

COMMITTEE WORK AS A VEHICLE FOR CHANGE

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This study examined the use of committees in a K-12 school setting as a method to address changes in the organization from the perspective of paraprofessionals, teachers, school administrators, and community members. Committee work is used as a common practice in school settings, yet is reported to yield inconsistent results. This study compared and contrasted optimal committee experiences to those perceived as unsatisfactory as reported by the participants of the study. Several specific factors were assessed through a mixed methods approach, specifically committee participation, membership, the structure of meetings, and stakeholder engagement. Purposeful sampling was used to select a total of 5 school administrators for semi-structured interviews, and 100 survey participants representing paraprofessionals, teachers, school administrators, and community members. The data from the interviews and surveys were analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods producing descriptive findings and areas of statistical significance when comparing committee experiences.

The findings of this study provide insight to school leaders on the factors related to committee participation, membership, structure, and stakeholder engagement that lead to efficient and effective practices. Conclusions drawn from this study suggest that group dynamics, power and political tones, leadership, and organizational culture are factors that can influence the work of committees. Implications of this research suggest that leaders: equip themselves with knowledge and strategies to address aspects of group dynamics that can stall the

efforts of committees; understand the political landscape that can shape recommendations derived from committee work; promote a shared leadership approach; and ensure that committee membership reflects those affected by the proposed changes and recommendations.

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PREFACE

My journey through this program was much like other ventures in my life that have led to amazing stops along the way; made possible through the love and support from my family, the camaraderie from those on a similar journey, and steadfast guidance from the Pitt community. Completing a doctorate while working full-time and raising two daughters from their teenage years to young adulthood came as no easy feat.

To my husband, Bunky. I cannot imagine how difficult it must have been at times for you to be both mother and father to our daughters while I juggled work and school timelines. Your tireless patience with reading my work and being my audience when I practiced presenting my findings was appreciated more than you can know.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The invitation came from the school district's Coordinator of Academic Technology and Instructional Services: Would I serve as a member on the Technology Advisory Committee (TAC)? In addition to the duties that come with being an elementary school principal, I had already served as a member of several other committees in the district. The TAC group was charged with the task of developing an action plan to identify the types of electronic devices to purchase and to integrate that technology into instruction. TAC would make recommendations that would result in a change to the instructional delivery models used by most elementary and secondary teachers. The proposal was an immense task for my organization, which serves over 8,000 students and employs over 1,000 staff members. In an early study of committee work by Glaser (1941), noted that large organizations avoid over-centralization by using committee work as a tool of management. While I understood the common practice of forming committees to make decisions in large organizations, I was still reluctant to participate.

My initial hesitation to join TAC was not attributed to the extra time or work that would come with this commitment. I feel very passionate about increasing the availability of technology devices to students in the elementary setting, which was the premise behind the school board's recommendation to form this committee. Although this seemed like a great opportunity to bring instructional practices into the 21st century, I had been down this road before with other reform initiatives in the district such as health and wellness, positive school climate,

and diversity. Each time, the reform effort was addressed through committee work, which led to recommendations that either did not come to fruition or that had little impact on the organization. Inversely, I had also served as a member on committees where our work has resulted in an improvement in practice or the creation of school policy; outcomes where I felt proud to be part of a group that brought forth positive results.

These experiences lead me to wonder: If the results of committee work are inconsistent and not always guaranteed to result in change or action on the part of the organization, why do we as leaders continue to use committee work as a practice in K-12 education? Would our constituents be better served if decisions and change initiatives were addressed solely through those holding positions of power and authority in the organization?

1.1 PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

According to Grossnickle (1983), “committee work can take time, effort, genuine interest, and enthusiasm and transform them into frustration, fatigue, disappointment, and disillusionment” (p. 78). In my experience as an educator, I have encountered other individuals who have shared the same feelings of frustration when the need for change is established and supported through the efforts of a committee, but the implementation of a change initiative is not assured or even validated.

Change initiatives in an organization challenge the established culture and norms that are shaped by the individuals who comprise the organization; therefore, to implement change, an engagement of various constituents in an organization would most likely result in a transformation of the culture of an organization. Shakir (2011) described committee work as a

form of distributed leadership that is commonly used to transform the culture of an educational organization. Literature related to distributed or shared leadership further describes it as a way to secure and sustain school improvement by involving members of different stakeholder groups. According to Slater (2008), shared leadership responsibilities engage stakeholders more fully in school improvement, thereby enabling schools to respond better to change.

Committee work through shared leadership incorporates the activities of the multiple individuals in a school, who all bring different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences and who work at mobilizing and guiding a school's staff (Spillane, 2005). While this structure for committee work is often supported and established in organizations, in practice there are often inconsistent results, perceived failure, and feelings of frustration reported by those who participate in committees. One explanation for this comes from the work of Lindahl (2008) who declared that a variety of factors can influence a collaborative approach to shared decision-making through committee work: the culture of the school, specific contextual issues such as history, setting, and age level of the individuals in the organization, the size, homogeneity, and cohesiveness of the group, motivation and morale, or turnover.

In an era of accountability, the landscape of K-12 education has undergone rapid changes due to federal, state, and local mandates. Fullan and Miles (1992) described how the capacity for individuals to acquiesce to change is challenging in any setting due to many layers of complexity related to historical, ideological, and political features. Committee work is commonly used as a tactic to engage those impacted by change and to provide a space for various stakeholders in an organization to represent other similar-minded individuals in a collaborative process for responding to change. Collaboration has become a common theme in school reform that opens up shared leadership opportunities for more people (Slater, 2008).

In theory, this practice provides a fair and multi-faceted approach to representing multiple viewpoints in a collaborative and shared decision-making process. However, it is valuable to consider the extent that interpersonal dynamics impact the ability of participants to work collaboratively in committee work. Along with considering aspects of interpersonal dynamics and competing agendas of stakeholders, faulty structures of committee work can serve as inhibitive factors to implementing reform through a collaborative effort (Ven & Delbecq, 1971). Further impacting committee work as a “tried and true” practice, issues of power and politics can adversely affect the work and outcomes. According to Gabriel and Paulus (2015) unequal participation, influences from “formal authority” figures, and strategic uses of data to lead a committee to making decisions are covert exercises of power that can negatively affect committee outcomes and further disappoint committee members who participated under false pretenses of a democratic process.

As with any approach to engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes, just as multiple factors and conditions can negatively affect the efficacy of committee work, certain indicators and processes can lead to effective and efficient outcomes. Datnow and Stringfield (2000) suggested that improvements in school are possible when the reform effort is well thought out, the stakeholder groups are active agents in the change process, there are sufficient resources and time to support the reform effort, and the school cultures change along with school structures. Selinger (2006) provided specific tactics to making committees work, such as treating committees like teams, getting rid of deadwood, maintaining active members, and identifying future committee leaders. The perspectives of researchers in the field of committee work diverge on two thoughts: practices and conditions. I am led to the inquiry of the most optimal conditions and most influential practices that move committee work away from a futile

attempt at democratization to a meaningful vehicle for change in a K-12 educational organization.

Bearing in mind that neither all reforms are created equally nor do all organizations concede to change in similar manners, this inquiry will explore the factors that impact the efficacy of committee work. Additionally, data gathered will provide an overview of the aspects of stakeholder perspective, organizational factors, and broader contexts of reform that impact the outcome of committee work.

Finally, just as all reforms are not created equally, all committees are not created equally, either. By examining the role and scope, composition, and practice of committee work in the applied inquiry setting, a better understanding of these characteristics of committee work can lead to collaborative practices that can lead to the successful implementation of reform initiatives.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are presented in order to understand characteristics of committee work that result in the implementation of change initiatives and that serve as a framework for examining various attributes of committee work, stakeholder perception, and emerging practices. The guiding inquiry questions below are intended to focus on a comprehensive exploration of this group process and the conditions and situations of using this approach in a school setting.

Q1: What are the self-reported perceptions of school administrators toward committee work as a process for implementing change?

Q2: What do school stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, central administrators, community members) perceive as factors that hinder committee work?

Q3: What do committee members perceive as practices that appear to support effective and efficient committee work?

2.0 A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Schools, districts, and states are under tremendous pressure to make educational changes that align with current mandates; however, successful educational reforms typically require enormous effort on the part of many individuals (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Moreover, educational reforms cover a range of controversial issues and are typically addressed by committees within schools, districts, and states that represent various stakeholders (Gabriel & Paulus, 2015). Shakir, Issa, and Mustafa (2011) described committee work as a way to secure and sustain school improvement by involving members of different stakeholder groups, therefore further emphasizing the benefits of distributed or shared leadership.

In an effort to better understand committee work, this review of the literature focuses on the use of committee work in education in response to reform initiatives. The intent of this review is to determine the factors that contribute the most to effective and efficient committee work practices and those that serve as obstacles. An understanding of the factors, inconsistencies, and emerging themes related to a shared decision-making process can provide insight for leaders to make more informed decisions on when to use committee work as a vehicle for change.

An initial recurrent theme from the literature in this review uncovered descriptions, definitions and types of committees that contribute to a growing knowledge of shared leadership

activities. A second theme that emerged from the literature on committee work was the influence of group dynamics on collaborative decision-making. This theme is relevant to the study of committee work, as much of the shared decision-making in education, which is focused on school improvement, tends to be distributed among stakeholders (Shakir et al., 2011). A study of stakeholders in the literature led to a glimpse into the elements of power and politics at play when committees are tasked to implement change initiatives. This was followed by an exploration of organizational culture and the adaptive capacity of an organization in relation to reform efforts. Finally, the review concludes with an in-depth look at leadership and learning organizations. Each theme explains, describes, or contributes additional information towards a practical level of understanding the effectiveness of committee work.

2.1.1 Challenges to committee work

A collaborative approach to addressing school reform has been well documented as a common practice in educational organizations, although it comes with challenges. According to Grossnickle (1983), committee work supports a shared-leadership approach to solving problems and making decisions but can also be time-consuming, a political battleground, and a way of deferring responsibility for an issue. Lindahl (2008) articulated that a major barrier to shared leadership practices, such as committee work, is the fact that it is a labor-intensive process that requires time for organizational members to interact on an ongoing basis. Specifically, several factors can adversely affect committee outcomes: inadequate information provided to committee members, inconsistent committee membership, lack of training or education provided to committee members, unclear mandates given to the committee, and lack of management support (Yassi et al., 2013). Gabriel and Paulus (2015) described a pattern of unfulfilled expectations in

their study of committee work where decisions were avoided or impossible due to logistics, lack of information, or misuse of time or decisions were made but without equal representation. Considering the aforementioned factors, the efforts of committees can yield inconsistent results. However, committees are still a widely used practice in the field of education in my 23 years of experience as an educator. Given the prevalence of committee work in education, an analysis of the contributing factors that influence the structure, participants, and outcomes of committees will provide a better understanding of more efficient and effective collaborative practices in the K-12 setting.

2.2 DEFINING COMMITTEE WORK

Fishman and Pinkard (2001) suggested that creating a committee that includes teachers, administrators, and outside stakeholders who are willing to help facilitate change is an effective strategy when developing a plan for a change initiative. While the creation of committees is touted in the literature as a suggested practice for effecting change in an organization (Bowman, Newman, & Masterson, 2001; Eshet, Klemes, Henderson, & Jalali, 2000; Fishman & Pinkard, 2001; Hew & Brush, 2007), initiatives still run the risk of failing to produce their intended results.

While committee work can serve a variety of purposes in organizations, one is left to wonder if the inconsistencies in committee work outcomes are due to a loose definition of committees in an organization, resulting in the overuse, misuse, or misunderstanding of its purposes. Several studies led to the characterization of committees under two overarching themes: (a) Advisory and (b) Governing (Cooper, 1973; Glaser, 1941; Selinger, 2006). The next

section of the review deconstructs these themes and provides examples of how committees are defined based on this literature.

2.2.1 Advisory committees

Advisory committees can include ad hoc, task-oriented and fact-finding varieties. Members of committees that serve in an advisory capacity do not make final decisions; rather it is the responsibility of the group who appointed the committee members to make a determination on the reform initiative. An ad hoc committee is established for one specific purpose and ceases to exist once a task is completed (Cooper, 1973). This is not to be confused with a task force, which is also a temporary appointment under one leader; however, the severity of the issue to which a task force responds establishes a sense of urgency for the committee and for the task to be completed. A time-honored tradition in the K-12 school setting and in higher education for dealing with new problems and challenges is to create a task force or committee to study an issue and make recommendations (Millett, Payne, Dwyer, Stickler, & Alexiou, 2008). In a fact-finding committee, the emphasis for the committee is upon the discovery of essential tasks and relations, rather than upon what to do (Glaser, 1941). This type of work provides leaders with a sound basis for action (Glaser, 1941). According to Davis and Davis (2009), advisory committees maintain a link to the community by being representative of all stakeholders.

2.2.2 Governing committees

Governing committees are synonymous with executive and policy-forming committees. Good decision-making may be brought about as a result of combined experience, knowledge, or

imagination of members of the organization (Grossnickle, 1983). This shared approach to making decisions contributes to an increased understanding and commitment of members in the organization. The executive committee also uses the experiences of others but operates as an individual would in an executive position; it has direct responsibilities, makes decisions leading to immediate action, and gives orders (Glaser, 1941). The executive committee represents a higher rank of members in an organization and is commonly comprised of board members and administrators in the school setting. Similar to the executive committee, the policy-forming committee decides on a program of action, a policy, or a standard (Glaser, 1941). Differing from the executive committee, the policy-forming committee deals with the “what, how, and why” (Glaser, 1941, p. 253).

In theory, committees operate in a governing capacity. In reality, advisory bodies can lead to feelings of disillusionment, frustration, and disappointment expressed by its members. Grossnickle (1983) provides some examples of member frustration “This committee was a sham, they took our recommendations and proceeded to do exactly as they wanted to do in the first place...What a complete waste of time; You’ll never catch me on another committee!” (p. 78). A more consistent outcome of committee work might occur if the type of committee work is better defined. The next section examines literature that addresses group dynamics as a factor in the inconsistent outcomes of committee work.

2.3 COMMITTEE GROUP DYNAMICS

Since committee members naturally have varying views, beliefs, attitudes, and values, group dynamics present a challenge in formulating a shared vision for determining how change

initiatives can enhance, support, and transform the teaching and learning environment in educational organizations. Riccardi and Kurtz (1983) described how a mutually understood common ground lead to the formation of relationships where individuals share time and experiences together, revealing their backgrounds, interests, and beliefs. Moreover, this leads to the development of trust and open communications, which are two critical attributes that strengthen the interpersonal relationships in a group. As related to committee work, these relationships contribute to the optimal combination of group processes for problem-solving (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1971).

Osborn (1957) posited the average person could think up twice as many ideas when working with a group than when working alone. Although the views of various committee members may not appear to conflict, the literature shows that group dynamics can have inhibiting effects on members, such as a tendency of low status participants to go along with the opinions expressed by high-status participants or group pressures for conformity and implied threat of sanctions from more knowledgeable members (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1971).

Williams (2005) contended that, in any group, there are subgroups or factions of people who coalesce around a particular narrative of the problem, share common values, and resonate to specific concerns in a consistent manner. When creating committees, specific members are often strategically invited to participate because of their viewpoints for or against a particular reform initiative. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) described this tactic as a strengthening of relationships by forging strong connections with people who have big stakes in the change initiative, whatever their perspective on it. For example, a school board member serving as a committee member may be faced with the issue of addressing how an initiative could be funded, whereas a community member on the same committee may need to reconcile that they will need

to advocate for increasing taxes when supporting this initiative.

In Slater's (2008) study, the central research question focused on the understandings, skills, and attitudes held by participants in school improvement initiatives that result in successful collaboration. Slater's findings addressed group dynamics by several communication techniques: listening, verbal and non-verbal behavior, openness, and empathy. Similar to the work by Van de Ven and Delbecq (1971), Slater's findings on collaborative activities showed that communication skills and strategies to build trusting relationships that subsequently build capacity are key in making changes in complex school systems.

Committee members are encouraged to address the variance of group dynamics to capitalize on a culture of empowerment. With this variance in backgrounds and experiences, Kegan and Lahey (2001) asserted that individuals may be reluctant to change due to competing commitments. Competing commitments occur when change is perceived to threaten the status quo that feels safe and comfortable to an individual. One way to address competing commitments is by framing questions that probe inner contradictions to encourage individuals to examine their deeply-rooted beliefs that have shaped their views and have become their reality (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). For example, asking individuals to reflect on what they are doing, or not doing, that is getting in the way of their commitment to contributing to the work of the committee can bring inner contradictions to fruition. Obholzer and Roberts (1994) described how the internal dynamics of group members serve as a crucial factor in determining any interplay between the unconscious roles and processes of the organization. Based on this assertion, the outcome of a committee's efforts may reflect the systems of behaviors within a group.

2.4 POLITICS AND POWER

Lumby (2013) suggested that ignoring politics in distributed leadership could be interpreted as a political act as much as overt engagement. He further claimed that in its avoidance of issues of power, distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power. Fullan and Miles (1992) asserted that educational reform is as much a political as an educational process. Gillette (in press) declared that many conflicts in school are endemic in response to change. School systems, like all systems, are rife with political activity, and the presence of conflicting mandates makes that all the more important and apparent (Gillette, in press, p. 19). Consider the following scenario: The restructuring of a governing body, such as a school board, can shift a political landscape, transferring power to an authority figure opposed to a change initiative. This can lead to conflict as members of an organization are forced to take sides, which could create a great deal of discord among the various constituents in an organization. This scenario illustrates how committee work can be especially counterintuitive if it has become a political battleground for those who compete for status and power (Grossnickle, 1983). Overall, organizations tend to replicate the political systems currently in place (Moe, 2003). This is supported by Moe (2003) who argued that, by the design of our political system, the advantage always goes to interest groups who want to keep things the way that they are.

Dettre (1978) emphatically stated that committee work is an excuse not a democracy in action. He further asserted that it is avoidant behavior done in a collective manner. According to Heifetz et al. (2009), in terms of understanding interrelationships and the influence of others, organizational structures operate on a political level and therefore require political thinking when affecting change. Five aspects of political thinking include: (a) Don't do it alone; (b) keep the opposition close; (c) acknowledge loss; (d) accept casualties; and (e) accept responsibility for

your piece of the mess (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). It is especially critical to understand the values of the various factions and stakeholders with whom leaders interact when thinking politically. Further contributing to the political nature of committees, Heifetz et al. (2009) contended that an understanding of external loyalties informs leaders of hidden alliances (p. 97). This declaration supports the importance of involving stakeholders in the creation of work groups, rather than allowing them the space to hinder the change effort.

Similar to the political influences on the outcomes of committee work, the concept of the “power laden nature of all human association” (Deetz, 2000, p. 144) further described relationships in distributed leadership activities as potentially subjected to imbalances in power. Committee work, as a distributed leadership activity can serve to provide new opportunities for all members, or empower only certain members, thus leading to decisions reflecting the views of dominant participants. Firestone and Martinez (2007) described distributed leadership as one-dimensional power where someone distributes the power to act. While committees embody a distributive leadership approach in making recommendations, they do not necessarily bestow individuals with the power to achieve the intended outcomes. Lumby (2013) accurately described the concept of power by clarifying that empowerment does not seem to equate to the ability to do new things that would otherwise be impossible. Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling’s (2009) study found those in authority positions were reluctant to relinquish control, power, and responsibility. The literature on politics and power presents a paradoxical implication as committees are mainly formed by authority figures in organizations. The examination of political and power contexts related to committee work provides additional insight on the issue of inconsistent outcomes.

2.5 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Senge (1990) described organizational culture in a more balanced view as a “learning organization” where people can continually discover how to create their reality and how they can change it. Wheatley (1998) noted that cultures that ask for predictability, controlled organization (homeostasis), and repetitiveness, are not interested in learning or growing, and expect things will change as needed. In contrast, learning organizations are skilled at systematic problem-solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experiences, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization (Garvin, 1993). Before determining the use of committees to serve as a vehicle for change, leaders must understand the dynamic nature of the organization.

An understanding of the organizational culture serves as vital information for leaders in determining when to use committee work as a means to implement a change initiative. Organizational culture can serve as a significant enabler or a significant barrier to innovation (Zhu & Engels, 2013, 201). Gillette (in press) described organizational thinking as a premise for working effectively in a school and school system. Among the components for organizational thinking are:

- (a) Viewing the system as a whole
- (b) Understanding that personality is only one factor that influences behavior
- (c) Acknowledging that schools have unique qualities
- (d) Accepting that the current structure is the skeleton of past conflicts
- (e) Recognizing that changing structure requires power (p. 3)

By developing a mastery in all of the aforementioned areas, leaders can better understand the aspects of organizational structures and find new ways to leverage change and effectiveness

(Gillette, in press).

Researchers in the field agree that a measurement of organizational culture focuses on values (Jones, Jimmieson, & Griffiths, 2005; Kahn, 1993; Schein, 1990; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998). Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1998) explained that it is not necessary for members of an organization to hold identical values in order to agree on what needs to be done, but Jones et al. (2005) contended that while the failure of planned organizational change may be due to many factors, few are so critical as employees' shared values towards the change event. Kahn (1993) asserted that when members of an organization perceive one another in particular ways, they lock one another in particular kinds of roles that allow for some behaviors and deny others. All of the aforementioned researchers in the field of organizational structures focus on aspects of relationships in their understanding of organizational change. Furthermore, Baird-Wilkerson (2003) suggested that an organization might focus on leadership work, but what will surface in that work is the truth of the organization's culture.

There is no universal blueprint for determining when committee work is the best means to moving reform efforts forward. Each reform initiative is unique to an organization's culture and adaptive capacity. Grossnickle (1983) provided a series of guiding questions for administrators to consider when making decisions to form a committee:

1. What is the purpose and goal of the committee?
2. Will this committee serve in an advisory or governing capacity?
3. What specific guidelines will be established for committee members in regard to resources and a timeline?
4. How large is the committee membership?
5. How will the administrator monitor progress?

6. Will a chairperson be appointed?
7. Is training necessary for the group?
8. Is there a plan to give recognition and convey appreciation for efforts and time?
9. Will the administrator respond formally to the group's report or output?
10. Is there a specific provision regarding the longevity of the committee in consideration of when the identified goal is achieved? (p. 80)

While the questions do not yield a straightforward, resounding affirmative or negative response to the decision of forming committees, they illustrate the importance of using a thoughtful approach to examining the organization in regard to its culture and adaptive capacity in making informed decisions. By understanding the culture of the organization, while respecting its institutional knowledge and capacity for change, leaders can use a strategic approach in determining the best ways to employ a change initiative. Additionally, Jones et al. (2005) identified readiness as an important factor in organizational change, noting that organizations often move directly into change implementation before the group to be changed is psychologically ready. The creation of committees often fulfills a level of urgency for school organizations to implement a change initiative, such as developing a cutting-edge program in line with other high-performing schools in the area of technology integration. The confidence in the ability of the organization and its members to accept a large-scale change initiative is critical to informing leaders of using committee work for reform efforts.

2.6 ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

The literature is saturated with references to the adaptive capacity of organizations in relation to

reform efforts (Heifetz et al., 2009; King & Bouchard, 2011; Staber & Sydow, 2002; Williams, 2005). Adaptive capacity refers to an organization's ability to adapt and thrive in changing circumstances (Heifetz et al, 2009). An adaptive organization is able to maintain pace with the changes to its surroundings by encompassing a set of specific qualities. King and Bouchard (2011) further explained adaptive qualities of organizations by stating that "standard operating procedures", "hierarchy", "rigid structures", and "adherence to well-established work routines" (p. 567) do not serve organizations well in addressing problems; rather, they tend to reinforce the status quo and pigeonhole challenges into compliance efforts that do little to disturb conditions that helped create the problems in the first place. Furthermore, organizations with limited adaptive capacity tend to search for solutions to problems in terms of the competencies they already possess and can therefore understand (King & Bouchard, 2011). When organizations' adaptive capacity is low, they may not even realize the need to develop new knowledge in an evolving and uncertain environment (Staber & Sydow, 2002). Conversely, King and Bouchard asserted that schools with stronger initial levels of capacity are more likely to use reform efforts in ways that further enhance capacity, and site-based, organic approaches can leave many schools behind because they do not have the capacity to generate or sustain significant improvements. Building adaptive capacity in an organization supports a view of adaptation not as an optimal end state but as a dynamic process of continuous learning and adjustment that permits ambiguity and complexity (Staber & Sydow, 2002).

By focusing on continuous professional growth, adaptive organizations are able to reflect on practices and utilize new strategies through a willingness to experiment. Schools are perceived as adaptive organizations by the very nature of change that occurs through state and federal mandates, evolving technology, and increased accountability. Recommendations for

change initiatives derived from committee work require an adaptive organization; one that was willing to accept the unanticipated challenges, costs, and need for a dynamic environment where learning is taking place at a rate faster than the rate of change in the conditions that require dismantling old routines and creating new ones (Staber & Sydow, 2002).

2.7 LEADERSHIP

In this section of the review, two main ideas encompassed in the literature emerge as major contributors to the study of committee work. Crum, Sherman, and Myran (2009) described how successful principals are able to promote collaborative working cultures, restructure the work environment to promote specific organizational needs and initiatives, reach out beyond the school walls to develop positive relationships with external stakeholders, and foster connections beyond the school with the larger community. Along with leadership theories and ideas, the literature reveals the practice of learning organizations as a framework for increasing the capacity of an organization to embrace synergy. Davis and Davis (2009) described how committees are positioned to be the catalyst that assists in facilitating the establishment of a learning organization. Leadership and learning organizations are described as important contributors to a growing knowledge of committee work in the next two sections.

2.7.1 Leadership

Heifetz and Linsky (2004) pronounced leadership in adaptive organizations as a perilous process, as it requires challenging existing norms and values and dealing with the subsequent feelings of

loss that are experienced by those who resist change. Research has highlighted the significant role that building principals play in effecting change that has been necessary as a result of the demands placed on schools (Crum et al., 2009). Further supporting this role of the principal, Fullan (2014) described leadership as essential to change and a vital component to establishing new learning for young children. Effective leaders recognize the value in collaboration and capitalize on the strengths, talents, and expertise of people to build capacity within the organization.

Fullan (2014) compared leadership in businesses to leadership in education. Where the business world is realizing the importance of a moral purpose from educational organizations in this regard, schools are beginning to discover that new ideas, knowledge creation, and sharing are essential to solving learning problems in a rapidly changing society (Fullan, 2014, p. xi). Fullan also advised that both businesses and schools must become “learning organizations” (p. 186) in order to survive challenges that accompany complex and rapid change. The concept of learning organizations is further explored in the next section.

Building capacity requires the principal to share leadership with others. Slater (2008) contended that sharing leadership responsibilities engages stakeholders more fully in school improvement and thereby enables schools to respond better to the complex changes emanating from government reform agendas. Brazer (2007) clarified two important areas for prospective leaders: selecting committee members and choosing a leadership role within a given committee. These findings provided a set of strategies for leaders by first considering the nature of a committee’s decision, secondly, identifying which types of individuals would best comprise a committee for that type of decision, and, finally, determining their role in working with that committee. These suggestions illustrate the emerging themes described in earlier sections of this

literature review pertaining to the types of committees, the effects of group dynamics, and empowerment of individuals participating in committee work.

Leadership in adaptive organizations does not follow a specific blueprint. Fullan (2014), however, provided a framework for principals representing a mindset for thinking about and leading complex change:

Starting with moral purpose, leaders act in ways intending to make a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole. Second, it is important for leaders to understand the change process. Third, the single most common factor to change initiatives is that relationships improve. Fourth, the new work on knowledge creation and sharing reflects congruence with the first three themes. (p. 22)

Leadership has been examined throughout this literature review as a contributing factor to the use of committee work for reforms in education. Leadership can also serve as a potential institutional barrier to the implementation of a change initiative, despite the efforts of a committee (Hew & Brush, 2007). Leadership is key to building capacity, establishing a learning organization, and encouraging a distributed leadership approach to solving complex problems of change. Fullan (2014) asserted that a principal's leadership is essential to change and a vital component to establishing new learning for students that sets the foundation for all else. The dynamic nature of education requires a culture of change, thus placing great responsibility on leaders to build capacity for change in their organizations.

2.8 LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

The underlying philosophy of all committee work is that problems are solved more satisfactorily and certain tasks are done more effectively by pooling the abilities, resources, interests, and experiences of several persons (Cooper, 1973). The literature describes how learning organizations in education provide an alternative method of using the skills and talents of several members in an organization through social interaction to construct the meaning of particular ideas and, in the process, develop and also potentially shape the habits of mind of their cultures (Davis & Lundstrom, 2011; King & Bouchard, 2011; Senge, 1990).

Compared to committee work, learning organizations place a focus on relationships rather than tasks. Honig and Ikemoto (2008) elaborated that resources become available through relationships, such as brokering, new models of professional practice, valued identity structures that reinforce those models, dialogue-rich social opportunities, and tools that focus practitioners on particular “joint work” (p. 335). Wheatley and Rogers (1998) described how failures at organizational change are the result of deep misunderstandings of who people are and what is going on inside organizations. Learning organizations value social engagement that can clear up these misunderstandings and result in successful organizational change where people can look at the organization through a new lens (Wheatly & Rogers, 1998). Based on the concept of learning organizations, Davis and Lundstrom (2011) deduced that advisory committees in education fit within the definition of a learning organization. The work of Senge (1990), Garvin (1993), and DeVito (1996) illustrated how schools can adapt the concept of the learning organization as a framework for advisory committees. Senge (1990) suggested five disciplines to increase the capacity of individuals in a learning organization: (a) systems thinking; (b) personal mastery; (c) mental models; (d) shared vision; and (e) team learning (p. 13). Finally,

Davis and Lundstrom (2011) proposed that committees adopt the concept of learning organizations to foster a more comprehensive role and scope within an organization.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Without an understanding of organizational culture, group dynamics, and political overtones, committees may produce recommendations that far exceed the organization's capacity for change. This literature review sheds light on the factors that impact the efficacy of committee work. Additionally, the information from the various studies provided an overview of the aspects of organizations and organizational culture for leaders to consider when making decisions pertaining to the implementation of reform initiatives.

Committee work runs the risk of being viewed by the participants as meaningless and futile, but can also be an effective means of making decisions that positively impact educational practices when conducted with thoughtful consideration and structure. By examining committee work in educational organizations, further knowledge can be gained to establish more clarity of expectations and characteristics of committee work. The intent of addressing the research questions in this chapter is to increase the efficiency of committee work and create a space where the decisions made by the group are considered and honored when implementing change initiatives in an organization.

3.0 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the Willow School District, a pseudonym for the K-12 school setting chosen for the study, there were diverse participants representing teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and community members with varied experiences and perspectives who were included in a qualitative inquiry using multiple methods of data collection (Menter, 2011). The specific singular unit of study in this inquiry was committee work that occurs at the building and district level. Using the various perspectives of each stakeholder group, best and worst committee experiences were compared and contrasted in an effort to better understand factors that potentially influence the outcome of committee work. By framing this inquiry through a comparative approach, I endeavored to understand the factors that influence committee work practices in the Willow School District.

Chapter 3 presents the research design that guided this study, the data collection and analysis procedures, and a description of the research setting and study participants.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 Research setting and participants

Many organizational entities use committees to complete tasks, engage in fact-finding missions, draft recommendations, or formulate policies. The K-12 educational setting was chosen as the context for this study as these organizations commonly engage in the practice of forming committees to implement change initiatives. The Willow School District, the research site chosen for this study, is a large suburban school district in Pennsylvania that serves over 8,000 students and employs over 1,000 staff members. Permission to conduct this study in the district was granted by the school superintendent (see Appendix A).

Participants in the study included school staff, administrators, and community members with varying background experiences and school sites representative of different demographic groups. For example, the members of the school staff who participated in this study represented both veteran teachers as well as those who are new to the profession. Participating community members hailed from different demographic areas within the school district and represented varying socio-economical and cultural needs of the buildings. For example, three out of the seven elementary buildings receive financial assistance through Title 1, Part A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* due to the high numbers or percentage of students from low-income households (Department of Education, 2015).

With a district of this size and diversity, change initiatives often affect groups differently. For this reason, committee work has been used as a way to involve various constituent groups in having a voice in the decision-making process. This setting provided an opportunity to study the

contributing or inhibiting factors of committee work when addressing reform efforts in Willow School District.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as a method of data collection that started with a protocol and specific probes, but also allowed for the conversation to follow themes that emerged. In other words, the semi-structured format provided a framework for specific aspects of committee work to be explored with interviewees through questioning while allowing for opportunities for important concepts to be explored through open discussion. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five members of the district leadership team comprised of building principals and central office administrators. These individuals were invited to the interviews, because they make decisions in this district pertaining to when to use committee work as a means to addressing change, as opposed to making top-down decisions. Consideration was given to conducting semi-structured interviews with other stakeholders in the research setting; however, due to the authority position of the interviewer and its potential effect on the comfort level and subsequent responses of stakeholders who do not hold positions of authority, only school administrators and central office administrators were chosen as the subjects for this data collection method.

Potential administrative participants were contacted by phone and invited to participate in a semi-structured interview. After agreeing to be interviewed, each of the participants were provided with a print confirmation of their participation in the study that included a description of their contribution to the study and assuring their anonymity in the process. The text of the semi-structured interview confirmation is located in Appendix B. Participants answered

questions about the expectations of committee work in the school district, their experiences with committee work, and their analysis of the efficacy of using committee work to support change initiatives and implementation of these initiatives (See Appendix C). Each interview took approximately between 10 – 15 minutes. The interviews were held individually at each participant’s office. The perspective data attained through the semi-structured interviews were used to address Research Question 1: What are the self-reported perceptions of school administrators towards committee work as a process for implementing change?

The semi-structured interviews were one of two methods used to gather perception data. By engaging in the interviews as the first method of data collection, the structure of the questions and anticipated open-endedness of the responses impacted the design and focus of the survey instrument. While the semi-structured interviews were intended to gather a general perception of administrators towards using committees to accomplish goals, the purpose of the survey was to drill down to specific attributes of committee work that were referenced in the interview responses.

3.2.3 Survey development

Similar studies about committee work were considered in the development of the survey used in this study. Although several research studies on shared decision-making and collaborative practices were found, none of the studies included a specific survey instrument that examined the practice of using committee work. The recurring themes that emerged from the literature review of committee work formed a basis for survey construction; however, the final results of this exercise created a survey that was too broad in scope and lacked the depth of specificity in addressing the factors attributing to effective and efficient committee practice.

A combination of personal experiences, sample online surveys designed to evaluate the success of specific committee work in various organizations, further exploration of existing surveys that helped to identify themes and common elements of survey items provided a more focused representation of committee experiences—both positive and negative. In addition, refined and reworded survey items to elicit information pertaining to committee size, membership composition, meeting duration and frequency, and participation were created. To gather a fuller representation of respondents' experiences, the survey was constructed for participants to reflect on their best and worst committee experiences. By asking about their best and worst experiences, as opposed to their committee experiences in general, the survey carried more meaning to the respondents, hence producing survey results that specifically identified the factors that either supported committee practice or those that inhibited the work of committees.

A Qualtrics survey tool was employed to gather perception data from teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, and community members involved in committee work. The data gathered through survey responses were applicable to Research Questions 2 and 3, which delved into the factors that hinder committee work and the practices that appeared to lead to efficient and effective committee work. The survey was an efficient way to gather data in consideration of time constraints. Furthermore, survey data were disaggregated using quantitative statistical measures to compare stakeholder responses as they pertained to the reporting of their best and worst committee experiences.

3.2.3.1 Survey sampling and implementation

The survey invitation sought a purposive sample of individuals and was sent to approximately 100 members of the school district comprised of teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, central office administrators, and school community members who have served

on committees in the district (see Appendix D). The names of committee members were available and made public on the school district's website under the school board minutes. Additionally, access to committee work records and the contact information of those who had served on committees in the district was provided to the Principal Investigator. Using information from the past two years of committees that had presented to the district's school board, a list of individuals who represented the specified stakeholder groups was generated. The number of paraprofessionals and school administrators on the list was relatively low; therefore, all paraprofessionals and administrators who served on committees in the school district over the past two years were sent a survey invitation in an email. The paraprofessional and administrator groups contained 18 and 25 individuals, respectively. Because the teacher and community member groups were larger, numbers were assigned to each participant and a "randomizer" computer application randomly chose 25 teachers and 25 community members to receive the survey invitation by email.

Using the same questions for each group provided a standardization of the information that was gathered for this study. The information garnered from the survey provided quantifiable data for further analysis. The text of the survey can be found in Appendix E. Survey items included several close-ended questions comparing respondents' best and worst committee experiences. These questions included: the respondent's stakeholder group, committee size, committee member composition, meeting frequency and duration, and committee participation. Using a double matrix design, where two Likert scales are presented side by side to represent best and worst committee experiences, respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about committee attributes, such as committee goals, resources,

and meeting structure on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (See Appendix E, Question 8).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

3.3.1 Semi-structured interview data

In order to address Research Question 1, responses from the semi-structured interviews conducted with school administrators were transcribed using a commercial transcription service that generated a word document formatted for formal coding. The interview questions were designed to capture the perspectives of school administrators on their involvement with committee work and their participation as committee members.

Research Question 1 suggests an exploration of participant actions/processes and perceptions found within the data, thus a descriptive coding method was used to categorize an inventory of topics (Saldaña, 2016). This method was applied by first browsing through the transcripts in their entirety, creating notes to track first impressions of the content, and then rereading the transcripts line by line. Relevant sections were labeled (or indexed) by concept codes, such as “shared vision” and “stakeholders.” The content deemed “relevant” was information that was repeated in several places across different interviews, and where participants explicitly stated that it was a key characteristic or factor. Additionally, interview transcript content was regarded as “relevant” when it aligned with information from published articles on committee work.

Given the large amount of information indexed from the initial coding, data were conceptualized by bringing similar coded concepts together, dropping some of the initial codes, and creating new codes. Saldaña (2016) described this process as second cycle coding. The primary goal of second cycle coding was to develop a more concise organization of data that eliminated information considered marginal or redundant (Saldaña, 2016). For example, initial codes of “stakeholders”, “dissenting views”, and “competing commitments” were reorganized into one category called “Group Dynamics” (see Appendix F).

3.3.2 Survey data

The survey collected data from each stakeholder group’s experiences with committee work. Participants were contacted twice by email over a two-week period of time. These attempts resulted in a 53% response rate of individuals who were invited to participate (n=53). Out of the respondents, 23% were teachers (n=12), 17% were paraprofessionals (n=9), 38% were administrators (n=20), and 23% were community members (n=12). To compare each stakeholder groups’ best committee experiences and their worst committee experiences, the survey responses were analyzed using descriptive analysis to find the percentage of agreement and mean for each survey line item. The data collected and analyzed from the survey addressed Research Questions 2 and 3, which pertained to the contributing or inhibiting factors towards effective and efficient committee work, respectively. As noted in the review of literature from Chapter 2, Datnow and Stringfield (2000) suggested that improvements in school are possible when the stakeholder groups are active agents in the change process. The return rates from the survey across groups were robust, which therefore generated confidence in perceptions reported.

The scale responses from the survey are reported and presented in a table format in the next chapter to display the calculation of each level of cumulative agreement and disagreement for each item by percentage. The data were organized in a cross-tabulation matrix, and a Chi-square analysis was conducted to examine relationships between best and worst committee work experiences as reported by each stakeholder group. A Chi square analysis was chosen as a way to examine the likelihood of agreement and/or disagreement towards factors of committee work when comparing respondents' best to worst experiences. The analysis was not intended for this comparison to be generalized to a larger population, but as a way to examine the strength of differences within the sampled population within the research site.

In addition to the Chi square analysis, descriptive analysis of the factors associated with committee work, such as committee size, meeting structure, member participation, and frequency/duration of meetings, were examined for statistical significance using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Sum Test, where the difference between best and worst committee experiences were calculated. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Sum Test was chosen as a statistical analysis due to the small number of survey participants and the output of two sets of data from the same group of people (best committee experiences and worst committee experiences) (Turner, 2014). Finally, a disaggregation by respondent type (paraprofessional, teacher, administrator, community member) was reported as a mean and examined for each survey item to determine the presence of potential influences, such as power and politics, on survey participants' responses.

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the data collection and analysis processes used in this study. The next three chapters align the survey data and qualitative analysis from the semi-structured interviews by the three research questions to report the findings. The first research question, “What are the self-reported perceptions of school administrators towards committee work as a process for implementing change?” is addressed through the semi-structured interview responses. What began as general insights, vague ideas, and hunches were later refined, expanded, discarded, or fully developed during the coding process of this analysis (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). Chapter 4 provides a fully developed description of this analysis as it relates to the research question and the connected review of literature.

The second and third research questions probe the factors that contribute to and those that hinder the work of committees. The analysis of survey responses shows that, while factors of committee work, such as participation, meeting size and frequency, and communication are all considerable aspects of the smooth operation of committee work, certain characteristics have an overwhelming positive or negative effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of this collaborative practice. Furthermore, themes from the review of literature are further supported as influential considerations as the survey responses are examined.

In order to understand the use of committee work in education by school leaders and subsequently apply this understanding to collaborative practices, the comparison between perceptions of best and worst committee experiences are described as findings in Chapter 4. This method of studying committee work in the K-12 educational setting is exploratory in nature and produces implications for future studies. By examining committee work through the perspectives of participants, and taking in as much detail and information as possible, a variety

of interpretations and explanations can be considered in understanding a real-world case, hence producing an assumption this understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to this case (Yin, 2014).

Table 1. Applied inquiry plan

	Evidence	Design/Method	Planned Analysis and Interpretation
<p>Q1: What are the self-reported perceptions of school administrators towards using committee work as a process for implementing change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings of semi-structured interviews • The attitudes of school leaders towards committee work • Record of divergent perspectives 	<p>Semi-structured interviews: conducted with school leaders to garner information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Committee participation ➤ Committee experiences 	<p>A. Descriptive Coding of committee participation and experiences.</p> <p>B. Categorization and indexing of descriptive codes</p> <p>C. Interrelationship between categories</p>
	Evidence	Design/Method	Planned Analysis and Interpretation
<p>Q2: What do school stakeholders (teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators, central administrators, community members) perceive as factors that hinder committee work?</p> <p>Q3: What do committee members perceive as practices that appear to support effective and efficient committee work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher perception • Paraprofessional perception • School administrator perception • Community member perception 	<p>Surveys: created and administered through Qualtrics will measure stakeholder perceptions according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best committee experiences • Worst committee experiences 	<p>A. Descriptive Analysis of Scale Responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency distribution, including mean and standard deviation • Mean calculation and comparison of level of agreement/disagreement (cumulative percentage) • Analysis of disaggregated data <p>B. Chi Square Analysis of stakeholder perception in their survey responses to best and worst committee experiences.</p>

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the use of committee work in a K-12 educational setting by school leaders and subsequently apply this understanding to collaborative practices, the findings from this study's comparison of perceptions of best and worst committee experiences are described in this chapter. This chosen method of studying committee work in the K-12 educational setting is exploratory in nature and has implications for future studies. Using a mixed-methods approach of quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the findings from this study explore perception data garnered from interview and survey responses. Hesse-Biber (2010) provided a rationale for using mixed-methods research, describing it as "complementarity" (p. 4) or allowing the researcher to gain a fuller understanding of the research problem. A combination of numerical and narrative explanations provided a more comprehensive explanation of the data in order to understand how K-12 stakeholders perceive committee work, how school leaders determine when to use committee work, and how committee work can be implemented in an effective and efficient manner (Hess-Biber, 2010).

Prior to scheduling the semi-structured interviews for this study, a nine-item survey was given to paraprofessionals, teachers, school administrators, and community members that gathered perspective data of best and worst experiences pertaining to committee length, size,

meeting frequency, membership, and various attributes associated with committee work. The survey data alone was originally intended to address Research Questions 2 and 3, but a mixed methods approach used both the qualitative semi-structured interview findings and the quantitative survey findings concurrently in order to enact a conversation between the data that would weave a richer and more complex story about how committee work is perceived by those who participate in or lead this type of work (Hess-Biber, 2010).

The findings in this chapter explore participant perspectives and experiences from the survey and interview data to address the three inquiry questions of this study:

Q1: What are the self-reported perceptions of school administrators toward committee work as a process for implementing change?

Q2: What do school stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, central administrators, community members) perceive as factors that hinder committee work?

Q3: What do committee members perceive as practices that appear to support effective and efficient committee work?

Chapter 4 first discusses the perception of committee work from K-12 administrators as organized by recurring themes then presents the findings on factors that contribute to or inhibit effective and efficient practices in using committees to address issues of change in the K-12 education setting.

4.2 SELF-REPORTED PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Five school administrators agreed to participate in the semi-structured interview sessions. Of the five administrators, four were building principals and one was a central office administrator.

Two out of the four building principals represented secondary education views, and the other two responded from an elementary education viewpoint. Each participant was asked to describe his or her experiences with committee work from a leadership perspective. Their responses included the anticipated and unanticipated results, perceived barriers, and structures of committee work based on their experiences as K-12 administrators. The interview transcripts from the five participants were indexed and labeled through an iterative process and ultimately organized into recurring themes of: power and politics, group dynamics, leadership, and organizational culture. This section reports the findings from the interviews thematically in the order listed above.

4.2.1 Power and politics

Throughout the interviews, the administrators made statements that indicated power and political influences shaped the subjects' committee experiences. When reflecting on the most challenging experience, Subject 1 commented that hidden agendas “*shift the nature of a problem-solving creative unit into more of a gripe session or something that takes more of a negative turn.*” Conversely, the same respondent described her method of countering the politically motivated involvement of certain members:

We took a look at the representatives and tried to balance it better among the people who needed to be there, and also downsize the group in terms of who all was going to come so that it [topic] could be discussed in a productive, positive manner with some kind of guidelines set up to keep everyone moving forward.

The comments made by Subject 1 interrelated with the group dynamics theme, which is explored in the next section.

Subject 4 spoke of situations that required immediate top-down decisions to be made by authority figures: *“There are times where you have to do a top-down decision, like a crisis situation. We’ve all been in situations where we’re in a committee thinking, ‘Why does this have to be a committee decision?’ It’s just common sense.”* In contrast, Subject 2 had a different view of top-down decisions. She indicated that top-down decisions were only made when her superior directed her to do so. Subject 2 exemplified this in a statement that committee work is a way to *“take a look at staff strengths and interest and try to foster leaders in the building.”* While this statement reflected the concept of distributed power, it is also indicative of the value placed on shared-leadership, which is explored in section 4.2.3.

Finally, Subject 4 shared his frustration when power and politics negatively impacted the work of committees by describing an experience where the committee *“came up with some great recommendations that were basically shelved by the superintendent at that time.”* The subject conveyed his perception that this action was politically motivated, hence supporting the theme of power and politics that was prevalent throughout the semi-structured interviews.

4.2.2 Group dynamics

Statements about group size, member composition of committees (stakeholders), and the concept of “competing commitments” were shared by all subjects throughout the interviews, which suggests the role group dynamics play in both optimal and challenging committee experiences. For example, Subject 3 gave an example of his assemblage of a scheduling committee where each grade level and content area were represented to *“have a voice and more of an investment into what the scheduling process was all about.”* Subject 5 cited a similar rationale by

describing the “*connection and motivation that everyone [stakeholders] has to the work that they are doing.*”

Subject 5 commented on the challenges of group dynamics where she had “*worked with teachers, parents, and board members*” in a subcommittee and “*didn’t see eye to eye the first couple of meetings.*” Subject 4 described this transition stage of group development in his comment about the challenges in committee work when “*there’s a bunch of people talking but they’re not closest to the problem, and they’re also not listening to what others are saying because they have their own agenda coming in.*” Subject 1 described her best committee experience in terms of the size of the group:

I’ve been on committees where it’s an extremely large group, and it’s very diverse, such as curriculum reviews where it can seem a little nebulous and everybody is moving in a different way. If the group is a little bit smaller, well represented, balanced between representatives of each side, you get better, more focused dialogue. Then hopefully you have considered up front all of the issues that could occur so you’re effectively working through the process.

Subject 4 also discussed his best experiences with committee work when they “*aren’t huge and no one’s hiding as an inactive participant when there’s only ten people with a lot of work to do.*”

In the section 4.3.2, committee size is also explored as an influential factor towards committee work through the analysis of survey responses.

4.2.3 Leadership

All subjects in the semi-structured interview sessions described the distributed leadership of others in addition to their own when recounting their successful experiences with committees.

Subject 3 described a specific committee experience where a teacher was so fully invested in the

work and empowered by the collaboration that *“they ended up taking the lead in mapping everything out.”* Subject 3 elaborated that this led to other participants seeking opportunities to take leadership roles within that particular committee and also other school initiatives.

In another approach to facilitating shared leadership, Subject 1 characterized how *“nominating other leaders makes it more beneficial so that it’s [committee outcome] not just coming from one person, but there’s a team working together to accomplish it.”* This positive experience for Subject 1 was contrasted to her committee experiences that were open-ended in design that resulted in a bit of a *“free for all where definition in terms of the end goal was not communicated”* due to the absence of leadership. Subject 2 described shared decision-making in contrast to top-down decisions:

Well, I won’t make a top down decision unless I’m directed to do it. I still get people around me to help motivate staff to do it [embrace changes in the school] because you’re going to have more buy in when you have people in your building especially when you’re trying to move a building to a different level or trying to grow a mindset.

Subject 3 stated that *“the more people you have involved in the decision, the better the outcome.”* Subject 3 also reiterated the importance of shared decision-making in his statement about using committee work as a way to be *“a more collaborative principal where teachers would have a voice and more of an investment into what the scheduling process [committee topic] is all about.”*

4.2.4 Organizational culture

Responses from several interview participants illustrated how committee participation reflected aspects of the overall organizational culture of the research setting. For example, Subject 2

described how in both best and worst committee experiences, staff members showed a “willingness to not get paid, but had a willingness to help kids.” Subject 3 also reiterated how staff members often volunteer to participate, expressing that “we’ve done it by invitations only, but I really don’t need to coerce teachers to do it.” Subject 5 spoke of her own participation on committees by stating, “First of all, I volunteered to be on it, so I was already invested in the work.” In describing experiences leading committee work, Subject 4 spoke of his contribution to the organizational culture by running committee meetings the same way:

Because you want to make people feel like they’re important to be there, that it’s useful, that they’re participating, and probably most importantly, that it’s making a difference, that there’s some type of byproduct at the end that made it worth their while.

Subject 1 specifically described the challenges of navigating the organizational culture when an advisory committee she led was “open-ended by design, because you’re hoping that they’ll help contribute to what the end goal would be, but sometimes that can be a little bit too much of a free for all.”

Subject 1 described the work of one particular committee as “wanting to educate everybody involved, and having a shared vision of what it [intended change to instructional practices] would look like that we wanted as our end product.” Subject 3 stated, “Understanding the purpose of the committee makes a difference between good committee experiences versus worst experiences.” Understanding the purpose of the committee was also cited by Subject 4 as the most significant contributor to his worst committee experiences: “I think committees where it appeared that there wasn’t much forethought in terms of what was the purpose of the meeting.” Additionally, Subject 5 suggested, “I think that the guidelines need to be clear as far as what the purpose is and what we hope to accomplish.”

In her final comments about committee work, Subject 1 described behavioral terms in the comment that committee members need “*to make sure that time is put aside to come back and revisit the progress and the action items.*” By surrounding themselves with similar-minded people, Subject 2 spoke of how “*they will foster that same kind of relationship and vision that you have so it’s the willingness to want to do, rather than the coercion to ask.*” Subject 3 also spoke of vision as connected to purpose in their comparison of best to worst committee experiences:

I think understanding the purpose of the committee, the way it’s advertised, how you’re recruiting people. I also think that having that vision, or that goal in mind, of what it is that you are – what outcome you’re trying to achieve.

4.3 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

Survey data was initially examined using a Chi Square analysis that compared respondents’ best and worst committee experiences. The Chi Square test compared the observed frequency of agreement scale responses by the respondents to the expected frequency to determine the likelihood of a significant difference between best and worst experiences for each item ($p < .05$). In the process of analyzing the data, it was discovered that many respondents did not endorse items under both the best and worst experiences, which rendered the Chi Square test statistically insignificant on many of the survey items due to low response rates for certain survey items; therefore, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Sum Test was found to be a better statistical analysis for question 7 (*How long did you serve on this committee?*) and most of the survey items under questions 8 and 9 (agreement scales for best and worst experiences).

4.3.1 Committee participation

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Sum Test (also called the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test) determines if there is a difference between two ordinal or interval variables when there are too many categories to run a Chi Square analysis (Huck, 2012). For example, item number 7, *How long did you serve on this committee?*, required an open-ended item that received both text and number responses, which created a large number of categories. The Wilcoxon Matched Pairs test was applied to item 7 and found to be significant ($p = .03$), which meant that people stayed significantly longer on committees that were deemed their “best” experiences.

Specifically, the average number of years people spent on committees that were considered their best committee experiences was 3.2 years and 2.3 years on committees that were classified as their worst experiences. The number of years that respondents spent on committees ranged from .5 to 18 years. While it is not surprising that individuals would choose to remain longer on committees that are producing positive results and where members are feeling valued, there was no evidence from the survey results or the semi-structured interviews that indicated or suggested a specific time commitment for serving on a committee.

4.3.2 Committee size

The best and worst committee experiences were compared in relation to the number of committee members to determine if the size of the committee had a direct bearing on its efficacy. The majority of survey respondents (75%) indicated in their best experiences that the size of the committee ranged from 5-15 members (see Table 2). Conversely, in their worst experiences, only 37.5% of respondents indicated that their group size was 5-15 members (see Table 3).

Despite the variance in cumulative agreement between best and worst experiences, a Chi Square analysis did not indicate a statistical significance in committee member sizes when comparing best to worst experiences ($X^2 = 0.001$, d.f. = 3, $p = 0.99$).

Table 2. How many individuals served on this committee (Best Experiences)?

Committee Member Size	% - Best Experiences	Count
5-10	50.0%	26
11-15	25.0%	13
16-20	9.6%	5
More than 20	15.4%	8
Total	100%	52

Table 3. How many individuals served on this committee (Worst Experiences)?

Committee Member Size	% - Worst Experiences	Count
5-10	27.1%	13
11-15	10.4%	5
16-20	12.5%	6
More than 20	50%	24
Total	100%	48

4.3.3 Committee membership

A Chi Square test was used to analyze the membership composition between survey respondents' best and worst committee experiences. Respondents were asked to indicate the

stakeholders (students, teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, community members, school board members) who comprised committees in their best and worst experiences. The analysis of committee membership concluded that there was no significant difference ($X^2 = 4.872$, d.f. = 5, $p = 0.43$) in the group composition between both best and worst experiences. Both experiences show a low participation rate of students serving on committees in comparison to other stakeholder groups, which could be a topic for future exploration of stakeholder engagement and committee work.

4.3.4 Committee meeting frequency

Survey participants were asked to reflect on the frequency in which committees met for both their best and worst experiences (see Table 4). The respondents who reported frequent meetings that occurred monthly, or every other month, characterized this frequency as part of their best experiences ($n = 42$), in contrast to their worst experiences where less respondents reported meeting monthly or bi-monthly ($n = 27$). A Chi Square analysis found a difference between experiences in regard to meeting frequency; specifically, frequent meetings (monthly and bi-monthly) were attributed to optimal committee experiences ($X^2 = 14.579$, d.f. = 4, $p = 0.01$).

Table 4. How often did each committee meet?

Frequency	% - Best	n	% - Worst	n
Monthly	42.3%	22	43.8%	21
6 times per year	38.5%	20	12.5%	6
1 - 3 times per year	15.4%	8	22.9%	11
Less than 1 time per year	3.9%	2	20.8%	10
Total	100%		100%	

4.3.5 Committee meeting length

In viewing the survey results pertaining to best experiences, the preferred length of committee meetings indicated by a little over half of respondents (53.9%) was 1–2 hours, compared to their worst experiences where only 25% of respondents identified that meetings lasted a duration of 1-2 hours. Furthermore, as the data suggested, meetings that lasted more than two hours were associated with respondents’ worst experiences (56.3%). Table 5 reports these findings.

Table 5. What was the typical length of committee meetings?

Meeting Length	% - Best	n	% - Worst	n
Less than one hour	25%	13	18.8%	9
1 - 2 hours	53.9%	28	25.00%	12
More than two hours	21.2%	11	56.3%	27
Total	100%	52	100%	48

4.3.6 Agreement scales

Survey respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements about committee work on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (see Table 6). Several items yielded a 100% level of cumulative agreement (Strongly Agree and Agree) by respondents when reflecting on their best experiences: *I understood the goals and purpose of the committee* and *Committee meetings followed the agendas*. Compared to their worst experiences, only 54% of respondents understood the goals and purpose, while 47% reported that meetings followed agendas.

Table 6. Survey agreement scales

Survey Item Number		Total Disagreement	Neutral	Total Agreement	Total (n)
Q8_1: I understood the goals and purpose of the committee	Best	0	0	47	47
	Worst	12	8	24	44
Q8_2: The committee had access to adequate resources to support its function	Best	0	1	46	47
	Worst	13	10	21	44
Q8_3: The committee had the support of key decision-makers within the organization	Best	2	2	43	47
	Worst	16	7	21	44
Q8_4: Committee meetings were held with appropriate frequency	Best	1	2	44	47
	Worst	20	9	14	43
Q8_5: The length of committee meetings was appropriate	Best	0	2	45	47
	Worst	22	4	17	43
Q8_6: Committee Meetings followed the agendas	Best	0	0	47	47
	Worst	16	7	20	43
Q8_7: Committee meeting agenda and materials were received in advance of the meetings	Best	6	7	34	47
	Worst	19	11	13	43
Q8_8: Meeting times were consistently used in a productive manner to address issues	Best	1	3	43	47
	Worst	20	9	14	43
Q9_1: The locations where meetings were held were conducive to positive group interaction and discussion	Best	1	3	42	46
	Worst	6	7	30	43
Q9_2: Attendance at meetings was consistent for most members	Best	2	3	41	46
	Worst	14	6	23	43

Table 6 (continued)

Q9_3: Attendance at meetings was evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee	Best	27	10	9	46
	Worst	27	9	7	43
Q9_4: The minutes of the meetings were accurate and reflected the discussion, next steps, and/or action items articulated by the members.	Best	3	11	31	45
	Worst	15	16	11	42
Q9_5: Committee membership represented all stakeholders affected by the issues addressed through the committee work.	Best	5	3	39	47
	Worst	19	6	19	44
Q9_6: Committee members treated each other with respect and courtesy.	Best	0	1	45	46
	Worst	11	13	19	43
Q9_7: All committee members came to meetings prepared and ready to contribute.	Best	0	6	41	47
	Worst	21	11	12	44
Q9_8: When I spoke at committee meetings, I felt heard and that my comments were valued.	Best	1	2	43	46
	Worst	17	12	15	44

While looking at each survey item comparing best experiences to worst experiences, several items showed a greater disparity between the levels of agreement. For example, 93% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that committee meetings were held with appropriate frequency when reflecting on their best experience, while only 33% indicated levels of agreement with this item when considering their worst experience. Furthermore, 87% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that members came to meetings prepared and ready to contribute in their best committee experience, while only 26% strongly agreed or agreed with this survey item when reflecting on their worst experience. Finally, 91% of respondents showed

levels of agreement with the item, *Meeting times were consistently used in a productive manner to address issues*, when responding to their best experiences, while in their worst experiences only 33% showed a level agreement regarding this item about meeting times.

According to a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Sum Test analysis, responses to every item were found to be statistically significant ($p = < .05$), except Item 9, *Attendance at meetings was evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee* (see Table 7). The Z statistic indicates the magnitude of difference between the scores associated with best committee experiences, and those associated with the worst experiences. The larger the difference, as shown by the Z-statistic, the more likely that difference is statistically significant, resulting in a small probability (p) value (Turner, 2014).

Table 7. Wilcoxon signed-rank sum test for survey items

Survey Item Number	Z Statistic	p Value
Q8_1: I understood the goals and purpose of the committee	5.101	.00
Q8_2: The committee had access to adequate resources to support its function	5.056	.00
Q8_3: The committee had the support of key decision-makers within the organization	4.615	.00
Q8_4: Committee meetings were held with appropriate frequency	5.126	.00
Q8_5: The length of committee meetings was appropriate	5.309	.00
Q8_6: Committee Meetings followed the agendas	5.263	.00
Q8_7: Committee meeting agenda and materials were received in advance of the meetings	3.695	.00
Q8_8: Meeting times were consistently used in a productive manner to address issues	5.325	.00
Q9_1: The locations where meetings were held were conducive to positive group interaction and discussion	3.023	.00

Table 7 (continued)

Q9_2: Attendance at meetings was consistent for most members	4.384	.00
Q9_3: Attendance at meetings was evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee	1.287	.20
Q9_4: The minutes of the meetings were accurate and reflected the discussion, next steps, and/or action items articulated by the members.	3.962	.00
Q9_5: Committee membership represented all stakeholders affected by the issues addressed through the committee work.	4.580	.00
Q9_6: Committee members treated each other with respect and courtesy.	5.340	.00
Q9_7: All committee members came to meetings prepared and ready to contribute.	5.303	.00
Q9_8: When I spoke at committee meetings, I felt heard and that my comments were valued.	5.241	.00

As a final disaggregation of data, responses from paraprofessionals, teachers, community members, and administrators to each survey item were compared to determine if perceptions differed amongst members of stakeholder groups. The agreement scale responses were consistent across different groups and showed minimal differences between the mean responses, hence the conclusion was drawn that members from different stakeholder groups value the same aspects of committee work that are attributed to optimal experiences while perceiving similar factors linked to unsatisfactory experiences.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the common practice of using committees in the K-12 school setting based on the three research questions. The first question probed the perceptions of school leaders as they reflected on their experiences participating in and leading committees. The second and third questions focused on the perceptions of paraprofessionals, teachers, community members, and school administrators as they compared specific committee practices within the context of considering their best and worst committee experiences.

By examining committee work through the perspectives of participants and taking in as much detail and information as possible, a variety of interpretations and explanations can be considered in understanding a real-world case, hence producing an assumption that this understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to this case (Yin, 2014). Each research question is presented in this chapter with a description of the conclusions derived from the findings of the study and recommendations for efficient and effective committee practices as informed by the data from this study and by existing literature on committee work.

5.1 Q1: WHAT ARE THE SELF-REPORTED PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS TOWARD COMMITTEE WORK AS A PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE?

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the recurring themes and their subsequent relationship to committee work that provides a summary of the interview results.

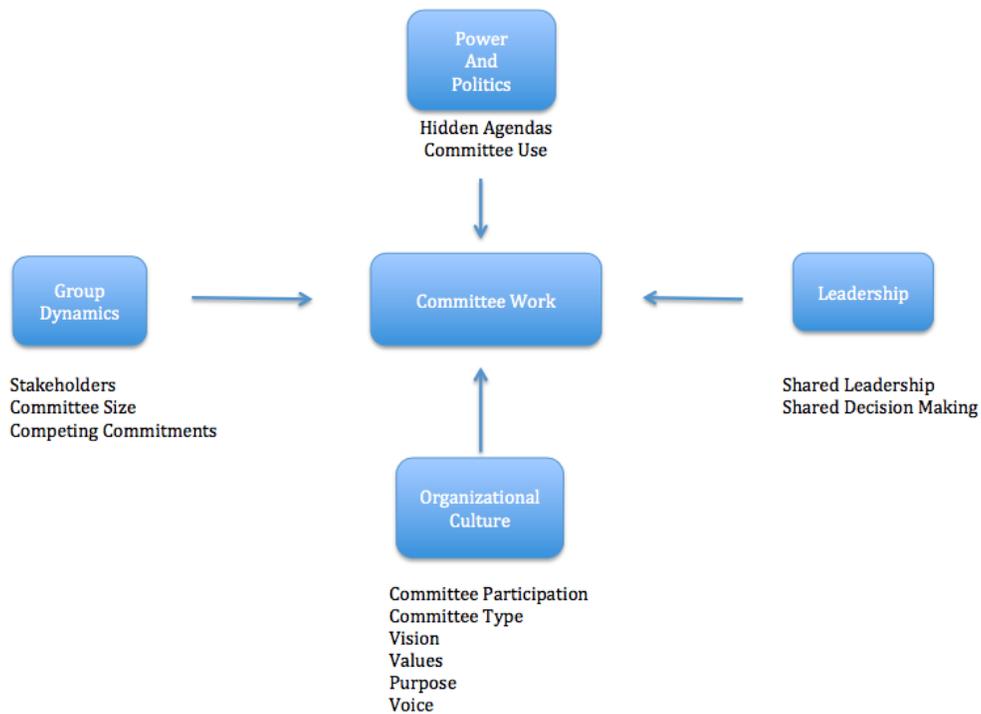


Figure 1. Recurring semi-structured interview themes

Conclusion: Issues of power and politics are among several influential factors affecting when committees are used to make decisions, the outcome of committee recommendations, and how members are viewed as contributors to recommendations.

In all but one respondent's interview, issues of power and politics were perceived as influential factors pertaining to the use, outcomes, and the challenges of committee work. One specific aspect of power and politics that was identified as a challenge to committee work was the presence of "hidden agendas" among committee members. Four of the respondents spoke specifically about experiences where members used committees as a forum to push their personal agendas. These findings support claims from Heifetz and Linsky (2009) who described hidden agendas as a defense mechanism by members who feel threatened by the proposed change.

Also attributing to the theme of power and politics were the ways in which committees are used to make decisions in the K-12 setting. Committee work was described by all interviewees as a preferred method of making decisions in contrast to top-down decision-making. While Subject 4 spoke of situations, such as crisis-related, that required immediate top-down decisions to be made by authority figures, all respondents described scenarios where committee members were empowered to help find solutions and make recommendations as equal participants. This finding supports Jennings (2007) description of how authority figures can serve as facilitators on committees using strategies such as consensus building to achieve active and equal participation among members.

Finally, serving as a power-related barrier to committee work and identified as an area of frustration, respondents shared experiences where committee recommendations were not valued or acted upon by authority. While committees embody a distributive leadership approach in making recommendations, they do not always necessarily bestow individuals with the power to achieve the intended outcomes. Specifically, Subject 4 stated that the committee "*came up with some great recommendations that were basically shelved by the superintendent at that time.*" Influences from "*formal authority*" figures can negatively affect committee outcomes and further

disappoint committee members who participated under false pretenses of a democratic process (Gabriel and Paulus, 2015). Further recommendations for countering potential power and political barriers are addressed in Chapter 6.

Conclusion: Factors of group dynamics can impact the efficiency of committees: group size, stakeholder engagement, and acceptance of group development stages.

All of the subjects interviewed spoke about the importance of engaging stakeholders in committee work. In recognizing that decisions in a K-12 organization can affect stakeholder groups differently, every subject interviewed shared their views on the importance of including individuals who are closest to the issue when making recommendations through committee work. According to Andriof, Waddock, Husted, and Sutherland (2002), stakeholder engagement can range from direct participation in making decisions to providing perspectives on selected topics. The interviewed subjects all spoke of stakeholder engagement in terms of direct participation.

While all respondents in the interviews lauded the significance of stakeholder engagement, they reported instances throughout committee work where members did not readily agree and would engage in heated discourse at times. Haynes and Fopiano (2012) described this stage of group development as “transition, storming, counter-dependency and fight, experimental engagement, conflict dominance and rebellion” (p. 10). This is identified as a necessary step in resolving conflicts in order to move to a new level of engagement and building trust (Haynes & Fopiano, 2012).

Further supporting the group dynamics theme, all interview subjects discussed the size of the committee as a factor related to their favorable or negative committee experiences. According to Jennings (2007), the downside of large groups is that they can lead to diminished

efficiency and lower quality solutions as it becomes nearly impossible to achieve a consensus and coordinate activities among members (p. 107). In every interview, subjects referenced committee size as a factor in both their positive and negative experiences. Haynes and Fopiano (2012) suggested that the optimum size of a well-functioning and effective group ranges between 5-10 members. Although the analysis of survey results did not indicate a statistical difference between best and worst experiences pertaining to committee size, research suggests that when making a committee, leaders should make it no larger than necessary for accomplishing the task (Jennings, 2007).

Conclusion: Shared leadership opportunities build human capacity and promotes school improvement by more fully engaging stakeholders.

In terms of leadership, interviewed subjects shared their perceptions about committee members having a voice, feeling empowered, and participating in collaborative efforts to make recommendations. Most leaders described how they could not complete the work by themselves and welcomed the help from the people around them to make decisions through committee work. All subjects described shared decision-making as an effective practice when working in committees. The interview data supported literature that shared leadership engages stakeholders more fully in school improvement and thereby enables schools to respond better to the complex changes emanating from reform agendas (Slater, 2008). As supported by both literature and findings from this study, shared decision-making strengthens the investment that members have in the issues and topics addressed through committee work.

The next and final section of conclusions from the semi-structured interviews continues to illustrate the interrelationship of themes that surfaced from indexed transcripts. The

organizational culture of the research setting reflects the group dynamics, power and politics, and leadership of the organization as perceived by the subjects in the interview process.

Conclusion: An understanding of the organizational culture helps shape the vision of the committee and subsequent action plan for making recommendations.

Schein and Schein (2017) described “organizational culture” as the way a group organizes and maintains themselves as a group. It is the beliefs, values, and desired behaviors that comprise the cultural DNA of a group (Schein & Schein, 2017). Considering this description, the interview responses from each subject reflected the impact that culture has on committee participation and purpose, the type of committees that are created, and the role of vision and values when using committees in an organization.

In the context of leadership and organizational culture, several comments from interviewed subject supported claims made by Alvesson (2002) that “managers always, in some way or another, manage culture” (p. 115). Another aspect of organizational culture that emanated from interview responses focused on the type of committee that appeared to be most commonly used in the research setting. The study of organizational culture refers to smaller groups within as “micro or subcultures” (Schein & Schein, 2017, p. 3). All interview subjects described experiences with advisory committees that were comprised of individuals asked to perform tasks that required a high level of collaboration, which resulted in conditions where the basic assumptions of each individual come to the surface (Schein & Schein, 2017). Schein and Schein (2017) suggested that groups, such as advisory committees, are more effective when they are able to understand aspects of organizational culture by determining the identified beliefs, values, and assumptions that might aid or hinder the proposed change or recommendation.

Out of all the factors of organizational culture affecting a committee's capacity to achieve positive results indicated by interview participants, the purpose and vision of committee work were cited as most influential. Schein and Schein (2017) asserted that if a group is successful in achieving its purpose and is internally well organized, it will reinforce the group's identity and give meaning to the work of the group. The creation and maintenance of a vision in committee work was noted as an important contributor to the effectiveness, as reported by interview participants. Schein and Schein asserted:

The targets of change must come to believe that they and the organization will be better off if they learn the new way of thinking and working. Such a vision must be articulated and widely held by senior management, who must spell out in clear behavioral terms, what "the new way of working" will be. It must also be recognized that this new way of working is non-negotiable. (2017, p. 328)

Cameron and Quinn (2011) alleged that any change that shifts organizational culture requires the creation of a broad, consensual vision of what the desired future culture will be, what the critical aspects of the organization will be, and what will be preserved that is valuable in the current organizational culture (p. 108). As reported by both interview and survey respondents, a clear and well-articulated vision can make the difference between a poor experience and successful experience when it comes to serving on a committee. Cameron and Quinn described the importance of vision in determining what the changes will and will not mean when addressing organizational culture change.

5.1.1 Summary

In conclusion, the semi-structured interviews presented perception data from school leaders regarding the overwhelming benefits of making decisions in the K-12 school setting through the work of committees in contrast to centralized decisions. While most of the examples cited by respondents were positive in regard to their experiences with committee work, several inhibitors to committee work were reported, including poor communication or organization, lack of vision or purpose, and conflicts within committee memberships that are not directly or adequately addressed.

Emerging from the interview transcripts, the interrelationship and interplay between power and politics, group dynamics, leadership, and organizational culture affected the overall practices and outcomes of committee work experiences. Taking into consideration these overarching themes, school leaders can better understand the factors that drive efficient and effective committee practices. The next section further delves into specific factors that either hinder committee work or lead to efficient and effective practices, as reported by survey respondents.

5.2 Q2: WHAT DO SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS (TEACHERS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS) PERCEIVE AS FACTORS THAT HINDER COMMITTEE WORK?

Conclusion: The most significant factors that hinder committee work include meeting frequency, meeting preparation, and stakeholder engagement.

According to the analysis of meeting frequency between best and worst experiences, survey data indicated a relationship between worst experiences and meeting frequency. Survey respondents tended to associate their worst experiences with infrequent meetings, specifically occurring less than three times a year. While very little research was found to support or contradict these results, recommendations from the *Harvard Business Review* (Rousmaniere, 2015) suggested that the frequency of meetings is subject to the purpose of each meeting (to inform, to seek input, to ask for approval) or the type of committee (irregular, ad hoc, quarterly, advisory). This suggestion supports the importance of pre-planning for committee work. Jennings (2007) created a model dubbed “D.E.C.I.D.E/A.C.T/L.E.A.D/E.N.D” for determining when to use committees, how to plan for this type of work, and how to determine if the group is achieving its objectives (p. 100). While this model does not identify the specific frequency in which groups should meet, it places importance on planning and preparation as a critical phase of committee implementation.

The findings from the survey also identified inadequate preparation as a hindering factor of committee work. From a leadership standpoint, this is a crucial phase when planning committee work. As indicated by the semi-structured interviews, many individuals volunteer to participate on committees, which demonstrates an investment in the task or topic at hand. When it comes to preparing for committee meetings or completing tasks, however, voluntary members may not necessarily have the skills, training, or background that equip them to contribute to works completion. Jennings (2007) described the importance of ensuring that all members are prepared for the work associated with the committee topic by assigning roles and responsibilities (p. 107). Without providing this structure, committee members can experience high levels of frustration that leads to a decline in committee membership.

A final area identified as a hindrance to committee work, as reported by survey respondents, was the perception of members indicating that their comments were not valued. One supposition to why survey respondents may perceive that their ideas were not valued relates to the concept of group dynamics. Group dynamics can have inhibiting effects on members, such as a tendency of low-status participants to go along with the opinions expressed by high-status participants, or group pressures for conformity (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1971). Another plausible explanation of this perception is the absence of an empathic leader. Haynes (2012) described an effective leader as one who has the “ability to recognize, identify, sense, understand, and respond to the needs, feelings, and ideas expressed by members of the group” (p. 91).

5.2.1 Summary

Through the use of a comparison between best and worst committee experiences, the survey responses indicated areas that can be interpreted as inhibiting factors to the establishment of efficient and effective committee practices. These findings were supportive of concepts from literature that suggested aspects of group dynamics, power and politics, organizational culture, and leadership that can serve as barriers to committee work. The next and final section explores the findings as they relate to supportive practices and positive contributors to committee work.

5.3 Q3: WHAT DO COMMITTEE MEMBERS PERCEIVE AS PRACTICES THAT APPEAR TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COMMITTEE WORK?

Conclusion: Practices that support effective and efficient committee work include the establishment of respectful relationships, clear communication, and access to resources.

According to the results of the survey analysis, several factors emerged as supportive practices when using committee work. Among these factors, two were identified by all survey respondents as a contributing factor to their best committee experiences: *I understood the goals and purpose of the committee* and *Committee meetings followed the agendas*. These two factors show an interrelationship where agendas support clear communication, and clear communication establishes purpose. Jennings (2007) described how the establishment of purpose builds relationship within the team and frames the work of committees to solve problems and make decisions. Common purpose is also means that members of a group are participating in the group activities to achieve similar goals (Haynes & Fopiano, 2012).

Aspects of communication and purpose are viewed within the theme of group dynamics in the above-cited literature. From an organizational culture standpoint, committees are groups that are created for a purpose; the success of the group is reliant on the degree in which it accomplishes its purpose (Schein & Schein, 2017). This supports the overall sense of efficacy that survey respondents indicated in their reflections on best committee experiences.

Finally, two survey items that showed a high cumulative percentage of agreement (98%), *The committee had access to important resources to support its function* and *Committee members treated each other with respect and courtesy*, were identified by respondents as contributors to their best committee experiences.

Partridge (2016) discussed these characteristics as part of the six key elements of

achieving positive results:

- The meeting is focused on and results in useful decisions;
- Its decisions are based on accurate and timely information;
- Participants have equal opportunities to take part;
- Participants treat each other with dignity and respect;
- Its decisions are recorded in ways that make them available to those people who need to know of them; and
- The results are worth the effort and time before, during, and after the meetings (p. 2).

The survey findings are also supported by Jennings (2007) who described the importance of ensuring that the group has access to necessary assistance and that the appropriate materials are acquired to complete the task in the planning phase for committees. Access to assistance can be defined as specific trainings or professional development, whereas appropriate materials might include existing research, reference materials, or access to technology.

5.3.1 Summary

The survey included many items pertaining to committee work that provide a structure for leaders to follow. While all of the items hold some value in establishing effective and efficient practices, this study identified those that are most impactful. The responses from the survey also reflected the themes that occurred in the literature and through the semi-structured interview responses. Committees are highly influenced and impacted by the political landscape and power structures of the organization, the group dynamics of its members, the ability of the leader to work within the dynamics while providing shared leadership opportunities, and the organizational culture that is challenged when presented with recommendations that counter beliefs, values, and attitudes. Disaggregation by stakeholder group found no significant

differences related to factors that inhibit or contribute to committee effectiveness. While these data do not reveal statistical differences, there may indeed be practical differences especially related to power and authority positional differences among stakeholders, for example administrators and teachers, teachers and students, or Board members and administrators. According to Heifetz, et al. (2009), organizations must be viewed as a web of stakeholders, and considerations must be given to the degree of power and influence that each group has over the resources that they control (p. 90).

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study support Jennings (2007) claim that committees are a fact of life in today's schools and are reinforced by current trends in education that result in changes to the existing system. In addition to becoming a norm of K-12 administration, committee work can be beneficial to the school climate. Johnson and Johnson (1994) concluded that group work promotes more positive relationships and enhances psychological health, self-esteem and social competencies more than competitive, individualistic work (p. 96). The semi-structured interview responses in this study reiterate the importance of acknowledging that relationships are influenced by power and politics, group dynamics, leadership, and organizational culture when examining committee work in K-12 settings. Furthermore, the survey results suggest aspects and practices of committees that either contribute towards or inhibit the efficiency and effectiveness of this collaborative work, such as the size of the committee, the number and duration of meetings, the structure of committee meetings, and the establishment of a clear and shared purpose.

Drawing on the findings and conclusions from the study, the benefits of using committee work in K-12 school settings outweigh the potential challenges, especially when thoughtful consideration is given to planning for committee work, communicating progress and next steps, and evaluating the efficacy of the committee towards meeting its goals. This chapter suggests recommendations for practice, policy, and further inquiry when using committee work to address

topics and implement changes. As the inquiry focused on a single setting, the Willow School District, the recommendations will be specific to this organization and serve to inform school leaders within this setting of implications for practice and policy.

6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the literature and findings pertaining to this inquiry of committee work, several considerations are included as implications for practices within the Willow School District. They include clear communications through the use of a meeting agenda template, shared responsibility of designated committee members in creating agenda items, and ongoing evaluation of the committee's capacity in completing the goals they set forth through an evaluative tool.

6.1.1 Committee Meeting Agenda

According to Gallo (2015), setting and communicating an agenda prior to meetings is critical to having a clear plan of action. Meeting agendas can save time and ensure that discussions are focused and productive. Jennings (2007) suggested that agendas be provided at least 24 hours in advance of meetings and should include the following information: the overall meeting purpose, a list of required attendees, projected time span of the meeting, the location of the meeting, any required resources or advanced preparation of participants, and the names of the recorder and timekeeper (p. 9). Agendas designated for participants can vary in content and design from those developed for leaders of committee meetings. A detailed process agenda contains additional

information for facilitators or chairpersons to ensure that meetings cover pertinent information and run smoothly (Coastal Services Center, US, 2010). A sample agenda template was created drawing from the literature on effective meetings and the findings from this study and is included in Appendix H.

In addition to meeting agendas, meeting minutes are an important record of discussion, decisions, and lingering questions from committee members that drive the work to be completed between meetings. Jones and Loftus (2009) suggested that minutes include such details as the meeting date, attendees, meeting location, and meeting duration and that they cover the following items:

- whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved;
- all items discussed;
- agreements reached;
- action agreed upon, and who will do what and by when;
- items left open and their status; and
- motions, plus mover's and seconder's names. (p. 228)

Similar to the timeline for distributing meeting agendas, Tracy (2016) suggested that meeting minutes be provided to committee participants within 24 hours of the meeting. A sample template for meeting minutes is located in Appendix I.

6.1.2 Committee meeting evaluation

Haynes (1997) argued that it is the leader's job to create an environment where evaluation becomes a normal part of the meeting process. An evaluation process allows for committee members to critically assess their progress towards short and long-term goals. By providing the space for reflection and feedback, committee members are given the reassurance that the work is important and that their voices are heard. A recommendation based on literature and findings

suggests that the Willow School District utilize ongoing evaluation as a means to formatively assess the efficacy of the group’s work, and to adjust and monitor where needed in order to meet the goals and timelines set forth by the committee. An evaluation process can help meetings operate more efficiently by improving decision-making, providing more clarity of roles and responsibilities, and holding participants accountable as committee members (Francis & Armstrong, 2012). A sample meeting evaluation is provided in Figure 2.

MEETING EVALUATION WORKSHEET #2						
1. To what extent are agendas for meetings you attend circulated in advance or posted at the start?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
2. To what extent are you asked to provide input on the agenda?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
3. To what extent do participants monitor the way they work together?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
4. To what extent are differences among participants encouraged and explored?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
5. When decisions are made, to what extent are the action steps made explicit and followed up on in writing?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
6. To what extent do participants seem aware of their use of time?	Not At All	1	2	3	4	5 Completely
Comments:						

Figure 2. Sample meeting evaluation worksheet (Haynes, 1997, p. 79)

6.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Participants in this study cited examples of instances when committee work failed due to

insufficient communication and lack of preparation or planning. Jennings (2007) described this lack of productivity that leads to frustration as a common occurrence with educators serving on committees. He suggested the use of research-based strategies that can transform committees from tolerable to meaningful by including a process for planning and preparation. An example of this practice comes from Francis and Armstrong (2012) who argued that committees need to include a constitution that sets out the purpose, functions, and role of the committee that defines how it proceeds. Drawing from these ideas and the survey and semi-structured interview responses from the participants in this study, seven specific items were identified as key attributes in planning and preparing for committee work. They include:

- Committee type
- Committee participation
- Meeting Frequency
- Committee size
- Communication guidelines
- Resources
- End Result plan

These attributes were organized into a planning sheet for school leaders to use when creating committees for addressing changes in their schools (see Appendix G). It is recommended that leaders within the Willow School District implement a policy on utilizing the planning sheet to: determine the necessity for forming a committee, versus making a top-down determination of an organization or systems change; and follow a discerning process for determining the structure, outline, and logistics of forming a committee when the proposed change calls for a collaborative engagement of stakeholders impacted by the change.

Committees can be used to serve multiple purposes, therefore careful consideration of the reasons for forming committees, recruiting committee members, and appropriate times to conduct committee meetings using the committee planning sheet can make a significant

difference between an effective committee experience and one that fails to produce meaningful results.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER INQUIRY

Literature suggests that several factors contribute to a committee's effectiveness, such as members' demographics, personalities, values, and competencies (Francis and Armstrong, 2012). Demographic data collected in this study was limited to participants' position as stakeholders in this district, rather than consideration of age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, or educational background as factors in determining the efficacy of committee work. McKenna (1999) suggests that diversity of group membership can be positive and powerful if managed effectively, or can be negative if discrimination and prejudice are allowed to take precedence over the potential benefits (p. 132).

Given the benefits of heterogeneous groups, but considering the potential biases and power influences that can negatively impact the work of committees with diverse members, the examination of demographic data such as age, race, gender, and ethnicity is recommended for further inquiry. The findings of this potential inquiry topic can inform the Willow School District of additional recommendations pertaining to diversity training, school climate improvements, and building adaptive capacity, all of which contribute to an overall positive organizational culture.

6.4 CONCLUSION

We now fast-forward two years later to the plight of the Technology Advisory Committee (TAC). Since its conception, the committee has made viable recommendations that have been supported by the organization, membership on the committee has remained stable, and the district has made significant strides towards its mission to prepare all students for success in a changing world. It may have been the organizational culture or the group dynamics of the committee that contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of TAC. Perhaps the political landscape or the leadership supported the urgency of increasing technology in the district.

The ever-changing landscape of K-12 education will continue to necessitate a change to existing practices and procedures. A collaborative approach to navigating through these changes through the work of committees has the potential to provide school systems with sound recommendations. By deconstructing the experiences of those who have served on committees through survey and interviews and thinking carefully about the results and implications, leaders in K-12 education are provided with the knowledge of effective and efficient practices and conversely anticipate the factors that can inhibit or hinder the work of committees.

7.0 REFLECTION

This final section captures the essence of how this study has impacted my growth as an educational leader and the overall influence of the inquiry process on my practice. There is no exacting blueprint for how to lead in the educational setting; rather, my skills and knowledge have continued to be shaped by the experiences and overall culture of the organizations where I served as a school administrator. This journey through the doctorate program has heightened my awareness and appreciation for the inquiry process as a means to critically assess my experiences and the overarching organizational culture through an iterative lens.

Swabey and Nicodemus (2011) asserted that research is a dynamic and additive process in any discipline, and I found this to be especially true throughout the inquiry process. My journey began with a focus on hiring practices for K-12 schools but soon changed given the magnitude of information available and the timeline constraints of the EdD program at the University of Pittsburgh. Considering the amount of time that I had spent on committees within my organization, I was naturally drawn toward the phenomenon of extreme positive and negative perceptions towards this common practice in the K-12 education system. Given the limited scope of this study through a single setting and small purposive survey and interview sample, I did not expect to uncover absolute answers regarding why committees are viewed negatively or positively; rather, I endeavored to gain better insight or familiarity with committee work used as a means to address change in the K-12 education system.

As a result of this inquiry, I have used the committee-planning sheet that was presented as a recommendation to anticipate and organize the number and types of committees that will operate within the next school year. Through a more informed process, I anticipate an increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of the committees by ensuring a thoughtful, organized, collaborative approach to decision-making.

Although my dissertation-in-practice through the University of Pittsburgh is drawing to a close, my journey as a reflective practitioner continues. According to Holly (2014), exploratory studies are often undertaken prior to discovery research to develop hypotheses (p. 52). I find this to be especially true with my experiences through the inquiry process. It is my hope that the information gathered, analyzed, and presented through findings and recommendations will help other practitioners refine their shared decision-making practices. Furthermore, this program has provided me with the necessary tools to examine problems in practice through a critical lens. For example, through the creation of survey and semi-structured interview items, I have developed better questioning skills. By coding interview transcripts and conducting statistical analysis on survey responses, I have improved my ability to interpret data. Through the interpretation of the data and organization of findings, I have made sound recommendations that will contribute to my own work as a school leader as well as others. In many ways, my journey has just begun...

APPENDIX A

SITE PERMISSION LETTER

[REDACTED] SCHOOL DISTRICT

[REDACTED]
Superintendent of Schools

[REDACTED]
November 18, 2016

University of Pittsburgh
IRB Approval Committee
Hieber Building
3500 Fifth Avenue, Suite 302
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms. Amanda Mathieson who is an elementary school principal for the [REDACTED] School District has requested to conduct her dissertation study at [REDACTED] School. I understand the working title of the dissertation is "Committee Work as a Vehicle for Change". The purpose of this study is to garner stakeholder perception towards committee work in order to understand the contributing and inhibiting factors to efficient and effective committee work practices. The results from this case study will help practitioners in K-12 education understand when and how committee work can be used to implement change initiatives in the education setting.

Based on the above information, Ms. Mathieson has my permission to proceed with her study in the [REDACTED] School District. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Superintendent of Schools

Figure 3. Site permission Letter

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SESSION CONFIRMATION

You have been asked to participate in a semi-structure interview as part of dissertation topic of study. The purpose of the interview is to try and understand how school leaders in a K-12 public school setting use committee work as a way to make recommendations. The information learned in the interview will also be used to identify factors that hinder committee work and to determine practices that are indicative of efficient and effective committees. The attitudes of leaders toward using committees as a process for implementing change will also contribute to an overall understanding of shared decision-making.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the interview and stop at any time. Although the interview will be video recorded, your identity and responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the report. There are no right or wrong answers to the interview questions.

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

➤ Welcome

Hello. My name is Amanda Mathieson. I am a doctoral student in the School Leadership program at the University of Pittsburgh and a practicing administrator with the North Allegheny School District. I am interested in learning more about your experiences with working on various committees in the K-12 public school setting.

➤ PROJECT BACKGROUND

As part of my doctoral studies, I have been encouraged to use my experiences as a scholar-practitioner to identify an area in my practice that warrants additional examination. As a principal in elementary building and member of a large school district, I have been a participant in many committees, and I have created many committees, all focusing on change initiatives in the educational setting.

In education, we use the term “best practices” to illustrate what we view as sound, evidence-supported procedures that optimize student learning and lead to positive outcomes. As a leader, I am interested in applying this concept of best practices to committee work and learning about ways to maximize efficiencies and effectiveness of this collaborative work.

➤ PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW

The reason I am conducting interviews is to learn more about how committees work and the perceptions of leaders who make decisions on when to use committees in the K-12 educational setting. In particular, we will talk about those factors that produce intended results, or even unintended positive results as

well as hindering factors that serve as barriers to the efficiency and effectiveness of committee work. I need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts.

Information from this interview will be combined with the information collected from surveys. I will then analyze the data for patterns, and use the emerging themes to develop practices that maximize the use of committee work to address change initiatives.

➤ **TIMING**

This discussion will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes and I will be audio-recording the interview. Are there any questions before we get started?

2. DISCUSSION

a. Committee Participation

- i. What committees have you led as a school leader?
PROBE: Were you asked to lead this committee or did you volunteer?
PROBE: Was the invitation from a colleague, supervisor, or acquaintance?
PROBE: (If volunteered) How did you learn about this committee?
PROBE: What aspect of the committee appealed to you when you initially volunteered to be on this committee?
- ii. What committees have you created in your experiences as a school leader?
PROBE: Describe how the committee was created – what was the area of focus for this committee?
PROBE: How did you decide to use a committee, rather than making top-down determinations?
- iii. What were the intended outcomes for this committee work?
PROBE: Was your committee able to achieve the intended outcome? Why or why not?
PROBE: Were there any unintended outcomes from this committee work?
PROBE: Were the unintended outcomes favorable or unfavorable? Explain.

b. Committee Experiences

- i. Think about best experience you had using committee work to address a school topic/issue. Describe the structure of the committee
PROBE: How many members, how often did you meet, any subcommittees?
- ii. What were the strongest attributes of this committee experience?
PROBE: Was it the other members, the leadership, the structure of the committee, the topic, the discourse?

- iii. Think about the most challenging experience(s) you had with using committee work to address a school topic/issue. Talk about its structure, as you had with the best committee scenario.
- iv. What were the most challenging part attributes of this committee experience?
- v. Comparing the best experience and most challenging experience, what factor(s) made the most difference?
- vi. In your experiences leading committee work, what did you feel went well? What would you have done differently? What did you learn from this experience?

3. CLOSING

- a. Do you have any final thoughts about committee work that you would like to share?**

In closing, I want to assure you that your comments and answers will be held confidential. I will be combining information that is gathered in the interviews with information gathered from the surveys. My next steps will be to analyze the information for trends and patterns that indicate factors that are contributors to committee work experiences, and those that are inhibitors to achievable results. Thank you for participating in today's session. I appreciate you taking the time to share your ideas with me.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY COVER LETTER

My name is Amanda Mathieson, and I am a doctoral student in the School Leadership program at the University of Pittsburgh. Additionally, I am a practicing administrator in the North Allegheny School District. Thank you for participating in my dissertation study and taking the time to complete this survey.

This survey is designed to gather and understand the perspectives of school stakeholders towards the factors and conditions that affect the efficacy of committee work. An understanding of these factors and conditions as reported by members of committees serving various roles would contribute to a growing knowledge of efficient and effective practices for when leaders and organizations address change initiatives through committee work. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes. The data that I will collect through the survey will remain anonymous; I will not ask for any names or other personally identifiable information, such as your specific position in the organization.

You will be asked to reflect on your best personal experiences with committee work, and those experiences that you consider unsatisfactory. Although the survey is designed for you to reflect on **both** experiences, your personal experience with committee work may reflect either a best experience or an unsatisfactory experience. In this case, you will be able to respond to the questions that correspond only to your personal experiences. (i.e. – best only, or worst only). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any time.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you have about this study. Your participation in the survey is appreciated and valued as an important aspect of this inquiry into committee work as a vehicle for change.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Amanda Mathieson

Doctoral Student, University of Pittsburgh

Phone: 724-766-4695

Email: AMM398@pitt.edu

APPENDIX E

SURVEY TEXT

Committee Work as a Vehicle for Change

Q1 I am a(n):

- Teacher (1)
- Paraprofessional (2)
- Administrator (3)
- Community Member (4)

Q2 Consider your best and worst experiences serving as a committee member. Describe each committee on which you served.

Q3 Committee Size:

	Best Committee Experience				Worst Committee Experience			
	5-10 (1)	11-15 (2)	16-20 (3)	More than 20 (4)	5-10 (1)	11-15 (2)	16-20 (3)	More than 20 (4)
How many individuals served on this committee? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q4 Who served on the committee (Please check all that apply):

	Best Committee Experience	Worst Committee Experience
	Answer 1 (1)	Answer 1 (1)
Students (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paraprofessionals (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administrators (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community members (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Board members (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 4. Survey text

Figure 4 (continued)

Q5 Committee Meeting Frequency:

	Best Committee Experience				Worst Committee Experience			
	Monthly (1)	6 times per year (2)	1 - 3 times per year (3)	Less than 3 times per year (4)	Monthly (1)	6 times per year (2)	1 - 3 times per year (3)	Less than 3 times per year (4)
How often did each committee meet? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Committee Meeting Duration:

	Best Committee Experience			Worst Committee Experience		
	Less than one hour (1)	1 - 2 hours (2)	More than two hours (3)	Less than one hour (1)	1 - 2 hours (2)	More than two hours (3)
What was the typical length of committee meetings? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Committee Participation:

	Best Committee Experience	Worst Committee Experience
How long did you serve on this committee? (1)	Answer 1 (1)	Answer 1 (1)

Figure 4 (continued)

Q8 Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with each statement below according to your best and worst committee experiences.

	Best Committee Experience					Worst Committee Experience				
	SD (1)	D (2)	Neutral (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	SD (1)	D (2)	Neutral (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
I understood the goals and purpose of the committee.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The committee had access to adequate resources to support its function.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The committee had the support of key decision-makers within the organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committee meetings were held with appropriate frequency.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The length of committee meetings was appropriate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committee meetings followed the agendas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committee meeting agendas and materials were received in advance of the meetings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting times were consistently used in a productive manner to address issues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 4 (continued)

Q9 Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with each statement below according to your best and worst committee experiences.

	Best Committee Experience					Worst Committee Experience				
	SD (1)	D (2)	Neutral (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	SD (1)	D (2)	Neutral (3)	A (4)	SA (5)
The locations where meetings were held were conducive to positive group interaction and discussion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance at meetings was consistent for most members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attendance at meetings was evaluated as a criterion for continued membership on the committee.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The minutes of the meetings were accurate and reflected the discussion, next steps and/or action items articulated by the members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committee membership represented all stakeholders affected by the issues addressed through the committee work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Committee members treated each other with respect and courtesy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All committee members came to meetings prepared and ready to contribute.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I spoke at committee meetings, I felt heard and that my comments were valued.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX F

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW CODES

Table 8. Semi-structured interview codes

Subject	Statement	1st Cycle Code	2nd Cycle Code	Themes
1	.....it was kids, volunteers.....	Committee Members	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
1	....making sure everybody was represented.....	Representing all groups	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
1	.....making sure that everybody who was a part of the cause was represented....	Representing all groups	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
1	...the communication is open between all parties	Open Communication	Communication	Group Dynamics
1	.....I've been on committees where it's an extremely large group and it's very diverse..... and you have to break into even smaller groups to accomplish much.....	Large Groups broken into smaller groups	Committee size	Group Dynamics
1	....If the group is smaller, well represented and balanced between representatives.....	Balanced representation	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
1	....more vocal individuals who had a couple ideas in mind.....	Vocal individuals	Dissenting views	Group Dynamics
1	A few hidden agenda items, if you will.....	Hidden agendas	Competing commitments	Group Dynamics
1	We take a look at the representative and tried to balance it better among the people.....	Balanced representation	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
1	Nominating other leaders makes it more beneficial.....	Nominating other leaders	Shared Leadership	Group Dynamics
1	....school counselor I now coaching/taking over that group so it continues....	Others taking over groups	Shared Leadership	Leadership

Table 8 (continued)

1	It has increased leadership among other individuals...	Leadership among others	Shared Leadership	Leadership
1	....staff members as leaders, so it's not just the principal saying.....	Staff members as leaders	Shared Leadership	Leadership
1	Having them help set the agenda.....	Others setting the agenda	Shared Leadership	Leadership
1	....empowerment of other individuals...	Empowerment	Shared Leadership	Leadership
1	....wanting to educate everyone involved in change.....	Committee use	Purpose	Learning Organization
1	Having a shared vision of what it would look like that we wanted as our end product...	Shared Vision of end product	Vision	Learning Organization
1	....from being reactive to the situations that are happening to being proactive.....	Addressing situations proactively	Purpose	Learning Organization
1	....getting everybody on the same page.....	Everyone on same page	Vision	Learning Organization
1	...open ended by design because you're hoping that they'll contribute... to what the end goal will be....	Open-ended committee	Committee Type	Learning Organization
1	....make sure that time is put aside to come back and revisit the progress.....	Monitor progress	Vision	Learning Organization
1	....trying to get the whole culture shifted....	Culture shift	Vision	Organizational Culture
1	I was asked to serve on the committees.....	Invitation to join committee	Committee participation	Power and Politics
1	Invitation came from a supervisor...	Invitation to join committee	Committee participation	Power and Politics
1	Viewing each other as equals....	Equal participants	Stakeholders	Power and Politics
2	....there's representation from every grade level.....trickled that down to paren input to get the parents involved	Representing all groups	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
2	I would rather utilize them, I would look at their strengths and maybe ask them to be on a different committee...	Matching people to committees	Committee participation	Group Dynamics
2	....some people are on committees have personal agendas....	Personal Agendas	Competing commitments	Group Dynamics
2	That has been challenging for the hidden agendas that are there....	Hidden agendas	Competing commitments	Group Dynamics
2	I would take a look at staff strengths and staff interest and then I try to foster leaders.....	Staff attributes and interests	Shared Leadership	Leadership
2	I can't do it by myself so I always try to get the people around me to help.....	Help from others	Shared Leadership	Leadership

Table 8 (continued)

2	...you're going to have more buy in when you have people in your building.....when you're trying to move a building to a different level... trying to grow a mindset.....	Stakeholder buy-in	Shared Decision-Making	Leadership
2	Than I have many different types o levels of that committee led by different people....	Different people leading different levels	Shared Leadership	Leadership
2	I'm a big advocate of shared decision making.. I like the train the trainer model...	Train the Trainer	Shared Decision-Making	Leadership
2	...they foster that same kind of relationship and vision that you have so it's the willingness to want to do, rather than coercion to ask....	Same kind of relationship and vision	Vision	Learning Organization
2	....constantly growing and changing according to the student need at that time.....	Addressing student needs	Committee goal	Learning Organization
2	...so the vision is to help kids grow, but the passion's got to just come from within....	Addressing student needs	Vision	Learning Organization
2	New committee this year....contraversial..sometimes what a leader sees and what building sees might be two different versions.... But we work together to have a common goal.....	Common goal	Vision	Learning Organization
2	If it's the same common goal whether that has to be district wide...I embrace the shared decision making because the more people you have involved in the decision, the better the outcome.....	More people involved in decision	Shared Decision-Making	Learning Organization
2	We've probably met 8 or 9 times since the beginning of the school year.....based on needs.....	Number of meetings based on needs	Committee participation	Organizational Culture
2	...just the willingness to not worry about getting paid, but the willingness to help kids,,,	Willingness to volunteer	Committee participation	Organizational Culture
2	We've done it by invitations only, but I really didn't have to coerce teachers to do it.....	Invitation to join committee	Committee participation	Organizational Culture
2	Sometimes we don't get the autonomy to pick committees, they're just given to us.....	Committee assignment	Committee participation	Organizational Culture
2	Some I volunteered and some I have been asked.....	Committee assignment	Committee participation	Power and Politics
2	A supervisor asked me to lead it.....	Committee assignment by supervisor	Committee participation	Power and Politics
3	....involving parents and teachers in the school	Committee members	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
3	Everyone had some sort of connection	Connection to committee topic	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics

Table 8 (continued)

3	Allowed people who really don't interact with one another to have time to meeting and have conversations...	Interaction with others	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
3	Needs to be transparent so you are recruiting the people who should truly be there.....	Recruiting members	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
3	I think what went well was the collaboration from everyone...	Collaboration	Shared Decision-Making	Group Dynamics
3	Knowing that I had done this before and it was successful....	Past successful experiences	Committee experience	Leadership
3	One of our teachers took the lead in mapping everything out.....	Teachers taking the lead	Shared Leadership	Leadership
3	I had some really great ideas that I thought we could work together with in order to get this committee moving	Collaboration	Shared Decision-Making	Learning Organization
3	....people really wanted to have a voice	People having a voice	Voice	Learning Organization
3	Taking a more collaborative approach	Collaboration	Shared Decision-Making	Learning Organization
3	The investment that people had.....	Investment	Stakeholders	Learning Organization
3	...having a vision or goal in mind, of what it is that you are....	Vision or goal	Vision	Learning Organization
3	Teachers would have a voice and have more of an investment into	Voice	Shared Decision-Making	Organizational Culture
3	The intended outcome was to provide something that could....	Intended outcome	Purpose	Organizational Culture
3	We had developed agendas, we knew exactly what we were looking for...	Developed Agendas	Purpose	Organizational Culture
3	....really didn't have a lot of background information on the committee, the purpose....	Lack of background information	Purpose	Organizational Culture
3	I don't think it was communicated clearly, what the goal of the committee was....	Unclear communication of goals	Communication	Organizational Culture
3	Every time we met I really didn't see an outcome or what its purpose was	Unknown purpose	Purpose	Organizational Culture
3	I think understanding the purpose of the committee (factor that makes a difference between best and worst experience)	Understanding the purpose as important factor	Purpose	Organizational Culture
3	Even setting the stage for when somebody is using a committee to be a form for complaint... having clear guidelines....	Clear Guidelines	Purpose	Organizational Culture

Table 8 (continued)

3	I think there needs to be a limit: How much is too much?	Committee overuse	Purpose	Organizational Culture
4	...it was a rather large committee....	Large committee	Committee size	Group Dynamics
4	The worst to me is when you get the wrong people involved...	Wrong people	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
4	...there's a bunch of people talking but they're not closest to the problem.....	Closest to the problem	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
4	...you get the wrong people that want to talk, talk, talk...representing themselves.... Have their own agenda	Personal Agendas	Competing commitments	Group Dynamics
4	....how it impacts the kindergarten teacher is very different than how it impacts the fifth grade teacher...	Impact on different groups	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
4	It was really lacking, one, in leadership.....	Lacking leadership	Leadership	Leadership
4	.....make people feel like they're important to be there....	Valuing members	Committee participation	Learning Organization
4	...we had a huge group that was able to come to consensus on some recommendations....	Large committee consensus	Committee experience	Learning Organization
4	I tend to give people information or solicit information ahead of time to make the meeting itself as product driven as possible...	Frontloading information	Communication	Learning Organization
4	....we've all been experiences where everyone just talks....at the end of the day we're like, "we had great conversations but what did we do?"	Unproductive conversations	committee outcomes	Learning Organization
4	I think committees where it appeared that there wasn't much forethought in terms of what was the purpose of the meeting (most challenging)	Unclear purpose	Purpose	Learning Organization
4	The structure of the committee, making sure it has a clear focus....	Clear focus	Vision	Learning Organization
4	I think you should use a committee any time where it's a major change that affects a lot fo different people	Change affecting people	Committee use	Learning Organization
4	.....many, many committees from principal advisory to crisis to diversity.....	Advisory and task force committees	Committee Type	Organizational Culture
4	...was asked to lead more because that was not necessarilly within the scope of my everyday job....	Asked to lead - outside scope of job	Committee participation	Leadership
4	...our work in the end...not valued or acted upon....	Work not valued by authority	Committee experience	Power and Politics

Table 8 (continued)

4	...there've been times where a committee was given to me versus someone else because my supervisor thought maybe I would either have some knowledge.....	Asked to lead based on experiences	Committee participation	Leadership
4	...someone else was structuring it and there really wasn't a vision of what needed to be done.....	Poor committee structure	Vision	Organizational Culture
4	...we came up with some great recommendations that were basically shelved by the superintendent at that time...	Recommendations not supported by authority	Committee experience	Power and Politics
4	There are times where you have to do a top down decision....crisis situation.... It's just common sense...	Top-Down Decisions	Committee use	Power and Politics
5	manageable because we were divided into subcommittees based on topic.	Subcommittees	Committee size	Group Dynamics
5	I worked with teachers, parents and a board member on my subcommittee. We didn't see eye to eye the first couple of meetings, but eventually became a pretty solid team	Different people - reaching a consensus	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
5	So, the guidelines and the right members are key	Committee Members	Stakeholders	Group Dynamics
5	The lead chair was disgruntled to be in charge – he didn't really know himself what our goal was or end product.	Disgruntled chairperson	Leadership	Leadership
5	more likely to be invested in their work if they have a voice,	Voice	Shared Decision-Making	Learning Organization
5	I am really interested in technology, so I volunteered to be part of a committee to implement technology K-12.	Willingness to volunteer	Committee participation	Learning Organization
5	First of all, I volunteered to be on it, so I was already invested in the work	Investment	Committee participation	Learning Organization
5	I think that the guidelines need to be clear as far as what the purpose is and what we hope to accomplish	Clear Guidelines	Purpose	Learning Organization
5	Everyone on the committee has to have some motivation or some connection to the work they are doing	Having a stake	Stakeholders	Learning Organization
5	I don't mind the fact that I inherited two district committees because it forced me to consider topics that I wouldn't otherwise	Committee assignment	Committee participation	Learning Organization
5	I think that I can be invested in other committees that I am assigned to as long as the goals are made relevant to the work that I do.	Relevant goals	Purpose	Learning Organization
5	I inherited this role when the previous principal retired, so it fell on my lap .	Committee assignment	Committee participation	Organizational Culture

Table 8 (continued)

5	A bullying prevention committee, PAC, which is a principal advisory committee; crisis team.	Advisory and task force committees	Committee Type	Organizational Culture
5	I knew that this committee would be making recommendations that would affect my building and I wanted to have a say in what program the district chose.	Having a stake	Shared Decision-Making	Power and Politics

APPENDIX G

COMMITTEE PLANNING SHEET

Committee Planning Sheet

Committee Type:

- Ad Hoc (serving one purpose; dissolved after task completion)
- Advisory (studies an issue and makes recommendations)
- Governing (Executive, policy-forming)

Committee Name: _____

Short-term goal(s):

Long-term objective(s):

Participants serving on the committee (check all that apply):

- Students
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Community Members
- School Board members

Approximate Committee Size: _____ members

Committee Member Participation:

- Volunteer
- Appointed
- Other

Committee Meeting Frequency:

- Monthly
- Bi-monthly
- 3x/year
- Other _____

Figure 5. Committee Planning Sheet

Figure 5 (continued)

Method of collecting feedback from members:

Resources needed for committee work:

End Result communication plan:

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Agenda

Committee Meeting:	Meeting Date:
Statement of meeting objective:	
Review of past meeting minutes (if applicable):	
Agenda Item #1 - Purpose: Intended action: (to inform, to decide, to resolve)	Person responsible: Materials/resources: Estimated Time for discussion and action:
Agenda Item #2 - Purpose: Intended action: (to inform, to decide, to resolve)	Person responsible: Materials/resources: Estimated Time for discussion and action:
Agenda Item #3 - Purpose: Intended action: (to inform, to decide, to resolve)	Person responsible: Materials/resources: Estimated Time for discussion and action:
Concluding Remarks:	
Date for Next Meeting:	

Figure 6. Meeting Agenda

APPENDIX I

MEETING MINUTES TEMPLATE

Meeting Minutes

Committee Meeting:	Meeting Date:
Review of past meeting minutes (if applicable): Approved by:	
Agenda Item #1 - Item Status (Open or Resolved): Next Steps:	Motion Made by: Motion Seconded by: Person(s) Responsible for next steps:
Agenda Item #2 - Item Status (Open or Resolved): Next Steps:	Motion Made by: Motion Seconded by: Person(s) Responsible for next steps:
Agenda Item #3 - Item Status (Open or Resolved): Next Steps:	Motion Made by: Motion Seconded by: Person(s) Responsible for next steps:
Concluding Remarks:	
Date for Next Meeting:	

Figure 7. Meeting Minutes

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