes the level of effectiveness for implemented components. The fourth phase is participant responsiveness and refers to the degree to which the program maintains the participants' interest. Program differentiation defines the final phase and refers to how the program's theory and practices are distinguishable from other programs.

Durlak and DuPre (2019) culled three additional phases on implementation from their meta-analysis. Adding onto Dane and Schneider's (2021) original five phases, they determined a sixth phase, monitoring, a seventh, program reach, and an eighth, adaptation. Durlak and DuPre's (2019) monitoring outlines the nature and amount of services received by members of the group. Their seventh phase, program reach, refers to the rate of involvement and representativeness of the program participants. Their eighth and final phase, adaptation, refers to changes made to the original program during implementation.

Wandersman et al. (2019) stated, "understanding capacity is central to addressing the gap between research and practice." Durlak and DuPre (2019) explained, "capacity is often used in reference to the entire process of diffusion and can be defined as the necessary motivation and ability to identify, select, plan, implement, evaluate, and sustain effective interventions." The authors noted that organizational capacity is important because organizations often need support in implementing innovations successfully. This additional support primarily comes from outside parties that provide training and technical assistance. Durlak and DuPre (2019) theorized that implementation is influenced by

variables present in five categories. These five categories are communities, providers, innovations, the delivery system, and the support system.

The first of Durlak and DuPre's (2019) categories, is community and relates to community influences on an implementation including politics, funding, and policy. No Child Left Behind legislation is an example of policy that may enhance or impede implementation depending upon how the policy is perceived to impact student achievement.

Dutlak and DuPre's second category, provider, outlines characteristics related to implementation. These include the need for the innovation, the benefits, self-efficacy, and skill proficiency. Kallestad and Olweus (2021) found that providers who recognize a need for the innovation, believe it will produce the desired benefits, are confident in doing what is expected, and have the skill set needed are more likely to implement a program at higher levels of dosage and fidelity.

Durlak and DuPre, state that a third category, innovation, discusses characteristics related to implementation, specifically adaptability and compatibility. Adaptability refers to the providers' ability to adapt programs to meet their needs while compatibility suggests that providers and organizations implement new programs that fit with the organization's mission, priorities, and practices.

Durlak and DuPre's fourth category, delivery system, sets forth that the delivery system for an innovation's implementation falls into one of three categories, general organizational features, specific organizational practices and processes, or specific staffing considerations. The authors state, "Innovative individuals and organizations cultivate an atmosphere conducive to trying new approaches. Effective leadership is crucial to implementation; and the existence of at least one program champion has long been recognized as a valuable resource to encourage innovation." Mihalic et al. (2020) found that when shared-decision making occurs among all stakeholders, there is better implementation of the innovation.

The fifth category for effective implementation of an innovation is training. Training assists providers in developing mastery, and attends to their motivation, expectations, and sense of self-efficacy. Durlak and DuPre (2019) emphasize that training should include modeling, role-playing, and performance feedback. The training can also provide re-training of initial providers, training new staff, and emotional support. DuFrene et al. (2019) found that early monitoring of implementation followed by retraining doubled the fidelity of implementation to 85% for providers who initially had difficulty with the innovation.

Durlak and DuPre (2019) found a few studies that referenced other variables that influenced implementation of an innovation, such as teachers' perception of the problem, school climate, and school leadership. For example, Kam et al. (2019) found that when school administrator support and the fidelity of teacher implementation on a program were high, learners improved significantly on all outcomes. When the opposite conditions occurred, the researchers noted negative changes in the learners.

Once a school administrator makes the decision to initiate a change, the critical step is determining how to go about planning the process. While there are a variety of commercially published materials that span the continuum of how to implement change, including topics such as the concept of bartering to study groups, it is essential that the change process focus on deep implementation and long-term sustainability rather than quick fixes that yield short-term results (Reeves, 2019).

Kral (2020) discussed six tenets in which school administrator leadership is paramount to any type of reform; support change, active participation, prime the pump, model collaboration, build relational trust, and make it happen. These tenets revolve around the school administrator's involvement in all aspects of the innovation. Kral (2020) indicates that the school administrator's involvement signals to the staff his or her commitment to the change. Without that commitment, staff members are unlikely to proceed with the innovation.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hord et al.,2019), is a well-researched leadership model, which describes how people develop as they learn about an innovation and stages of the process (Sweeney, 2020). In research, Loucks-Horsley (2019) conducted related to CBAM, seven tenets leaders should keep in mind when instituting change. Those tenets are awareness, informational, personal, management, consequences, collaboration, and refocusing.

A Theory of Influences on Change in Teachers' Instructional Practices. This is a theory of change in teacher instructional practices. It is an explanation for changes that teachers make in their instruction based on influencing factors, with special emphasis on the influence of high school principals. The theory has two components of influence: (1) leadership strategies of principals and (2) other influences on teachers' classroom practices. The main interest is in the leadership behaviors of principals and how these influence the instructional practices that teachers use in their classrooms. The other influences are included to acknowledge that the principal is not the only influence on teacher classroom instruction. The theory is based on research findings, commentary literature, and personal experiences in

public education. All are combined to form a concatenated theory (Mullins, 2019). Principals have an influence on teachers' instructional practices. Principals use the following leadership strategies to change teachers' instructional practices: (a) communicating goals (Blase & Roberts, 2019), (b) supervising instruction (Blasé & Blase, 2019), (c) promoting professional development (Blase & Blase), (d) providing resources (Appleton & Kindt, 2019), and (e) providing incentives (Sheppard, 2019). Research on each variable is included in this section.

Principals communicate school goals in many different ways. They often do it through faculty meetings and departmental chair meetings. They communicate them through individual meetings such as follow-up conferences to classroom observations.

Teachers perceive their principals to be strong instructional leaders when they communicate school goals through (a) interacting with them on their classroom performance, (b) being accessible to discuss instructional matters, (c) allowing teachers to try new instructional strategies by letting them know that it is okay to take risks, and (d) clearly communicating a vision for the school (Smith & Andrews, 2019). Communicating school goals was found to positively affect the type of instruction teachers delivered (Blase & Roberts, 2019; Sheppard, 2019).

Communication of school goals by the principal has a significant, positive relationship with teacher classroom innovativeness (Sheppard, 2019). Classroom innovativeness is a teacher's willingness to try new and various instructional approaches. At the high school level, Sheppard found that communication of school goals by the principal accounted for the largest amount of variance in classroom innovativeness. He discovered that communicating school goals, framing school goals, and promoting professional development together accounted for 57% of the variance in classroom innovativeness. Sheppard reported that framing school goals accounted for the largest amount of variance out of the three, but did not report the specific amount of variance.

Communicating school goals encourages teachers to use more reflection, which may lead to teachers adjusting their instructional techniques to address the different learning needs of students (Blase & Roberts, 2019). The connection between the communication of goals by principals and teachers' classroom instruction, however, was weak. Blase and Roberts discovered that 33% of the responding teachers felt communicating school goals encouraged them to use more reflection. Any leadership strategy identified by 35% or more of the responding teachers was considered a high impact influence. They did not explain how 35% was set as the minimum for a high impact.

2. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study because of the complexities involved in leading an organization through a major innovation. As Merriam (2019) states, "A qualitative approach examines how everything works together to form a whole." The inquiry into classrooms lends itself to seeking knowledge by asking probing questions. The information gleaned assisted this researcher in discovering how the school administrator organized the individuals involved to attempt the instructional innovation. The interview analysis captured the essence of the inquiry while maintaining contextual integrity.

Other characteristics of qualitative research include asking open-ended and probing questions, providing rich descriptions of fieldwork, and collecting and analyzing documents (Patton, 2019). The researcher selected to use guiding questions with the participants. The guided interview participants include the school administrator, the reading specialist, and the teachers. The rationale for this format was to ensure the exploration of specific issues while allowing the researcher some flexibility to pursue other lines of questioning based on responses given by the interviewees (Merriam, 2019).

This study focused on one elementary school in the Toril District of Davao City area that has gradually implemented innovative education as a choice for students and their families. It is the only public elementary school within its district to conduct an innovative course.

The school is located in a high socioeconomic community; however, the boundaries were re-drawn within the last decade to include several low-income barangays. At the time of the study, the total enrollment was 525 students. The largest group among the student enrollment was from the Visayas, followed closely by those coming from Luzon and the ARRM.

Participating in this study was the school administrator, a veteran educator who had been in the profession almost 30 years as a teacher and administrator. In addition to the school administrator, another participant included the reading teacher, and classroom teachers responsible for instructing in the classrooms. The teachers, of either sex, who were regular in their position, numbered 10. Interviews were conducted three ways: in the classroom, outside of the classroom (in the hallway, conference room, or court), and in their residence. Interviews were done to pursue triangulation through the environment.

The inquiry into the school administrator's action when implementing innovative education lent itself to seeking knowledge by asking probing questions of the teachers. The information gleaned assisted this researcher in

discovering how the school administrator organized the individuals involved to attempt the instructional innovation. The interview analysis captured the essence of the inquiry while maintaining contextual integrity. The synthesis of these themes into a rich descriptive narrative ultimately revealed the leadership characteristics used by the school administrator as she initiated and implemented the innovation as well as the leadership qualities needed to sustain it. The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the school administrator, the reading specialist, and teachers using guided interview question created by the researcher.

The analysis for the research is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing studies according to Yin (2019). For this study, the researcher needed to examine and compare the interview responses thoroughly to determine emerging patterns, themes, descriptors, and discrepancies that demonstrated the school administrator's method of leadership. Once themes were identified, the transcribed texts were scrutinized for evidence of leadership characteristics noted in all the interviews, as well as characteristics that were not consistently mentioned by all interviewees. Yin (2019) stated, "the goal is to analyze the study by building an explanation about the case."

The researcher reviewed and analyzed interview data to find common themes that emerged from interviews and became inherent to the study (Creswell, 2013). Analysis revealed the school administrator's leadership characteristics as she initiated, implemented, and sustained the innovation, as well as the factors leading to the stakeholders' willingness to participate in the innovation.

Phenomenological analysis is an approach to psychological qualitative research with an idiographic focus, which means that it aims to offer insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon. Usually these phenomena relate to experiences of some personal significance, such as a major life event, or the development of an important relationship. It has its theoretical origins in phenomenology and hermeneutics, and key ideas from Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are often cited. Smith, J.A. (2019) said that PA is one of several approaches to qualitative, phenomenological psychology. It is distinct from other approaches, in part, because of its combination of psychological, interpretative, and idiographic components (Gill, 2019).

3. RESULT

The interviews resulted in responses that were collected. These responses were made by teachers, analyzed, interpreted and themed accordingly. The presentation of responses followed the research questions in answer to the interview questions of the researcher. Teachers as participants were coded as Teacher 1 to Teacher 10.

Strategies the school administrator use to manage the changes

resulting from initiation, implementation, and sustainability

of innovations introduced

The school administrator's journey, defined as the processes that led her to implement instruction, started in the early years of her career and was based on experience and language development. She began her career in education as a speech teacher, and her first assignment was in a kindergarten through twelfth grade school for students with emotional disabilities.

As she continued her personal research into determining the sources of learning discrepancies between the genders, the principal decided to pursue a doctoral degree. She stated that her initial interest was on differences in the way genders learn, but came to her own conclusion that what she was observing in her role as a speech teacher was not a gender issue.

To prepare for implementation, the principal shared her vision about teaching students in gender-specific classes and outlined her plan to bring single-gender classes to the school at a staff meeting in 2018. She stated that the school would pilot the program in grades two and six, but added that if the pilot program were successful, additional grade levels would offer single-gender classes.

During this initial meeting, the principal polled each teacher asking them to write down on paper a response to this question, "If you felt you connected better with a gender, which gender would that be?" Teachers who expressed interest in teaching a single-gender class received consideration for the positions, but the principal made the final decisions.

The principal also met with parents in the summer of 2018 to introduce them to the idea of single-gender classes at the school. She recalled holding several meetings, but was unable to recall the exact number. In each meeting, she presented information on the program, and highlighted its benefits to the students. Parents received a hard copy of an intent form where they indicated the placement preference for their child. The principal directed parents to the internet and to Gurian's book (2019) when they expressed interest for further information. Teacher 1, the teacher for the sixth grade male class, remembered the principal's frustration with sixth grade behavior, but was unaware that she had researched single-gender instruction until she presented the program to the staff.

The principal perceived single-gender education as one thread woven with several others that was necessary for teaching some students at The school. In her mind, single-gender was not the sole innovation needed but rather one in a collection of innovations implemented that addressed the behavioral and academic needs of her students.

According to the teachers and the reading specialist, the critical factor for choosing single-gender education over other innovations was student behavior. All teacher interviewees responded that behavior at The school was not conducive for learning: they independently concurred that the inclusion of Responsive Classroom® into the school's behavioral plan had a positive impact on student behavior and learning.

Teachers responses to the manner in which the school administrator implemented the innovations.

In the course of her interview, the principal believed the faculty supported the innovation from its inception because student behavior was a strong school-wide concern. Other responses of the teachers: friction among the staff, number of new teachers, jealousy among the staff, the community value the initiative, and the teachers supported the program.

All the teacher interviewees stated that the parents and community valued the program and the impact it has had on learning. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 commented that parents new to the community often have researched single-gender education prior to enrolling their children. All the teachers agreed that parents loved having choice because they controlled the selection of their children's teachers.

Challenges and response of school administrator on innovations introduced

The principal stated that the program has experienced several challenges: ensuring students go into the program, looping, parent option, placing students in classes for the next year, and continued support for the teachers.

The second challenge the principal explained involved looping. Although looping was not a required piece of the program, several teachers asked to move up with a class.

A third challenge provided by Teacher 2 focused on the parent option feature of the program. Her tone of voice indicated some irritation as she discussed how the parents liked the option so they can plan where their child would go in the coming year.

Analysis

This researcher became interested in the topic of leading innovations. Specifically, this researcher became fascinated with learning how to lead innovations, and wanted to know the methods used by principals to initiate, implement, and sustain an innovation over time. One innovation that surfaced and that the researcher found particularly intriguing was that of single-gender education. The researcher located a school offering this instructional innovation and the researcher focused on this school with the intention of examining the leadership style used by the principal to implement in which the school leader brought on the single-gender initiative.

One interesting finding noted by the researcher was that the reading teacher had minimal, if any, input into the decision to implement single-gender instruction or in the steps to make it a reality at the school. At many schools, the faculty perception of the reading teacher is as the instructional leader charged with implementing instructional programs. Since improving student behavior and not instruction was the rationale behind the single-gender innovation, this may explain the minimal role played by the reading teacher.

Another interesting finding concerned professional development, the limited amount of it. The principal initially organized professional development through the formation of a book discussion group. The book discussion group met several times throughout the pilot year, but subsequent professional development from single-gender organizations or other outside parties did not occur. In addition, staff members had not received training in the initiative, even though they may eventually teach a single-gender class themselves. The principal's rationale for the lack of continuous professional development for new employees was that it was unnecessary. The principal stated that new employees would learn about single-gender from their team members.

The principal stated on several occasions that she was very aware of what was going on in the building and how the staff and community felt about single-gender instruction. Yet, when examining teacher responses, some of them indicated that the innovation created an environment of jealousy and animosity among staff members. In addition, community members had stated to the teachers that they preferred the single-gender classroom not for the initiative itself, but because it allowed them a greater say in whom their child would have as a teacher. Consequently, it seemed that not everyone was as committed to the idea of single-gender instruction as it would appear, and if they were, it may not have been for the intended reasons.

In implementing and maintaining the innovation, the researcher anticipated finding that the program's participants met throughout the year to discuss topics specific to single-gender instruction. These included how new students and

parents were adapting to the program, how students in the program were achieving academically, how well the teacher and students were adjusting to looping, and if looping was a beneficial component of the program. The researcher found that participants in the single-gender program did not meet following the first year of implementation. Teacher 10 stated, The meetings stopped after the first year, and I don't know why. We do not meet to talk about how the students are doing, if the program is still viable, or who will loop and teach single-gender from year to year. There is so much more to do and learn.

The researcher anticipated that the interviewees' responses, particularly those made by the principal and classroom teachers, would include discussion on academics as a factor in bringing the innovation to the school. While some discussion referred to improved academics with the implementation of single-gender instruction, it was not found to be a major component associated with the innovation. The researcher did find that improving student behavior was the impetus for the single-gender innovation and that finding was based upon data provided by the interviewees.

The researcher also anticipated learning more about single-gender education from the parents participating in the study. As stated earlier, the principal selected the parents for inclusion in the study. Teacher 1 had knowledge about the program by virtue of his being a teacher in the program. Teacher 2 did not have an accurate understanding of the program until a teacher in the program contacted her, explained the program, and persuaded her to enroll her grandchild. Although both parents spoke highly of their children or grandchildren's experiences in the single-gender program, Teacher 2 had limited background information on the rationale or critical factors used for implementing the innovation, and Teacher 1 likely had his information due to the fact that he was a staff member.

Based on the Principal's interview, she made the decision to implement single-gender education for several reasons, among them her interest in altering the educational environment to alleviate the effects of poverty on learning, to instruct males in modalities that met their instructional needs, and to minimize gender behavior disruptions. She selected single-gender education as the innovation, informed the staff of its implementation, managed the legal issues, selected the resource and method of professional development, and appointed herself as the implementation overseer. She had made all the decisions regarding the single-gender innovation, and had led the implementation process based on her knowledge and beliefs of what she determined were appropriate for the students. While she incorporated aspects of professional research in the implementation of the innovation, she did not follow any one methodology with specificity. Consequently, components of the implementation process were unaddressed from the beginning of the process and remain so to this day.

Based on teacher and parent participant interviews, they knew little about the principal's rationale for this innovation. They only knew of the school's need for improved student behavior. The participants appeared comfortable with the innovation's implementation process, an indication to this researcher that they were accustomed to the principal's leadership style of leading for change.

When comparing the Principal's style with implementing an educational innovation to relevant research, some elements are clearly missing. Dane and Scheider (2021) discussed the need for fidelity when implementing a program innovation. This fidelity was lacking since multiple programs were implemented simultaneously, therefore the level of fidelity to any of the programs was compromised. Many elements of Kral's (2020) leadership model appear to be absent at Tibuloy Elementary School as well as those found by Hord et al. (2019). The most glaring absence appears to be in the area of collaboration. While collaboration does not explicitly appear in all models, it is implicit in each of them.

4. DISCUSSION

This study was limited to learning about one principal's leadership in implementing an innovation, single-gender instruction. It would be interesting to learn of similarities and differences in leadership style of a principal implementing the same innovation at another school to determine leadership traits that affect an innovation's acceptance, understanding, and effectiveness as perceived by a school's staff, parents, and community.

In this study, the implementation of single-gender instruction occurred almost simultaneously with the implementation of the Responsive Classroom® program. It would be helpful to study the implementation of single-gender instruction as a strategy for managing student behavior without the Responsive Classroom® component. The principal brought single-gender instruction to Tibuloy Elementary School to resolve behavior challenges, and the staff members interviewed for this study believed that student behavior was the impetus for the program's implementation.

The unknown information from this study is if single-gender education improved behavior that ultimately resulted in increased academic success for the students enrolled in the program. It is also unknown whether the components of the responsive classroom program were responsible for improved student behavior, or if the inclusion of both programs contributed to improved student behavior. Future researchers may want to investigate situations where one of these

initiatives was implemented independently from the other. A study such as this would provide data supporting or refuting the success of each of these programs in isolation.

On the assumption that the implementation continues when a new principal assumes the role at Tibuloy Elementary School, it would be interesting to conduct a follow-up study to determine whether the style of the new leader had a positive or negative impact on student behavior and academic success.

One additional suggestion for future study is to examine the impact on achievement for students who are not included in the innovation. In this situation, that would involve an analysis of behaviors and achievement of students placed in mixed-gender classrooms as compared to those in the single-gender environment.

Practical Recommendations for School Offering Single-Gender Classes

1. School districts should conduct research at schools within their system where non-traditional innovations, such as single-gender education, are occurring. This availability of research to administrators inside the system would permit them to analyze the information while considering implementing related innovations at other schools.

2. School districts should consider the creation of a live or virtual internal leadership forum where school administrators share their experiences in leading programs and innovations. This forum structure could occur on a rotating basis so administrators within the system can learn from others on how to lead, implement, and manage innovative programs and strategies.

5. REFERENCES

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