Transforming Curriculum Leadership:
Vice Principals in Independent Christian Elementary Schools

Philip Teeuwsen, B. Ed., B. A.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

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Faculty of Education, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

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Abstract

The literature on the vice principalship characterizes the position as one filled with clerical record keeping and student discipline and paints a picture of role conflict and general discontent. Research suggests that vice principals desire to take on a more significant role, specifically a role in curriculum leadership. Using open-ended interviews, a focus group interview, document analysis, and my research journal, I have explored the work of a group of vice principals who have taken on the role of curriculum leader in independent Christian elementary schools in Ontario.

When asked to explain their understanding of curriculum, the participants referred to written programs of study. However, their leadership activities reveal a broader understanding of curriculum as something that is in fact dynamic in nature. This leadership is enabled and shaped by their middle position on staff that combines the authority of an administrator and the credibility of a teacher. Although this dual identity creates tension, it also provides opportunities for genuine curriculum leadership.

As middle leaders, the participants in this study often pull together or connect elements of the curriculum (teachers, principals, and programs) that have become separated. Such connective leadership is characterized by transformational (Van Brummelen, 2002) tendencies. This research suggests that the further along the continuum one goes from the understanding of curriculum as planned (Eisner, 1994) to acknowledging a lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993), the more transformational one’s leadership style becomes.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“And I think the VP is sometimes the Fifth Business.” (Ron, Interview 2, page 3 of 22)

Who are you? Where do you fit into poetry and myth? Do you know who I think you are, Ramsay? I think you are the Fifth Business.

You don’t know what that is? Well, in opera in a permanent company of the kind we keep in Europe you must have a prima donna – always a soprano, always the heroine, often a fool; and a tenor who always plays the lover to her; and then you must have a contralto, who is a rival to the soprano, or a sorceress or something; and a basso, who is the villain or the rival or whatever threatens the tenor.

So far, so good. But you cannot make a plot work without another man, and he is usually a baritone, and he is called in the profession Fifth Business, because he is the odd man out, the person who has no opposite of the other sex. And you must have the Fifth Business because he is the one who knows the secret of the hero’s birth, or comes to the assistance of the heroine when she thinks all is lost, or keeps the hermitess in her cell, or may even be the cause of somebody’s death if that is part of the plot. The prima donna and the tenor, the contralto and the basso, get all the best music and do all the spectacular things, but you cannot imagine the plot without
Fifth Business! It is not spectacular, but it is a good line of work, I can tell you, and those who play it sometimes have a career that outlasts the golden voices. Are you the Fifth Business? You had better find out.


Background to Problem and Research Questions

In the novel, *Fifth Business*, Dunstan Ramsay finds himself in the middle of many relationships. He is rarely the star, and he is never the loser or the servant. He is in the middle. His role is essential to the success of many people around him, although they never realize it, nor do they ever thank him. His work is unnoticeable to all but himself, even though he knows the things that could destroy the people around him. He is able to manipulate his circumstances to his own advantage for the most part, but essentially he plays the role of catalyst fitting the pieces together and pushing the story forward. Throughout his life he is pulled back and forth between the people he meets, but he is no fool.

The work of the vice principal can be seen, as my participant Ron says, as fifth business. Vice principals are in the middle, pulled between loyalty to the principal and the staff, juggling information that they often know but cannot speak of or sometimes even do anything about. Yet in this position they are able to quietly move the school forward and positively influence and improve curriculum and instruction in their schools and the lives of their colleagues and students.

The vice principalship is often viewed as a managerial position in which the vice principal performs duties that the principal has no interest in or time for. It is
generally viewed as a transitory position, or a stepping-stone to full principalship. The vice principal role in many cases has become one of clerical record keeping and student discipline. It has also become a position shaped more by custom than serious reflection (Hill, 1994). It is also a position that is often far removed from leadership in curriculum and instruction. The literature reveals that many vice principals are unhappy with this function and see their ideal role as taking on curriculum leadership in their schools.

There is, however, a group of vice principals in Ontario who have taken on the role of curriculum leader. Known as vice principals in charge of curriculum or curriculum vice principals, these people are teachers in independent Christian elementary schools who have been given responsibility over curriculum development and implementation in their schools. Curriculum vice principals function as internal curriculum co-ordinators as they spend much of their administrative time “organizing, guiding, and assisting the teachers in developing their original programs” (Sabar, Silberstien, & Ezar, 1993, p. 313). They also spend time in consultation with the principal of the school. Although some schools have more formal arrangements than others, the curriculum vice principal serves as part of the administrative team in their school.

Very early in my career as a teacher, my school board granted me the role of curriculum vice principal. Almost immediately, I realized my work involved much more than tracking the completion of units and searching for helpful resources. I found myself spending a significant amount of time talking with and listening to teachers and parents as well as my principal. Some of this talk did
indeed relate specifically to curriculum units and timetables. However, much had
to do with teacher concerns about student behavior as well as emotional highs and
lows that teachers were experiencing in their life away from school. I found myself
wondering how I could account for all the time I was spending in these discussions.
Wasn’t I supposed to be working on curriculum?

I now believe that by listening to teachers and responding to their concerns,
I was in fact co-ordinating the curriculum of my school. This understanding is the
result of a shift in my understanding of curriculum. At the beginning of my career,
I viewed curriculum as a static, written plan. I now view curriculum as a dynamic
plan, something that is lived out by each individual student and teacher. I have
found that as curriculum vice principal, as teacher and administrator, I have often
been at the crossroads of Schwab’s (1973) commonplaces of curriculum.

Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996) found that vice principals
perform a bridging role, connecting the various people in their schools and
smoothing over relationships. I wondered whether vice principals would lead
curriculum in a similar manner. Such curriculum leadership would demonstrate a
conception of curriculum that is broader than simply that of a written program of
studies, a conception in agreement with Morrison (1995), who believes that
curriculum is not simply “an inert corpus of knowledge; it is devolved upon people
interacting with each other” (p. 66). To lead curriculum in such a way requires
curriculum leaders to know not only the curriculum material. They must also know
the people working with it and the ways in which the curriculum is experienced by
students and teachers in their schools.
The vice principals' curriculum leadership is influenced by the curriculum conceptions they hold. For example, the work I do with curriculum should reflect my understanding of curriculum as including but also being broader than the written material found in curriculum manuals. Other forces besides the leaders' own conceptions, however, shape their curriculum leadership. Leadership is also shaped by the context in which the leader works. Vice principals are in the middle, caught somewhere between the teachers and the principal. Their leadership then will be shaped not only by their own conceptions. It will also be influenced and perhaps even hindered by curricular conceptions held by the people involved in their school as well as conceptions of curriculum and schooling imbedded in institutional policy.

By interviewing fellow vice principals who are responsible for curriculum in independent Christian elementary schools using both open-ended interviews and a focus group interview, analyzing curriculum documents, and recording my own experience as a vice principal, I have explored the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of the curriculum leadership of the vice principal?
2. How do the vice principals' conceptions of curriculum shape their curriculum leadership?
3. In what ways is this curriculum leadership enabled and shaped by the middle ground held by the vice principal?
Historical Background of Independent Christian Schools

Shirley Grundy (1987) writes,

If we are to understand the meaning of the curriculum practices engaged in by people in a society, we need to know about the social context of the school...we also need to know about the fundamental premises upon which it is constructed (p. 7).

It is important from the outset, therefore, to describe the type of schools my participants work in and the way in which these schools operate as independent educational institutions. By understanding the nature of these independent schools, one can more clearly understand why vice principals are taking on curriculum leadership and further understand how they are doing this work.

The history of the independent Christian schools in which the participants in this study work goes back about 50 years to a wave of Dutch immigration following the Second World War. Many of these immigrants were of the Calvinist worldview. An important aspect of this worldview is that parents bear the responsibility for the education of their children (Stronks & Vreugdenhil, 1992). As a result, many of these immigrants started their own parent-run schools.

The schools that the participants in this study work in are independently owned and operated. They receive no public funds and are nonprofit. Each school is run by a board of directors which is elected by the membership of the school.

The governance structure of these independent schools can be referred to as school-based management. According to Kathleen Cotton (2001), school-based management is a governance arrangement in which authority moves away from a
central office and school board to each individual school. Those who advocate for such a management model believe that the individual school is the primary source for educational change and that those closest to the students (the teachers and principals of a specific school) should have an authentic voice in school management and improvement.

Such an arrangement tends to alter traditional educational roles. Cotton (2001) notes that the role of principal changes most significantly. The principal’s role becomes that of a chief operating officer. The role of the vice principal also changes. The vice principal moves towards acting as an advocate for the teachers with the principal. Glanz (1994a) found the same thing, stating, “assistant principals under school-based management, were not viewed by teachers as threats, but as colleagues” (p. 587).

Each of the independent schools my participants work in make their own policies and they adopt and develop their own curriculum as they see fit according to their mission and vision. This does not mean that they are completely isolated. The participants of this study all work at schools that are members of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS), located in Ancaster, Ontario. The OACS is a service organization that provides support, advice, and resources to parent-owned and operated Christian schools. The OACS offers manuals for the operation of the school (policy guidelines for hiring, contract negotiations, committee structure, etc.) as well as curriculum material. Since parents operate many of these schools with little or no expertise in education, one of the main sources for policy and curriculum has become the OACS. Policy suggestions made at the OACS are just
that, suggestions. However, most member schools do adopt or adapt policy and curriculum produced by the OACS.

Principals in independent Christian schools must manage the direction set by the board while providing a responsive leadership that is pivotal in attracting and retaining students and parents (Madsen, 1997, p. 136). In their Human Resource Committee Manual, the OACS (2004c) refers to the principal as the chief operating officer. In other words, “the principal is the primary agent of the board for school/staff/student purposes” (p. 9). This requires the principal to be busy with most areas of school operation. It also requires that the principal be available at a moment’s notice to deal with events that arise from a discipline situation to a broken-down bus. Also, principals in many OACS schools have begun functioning as development directors, involving themselves in community relations and fund raising. Of course, not all OACS schools have structured their schools in this way. Many, in fact, do not even have full-time principals, as they are too small to afford them.

What this has meant is that principals, by the mere structure of the school governance, are being taken away from curriculum leadership. The result has been that many vice principals have been given the task of leading curriculum in independent Christian elementary schools.

Rationale

The study of independent Christian schools is of personal importance to me. I am a product of Christian education, having attended independent Christian schools for elementary school, high school, and university. I have chosen to work
as an educator in Christian schools, and my wife and I will be sending our children to these schools for their education. By conducting research in independent Christian schools, I hope to be able to contribute to the their continued health and development.

There is more to gain from the study of curriculum leadership in Christian schools than simply the further development of these schools. I feel that the larger educational community has much to gain through a better understanding of what independent schools are and how they function. Specifically I believe this to be true in the realm of curriculum leadership and administration. The independence of these schools means that they are free from the centralized control of large school boards, powerful teachers’ unions, and the prescribed curriculum of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training (OMET). In an age of standardization and high-stakes testing, exploration into alternative, decentralized educational structures and curriculum should be encouraged.

Sergiovanni (1995) writes about the advantages of small, independent schools versus large, publicly funded schools. He wonders why school boards continue to operate and build large schools when much of the research suggests that smaller schools are better for our students and our wallets. Part of the answer to this question, he believes, is because it would require a rethinking of the dominant theories of educational leadership and management. More specifically, he states that the role of the vice principal would have to be reevaluated. Unfortunately, the inertia that plagues school reform also seems to have slowed down research into alternative school leadership arrangements, including research on vice principals.
In this thesis I have studied the curriculum leadership of vice principals in a small, decentralized setting, examining the experiences of an understudied group of administrators in a small, largely ignored, independent educational setting.

Outline of Subsequent Chapters

In the following chapter, I examine the literature dealing with vice principals as well as conceptions of curriculum and leadership. Although there has been little study on vice principals, there is enough to suggest that those holding the position are well placed for curriculum leadership. In Chapter Three, I discuss the qualitative methodology and methods I used throughout this research. I present my findings in Chapter Four, analyzing in particular the participants’ conceptions of curriculum as demonstrated through the type of leadership they practice. Finally, in Chapter Five I discuss some implications of these findings for the future of vice principal curriculum leadership as well as present some ideas for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature addressing the vice principalship reveals the position as one that is well established in our schools but that is not very well thought out or understood. In this chapter I explore the roots of this position as well as the way in which it is currently practiced in North America. By way of comparison, I have explored literature on deputy headteachers in Great Britain. I have included research on the deputy headteacher also because the context of their work and experiences as teaching administrators closely match the context in which my participants work.

The literature suggests that vice principals are well positioned to lead curriculum. Therefore, following the discussion of vice principals and deputy headteachers, I examine different perspectives on curriculum. In this section, I review a number of perspectives on curriculum. However, I focus on two, namely the curriculum as plan (Eisner, 1994) and a curriculum as lived (Aoki, 1993).

This chapter concludes with a review of the literature on transformative and moral leadership as it applies to the curriculum leadership of vice principals.

Vice Principals

Jeffrey Glanz (1994c) explores the emergence of the assistant principal position in the United States. He traces the position back to the early 1900s. Up until the 1920s, principals were seen as head or lead teachers. As head teachers, principals would take over classrooms to demonstrate to teachers how teaching should be done. Thus their primary role was in demonstrating to young teachers the art of teaching. In the 1920s and ‘30s the principal’s administrative duties
increased, shifting the principal away from classroom supervision and towards school management.

In order to maintain day-to-day classroom supervision, Glanz (1994c) writes that two groups of supervisors began to appear. The first group to appear was the special supervisors. Special supervisors were relieved of some teaching responsibility in order to help teachers with subject mastery. They had no formal training as supervisors but were generally recognized as highly skilled teachers. The special supervisor assisted teachers with the practical implementation of their subjects.

Special supervisors were readily accepted into teachers’ classrooms. Glanz (1994c) mentions a couple of reasons for this. First, the special supervisors had no formal authority and did not conduct thorough teacher evaluations. Second, special supervisors were usually female, as were the majority of the teachers at the time. The female supervisor was viewed as a colleague who was there to help, unlike the male principal whose role was often perceived by the teaching staff as a threat, someone whose presence in the classroom was more of a menace than a welcome aid.

The other supervisor to appear was the general supervisor. The general supervisor was hired to help the principal with the day-to-day running and management of the school. According to Glanz (1994c), they were concerned with administrative matters and official teacher evaluations. General supervisors, all of whom were male, were not viewed as helpers. Rather, they were often viewed as unwanted snoops looking for teachers’ weaknesses.
The special supervisor position did not last long and had mostly disappeared by the late 1920s. Glanz (1994c) states that by the early 1930s, the general supervisor had become the principal’s right hand, and by the 1940s and ‘50s, the literature began to reflect this by referring to the general supervisor as the assistant or vice principal.

The vice principalship is now a common position in schools throughout Canada and America. Yet the position remains one that is ill defined and for many vice principals, unsatisfactory. Hill (1994) found that only 24 of 86 Ontario school boards studied had clearly defined roles for the vice principal. The vice principal often finds his or her job description in the list of duties the principal has no time for, someone who tackles unwanted administrative tasks (Marshall, 1992). In positive terms, this means that the vice principal can find him or herself performing a wide range of administrative functions. This is why Matthews and Crow (2003) refer to the vice principal’s role as the mirror image of the principal’s.

The role of the vice principal in Ontario is defined in Ontario Regulation 262. This regulation provides school boards with the power to appoint vice principals to perform various duties as assigned by the principal. It also states that the vice principal may assume the duties of the principal in his or her absence (Hill, 1994). According to Hill, school boards have played a large part in shaping the role of the vice principal. In order to discover what the shape of the vice principal role was, Hill surveyed 126 public and separate school boards in Ontario. These boards were requested to provide policies, regulations, and other data pertinent to defining the role of the vice principal.
Eighty-six surveys were returned. Of these, only 24 had a policy governing or defining the role of the vice principal. Hill (1994) found that five of these boards referred to the vice as a principal in training, but only three of these had a clearly detailed process by which vice principals could take on a leadership role. Hill (1994) concluded that in Ontario, the nature of the vice principal role “derives more from custom than conscious effort at organizational or succession planning” (p. 6). Thus, he refers to the position as a rite of passage, a place where time is put in while a vice principal waits for an opportunity to move up the ladder to full principalship.

The lack of a well thought out leadership training strategy is ironic when one considers the large number of vice principals who want to become principals. The traditional view of the vice principal position is one of an apprenticeship for a future career in educational administration. It is often viewed as a training ground or entry-level position for future principals (Marshall et al., 1992). In fact, Marshall et al. found that 80 percent of vice principals aspire to future higher-level administrative jobs.

There are at least two important factors that determine the role of the vice principal. First, the vice principal serves at the pleasure of the principal. This has resulted in the principal being viewed as the visionary, and the vice principal being seen as the manager (Porter, 1996). Second, since many vice principals would like to be promoted, they are reluctant to rock the boat and make changes that would make their position more effective and enjoyable (Marshall, Mitchell, Gross, & Scott, 1992).
In her study of vice principals, Marshall (1992) suggests that although job descriptions vary from school to school, most vice principals have some tasks in common. First, vice principals arrange conferences with students and parents to discuss plans for student improvement. A second task is dealing with student discipline and behavioral issues. Third, vice principals often find themselves responsible for arranging staff schedules. Finally, vice principals counsel students on their educational and vocational choices.

Marshall (1992) states that vice principals work closely with the principals of their schools, sometimes co-ordinating with each other, others times substituting for the principal when he or she is away. These responsibilities place the vice principal in a position of support for the principal. Such a role provides an image of a united leadership team but can lead to the stifling of the vice principal’s own perspective and initiative, as it is the principal who sets the tone and who ultimately controls the work of the vice principal.

In Glanz’s (1994b) study of New York area vice principals, over 90% of the respondents believed that their main duties included handling disruptive students, dealing with complaints from parents, supervisory duties, scheduling, and administrative paperwork such as completing surveys and order forms. Most of the respondents believed that the vice principalship was an important role; however, many believed that they were not being used to their full potential. Most expressed a desire to be working on other duties such as teacher training as well as curriculum and staff development.
In a more recent survey of 100 vice principals, Weller and Weller (2002) found the vice principal participating in the following administrative activities: supervising students (98%), completing routine reports, and writing and enforcing policy (92%), participating in the selection of teachers, department heads, and assistant principals (87%), evaluating teacher and staff performance (78%), co-ordinating staff development programs (62%), developing the school's master schedule (57%), co-ordinating and placing student teachers and paraprofessionals (52%), preparing the school budget (7%), and acting as the school's liaison to community and civic organizations (5%). Many vice principals in this study were involved in curriculum and staff development, but by far the main jobs most had in common were clerical and disciplinary in nature (p. 12).

In her research with 72 vice principals, Cantwell (1993) studied the actual duties of vice principals as well as their perception of the ideal vice principal position. She then asked the principals whom the vice principals worked with the same questions. She found that the vice principals and the principals agreed in their perceptions of the actual duties the vice principal performed. She also found that both groups agreed on what the ideal vice principal role should be.

In Cantwell's (1993) study, the vice principals reported that clerical duties took up most of their time, followed closely by instructional supervision and student discipline. The principals believed that the vice principals spent most of their time on instructional supervision followed by student discipline and clerical duties. The two were very close together in this regard. They were also close on their perception of the ideal role for the vice principal. Both agreed that vice
principals should be spending more time on curriculum development and instructional supervision and less time on clerical duties.

Cantwell’s (1993) study presents an interesting dilemma. Vice principals and principals in this study had similar perspectives on what the ideal vice principal’s job should be, yet both were fully aware that the duties being performed were far from the ideal. An important additional finding was that the vice principals did not know that the principals’ idea of the ideal vice principal role was similar to their own. Cantwell states that this demonstrates a lack of clear communication between principals and vice principals regarding the vice principal’s role.

Perhaps there is more to this misunderstanding than a lack of communication. It could be that vice principals have motivations, spoken or otherwise, for not discussing their work and desires with their superiors. Marshall and Mitchell (1991) studied what they called the assumptive worlds of vice principals. Assumptive worlds are “perceptions of expected behaviors, rituals, and feasible policy options” (p. 397) that screen organizational behavior. According to Marshall and Mitchell, vice principals learn to do their duties while simultaneously seeking to impress their principal. In order to do this, vice principals live by assumed rules.

In the area of policy initiation for example, vice principals governed their action according to two rules. Rule one is limit risk taking. Vice principals need to be resourceful in finding low risk solutions to everyday problems. They also tend to involve themselves in projects that improve the school a little bit at a time, thus
limiting opposition and cost. Rule two is to remake policy quietly. Vice principals need to operate according to the unspoken school culture. However, at the same time they need to meet the needs of their school, principal, teachers, and students. In order to accomplish all this, vice principals sometimes find the need to quietly ignore the school rules and the instructions of the principal (Marshall & Mitchell, 1991).

Marshall and Mitchell (1991) elaborate on rules that appear to govern vice principal action in three other areas: acceptable and unacceptable values, patterns of expected behavior, and school site conditions that affect political relationships. In all three areas, vice principals try to do what they perceive is right while at the same time ensuring that they do not place themselves at a political disadvantage. This is due to the fact that the many vice principals want to be promoted. However, as Marshall and Mitchell point out, it also leads to the constraining of initiative and of values. Looking back to Glanz (1994b) and Cantwell’s (1993) studies in which vice principals reported dissatisfaction with their roles, one can start to see a connection between the pursuit of promotion, along with the assumption of certain rules of conduct that will further promotion, to dissatisfaction in working conditions.

The key to improving the situation seems to lie in the redefinition of the vice principal role. McChesney (1986) refers to the vice principalship as “a kind of wasteland between classroom practice and school leadership” (p. 7). The only way this perception can be changed is if the vice principals change it themselves. Porter (1996) writes,
Attitudes towards the position need to change for the better:
Assistant principals need to view themselves as change agents, not keepers of the status quo. Along with this comes a need for vocal and persistent efforts at calling attention to the inherent worth of the position. Again, assistant principals need to take charge of their own image and project confidence in the importance of their work.
(p. 28)

Michael Harvey (1994) offers some suggestions for how vice principals can empower themselves and improve their situation and their schools at the same time. Many of these strategies include suggestions for how vice principals should develop a clear vision of what they want to do and be as well as pursuing professional development opportunities to get them there. However, several other of Harvey’s suggestions point to the vice principal taking advantage of the position they already have and using it to improve their schools. Specifically, Harvey suggests that the vice principals “work to acquire a central location in the network of social relationships and system of communication in the school” (p. 31). In so doing, they can develop a network of influence and communicate between staff and the principal. He suggests that the vice principal “develop a capacity as an initiator, facilitator, advisor and resource person rather then a director and controller of other school participants” (p. 33). Perhaps most important, Harvey suggests vice principals work to “create the necessary conditions which allow for the operation of an authentic executive team” (p. 33), finding strategies to challenge views of principals who prefer traditional, top-down leadership styles.
In summary, Harvey (1994) suggests that vice principals take advantage of their middle position to further authentic dialogue between their colleagues and that they lead by serving, while at the same time challenging hierarchical views of authority. In other words, vice principals can take advantage of their middle ground position, taking all of the tasks they are given and using them to promote collaboration and teamwork (Dombart, 1992). In order to do this, they need to exercise transformational and moral leadership that strives to connect and support rather than dictate and demand.

Deputy Headteachers

The deputy headteachers in the following studies function very much like the curriculum vice principals in independent Christian schools. They work in partnership with the head teacher, or the principal, they spend most of their time as teachers in the classroom, and they perform a variety of duties that are different from school to school (Morrison, 1995; Webb & Vulliamy, 1995). The research reviewed emphasizes the various duties the deputy headteacher performs as well as the role conflict and stress that comes from being administrator and teacher simultaneously.

Webb and Vulliamy (1995) found that most of the deputy headteachers in their study had no formal job description. However, they express agreement with Alexander (1988) who discovered that deputy heads engage in four prominent activities: teaching students, curriculum leadership, general managerial tasks, and staff development and support. The majority of deputy headteachers in Webb and Vulliamy’s study were also full-time classroom teachers. In fact, most identified
themselves as teachers first. Classroom activities took priority over administrative responsibilities.

In his study on deputy heads, Morrison (1995) lists seven aspects of the deputy head’s role. These are: communication with the principal and staff, the exercise of curriculum leadership, liaison between the principal and the staff, motivation of staff, organization of resources, establishing and maintaining continuity throughout the school, and curriculum development. Morrison found that primary school deputy headteachers tended to focus on the first four activities of this list, or the interpersonal factors. Like Webb and Vulliamy (1995), Morrison found that the main concern for the deputy heads in his study was their classroom teaching and students.

In both studies, deputy headteachers expressed a feeling of conflict when it came to defining their role on staff. Webb and Vulliamy (1995) found that where there was a close relationship between the head teacher and the deputy head, the deputies felt a distancing effect between them and their teacher colleagues. This situation is problematic since the deputies view themselves as teachers and desire a close relationship with their colleagues. In Morrison’s (1995) study, deputy headteachers believed that conflict occasionally arose because of their allegiances to both teachers and administration.

Morrison (1995) states that deputy heads are ideally placed to take on curriculum leadership. He believes that the deputy head can lead curriculum through collegiality. By being in the middle of staff and administration, the deputy head possesses “the legitimacy, credibility and personal qualities to draw together
the strands of curriculum and to draw together the people involved in its implementation” (p. 67). Webb and Vulliamy (1995) found that deputy headteachers saw this pulling-it-all-together task as an important aspect of their work. Deputies did this by “promoting good channels of communication downwards, upwards and sideways” (p. 58). They also discovered that deputy heads, having very little time to work on curriculum, believed they could be curriculum leaders by being excellent teachers. They believed they could lead by example.

The literature on vice principals reveals that most aspire to a future career in senior educational administration. This is not the case with deputy headteachers. Jones (1999) found that 10 of the 12 deputies she studied were not interested in becoming head teachers. She reports that this finding is supported by a survey of deputy heads by James and Whiting (1997), who found that only 18% of deputies in elementary schools and 17% of deputies in secondary schools wanted to become headteachers.

According to Jones (1999) this represents a danger, that the roles of the head and the deputy are becoming so different that time spent as a deputy is no longer a preparation for headship. Glanz (1994b) made the same observation regarding vice principals in the North American setting, stating that the vice principal position has become so different from that of the principal that it is no longer accurate to view it as training for principalship. The same could also be said of principals and vice principals in independent Christian schools.
Certainly this can be viewed a dangerous situation when one looks at the future vacancies due to the number of retiring principals. However, the very fact that there are different roles suggests that this has come out of necessity and that the vice principal, the deputy head, and by extension the curriculum vice principal is a valuable and distinct part of school leadership. The uniqueness and importance of this role, therefore, need to be more clearly understood.

Conceptions of Curriculum

In order to explore the work of the curriculum vice principal in independent Christian schools, it is first necessary to come to grips with the fact that curriculum is understood differently by different people.

Print (1993) provides a list of how several educational thinkers have described curriculum. Here are a few from that list:

- Ralph Tyler (1949): All of the learning of students which is planned by and directed by the school to attain educational goals.

- D. K. Wheeler (1979): By “curriculum” we mean the planned experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school.

- M. Skilbeck (1984): The learning experiences of students insofar as they are expressed or anticipated in goals and objectives, plans and designs for learning and the implementation of these plans and designs in the school environment. (p. 8)

The key similarity in all these definitions is that curriculum is planned or a plan. Eisner (1994) refers to curriculum as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for students. Curriculum does not happen by accident. The idea of curriculum as a plan conjures up images of student
textbooks and teacher guides. Certainly Eisner does see these as part of the curricular plan, referring to textbooks as the "hub" around which curriculum programs are built. However, teachers play a crucial role in the development of this curriculum through their daily deliberations and lesson planning. Eisner suggests that the planned curriculum is not to be understood as a finished curriculum. Rather it is to be seen as an ongoing plan that is constantly unfolding.

Curriculum is dynamic and is constantly evolving through teacher planning and interaction with students. It often begins with a written text or guide, but it takes place in relationship. As Doug Blomberg (1993) writes,

curriculum is not primarily a plan for a relationship between an individual and a body of inert, objective knowledge. It is a plan for a relationship between living, growing, changing, learning people. It is a plan for what people will do. As such, it should be dynamic and responsive rather than static and mechanical in character. It is for this reason that some have characterized teaching as primarily an ethical relationship (Dooyeweerd, 1969; Fowler, 1983; Seerveld, 1980). (p. 67)

Certainly, curriculum is a plan, both in terms of curriculum guides, textbooks, and teacher preparation. However this plan is not a script. Blomberg (1993) refers to it as a hypothesis or a teacher's best guess prior to and during instruction as to what will encourage learning.

This view of curriculum as a dynamic plan can be seen in research that demonstrates how teachers make or develop curriculum as they plan and teach from
day to day. Ben-Peretz (1990) writes that curriculum, as found in the form of textbooks, has potential only. As teachers teach, they release this potential by interpreting the curriculum according to their beliefs and knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) refer to teachers as curriculum makers, not simply technicians implementing someone else’s agenda. They illustrate how teachers and students live out a curriculum together, that curriculum is actually an account of teachers’ and students’ lives over time. According to this view, the act of teaching cannot be seen as separate from curriculum development. Doyle (1992) refers to teaching as a curriculum process and states that as teachers teach, they actually author their own curriculum. This view echoes Connelly (1972) who believes that curriculum developers or writers and teachers are involved in the same process: that of curriculum development.

The teacher obviously plays a large role in the curriculum that is enacted in their classroom. It can be said that there are as many different curricula as there are teachers regardless of whether or not teachers are using similar texts. This does not mean, however, that within each individual classroom all the students are learning the same things. While classes of students do learn subject content together, each student is processing information and making meaning in their individual ways.

Aoki (1993) makes a distinction between the curriculum-as-plan and the lived curriculum of students. He states that the curriculum-as-plan is the work of curriculum planners and writers. The curriculum-as-plan spells out what teachers will teach, the objectives and intents, as well as how the teachers should teach. This curriculum is most often represented in textbooks and curriculum guides and
is usually referred to as "the curriculum" (p. 259). When one speaks of implementing curriculum, it is typically the curriculum-as-plan that is being referred to.

The lived curriculum is different, however. It includes that written curriculum material that is used in schools. However, it also accounts for the lived experiences of children as students, and it is just as real as the planned curriculum to which these students are exposed. It is also hard to define and perhaps even impossible to truly know. However, it should be taken seriously. In order to describe it, Aoki (1993) takes a look at how a specific teacher, Miss O, a Grade 5 teacher, is alert to the lived curriculum in her class. He writes,

The other curriculum is really a multiplicity of lived curricula that Miss O and her pupils experience. For Miss O it is a world of face-to-face living with Andrew, with his mop of red hair, who struggles hard to learn to read; with Sara, whom Miss O can count on to tackle her language assignment with aplomb; with popular Margaret, who bubbles and who is quick to offer help to others and to welcome others' help; with Tom, a frequent daydreamer, who loves to allow his thoughts to roam beyond the windows of the classroom; and some 20 others in class, each living out a story of what it is to live school life as Grade 5's. (p. 258)

In the classroom, the planned curriculum and the lived curricula intersect. As Aoki (1993) writes, "when the pupils arrive, things and pupils arrange themselves, as it were, around Miss O’s intention. They become ‘teachable,’
'promising,' ‘difficult,’ ‘hopeful,’ ‘challenging’” (p. 257). According to Aoki, teachers work somewhere in between the curriculum as planned and the lived curricula of their students.

By taking this lived curriculum seriously, one begins to take on a perspective of curriculum that is holistic in nature. Curriculum exists in all aspects of schooling. Schwab (1973) summed up these aspects as the four commonplaces of curriculum: teachers, students, subject material, and the milieus. The lived curriculum accounts for these commonplaces as they interact with and sometimes conflict with each other. Those who take on curriculum leadership need to understand all the commonplaces as they exist and interact in their own school. They must understand the planned curriculum; however, they must at the same time acknowledge and take seriously the lived curriculum in each classroom of their school.

Transformational Leadership of the Curriculum Vice Principal

The vice principal finds him or herself on middle ground somewhere between the principal and the rest of the school staff. This central position can lead to role conflict and stress. However, it can also open up opportunities for positive school improvement and change. The literature reviewed indicates that vice principals have inherited a vast array of duties and responsibilities. This can take them in all sorts of directions over the course of a school year. However, just as Marshall and Mitchell (1991) found vice principals operating according to unspoken rules of their assumptive world, perhaps vice principals need to begin to
assume an overall task underlying all of their activities. In an attempt unify the various tasks the vice principal performs, Dombart (1992) states,

I along with assistant principals throughout the country, resolve the role conflict by accepting all the gritty tasks attached to our positions and then using them as springboards from which to foster collaboration and involvement. (p. 35)

To recognize the vice principal position as using all events and responsibilities to further teamwork and collegiality is to recognize the transformational and moral leadership of the vice principal.

HarroVan Brummelen (2002) refers to school leaders as transformational servant leaders. Such leaders seek to empower their colleagues and their students. According to Van Brummelen,

Transformational leaders in Christian schools develop a Christ-centered collaborative culture using team-building activities. They provide teachers space where they together examine the relational world of the classroom, engage in meaningful discourse about their personal practical knowledge, and make sense of their practice within the context of the school and community. They welcome teacher’s voices and encourage authentic relationships. They help to overcome teacher isolation by providing time within the timetable for dialogue and joint planning. They also communally assess where the school is at, where it hopes to be, and what steps must be taken to continue in that direction. (p. 234)
Van Brummelen's description of transformational leadership emphasizes the role relationships and communication play in the day-to-day running of a school. He also emphasizes the importance context plays in understanding the meaning of experiences and realities at school for teachers and students.

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) also write about transformational leadership. They view transformational leadership as inspiring increased levels of commitment and ability among all the members of the school community. Such leadership, when successful, increases the overall capacity of the school to continuously improve. It does not focus on the power of the principal or vice principal. In fact,

authority and influence associated with this form of leadership are not necessarily allocated to those occupying formal administrative positions....Rather, power is attributed by organization members to whoever is able to inspire their commitment to collective aspiration.


Those practicing transformational leadership do so not for personal gain, control, or the maintenance of power. They seek to understand the nature of the school culture in which they work and people with whom they work so that genuine growth and improvement can occur.

According to Sergiovanni (1992), leadership, or authority, has five possible sources. First is bureaucratic authority found in the form of rules and regulations. Second is psychological authority which is rooted in a system of rewards and consequences. Third is technical-rational authority which utilizes research and
logic to convince people to follow. Fourth is professional authority which is rooted in a deep knowledge or expertise in the craft of teaching. The final source of authority is moral authority. Here obligations stem from shared values and ideas.

The transformational leader's authority must be morally rooted. Sergiovanni (1992) states that moral authority promotes collegiality and relies on the abilities of everyone on staff. The moral leader works to define the school community in terms of shared values and beliefs and works to enable all to live out these values in their work.

Michael Fullan (2001) also writes about moral leadership. He believes that moral leadership requires leaders to act with the intention of making positive change in the lives of the people in their school and society as a whole. The moral leader seeks first to improve the lives of individuals and then gradually seeks to make improvements in the lives of classes, schools, and the community in which the school is located.

How does this apply to the work of the vice principal? Marshall et al (1996) studied the work of career assistant principals and discovered that for many, their leadership is rooted in an ethic of care. The administrators in this study sought to bridge the gaps between various elements of their schools, including students, teachers, administration, and community members. These administrators were willing to commit large amounts of time to building relationships. They also refused to ignore the very personal impact their decisions would have on their colleagues. This concentration on interpersonal relationships blends well with Aoki's (1993) concept of a lived curriculum. In order to take the lived curriculum
of a school seriously, one has to listen closely to the many individuals who create the curriculum and understand the context in which this creation is taking place. Such leadership must be transformational in nature rather than hierarchical.

The concept of the transformational servant leader whose authority is morally rooted in an ethic of care is important for the study of the curriculum vice principal. Transformational curriculum leadership involves the equipping of those involved in this teaching/learning relationship to participate fully in the learning process as the curriculum plan is developed over time. Vice principals, especially those in charge of curriculum, are well placed to perform such a task. Not only are they in a position to bridge the gaps that exist between people on their staffs, they are also well positioned to connect the various elements of the curriculum as planned (Eisner, 1994) and lived (Aoki, 1993) in their schools. They are in a position to “draw together the strands of curriculum” (Morrison, 1995, p. 67) and the people implementing it.

According to Fullan (2001), if moral purpose is job number one for school leaders, job number two is relationship. He writes,

Focusing on relationships isn’t just a matter of boosting achievement scores for next year, but rather a means of laying the foundation for year two and beyond....Well-established relationships are the resource that keeps on giving. (2002, p. 18)

Curriculum exists in relationships (Morrison, 1995), not only between teachers and students, but also between the curriculum material, the support community, the administration, and the dominant school culture. As a
transformational curriculum leader, it is the vice principal’s job to create space  
(Palmer, 1993) in which these curricular relationships can flourish and improve.  
They are well placed to do so.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The work of the curriculum vice principal is of a personal, subjective nature that is unique to each independent school. Each vice principal works in a distinct context with a unique staff and in a school community that has developed its own policies and vision for education. Their job descriptions may be straightforward; however, the leadership they provide is unique to each vice principal. In this study, it was my intention to look at the experiences of the vice principal curriculum as well as their perspectives on curriculum and leadership. A qualitative approach was appropriate for such a study.

Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2002), qualitative research is used in studies that require an exploration and an understanding of a central phenomenon. Qualitative research asks general questions and seeks to understand the experience of the participants involved in the study. The purpose of this study is to understand the curriculum leadership of vice principals from their perspectives. The reality of their work and the nature of the leadership they exercise cannot be measured with any formula.

In qualitative research, the researcher does not intend to disappear in the interpretation and reporting of the data. Rather, qualitative researchers address their role reflexively, reflecting on their own values and beliefs as they interact with the data (Creswell, 2002, p. 57). In this study, I have sought to learn from the experiences and perspectives of my participants. I do have my own perspective on the role of curriculum vice principal as indicated in the first two chapters; however,
I also realize that this perspective is grounded in my personal experience and situation. I did not expect it to be the same for all of my participants. I enjoyed learning from and getting to know my participants. However, I also believe that through this research, my participants learned from and have gotten to know me. As Palmer (1993) writes,

In truthful knowing we neither infuse the world with our subjectivity (as premodern knowing did) nor hold it at arms length, manipulating it to suit our needs (as is the modern style). In truthful knowing the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships. (p. 32)

I have been conscious that as I entered into this qualitative study, I was entering into a relationship with my participants. Such a relationship demands respect as well as a research process that is credible. In this chapter, I explain my research methodology in the light of respect for my participants and the attention paid to the credibility of the research conducted.

Researcher Positioning / Participant Recruitment and Protection

Using Acker’s (2000) discussion of Bank’s levels of researcher involvement within a community, I would classify myself as an indigenous-insider. My participants perceive me as a legitimate member of the community, promoting the well-being of the community through my research. I am studying curriculum leadership within independent Christian schools to further my understanding of it but also so that these schools can benefit from my research. I am also, like my participants, a curriculum vice principal and have been serving as such throughout
this research. In many ways, I am one of them, “someone familiar” (Tilley, 1998, p. 301). This position has enabled my research through both access to participants as well as the depth of the data collected.

I was able to quickly secure the participation of the first three vice principals, individuals I already knew through my work as a vice principal. In three of the cases, the participants had expressed interest in what I was working on during the proposal stage of this thesis. After receiving ethics clearance (Appendix A), I contacted them via email. I had a more difficult time finding a fourth participant. Some potential participants I had contacted expressed interest in the research but were unable to participate due to other commitments. Others never replied to my emails.

Finally, I was given the name of my fourth participant, Al, by one of the vice principals already in the study. This made for an interesting situation. I had been conducting interviews with the first three participants while I was searching for the fourth. In fact, I had completed two full sets of interviews before I had even conducted my first with Al. The dynamics and the topics of this interview were different than the first three. I will comment further on this in the next section.

My position within the community did make it fairly easy to find participants. However, a note of caution must be raised at this point. Christian schools in Ontario represent what Acker (2000) refers to as an “academic small world” (p. 192). They form a tight-knit community with relatively few members. Although not everyone knows each other within this community, the possibility of making connections from things said in interviews to specific people is very real.
This is especially true of vice principals as they are a small group within this already small community. This raises issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Only they and I have had and will have access to the data. Still, there remains the possibility that they will be recognized by what they reveal in the interviews. In reality, by participating in the focus group session, the participants gave up their anonymity by revealing their identities to the other participants at the session.

This issue of confidentiality was addressed by way of informed consent. I took steps to help ensure confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. Further, one of my participants is a woman. By identifying her as the only woman in the study, the only participant with a female pseudonym, she would be at a greater risk of being identified than the three male participants. In our conversations, she expressed that she was not worried about her identity being revealed. Rather, she was concerned that if readers were able to identify her, they would automatically be able to identify her principal, and he had not agreed to be in this study. She wanted in all things to protect her principal and her school. After some thinking about this, I realized there were only two ways to handle this: provide the participants with all female pseudonyms or provide them all male pseudonyms. In the end, this participant and I agreed on a male pseudonym. Throughout this thesis, I will refer to my participants as Ron, Al, Dan, and Jon.

I have made this choice hesitantly. I am bound to protect my participants, and feel using all male pseudonyms is an effective way to do this. However, I am also aware that a female perspective is important and that the female experience in curriculum leadership can be expected to be different from that of males. I did
make attempts to include more female vice principals in this study but was not successful. However, my participants do represent a variety of leadership team arrangements in terms of gender. Two participants are male vice principals working with female principals, one participant is female working with a male principal, and one is a male working with a male. There is balance in the sense that female leaders are a crucial aspect of the context in which my participants work.

I have made every effort to ensure confidentiality by not reporting on identity specific data (Howe & Moses, 1999). The participants were made fully aware of the extent of their participation through informed consent and retained the right to pull out of the study at any point without penalty. To further protect my participants, I have also limited my description of the schools in which they work. Facts such as general location and student population greatly increase the probability that their identities may become known.

Research Methods and Data Collection

Using Merriam’s (1998) classification of the different types of qualitative research, the type of study I have conducted can be classified as basic or generic. By generic, Merriam meant studies that include description, interpretation, and understanding of a phenomenon and data analysis identifying codes, categories, and themes. The data in such studies are generally collected through interviews, document analysis, and first-hand observation.

In this study, I conducted two sets of interviews with 3 of my participants and one interview with the fourth. I also held a focus group session with all of the participants during which we discussed preliminary findings and various other
topics of interest relating to our work and the research. In addition to this, I also analyzed curriculum documents that are in use in the schools in which my participants work. Finally, throughout this process, I kept a research journal in which I recorded reflections, resources, field notes, and other items relating to the research I was conducting.

In the sections that follow, I explain the methods I employed in this research in light of the literature that supports respectful and rigorous research. I demonstrate how these methods were used to increase credibility and ensure respect for my participants.

*Interviews and Focus Groups*

The interview has become a mainstay of modern society. According to Fontana and Frey (2000), we live in an interview society. They write, "the interview has become a means of contemporary storytelling, where persons divulge life accounts in response to interview inquires" (p. 647). Interviews are almost expected by our society. In many ways, interviews have become an obligation, especially for public figures.

Interviews are also a favored tool among qualitative researchers. According to Scheurich (1995), interviewing as a research tool has commonly been separated into two parts. The first part is the actual interview, in which the researcher asks predetermined questions and the participant responds. The interview is recorded, either on video or audiotape. Then, in the second part of the process, the tape is transcribed and analyzed and coded. Scheurich believes, however, that this two-step view of interviewing underestimates the complexity of human communication.
The interview is not simply a question and answer session. It is a conversation between two people about a topic in which both have an interest. It is a conversation in which the researcher cannot remain on the edge (Brieschke, 1997). Rather, the researcher and the participant come together to explore the phenomenon under study. Learning takes place for both.

The process that I used when interviewing was always the same. I arrived at the chosen location and set up my tape recorder. If it was my first interview, I went over the informed consent form with participants before they signed them. Both of us kept a copy. During the interview I took notes in my research journal when items of interest came up to which I wanted to return. Immediately following the interview, I wrote notes and reflections in my journal, recording my initial impressions and thoughts. In all cases, I listened to the interview tape in the car on my way home. This process provided me with immediate familiarity with the interview that had just taken place. By the time I sat down to transcribe the interview, I had already listened to the tape once and had started reflecting on the content.

It was my intention to conduct two sets of interviews with all of my participants. The first interview focused on topics that emerged both from the literature and from my own experiences and perspectives on life as a vice principal. The second interview picked up on themes that emerged during the first. I felt that two interviews were necessary in order to increase the depth of understanding for both my participants and me. While I was transcribing my second interview with Dan, I wrote the following in my journal:
I see that as this discussion progresses, the two of us are coming to a common understanding of what the root of the role conflict is. We are building this together through discussion, through dialogue. It may not be true for all the other participants, but at this point, it is true for us. (Research Journal, February 10)

Role conflict was a topic that came out of our first interview and was something that I wanted to touch on again during the second. Had I just settled for the one interview, I do not believe I would have fully understood what the concept of role conflict was really all about.

This research was not a collection of isolated interviews from which I chose themes to discuss. Rather, it was similar to an ongoing conversation, an organic process of deepening understanding. This conversation developed from question to question, interview to interview, and from one participant to another.

The interviews were openended, meaning that I did have questions that I wanted to ask; however, the responses given by the participants led us in additional directions and to different questions. Fontana and Frey (2000) distinguish between structured and open-ended interviews. In structured interviews, the participants are asked preestablished questions with a limited set of categories into which their answers would be placed. In this type of interview, there is little room for any flexibility. In open-ended or unstructured interviews, there is room for more depth in the data as the interviewer and the participant enter into a conversation with each other. The result of this type of interview, I found, was a more natural give and take between the participants and me.
The organic nature of the interview process became very clear by the time I sat down to do my first interview with Al. Al became part of the study after I had completed my second set of interviews with the other vice principals. By this point, I had gone through the process of interviewing, transcribing, writing up initial impressions, and receiving feedback from my other participants. I wrote about this issue in my journal:

Today I interviewed Al. This interview came after I had finished the 2nd interview with my 3 other participants. I was somewhat concerned that items would come up that would alter what had already been done. Imagine that, being afraid that I would have to go back and reanalyze things in a qualitative research project!

(Research Journal, March 21, 2005)

Part of my misguided concern was that, in my mind, I was running out of time. I felt that I did not have the time to do another round of interviews with all the participants. What I discovered, however, was something that caused me to reflect on the dynamic nature of the interview process I was involved in. Over the two sets of interviews, certain themes had emerged and had been clarified. In my interview with Al, I addressed the same topics as with the others; however, we moved very quickly from the general topics to the root of the issues. Certainly, this is a function of my making connections through the questions I was asking, questions that emerged from the other interviews. We were combining two interviews into one. This, however, was possible only because of what had already developed in the previous interviews.
Following these interviews, I conducted a focus group session with all of my participants. The purpose of this session was to report my initial findings to the participants. As such, it was a form of member checking and researcher accountability as well as reciprocity for my participants. During this session, my participants and I explored themes that had emerged in the first two interviews. We also talked about other topics of interest to the participants.

This focus group interview was the highlight for me. I approached it with some apprehension, however. In preparation for the focus group, I had sent each participant a copy of a draft of my findings. I noted the following in my journal:

Today I sent the rough draft of my findings to my participants. I’m a little anxious about it. It’s the same anxiety that I feel on report card day. When I hand out reports to my students, I am on edge. I have put my thoughts on paper for others to read. I am instantly accountable. Ideas I’ve had are now “out there” in the open for others to see. I feel that way now. My participants now can see what I’m doing, really for the first time. I am now accountable.

This is good. If I truly respect my participants, I will be more rigorous in my research. I look forward to the focus group. I hope my participants come away from it feeling inspired and energized.

(Research Journal, April 27, 2005)

Beyond the accountability aspect of the focus group, I also noticed a continuation of the conversation that had begun during the two rounds of interviews. The conversation during the focus group continued to develop
naturally and easily. For this reason, I have included large, uninterrupted sections of this conversation in parts of Chapter Four.

Transcription

The transcription process is not part of the interview. The transcription is not data. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) write, “transcription represents an audiotape or videotaped record, and the record itself represents the interactive event” (p. 81). A transcription is actually twice removed from the data: once on the recording, and once again as the recording is put to paper.

The concept of transcription as an interpretive act is an important one to consider. As Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) write,

Analysis takes place and understandings are derived through the process of constructing a transcript by listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing. We think that transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data. (p. 82)

The transcription process is an important opportunity for data analysis to begin.

There is a potential downside to this interpretive aspect, however, especially if one fails to consider it. In her study on transcription and transcribers, Tilley (2003) found that the work of transcribers could be far from objective. She discovered that people involved in transcription work can and do leave their interpretive and analytical mark on their work. Those doing transcription can influence the interpretation of what was said through their choices of what is
represented in the text. In Kvale’s (1996) words, “transcribe means to transform” (p. 280).

Given the interpretive nature of the transcription process as well as the opportunity transcribing offers for data analysis, I felt it was very important that I do the transcribing myself rather than pay someone else to do it. This process provided me with prolonged engagement with the data. Further, my participants and I had agreed via informed consent that only they and I would have access to the data. By transcribing the interviews myself, I respected this agreement.

There is more to the element of respect for the participant that needs to be recognized in the way transcripts are written. This became apparent throughout the interviews I conducted. For some, their initial impression was that the transcript made them sound “stupid” or “like a dork.” We talked about the fact that they did not sound stupid, but that the spoken word when written down is not equivalent to formal written text.

During the transcription process, I focused on communicating the meaning of what was said. Stuttering and long pauses, “ums” and other repeated words, were not transcribed when they did not affect the meaning of what was said (as interpreted by me). Many of the quotes used in this document have been edited for clarity so that the meaning of what was said is clear by what has been represented in this thesis. All interviews were transcribed within a week of the interview. I used the same transcription conventions developed by Tilley and Powick (2002) for all of the interviews. I always transcribed with my research journal by my side,
taking notes of thoughts that occurred to me as I went along as well as questions I had that I wanted to bring up at subsequent interviews.

Once I completed transcribing, I listened to the entire interview once more while reading along using the transcript I had just constructed. Finally, I wrote a brief synopsis of the interview. This synopsis as well as a copy of the transcript was sent in the mail to my participants rather than electronically. I felt this was an important measure to take; as we all know, sometimes our emails arrive in mailboxes for which they weren’t intended.

The transcripts were formatted with one and half inch left margins and a half-inch right margin. This provided me with space for notes and codes during analysis. In total, the first two rounds of interviews translated into 196 pages of transcript. The focus group transcript was 46 pages long.

**Interview Analysis**

Creswell (2002) describes the analysis process in four steps. These steps are:

- Coding text data
- Developing a description from the data
- Defining themes from the data, and
- Connecting and interrelating the themes. (p. 265)

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) go into greater detail when describing the coding process. They state that coding of data begins with the research questions that inspire the study being done. Freeman (1998) refers to these as “a priori codes.” According to Coffey and Atkinson, these codes are simply organizing
principles and are not set in stone. They are ideas that the researcher creates and uses as a tool for analysis. They also point out that data relating to a specific topic or code will not always be found in the same spot, or in answer to the same question, in each interview. This, they say, is true to the nature of qualitative research.

In my analysis, I used my interview questions as a priori codes and looked for themes that emerged around each code. The codes that emerged during the first interview were addressed during the second interview. Once I had made a list of codes, I crunched similar codes together. In doing so, I was able to find the themes that I used in this research. I analyzed the second interview using the same process as the first. The themes that emerged from this second interview analysis were the starting point of the focus group session.

Once codes had been constructed, the data were further analyzed using categories and subcategories. By looking at these codes, categories, and subcategories, I began to look for themes. Themes, according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) are ideas that seem to lie beneath the codes and categories. Whereas codes and categories stick close to the data, themes are more theoretical and much more broad. In the end, I developed eight themes for analysis and discussion in this thesis. These themes were used as my headings in Chapter Four.

In order to provide a more detailed picture of my analysis process, I would like to explain how I developed one of my themes, that of role conflict. In the first part of my analysis, I searched for key words that I used as codes. I wrote these codes in the margins of the transcripts. Some of the codes that I wrote down were:
tension, guilt, identity, teacher advocate, principal support, who am I?, conflict, tricky balance, staff room silence, isolation, liaison, two-faced, awkward moments, don't speak.

I copied these codes down on a separate piece of paper and then arranged them in categories. In this case, I started with three categories, namely Identity, Official and unofficial knowledge, and Relationship with colleagues. I defined each category and then arranged the previously established codes under each category heading.

After arranging the data in this way, I began to put similar categories together. In doing so, I was able to group the three categories mentioned above under one theme, namely Role Conflict. This is one of the eight themes that I chose to discuss in the next chapter.

Curriculum Document Analysis

In order to understand the work of my participants, I analyzed documents that I felt would provide insight into the context and the work of my participants. The content analysis is important to this qualitative study. In fact, Krippendorff (2004) states that ultimately all content analysis is qualitative, even when such text is transferred into numbers for computer analysis.

In my analysis, I applied the same process of eliciting codes and themes that I did with the interviews and the focus group. This helped in making sense of the work the vice principals were doing and the assumptions made in the curriculum with which they and their teachers were working.
I chose eight documents to analyze, all of which were published by the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. Five were curriculum documents being used in schools in which my participants work.

- (1995). *Choices: Teacher Resource Manual*. This is a literature unit for the intermediate grades. It is based on short stories revolving around the theme of people making choices.

- (1997). *Mathematics: Scope, Sequence, and Skills. Grades K-8*. This resource lists the mathematical concepts that should be presented, taught, and mastered in each grade.


- (2004a). *Celebrating Canada*. This primary unit is an integrated unit that pulls together grades 1-3 to celebrate what they have learned about Canada together.

- (2004b). *Creation Studies: Perspective and Framework*. This document explains the philosophy behind the new OACS primary social studies curriculum. It also provides teachers with ideas for assessment and evaluation as well as strategies for dealing with split classes.

I also analyzed three other documents that were useful in determining the work of the vice principal and the nature of the administrative structure in which they work.

- (2004c). *OACS Human Resources Committee Manuel*. This manual helps schools define what the role of principal and teacher is and provides a
framework through which teachers are hired. It also provides a mechanism for settling disputes.

- (2003). *OACS/OCSAA Administrator's Salary Guidelines*. This manual helps determine principal and vice principal salaries and offers suggestions of what vice principals should be doing.


**Trustworthiness of Data**

Rigor in qualitative research “refers to the degree to which a qualitative study’s findings are authentic and its interpretations are reliable” (Padgett, 1998, p. 88). Rigor requires the researcher to prove through his or her methods and documentation that the research done was extensive and can be trusted. Rigor is a measure of the trustworthiness of a qualitative study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that trustworthiness of qualitative research lies in part in the belief that the findings of the research are credible. In this section, I will explore some elements of credibility and how I applied them to my research.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that trustworthiness is a concern for those who are reading and hoping to learn something from the report. However, these “consumers” cannot really know what went into the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The researcher therefore needs to provide enough detail and information about the data collection and analysis process so that the readers can make an informed judgment of credibility on their own.
One important way to provide assurance that the findings of a study are credible is through the active participation of the participants. Since they are part of the construction of the interpretations, they will know if the study is trustworthy or not. Therefore, "credibility is a trustworthiness criterion that is satisfied when source respondents agree to honor the reconstructions: that fact should satisfy the consumer" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985. pp. 328, 329). Only the participants really know if the researcher has been trustworthy and if the findings are credible. Therefore, member checking has been an extremely important element of this study.

After each interview, I sent my participants a transcript and an initial synopsis of what we spoke about, including my initial interpretations. They were able to read and approve the transcripts for use before I began coding. I also gave participants the preliminary results of the study and my draft findings at the focus group session, and they were able to respond to them at that point. Each step I took was in consultation with the participants.

Prolonged engagement is another element that is essential in establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). In this type of study, prolonged engagement refers to engagement with the data rather than engagement in the field (such as in ethnographic studies). In order to accomplish this, I listened to the tapes of the interviews several times during analysis. As mentioned earlier, I listened to the tapes in the car on the way home from the interviews. I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible after they took place and began making notes in my research journal while I transcribed. I also listened to the tapes while reading
the transcriptions. Prolonged engagement required me to refer back to the
document analysis as well as to the analysis of my own research journal as I
worked through the study. In short, I immersed myself in the data for the duration
of the study.

Triangulation is also listed as a way of establishing credibility (Lincoln &
Guba, 1985; Padgett, 1998). Triangulation is a way of verifying findings by
comparing sources of data to one another. In my study, I achieved triangulation by
comparing the following data sources: participant interviews, the focus group
session, document content analysis, and my own curriculum journal. These sources
of data were analyzed together and in comparison with each other.

In summary, in order to establish credibility, I have tried to make my
research transparent, especially to my participants. The readers will need to decide
for themselves that this document accurately reflects the research I have done as
well as the experiences of my participants. However, through the active
engagement with and verification of my participants, the triangulation of my data
sources, and through the prolonged engagement with the data, I believe I have
given readers enough to believe that these findings are trustworthy.

Limitations to the Study

The data in this study are nonobservational in nature. Findings are based on
what I was told in interviews rather than what I may have found through firsthand
observations of my participants working in their schools. Such observation may
have provided additional and interesting data. Also, due to time restrictions, I was
able to do the planned two sets of interviews with only three of my participants. I
conducted only one interview with Al. It could be that an additional interview with Al may have led to deeper data.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

In this research I have been speaking with vice principals who have taken on curriculum leadership roles. What this research reveals is that from the perspective of these vice principals, they are well positioned on their staffs to provide curriculum leadership. They enjoy this work and feel effective in carrying out their curriculum leadership tasks. They have not entered a wasteland (McChesney, 1986). As Jon says,

I don’t know about wasteland, but I feel like I’ve stepped into something different, a no-man’s-land (Jon, Interview 2, pages 1, 2 of 16).

In this chapter I explore the nature of the vice principal’s curriculum leadership. This is accomplished using the following eight themes:

1. Curricular conceptions.
2. Vice principals as curriculum leaders?
3. Teachers are curriculum developers.
4. Creating a safe curricular space.
5. Walking beside them as they change.
6. Authority and credibility.
8. Role conflict.

Under the theme of curricular conceptions, I examine the participants’ views on curriculum and how it exists and is experienced in schools. In the second section, I explore data that indicate why these vice principals are leading
curriculum, and their feelings on the vice principal leading the curriculum in place of the principal. In the next three themes, I examine the work the participants do with the curriculum and demonstrate how this work relates to their conceptions of curriculum. Under the sixth theme, I examine data that show how the middle position the participants occupy enables them to lead with the authority of an administrator and the credibility of a teacher. In the final two sections, I examine the part the vice principals in this study play in balancing the needs of teachers and principals and the role conflict that is inherent in their work.

Curricular Conceptions

In my initial conversations with my participants, I found a tension between their expressed conception of curriculum and the focus of their work with curriculum. They initially spoke of curriculum as a written document. However, their experiences as curriculum leaders suggest a broader understanding.

Dan: As a curriculum developer, I work on the course of study and the teaching methods to get you there...so that’s not necessarily my definition of curriculum, but that’s the part I focus on. (Dan, Interview 1, pages 15, 16 of 49)

Dan’s working definition of curriculum is different than his actual understanding of how curriculum is experienced. For Dan, the curriculum exists in two different forms, the written curriculum and what he calls the “hidden curriculum.” The written curriculum is that which is laid out in the program manuals and texts. According to Dan, the hidden curriculum is the domain of the
teacher, where the text, teacher, and students meet. It is what actually happens in the class. As he says:

I think the hidden curriculum belongs to each teacher. If we teach from a certain perspective, then that comes out in each classroom. And the hidden curriculum is often spontaneous...I don’t see it as a negative thing. (Dan, Interview 1, page 17 of 49)

This “hidden curriculum” is not that which is referred to by some as the imbedded and often times negative lessons students learn in school. Rather, according to Dan, this hidden curriculum is an important and positive aspect of the curriculum; however, it is the domain of each individual teacher and not something he wishes to dictate or interfere with. As a curriculum administrator, he focuses on the written program as it is laid out in curriculum guides.

I brought this definition up with Dan during our second interview. After listening to our first discussion, it seemed to me that a lot of the work he was doing as the person in charge of curriculum stemmed from a perspective of curriculum that was broader than a written program of studies. In response to this, Dan said,

I used the definition of curriculum as the program of studies even though it wasn’t the one I originally wanted to use. That’s how it worked itself out. That’s what you’re doing. But you can never have a program of studies in isolation. It’s nothing unless you have students, teachers, and the context. So when you develop your language arts program, it always affects the community that you’re working with. So I don’t think you can have one without the other.
Sometimes teachers feel that publishers will put out curriculum in a vacuum. And I think that what [the publishers] really need to hear is that the program of studies in a vacuum doesn’t work...it’s dead.

(Dan, Interview 2, pages 15, 16 of 21)

Dan’s definition of curriculum as a program of studies is rooted in the way in which this program is interpreted and given life in the classroom, through the interactions between text, teacher, and student.

Ron’s definition of curriculum was similar to Dan’s. In our first interview he said:

It ends up being the program that’s delivered to the students...and making sure it’s co-ordinated and making sure it’s laid out, and that it dovetails from year to year. (Ron, Interview 1, page 20 of 31)

Like Dan, Ron’s working definition is that of a written curriculum, something that can be “delivered.” The goal of my participants is the establishment of a well-defined program of studies that can be easily communicated to new staff and to community members through curriculum documents or binders. These summaries are especially important for independent schools that seek to differentiate themselves from the publicly funded education system and other independent schools. When people ask what is special about an independent school, they should be able to see it in the curriculum documents that are being used. The vice principal is responsible for the establishment and review of these curriculum documents. Hence their working definition of a planned curriculum.
It became clear, however, that from the perspective of the participants, a written document does not accurately reflect what is being learned in any particular school. Ron’s definition of curriculum is the program of studies; however, he also believes that it is “a changing animal,” one that is hard to capture for any length of time. This came through clearly as Ron spoke about a curriculum document that his school had on file that did not reflect the school’s program. He said,

It had every subject and photocopies of every book that we sort of do, but it was like we taught everything. And we didn’t. And like preambles that were 10 pages long, because they were just copied out of something. And so the last few years, what I’ve been working on and going nuts on is compiling an actual program of studies, what we actually do here. (Ron, Interview 1, page 5 of 31)

By trying to account for what is actually done at his school, Ron is attempting to get beyond the generalities that are so common in curriculum guidelines, which often suggest that at the end of any specific grade, each student will hold specific knowledge skills, and values. He is attempting to provide an accurate portrayal of what is being taught in the classrooms.

However, Ron would admit that such a task is, in the end, impossible. Once he finishes compiling the program of studies, he will find that it too does not reflect the true nature of what is going on in his school. This is a limitation of focusing on the written aspect of the curriculum in isolation from the other aspects of school life.
In our second interview, Ron and I discussed this view of curriculum. Like Dan, he is focusing on the written program. However, he also acknowledges that curriculum includes what is written down but goes beyond that as well. Ron's understanding of curriculum is rooted in the specific context of his school and in the lives of the teachers and students in his school. He stated,

[Vice principals] can't just work on the curriculum [material] all by itself. It's bigger, broader than that. Because again, when you become so narrowly focused, "Well teach this. This is good stuff," well then you forget about everything else. (Ron, Interview 2, page 16 of 22)

When Ron spoke about "everything else" he was talking about the nature of the community that supports the school as well as the kids in the classrooms and the teachers who are teaching them. Ron believes that vice principals are in a good place to lead curriculum because they are in touch with the students and the community; as he said, a curriculum leader needs to be in the classroom:

They can't be out of it completely. Otherwise, you know the complaint, "They do all their stuff way out there and they have no idea what we're doing in the classroom." Well, sometimes it's true. So you can't put yourself in that position. You do need to be aware of where the kids are at. (Ron, Interview 2, page 18 of 22)

Jon's working definition of curriculum was more obviously broad than that of Dan and Ron. This is clear in our first conversation:
Phil: Now the word curriculum, what is your working definition of curriculum?

Jon: What's being taught and what's being learned,

Phil: Those are two different things,

Jon: They are two different things {laughing}. Very different things. I'm just trying to get a handle on, okay, what are the kids learning when they come out of here, and what are we intentionally trying to teach them as they leave this place? You get all sorts of debates about what the actual curriculum is, like what is in your binder,

Phil: Well that's definitely part of it, right?

Jon: Yeah, and it should be. That's the stuff you're most intentional about. There are also things regarding how you are, how you react, how you interact with kids, that's a huge part of curriculum too. (Jon, Interview 1, pages 8, 9 of 34)

According to Jon, the written curriculum is important because that is where a school lays out its plan and its intentions. However, of equal and perhaps greater importance for Jon is the learning that actually takes place both through the interactions with the written material and through the relationships that develop between teachers and students. Both these aspects of the curriculum deserve equal attention.
Jon’s conception of curriculum seems to clash with the view held by many in his school. This became evident to him when he was considering taking the position. He said,

When I talked to someone about my present job [as curriculum vice principal] I asked for weaknesses in the curriculum. I was told that there weren’t any. I thought to myself, “yeah right.” I thought it was pretty interesting that someone would say that. It’s kind of like it was done. (Jon, Interview 2, page 10 of 16)

The curriculum is never done. For Jon, part of the curriculum that needs attention is relationships between students and teachers. He was trying to focus his staff on how they view kids, or more precisely,

What do you really believe? What kind of worldview is really shaping how you view kids? (Jon, Interview 2, page 8 of 16)

These questions, according to Jon, are curricular questions. Although he is not pushing any sort of action research with his staff, he is asking them to reflect critically on this important issue during professional development days.

The relational aspect of the curriculum came through in my discussions with Al. Like the others, Al spoke about co-ordinating and reviewing a written program. However, his work with the program is closely tied to his experience with his students. He said,

I went into teaching because of the rapport. I love teaching. I don’t want to sit behind a desk, you know. I don’t want to do budgets. I don’t want to have to look at, you know, even curriculum, that’s all
right, but even that is taking me out of the classroom. If I can visualize what [the curriculum] is going to look like in the classroom, then it becomes much more exciting. (Al, Interview 1, page 21 of 23)

Al’s view of curriculum and his work with it are framed by the connection the written material has to his class of students. The two cannot be separated. As contradictory as it sounds, from Al’s perspective curriculum work can take the curriculum leader out of the classroom. This is something Al does not want to let happen.

I noted the following in my journal in preparation for my second round of interviews:

The term “curriculum” or at least the definition the participants use as a guide in their work is the program of studies; what is taught (the curriculum as planned). This is ultimately what we are hired to deal with. It is what we “produce.” However, the experiences as described by the participants reveal a much broader understanding of curriculum. All touched on their work with what Schwab called the commonplaces of curriculum: the material, students, teachers, and the milieu. All also expressed one way or another a feeling that their work as curriculum co-ordinators is never finished. This experience reflects a dynamic nature of curriculum. (Research Journal, February 2, 2005)
The work, or to say it another way, the product the curriculum vice principal is expected to produce is a written product, a technical, tangible, physical curriculum guide that can be used as a benchmark for tracking teacher and student progress. Yet they are well aware that these written documents reveal only part of the curriculum that is experienced in their schools.

What the vice principals need is a method for performing their administrative tasks that accounts for the curriculum guidelines in their schools as well as the way these guidelines are lived out in classroom interactions. Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) talk about such an approach to curriculum mapping. They state that rather than worrying about aligning objectives, activities, and learning outcomes, curriculum leaders should focus on obtaining

- a rich description of classroom life and curriculum enactments as well as identifying values, assumptions, content, thinking, and cultural patterns and meanings. For transformative educators, curriculum mapping is a multidimensional rendering of classroom life – a full-color relief map. (p. 96)

My participants do have an understanding of curriculum that goes beyond the written text. I believe they have a rich understanding of the classroom life and curriculum enactments that Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) are talking about. This becomes clear in the following sections as they talk about the work they do with their colleagues. However, as part of their administrative function, they focus on the written aspect of these enactments. Their underlying conceptions of what curriculum is do not get expression in these written documents. Certainly this is a
result of institutional requirements for the tracking of the scope and sequence of what is taught in each grade. Still, there is room for vice principals to give greater legitimacy to a broader conception of curriculum in their work with the written documents.

Vice Principal as Curriculum Leader?

The governance structure of the independent schools in which my participants work has caused principals to be taken away from curriculum leadership. As Dan noted,

You know why the principals are giving [curriculum leadership] away is because they never get around to it. They have to deal with what happens right now, and they may have a morning set aside where they’re going to work on developing curriculum, and then they get a discipline thing, they get a bus driver in, the mayor is coming, whoever. They never have a chunk of time. It doesn’t work that way. And any principal you talk to will say that’s the one area that he or she never gets to, that developing of curriculum. They have all the right intentions, but they never get to it. (Dan, Interview 1, page 27 of 49)

Ron spoke in a similar manner about the state of curriculum co-ordination at his school before he was hired,

[The principal] had been doing some of the curriculum stuff just to pick up for what wasn’t getting done. Which obviously, there was a void there that needed to be filled. (Ron, Interview 1, page 2 of 31)
This is contrary to the trend that Cotton (2001) describes in her discussion of school-based management, where principals become more involved in curriculum leadership. There is one possible explanation for this. Even though school-based management devolves educational decision making to the local schools, a central office often provides other policy decisions and logistical support such as purchasing and even contract negotiation. For the independent Christian elementary school, all decision making, scheduling, purchasing, and organization happens on site. Also of note is that the principal is often the main person in charge of discipline, and not the vice principal. Principals need to make it all work together, leaving them little time for sustained focus on curriculum. The result has been that many vice principals have been given the task of leading curriculum in many independent Christian schools.

At the focus group interview, Jon talked about the wisdom of vice principals and not the principals leading curriculum:

Jon: We always talk about the principal as the educational leader of a school. And after talking with you, it was ironic that most principals [in our schools] don’t deal with curriculum, because what has more to do with the education of the students then what you teach? So in some ways I wonder, why aren’t they involved in that? But after reading through your research, it makes you look at the bigger picture that, yeah, principals are accountable to all these different people within the school community and have to make decisions about things as crazy as the urinal’s broken in the
bathroom to the bus broke down to I've got a discipline problem
over here. And then the Board is asking about budget questions for
next year and all those things. So curriculum kind of gets lost and
handed over just to the teachers in general. And therefore the need
for someone else to take care it. (Jon, Focus Group, page 17 of 46)

In the schools where my participants work, there is a perceived need for someone
to take ownership of the curriculum leadership. Since the principals are too busy to
give curriculum the attention it requires, it makes sense that a vice principal be
given the task instead.

This shift in curricular responsibility comes with some tension, however. A
major aspect of the curriculum vice principal’s job is curriculum review and
implementation. The OACS provides a model for curriculum review called the
Curriculum, Review, Development and Implementation model (CRDI). This
model is built on the premise that “the principal is the leader in this curriculum
review process. It is one of the major tasks a principal has since it brings together
the three main components of the school: students, teachers, and curriculum”
(OACS, 1992, p. 2). The fact that my participants lead the curriculum review
process in their schools suggests that the intent that the principal lead curriculum is
being ignored to some extent. It seems to be a shift in practice rather than a shift in
policy.

There was a hint of frustration present during the focus group discussion on
the state of involvement principals had with curriculum. As mentioned, the
perception of the participants is that their principals are stepping out of curriculum
and the classroom more and more. The perception of the participants is that this has created a substantial gap between the office and the classroom. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Al: They have to be on top of [the curriculum] though. How can they go into a classroom and do a teacher evaluation if they’re not familiar with the curriculum or if they don’t want to see certain aspects of the curriculum brought out in the classroom or if they [don’t] have that overall picture. If they don’t have that, how can they even go in the classroom and make suggestions about how to improve the teacher? I don’t understand that. It has to be a part of their work.

Ron: But it happens. It happens in plenty of schools where it’s the curriculum evaluation [that’s forgotten]. I’d make [curriculum evaluation and professional development] more closely related.

Al: They have to be.

Ron: But the evaluations aren’t happening as regularly, or at least good observations in order to help the teacher improve.

Jon: Evaluation of the staff?

Ron: Where that’s not happening because of all those other pulls. And so some [principals] aren’t as aware of what’s going on [as they should be]. (Focus Group, pages 17, 18 of 46)

The principals that the participants work with are required to perform staff evaluations; however, once they have given curriculum leadership to a vice
principal, there is an apparent lack of awareness on the part of the principal as to what is actually being taught.

On a deeper level, I believe another issue is at the root of this frustration. The CRDI model suggests that curriculum review pulls together the major components of school, namely teachers, students, and curriculum. This suggests that somehow they can be and have been pulled apart. In a sense, these components of schooling are torn apart when vice principals are given the task of co-ordinating a curricular program separate from other aspects of educational leadership.

The vice principals in this study work in a context in which curriculum can be seen as a component of schooling that can be separated from other components and delegated to others to oversee. They are, after all, co-ordinating curriculum in place of the principal and are, in a sense, an extension of that administrative office. They are overseeing curriculum on behalf of the principal under the umbrella of administration.

Their experiences as vice principals working with curriculum, however, betray a deeper understanding of a more holistic curriculum. Even though they are part of the leadership team of their school, they experience it as a teaching vice principal. Their curriculum leadership is framed by their experience of life in the classroom. This is a phenomenon that became apparent throughout this research. After my first interview with Ron, I noted the following,

The vice principal of curriculum lives the curriculum in all of its ebbs and flows. They feel the interaction and the change, resistance,
etc., of a dynamic lived curriculum. They are in the middle. They work with the written curriculum, but they feel the curriculum as it is lived. (Research Journal, January 22, 2005)

My participants have been given the task of co-ordinating and reviewing the planned curriculum in their schools. However, my research suggests that even as they attempt to focus on the planned part of the curriculum, they do so conscious of the ways in which that curriculum is experienced by teachers in their school. In the following sections of this chapter, I explore my participants' experiences as vice principals of curriculum and their work co-ordinating curriculum.

Teachers are Curriculum Developers

The participants in this study reveal a broad conception of curriculum through their understanding of the teaching process. In the data, I found that the participants viewed teaching as a form of curriculum development. They give teachers a lot of credit as professionals who know what is best in their own classrooms. At the same time, however, they are also in charge of ensuring that the curriculum of their school is well co-ordinated, that everyone is pulling in the same direction, and when new units and programs are adopted, that they are indeed implemented. It is a tricky balance.

Dan and I were discussing the new social studies program that was being implemented in the primary grades in his school. He was talking about how the new curriculum was stretching the teachers and pulling them in new directions. He said,
The teachers are just stretched to the limit because they feel that they have to do everything the way the writers wrote it up. And they're having a terrible time NOT FOLLOWING THE BOOK. (Dan, Interview 1, page 19 of 49)

This statement struck me as significant. Here is a curriculum vice principal, the person responsible for ensuring that the school's program is followed, finding himself exasperated by the fact that the teachers are having trouble straying from the written documents.

I found this perception throughout my interviews with the vice principals. Speaking about the primary socials curriculum, Al said,

The curriculum's so full, and the OACS has written so many units... focusing on those units and teaching those units is fairly restrictive in terms of what the teachers can do. They're so full, so compact. Basically, the only creativity that our staff can exercise is deciding which sections they won't teach in order to get the unit done [on time]. (Al, Interview 1, page 16 of 23)

Teacher creativity was being impaired by a curriculum that in Al's view is too full and perhaps too prescriptive.

It is interesting that teachers were having trouble adapting the material they were using. Analysis of some of the OACS curriculum documents demonstrates that they were indeed written with the intention of further teacher development. These documents emphasize the teachers' role in curriculum development. Although the documents are detailed and provide plenty of activities from which to
choose, the onus is on the teachers to make choices about their own program. Consider the following quote from a recent Canadian history unit:

*The Story Intensifies* provides busy classroom teachers with a framework for the teaching of history. It is not the intent of this publication to inhibit the creative ability or enthusiasm of teachers. The resources and suggested teaching strategies are designed to complement, rather than limit, the teachers’ classroom instruction. (OACS, 2002, p. vii)

This perspective of curriculum has been made even more explicit in the newest material produced by the OACS. During this study, all the participants were supporting the implementation of a new primary social studies and science program called *Creation Studies*. In the document, *Creation Studies: Perspectives and Framework* (2004b), the authors detail the following about the teachers’ role in curriculum development:

Most units give a number of suggestions for different approaches and lessons often have far more detail than can be covered in a given class period. Teachers will need to make choices and are thereby encouraged to see themselves as the “crucial curriculum planner,” making specific content choices and selecting activities that will touch the hearts and minds of their students. In this way, teachers are invited to take ownership of the curriculum....The teacher is also a crucial curriculum planner in selecting and developing the approach used for each unit. Though a specific model is
recommended, ultimately the teacher needs to decide if it is effective for his/her situation. (pp. 21, 22)

The vice principals were facing the challenge of getting their teachers to recognize their role in curriculum development. Teachers need to be encouraged not only to become familiar with the material they are teaching; they also need to study the writers' intentions for how the material should be used. In the OACS documents, these intentions are clearly explained in the overview, framework, and Christian perspective statements at the front of the units. It is up to the vice principals to ensure that the writers and the teachers communicate with each other by having the teachers read this material rather than skipping straight to the lessons.

The perception of teachers as curriculum developers can be approached using Connelly's (1972) concept of curriculum development. Connelly views curriculum development as one process taking place in two stages. The first is the writing process through which the curriculum documents are produced. The second is the implementation process of teachers. Connelly refers to these functions as external and user development. The significance of this process is that teachers become curriculum developers through the act of teaching. Dan referred to this when he stated,

I think we teachers tend to look at curriculum development as writing, and that's not necessarily so. It's working with what's written as well...there's a lot of curriculum development going on day in and day out. (Dan, Interview 2, pages 10, 11 of 21)
I found throughout our discussions that the participants recognize that teachers develop curriculum through the teaching activity. They acknowledge and even expect their colleagues to do something with the curriculum material they are given beyond teaching lesson after lesson. However, once they acknowledge that teachers are moving beyond the text, it must also be acknowledged that what they are teaching may be far from the academic benchmarks listed in the curriculum documents.

Jon expressed awareness of the necessity of teachers moving beyond the text. On the one hand, he was very pleased with the state of the curriculum guides and the layout of the program of studies in his school. He thanks the previous curriculum vice principal for this. However, he expressed concern about the relational aspect of the curriculum. He said:

I think many on staff are pretty regimented, and that’s how things are. They run a good program and a pretty tight ship. And when they see something that’s a little bit different and a little bit more relational rather then academic, it’s not always appreciated. So that tension is interesting...and I think [vice principals] can definitely change that. (Jon, Interview 2, page 8 of 16)

Jon wanted to focus teachers on what students were learning beyond the academic subjects. He wanted the teachers to take seriously the messages the students get through all of their interactions at school. Jon felt that as a curriculum vice principal, it was his business to do something about this. In doing so, he was straying outside the boundaries of the written curriculum.
Dan was also aware that the lessons that were being taught in the classrooms of his school often went beyond the written text. Similar to Jon’s desire to have teachers acknowledge the more relational aspect of their craft, Dan expressed a desire for teachers to tackle important issues through their lessons. He said,

So if you’ve got a classroom where there’s a lot of anger and a lot of relational problems, then your study on a particular novel will tend to take that slant. (Dan, Interview #1, page 17 of 49)

The participants in this study know that the lessons that get taught in the classroom are dependent on the needs of the class as expressed by the students. Usually students will not actually verbalize these needs. However, teachers recognize these needs as they become apparent in a number of ways: student boredom, anger, enthusiasm, apathy. To recognize teachers as crucial developers of curriculum, vice principals must encourage teachers to use the written text to focus on issues that are of immediate importance to their class.

Jon spoke enthusiastically about teachers moving beyond the curriculum guidelines. He said:

I guess in some ways maybe our schools have kind of a small view of what curriculum is. It’s what’s in the binder, and is the binder organized, and can I find it? Is it all there? And in most cases [the curriculum guide] will be well organized, a nice package that’s ready to go. In some ways it can be kind of dry. It’s a [curriculum
guide], but what are the kids actually learning? It needs a bit more
life. (Jon, Interview 1, page 13 of 34)

Through his work with his staff, Jon is attempting to get teachers to think beyond a
well-organized curriculum binder. It is not clear from the data, however, if Jon is
actually challenging a small view of curriculum through his work, or if he is
working simply on the effects of a small view of curriculum. Challenging views of
curriculum that cause teachers to ignore interpersonal relationships in their work,
for example, is a completely different activity than providing opportunities to
discuss these interpersonal relationships. If vice principals see a narrow view of
curriculum as a cause of unhelpful educational practices, then they should find
ways to address this view directly.

Giving the curriculum life. Ultimately this is the task of teachers: breathing
life into a written document. The task of the curriculum vice principal then is to
encourage conditions in which this can happen and then to seek to understand and
acknowledge this growing curriculum as it is taking shape.

According to Macpherson et al. (1996), teachers and administrators often
hold a view of curriculum leadership that is “framed by technologies of
management, administration and power rather than framed by the human context of
their work” (p. 28). Such a view tends to stifle a system’s ability to support
teachers as curriculum developers and teaching as curriculum development. The
curriculum leadership my participants provide can be seen as management of a
written program. There is a curricular framework that teachers are expected to
follow. However, the vice principals expect teachers to go beyond the program, to
develop and adapt it. As teachers themselves, they appreciate the importance of teachers exercising their professional control over the curriculum being taught in their classrooms.

I wondered when working on this theme about the connection between the conceptions the vice principals had of curriculum and the frustrations they were experiencing getting teachers to move beyond the written text of the curriculum documents. The participants in this study hold a view of curriculum that includes the written text but that goes beyond that. However, in their administrative role, they often seek to isolate the written aspect of the curriculum and use it to define and track the curriculum. I have noticed similar tendencies in my own curriculum leadership. It seems, however, that if teachers are held accountable only for completing units and meeting standards, all the talk about ongoing curriculum development could ultimately be ignored. Teachers cannot be asked to move beyond the text enthusiastically if the only record of their work with the curriculum is that they successfully completed the required number of units.

Creating a Safe Curricular Space

Williams (1995) states that “one responsibility of the assistant principal is to create a climate in which teachers feel comfortable in developing worthwhile programs” (p. 79). In order to help their colleagues work with the curriculum material that frames their teaching, my participants seek to foster collegial relationships and professional dialogue. In many ways, their role can be seen as one of refocusing their colleagues on what they, as professional educators, should be
doing and thinking about, namely being effective classroom teachers. To do this, the participants spoke about setting aside time to talk about education and teaching.

Dan and I spoke about the difficulty of finding time to talk as a staff about curriculum and teaching during the school year. At his school, two professional development days are set aside for curriculum review and development, but other than that, there is little time available in the midst of a busy school year to sit and reflect on teaching. In order to deal with this, Dan has instituted a summer retreat where he and his staff go away from the school building to discuss plans for curriculum for the upcoming year. Dan said,

If you stay at school for your retreat, the teachers are running to their classrooms every coffee break and either working on a bulletin board or they bring cut-and-paste to the meetings...they figure they can do that while you’re discussing. And they don’t participate....But when we go away, they know that whole day is our retreat. And so, for part of it we talk about schedules and so on, but most of it we talk about some issue or something that’s going to happen during the year. So all those opportunities, I think it’s our job to encourage and find ways to [talk together as professionals]. And we can do it, as I said, around the curriculum. (Dan, Interview #2, page 8 of 21)

The retreat has become a time for Dan’s staff to talk and think about curriculum right at the beginning of the year without the distractions of the business of schooling.
Ron is also responsible for organizing professional development days. He has been able to arrange for monthly professional development meetings just to talk about curriculum and instruction. He says,

[Our monthly professional development meetings] get teachers thinking [about teaching] as opposed to just thinking about everything else instead of [teaching]. So I got tired of just school business meetings once a month...it’s been rewarding to get that going. (Ron, Interview 1, page 6 of 31)

Ron’s staff does have other staff meetings where they talk about upcoming events, assemblies, and schedules, but the program meetings are devoted to thinking about and talking about the craft of teaching.

Finding time to talk about teaching and education is an important element of the professional development my participants are putting in place. However, the goal is to go beyond these specific days and make professional talk a more standard aspect of life at their schools. In other words, the goal is to establish a climate in which teachers can relate to each other as professionals and continuously learn from each other. This is not an easy task. Jon related how important and difficult this can be:

The last PD day, basically what we were doing that morning was talking about teaching. They’re all talking about language arts, but there are varying opinions on how to teach language arts just within our staff. Not great, not huge differences but, yeah, I definitely agree that it’s easier for teachers just to talk about their family life or
something they saw on TV last night. That kind of talk happens quite easily, but to openly talk and feel free enough to talk, "oh I really enjoyed this lesson" or "things really went well in this lesson" without feeling worthless or cocky about doing so. Just getting comfortable and making yourself vulnerable in some ways. It’s been my experience that teachers don’t like to do that. (Jon, Interview 2, page 5 of 16)

Ron had similar sentiments in relation to teachers talking about what they do as teachers with each other. He says,

Trying to grow from each other. I think that is the challenge, to make teachers realize that we are trying to grow with each other. That they’re not being evaluated for who they are. Which is a personality jump for a lot of teachers. Because what’s appealing about teaching for a lot of teachers is that you’re on your own, you do your own thing...but then to come together and talk about your craft? Whoa! I mean, what if they say I don’t do it right? Oh no.

(Ron, Interview 1, page 24 of 31)

Teaching is an extremely personal activity. The choices teachers make are based on deeply held beliefs and values that often not even the teacher is completely aware of. Teaching is not simply the implementation or transmission of someone else’s plans. Rather, as Clandinin and Connelly (1992) state, “teacher and students live out a curriculum” (p. 365). What this means is that curriculum is a classroom process (Doyle, 1990, p. 353). Put another way, teaching is a curriculum
process. When someone comments on teaching and curriculum, they are commenting on the teacher, whether they realize it or not. Sue Johnston (1993) discovered this in her research on the curriculum deliberations of a teacher named Helen. She discovered that Helen’s “platform for her curriculum decisions was who she was as a person and a teacher, these being one and the same” (p. 481). She quotes Helen as saying, “All you can ever give to another human being is who you are. If it’s your husband, your friends, your children --- the kids learn me. That’s basically it. I don’t think it can be any other way. All I can give them is myself.” (p. 481)

Jon related a story of a colleague he is working with that demonstrates the personal connection teachers have to their craft:

I think she’s a little bit intimidated at this point, and that’s too bad...I would love to create a way where she could openly feel confident enough to talk about the good ideas she has. And then if someone says something that might be construed by her as criticism, that she won’t back down from it right away, that she’ll be confident. (Jon, Interview 2, page 7 of 16)

For Jon, the struggle is to create an environment in which teachers feel free to share their ideas, successes, and failures.

My participants spoke of a number of ways in which they try to establish this collegiality and professional dialogue. At Al’s school, they started to meet in individual teachers’ rooms at the end of each week. On Fridays, after the afternoon devotions and announcements, the staff would all meet in someone’s room. This
teacher would share what her class was doing and display some student work. Following this, the staff would close the week with words of encouragement and prayer for that teacher. Al felt this was a very positive activity for his staff.

Dan encourages collegiality by getting his staff to read and discuss articles that are appropriate to the subject area that is being reviewed. He numbers the teachers off and splits them into small study groups. By doing this, teachers are able to work with different people each time. He has found this to be an effective technique and has seen positive results in the way his staff speaks openly during curriculum planning sessions:

They feel the freedom while they are going through it to natter and to complain and to, you know, vent their frustration, like, “this is crazy how much work this is to get together. Is it going to be worth it?” And then they have the freedom to come back 2 days later after their lessons and say, “whoa, that was great, that was incredible.”

(Dan, Interview 2, page 9 of 21)

He added later,

As a curriculum director, you have to give the teachers that space to vent and complain and struggle. Because if they just say, “Oh yeah sure, let’s do it,” then I think maybe you’ve got more to worry about {laughing}. (Dan, Focus Group, page 25 of 46)

For Dan it is important that teachers feel free to complain and celebrate together, openly communicating their feelings throughout the curriculum development process. It is also important that he is seen struggling right alongside his teachers.
Dan: But you know as a teacher then, it also helps when they see you struggling with it.

Ron: Sure.

Dan: Because I teach the stuff too, and I know how hard it is you know. And I can be one of those teachers who can come stomping into the school and like, “Whose bright idea was this anyway” {laughter}? (Focus Group, page 23 of 46)

For Ron, being honest about his own struggles and questions creates openness. He says,

We can learn from each other. And we can even say, “I don’t know what to do here” together. And that’s fine, to create a safe zone for that. Maybe the vp with all the curriculum answers and everything, I don’t think they could create that [openness]. I think they would set up more walls. “I’m not going to say anything, I’m going to look stupid.” I think you need to look vulnerable, you have to be vulnerable, an honest vulnerability. I don’t know everything here.

(Ron, Interview 1, page 23 of 31)

Ron is convinced that the view of the leader being one who knows everything does not work very well in curriculum development. He believes that the teachers hold most of the answers to the curriculum questions that are asked. As vice principal, his job is often a matter of deciding which questions need to be answered and in what order.
I asked my participants if they felt that they were well positioned on their staff to lead curriculum through openness and collegiality. All of them agreed that they were. Teachers can become isolated in their classrooms, either by choice or by design. The vice principal, and especially a vice principal who is responsible for curriculum, is in a good place to draw these teachers out. It is their work with curriculum that gives them a legitimate place in the different classrooms in their schools. It is part of their job to ask questions about what teachers are doing in their classroom. Although they have crossed a line and entered someone else’s space, they are not trespassing. They are there for good reason. They are like the special supervisor, the forerunner to today’s vice principal, who Glanz (1994c) states was given the task of helping teachers develop their programs. They also function like an internal curriculum coordinator (Sabar, et al., 1993) who assists teachers in organizing and developing their educational programs. They are in a position to connect teachers and to get them to discuss their craft openly, at least to some extent.

The space my participants are creating is a good first step for curricular and professional growth. However, it is just that, a first step. The importance of professional dialogue in the school community cannot be understated. As Palmer (1998) writes,

Involvement in a community of pedagogical discourse is more than a voluntary option for individuals who seek support and opportunities for growth. It is a professional obligation that educational institutions should expect of those who teach – for the
privatization of teaching not only keeps individuals from growing in their craft but fosters institutional incompetence as well. By privatizing teaching, we make it hard for educational institutions to become more adept at fulfilling their missions. The growth of any craft depends on shared practice and honest dialogue among people who do it. (p. 144)

Professional dialogue is more than just helpful and encouraging. It also involves constructive criticism. It is essential to the health of our schools. Curriculum leaders must establish a safe space in which this can occur, a space that is defined by openness, hospitality, and professional boundaries (Palmer, 1993). This becomes even more important when one views curriculum as being constantly developed by teachers as they teach. Short of being in teachers’ classrooms at all times, the quality and effectiveness of such curriculum can be judged only through open discussion of what is being experienced as the curriculum material is taught.

Walking Beside Them as They Change

Leading curriculum as a vice principal has implications for program and staff evaluation. Often curriculum and instruction are separated into two distinct educational categories. However, curriculum cannot exist outside of the classroom and the interactions of students and teachers. Since teaching is a curriculum process (Doyle, 1990), it follows that improved teaching will result in improved curriculum. Curriculum improvement and professional development go hand-in-hand.
This proved to be a tricky area for my participants. They believe that they are well placed to evaluate curriculum in the classrooms of their schools. However, they provide words of caution as well. As Al said,

We are not there to evaluate or to report to the board or to make it very official. It could be very unofficial....Vice principals are better received because the teacher won't be as tense and try to put on this super lesson. They'll just show you what they're doing. (Al, Interview 1, pages 13, 14 of 23)

The condition that frees teachers up to relax and share, according to Al, is that he is not there in an official evaluator capacity. He is not writing a report for the teacher's file. He is not the principal and does not want to be viewed as one.

Helping teachers develop their programs and improve instruction is an area the vice principals are keenly interested in. However, this can quickly stray into the area of teacher supervision. As soon as they become a supervisor, the participants feel that their work in connecting teachers through collegiality may suffer. Jon expressed concern about this aspect of his job. He said,

If I was ever going to visit classrooms, it would be pretty clear I'm not doing this on a supervisory role. But having said that, my principal asks for feedback sometimes about staff situations, and it borders on asking me to give supervisory comments about another staff member. I usually say it's not really my job to supervise. (Jon, Interview 2, page 6 of 16)
When I asked Jon about the possibility of entering a class informally and watching how curriculum is being developed, Jon still had reservations. He did not want to be put into a situation where his colleagues would view him as a supervisor. This could interfere with the open give and take that Jon is hoping to establish in his school.

At the focus group interview, we had a very interesting conversation surrounding curriculum and teacher evaluation and the vice principal’s role in these. The following is an excerpt from that conversation. It illustrates the desire of the vice principals to help teachers grow professionally with each other. However, it also indicates their desire to do that from the middle, to evaluate as a colleague and not to judge.

Phil: I would like to see professional growth and classroom supervision go hand in hand. And that’s a wall I’m running up against. How can I do that from my position? Time is a factor. Also that I’m not the principal...and as soon as I start to make judgments, I’ve lost my middle ground. It’s okay to make judgments I guess, but I would like to improve the teaching for the students’ sake and that can’t be done in a judgmental way.

Ron: But just attaching the word evaluation to your job title alters that scenario. You’re not working collegially any more. The word evaluation has judgmental connotations to it, so it’s going to happen.

Dan: But evaluation is always done for the purpose of growth.
Ron: Oh it is. But say evaluation to anybody and there’s baggage attached to it. No matter how much work you do with it. And I think you can make it a growth opportunity, and you work towards that. But still, and I would agree with you, Phil, if you attached [evaluation to your job description], your position is altered significantly.

Al: If you don’t do it as a form of evaluation, you can take it as a suggestion, you can take it as do it or don’t do it. It’s such a personal job, teaching. If you evaluate somebody, they might change because either they have to or they want to. If they have to, they’re not going to do it willingly, and it’s going to fall by the side...I think by making suggestions, teachers might see the need more. Whereas if you evaluate them officially, they have to do it because you said so. And I don’t know if you can make major change that way, to force somebody to do something. Especially if you have an experienced staff. They’ll do it grudgingly....But if they can see the need themselves, and of course often the more experienced staff often don’t see the need to make any changes. Then you have to go at it in a lot more of a subtle way.

Ron: Yeah, but somebody needs to do it still. And if the board has said you shall do x number of evaluations, then okay, this is a board-mandated thing. It’s not, “Let’s get around and chat and
figure some things out together.” You end up with a [written evaluation] eventually.

Al: And you’re accountable, and you have to go back and say what changes have been made. How are you going to implement that? How are you going to maintain that? How are you going to evaluate that? So that all of a sudden becomes part of your strategic goals.

Dan: Isn’t that part of our mandate, our role, to walk beside the teachers as they change? (Focus Group, pages 19, 20 of 46)

Glanz (1994b) raises this important question, “How can I, as an assistant principal, minimize the stigma of evaluation and at the same time deliver meaningful assistance to teachers in improving student learning?” (p. 581). The solution for Glanz is breaking down the hierarchical structure of the school and including more people in the curricular decision making process. Most important in this arrangement, the teachers and the vice principal need to have clearly stated common goals, the key one being excellent instruction for the sake of improved student learning. This is the goal my participants are pursuing. Their method is to work among their fellow teachers, to work with them and help them recognize their own gifts and those of others. As they do this, they attempt “to free teachers to discover their own personal solutions and to become themselves more fully” (McBride & Skau, 1995, p. 267).

The key for the vice principal is to maintain the reality and the appearance among their colleagues that they are working together to improve student learning
and not making judgments on their competence. In Dan’s words, they walk beside
the teachers as they change. They are able to do so in part because of their position
on staff. They are teachers and they are vice principals. As vice principals, they
are in a position to mandate change; however, as teachers, they are also responsible
for implementing these changes along with the rest of the staff. They have, in a
very real sense, connected administration and teaching in an attempt to improve
instruction and student learning.

Authority and Credibility

The ability of my participants to improve curriculum depends much on how
well they use their middle position on staff. Much like the deputy headteacher, the
curriculum vice principal must possess “the legitimacy, credibility and personal
qualities to draw together the strands of curriculum and to draw together the people
involved in its implementation” (Morrison, 1995, p. 67). My participants feel that
in many ways, they have achieved this.

Dan: I’m blown away that people do respect me. When I talk,
they listen. That blows me away. I just think, “When did it
happen?” I’m not sure when that happened. But all of a sudden it
did. (Dan, Interview 1, page 43 of 49)

In our first interview, Dan expressed surprise at the fact that people in the
community listen to his ideas and come to him for advice. A humble leader, Dan
wonders when this change occurred. When did people start coming to him for
answers and guidance?
Ron had some thoughts on this. For him, things changed as soon as he became vice principal:

I think what surprised me was that teachers started coming to me and asking me for stuff, or asking me for advice and direction right away... which was good, there's some encouragement there. (Ron, Interview 1, page 8 of 31)

Both Dan and Ron had been teachers in their schools before they became vice principals. When they became vice principals, things changed almost immediately. The vice principal title placed them in a new position on staff, and the result was that people started to listen to them and come for advice. They were not new to the staff, but their new title changed the way they were viewed. People recognized the title as one that came with a certain amount of authority and acted accordingly. The change was noticeable and immediate.

For Jon, the experience of becoming vice principal was a little different. He had come from another school to fill the vice principal role. He did not have any well-established relationships with his colleagues, and therefore he did not notice any drastic change in his relationship with them. In one of our conversations, I asked him if having the vice principal title empowered him to take on curriculum leadership in his new surroundings. He replied,

I think in some ways, even for myself, you said it empowers us, and maybe that's true. Because I'm more open, I feel like it's my place to say something when maybe otherwise I may have shut up. So in that respect, if I was just a regular teacher coming into a new school,
I wouldn't have been as vocal about my opinions. But coming in and feeling like I was in a bit of a leadership position, I don't know, it's almost my responsibility to say if I don't think things are quite right in a certain way. Then it is my business to say something.

(Jon, Interview 2, page 3 of 16)

My participants find that the vice principal title is significant for leadership in two ways. The title has an effect on the way the vice principal is perceived by the people around them. People respond to them as administrative figures. These responses are as varied as the situations teachers may find themselves in from day to day. Also, the title can have an effect on the way the vice principal conducts him or herself. It becomes their place to speak up when circumstances require.

There is more to the authority possessed by the vice principal than that which is contained in their administrative title, however. All of the participants view themselves as teachers as well as vice principals. It is this identity as teacher that they believe gives them credibility on staff to lead, especially when it comes to curriculum matters. Dan spoke about the difference between his leadership and that of his principal. He says,

[Being a teacher] gives me a little more credibility with the teachers. They come more easily to me because they know that I know what it's like in the classroom. (Dan, Interview 1, page 22 of 49)

Ron too believes that teachers come to him with curriculum questions because they know that, as a teacher, he will understand where they are coming from. However, for him, this credibility requires constant maintenance:
Since I’ve taken on the vp role, I think, okay if I think this is a good thing, I bloomin’ well be trying it before anybody else tries it too.

Or else forget it. Everyone can easily shrug their shoulders and say, “yeah, yeah, nice try Ron. We know what you’re like.” So it’s probably improved my teaching, because I’m more conscious of that. It’s not just my eyes anymore that I’m considering. It’s other eyes as well. (Ron, Interview 2, pages 19, 20 of 22)

Without credibility as a teacher, the leadership the vice principals provide may fall short of being effective. A key difference between their leadership and that of their principal is that, like the deputy headteachers in Britain, they continue to be teachers and as such often lead by example.

As Ron mentioned, his administrative curriculum work has improved his teaching. He is up-date-on curricular innovations and is implementing new programs along with his colleagues. What happens, then, when a vice principal is a bad example of a teacher? Throughout this study, little mention was made of the vice principals being evaluated for their teaching. Where are they getting their support as teachers? If the openness they are seeking to establish through their professional development activities is effective, they will benefit just as much as their fellow teachers will. In the meantime, however, the vice principals need to ensure that they are properly evaluated, by the principal or even fellow teachers, to ensure that they continue to grow professionally. This too will lend credibility to their leadership.
The middle ground between administration and teaching is a potentially advantageous one. My participants have found that the combination of administrative authority and teacher credibility has positioned them well to lead in very real, but often quiet and unseen ways. They feel they have the authority to speak up when things need to change, and they understand the teachers with whom they are working because, in the end, they too are teachers.

Keeping the Balance: Connecting Principals and Teachers

The principals in the schools where my participants work have passed curriculum leadership over to the vice principal. This, however, has separated the principals somewhat from the realities of life in the classrooms of their schools. They may know what units are being taught in what grade; however, given all of their principal’s other duties and concerns, they may not have a clear idea of the larger curricular picture. It becomes the vice principal’s job then not only to support their principal, but also to reconnect the principal to the curriculum as it is experienced in the school.

An important aspect of the vice principal’s job is to support and complement the leadership of the principal. My participants were very conscious of the need to support the principal in front of the community and the staff. It became clear that out of all the duties the vice principals have been given, the primary one is to assist and support the principal.

Marshall et al. (1992) refers to this principal support function as “passing the loyalty test” (p.83). Vice principals often face the moral dilemma of supporting their principal in public when they might actually question him or her in
private. To disagree publicly with a principal “constitutes a social error that may prevent an assistant principal from advancing” (p. 83). According to Marshall, some loyalty errors a vice principal can commit are failure to support the principal, defiance of orders or publicly questioning superiors. Would the attitude be different for vice principals who have no intention of moving up the career ladder? Vice principals depend on their principals not only to become a principal in the future. They also depend on their principal for the position they currently hold. They are replaceable therefore loyalty is still an issue. What Marshall et al. (1996) did find was that vice principals who intended to remain vice principals focused on relationships and bridging gaps in communication among their colleagues rather than on themselves and their position. However, there is no indication that these vice principals were more willing to challenge their principals than others.

The vice principals in this study expressed a genuine concern for their principals. The loyalty they have to their principal is more than a sense of duty or obligation. They understand the principal is in a stressful and often lonely position. Being there for the principal to talk to and get suggestions from is an important role for the vice principal to fill. Consider the following excerpt from the focus group:

Jon: I find with my principal, she’ll come to me to talk about staff issues more so than staff will come to talk to me about principal issues or board issues. It comes the other way. And if she’s having a situation with a staff member, she’ll come and talk to me about it. “Am I being reasonable, is this the right thing to do here?” And just kind of bounce ideas off me. So in some ways I’m
her sounding board rather than I’m the staff’s sounding board. And that just may be the circumstance right now. That could change in a year or two as well.

Ron: But I think that’s only wise that that situation can exist. Because I know I’ve been in enough situations where when you get that second opinion, sometimes you can turn 180 degrees after hearing that second opinion. Because you thought on your own that was the way to go. Sometimes you just twig it a little and go a different direction. But if the principal doesn’t have that person there, they can just plow ahead and do something, then they go, “Shoot, that wasn’t [right].” So they need that, they do need the vp there to hear some things.

Jon: And maybe I give her more of the teacher angle. Like she’ll ask me, “Okay, how do I talk to this staff member about this certain issue?” And then I try to put myself in that staff member’s shoes. You know, how would I feel if the administrator came to talk to me about that as just a normal teacher. And that gives me a different set of eyes than what she has to look at those situations.

Dan: I think that’s a really important role that we play. And I know that’s one that my principal really appreciates, that he finally has someone to talk to. (Focus Group, pages 11, 12 of 46)

The support the vice principals give their principals is not only the moral support of being willing to listen and offer honest advice. It is also part of their
support role to provide the principal with an awareness of what is going on in the lives and maybe the minds of the teachers. They connect their principals to aspects of life at school that the principals may not be fully aware of.

While they support the principal, the vice principals are also called upon to advocate for the teachers in many cases. Al spoke about the need for the teachers to have an advocate in the office. He believes that in many cases the principal’s hands are tied by their duty to support the direction set by the board:

Some principals lean more towards being an advocate for the board, some are more aligned with the teachers. It’s hard sometimes to walk that balance, whereas the vice principal’s much closer to the staff. (Al, Interview 1, page 5 of 23)

Since Al is not immediately responsible to the board, he can speak on behalf of the teachers when issues arise. However, he stresses the need to be careful in this advocacy role:

I really have to be careful that I don’t undermine [my principal’s] authority. That’s always on the forefront of my mind. (Al, Interview 1, page 8 of 23)

Dan also spoke about this balancing act. He says,

I see things that my principal doesn’t see, okay…I’m an advocate for teachers who can’t get their units done or an advocate for teachers who I know are having a rough time at home. (Dan, Interview 1, page 23 of 49)
Dan feels that since he is a teacher and since he spends more time with teachers than the principal does, he is more in tune with what is going on in their lives and their classrooms and can speak to the principal on their behalf when they do not feel comfortable doing so. He sees this as a good arrangement, but only under the following condition:

As long as the teachers know that there are no barriers between you and the principal. And I know some cases where that has happened, where there has been a big power struggle or there has been a lot of antagonism between the principal and the vice principal. (Dan, Interview 2, page 3 of 21)

For Dan and Al, it is important that in their teacher advocacy role, they are clear with teachers that they will not work behind their principal’s back. This requires discernment into the motives behind teacher requests. Ron spoke about being careful in this area too. When I asked him about the reasons why teachers may come to him and not the principal, he said,

Sometimes it’s done for the wrong reasons. Because it’s just like, our daughter will ask me for something and I’ll say no. And then she goes and asks mom. Well, they know how our principal’s going to respond. They won’t go and ask him. They’ll go to me first, hoping that I say, “oh yeah, go for it.” And depending on the thing, sometimes I will say, “yeah, go for it.” But for other issues that I know are bigger and more significant, I just hold off on that. (Ron, Interview 1, page 19 of 31)
In cases like these, the curriculum vice principal needs to ensure that he or she is not being used as the “princiPAL” (Glanz, 1994b, p. 583).

During the focus group interview, the analogy of the principal and the vice principal functioning like mom and dad was taken a little further.

Phil: Where is the balance between speaking up for the teachers but also advocating for what the principal needs? Does anyone else find themselves in that position, or is it just me? {laughter}  
Ron: No, no, it happens. And like Dan said, some of the things they tell me, they tell me knowing full well that I’m going to end up discussing it with the administrator. They know that. But they don’t want to go that route.

Phil: You’re safer.

Ron: Yeah.

Al: Because then it becomes official.

Ron: Yeah, I think so.

Al: It’s like, I think in your document when you said you’re kind of asking Mom because Mom’s easier, and then instead of going to Dad, you go through Mom first.

Dan: And Mom will go to Dad,

Al: Yeah. So we’re Mom {laughter}. (Focus Group, pages 9, 10 of 46)

It is interesting that even though two of my participants are males working with female principals, they see that in some cases, they have taken on a motherly
role, while their female principals seem to have assumed the more traditional role of the patriarchal principal. Whether this is simply the nature of the principal role when exercised as a chief operating officer or it is the perception of teaching staffs that the vice principal is a preferred initial option, I would only be guessing. However, it is clear that the vice principals are aware that they play a key role in bridging a gap that exists between the teachers and the principal. With all the duties the principals in their schools are performing, it is not surprising that this gap could exist.

The balancing act between being an advocate for teachers in the office and supporting the principal in the staff room, although difficult, is an essential role filled by these vice principals. In fact, according to Harvey (1994), vice principals should be working to attain this central position in school communications. He notes that “power differences between teachers and the principal can prevent open communication” (p. 31). Teachers may find it awkward or even threatening to approach the principal on difficult topics. Further, in agreement with Al’s perception of the principal’s hands being tied, Harvey notes that principals are often the focus for accountability for the school community and as a result are often limited in their ability to advocate for teachers. As a result, the vice principal “becomes a key participant in dialogue among teachers at a school site” (p. 31). My participants are often the teachers’ link to the principal and should take this role seriously. On the other hand, my participants are the principal’s link to the staff and the classroom. As such, they “can exercise leadership when they focus the thinking of colleagues on school priorities as well as school problems” (pp. 31, 32).
They play a crucial role in interpreting the experiences of teachers and students as they work with the curriculum for principals whose attention is often elsewhere.

Role Conflict

Al and I were discussing the vice principal position and the way it is structured within the independent Christian school context. During this conversation, he said the following:

So, I find that in our schools, the vp is basically viewed as a teacher in charge or a principal want-to-be. But it's not a position. (Al, Interview 1, page 21 of 23)

For Al, the vice principalship position was perceived as being filled by people who were there to take over when the principal was away or people who were hoping to one day become a principal themselves. This perception is similar to Hill's (1994) finding that the vice principalship in Ontario was becoming an educational position with little deliberate thought put into its best possible use.

In the previous sections, I explored the conceptions my participants had of curriculum and teaching as well as their role in balancing a written program with the curriculum being experienced by teachers and students in their schools. I wondered, given their perspectives, duties, and middle position, how they identified themselves and how they felt others perceived them. Were they teachers-in-charge or principal want-to-bes? Or were they something else?

The participants in this study have between 10% and 40% release time for their vice principal duties. They spend most of their time teaching. This is reflected in the way they view themselves. Much like the deputy headteachers in
Britain, when asked how they identify themselves, my participants all said that they identified themselves as teachers.

There were variations to this identification. Jon stated,

When people ask me, “So what do you do?” “Oh I teach at [ ] Christian school,” and I leave it at that. And if it’s pursued, then I say I’m also the vice principal there. But I see myself as a teacher.

(Ron, Interview 1, page 22 of 34)

Ron identifies himself in a similar manner. When asked by people what he does for a living, he says,

I’m a teacher and I also am the vice principal. You know, it’s not I’m the vice principal and I teach grade 7. And I think that order is significant actually. There’s a bit of a state of mind there, because ultimately, the buck stops over there [in the principal’s office]. It does. (Ron, Interview 1, page 11 of 31)

Ron’s identification as a teacher is rooted partly in the fact that there is a principal who has the final say in the school.

Al and Dan identified themselves as teachers also; however, they were not inclined to separate the two roles. Al stated,

At first I would say I’m a teacher, like the first 10 years or so.

Lately I’ve been saying I’m a teaching vice principal. (Al, Interview 1, page 4 of 23)

Dan had a similar response saying,
I'm a teacher first, but I guess I'm never without my administrative hat any more. When I first started, definitely, there was a difference. I was a teacher, and then on my release time I was the administrator. That's not true anymore. The two have sort of blended together.

(Dan, Interview 1, pages 10, 11 of 49)

The identification as teacher first can create stress for vice principals as they attempt to juggle teaching and administrative tasks. Jon related an interesting conversation he had with a former vice principal, who said

he always felt this tug between his teaching and his administrative stuff. And just had a hard time with that and keeping up with the grading...he felt like he was doing a bad job at both things. And I'm starting to feel that. Like, I want to do all these things, but I still have 25 kids staring at me every Monday morning too. (Jon, Interview 1, page 17 of 34)

Jon has been able to reconcile this tension somewhat by being clear about where his main focus should be. He stated,

The vp stuff, I want to get it done, but I know that when I'm [in the classroom] I'm not wasting my time...if I feel guilty about something, it's about, you know, the social studies test I've had in my backpack for a little too long. (Jon, Interview 1, page 22 of 34)

Al's priorities are also clear. He said,

Monday afternoon is vp time. So that's one block. But that's on paper. But I find the vp work is a lot of evenings. And in fact I
don’t look forward to Monday because it’s my longest day. And you get started at about 1:00 and you don’t get done until around 6-6:30. I try to get the vp work done, because the teaching to me is a priority. (Al, Interview 1, page 4 of 23)

This raises a question about the practicality of a school’s curriculum leader being in the classroom for the majority of time. Can a classroom teacher lead curriculum adequately? In reality, is there enough time to do both well? I believe there is a connection between a lack of time available and the separation the participants make between the curriculum as it exists in the curriculum manuals and the curriculum as it is experienced in the classroom. By isolating the written material and focusing on that alone, the vice principals make their task manageable. However, in doing so, they may communicate the importance of only part of the curriculum that they believe exists in their schools. By acknowledging and encouraging all of the work teachers do, including interactions with students, as curricular in nature, the vice principals may have a positive impact in shaping the way curriculum is thought of in their schools.

Ron expressed a similar sentiment to Al and Jon regarding the lack of time available to teach and lead curriculum. He stated,

It’s a good thing I have as many years of experience teaching the stuff I teach, because if I didn’t, I think both jobs would be suffering...if I had to teach a bunch of new curriculum, then more of my energy would be taken away from the vp work. Because it’s a tricky balance. It really is. (Ron, Interview 1, page 3 of 31)
It is clear that the participants do see themselves as teachers. It is also clear that for some, the vice principal duties are perceived as getting in the way of their teaching. It struck me when Ron was discussing how it was a good thing he was not implementing new materials because of the time constraints involved in his position. I wondered if the sheer amount of work involved in being both administrator and teacher was limiting the participants’ ability to be as innovative as they would like to be. This could be a possible danger for vice principal curriculum leaders who still spend most of their time in the classroom.

What about the participants and their role as administrators? How do they see themselves in this function?

Hartzell (1993) makes a distinction between upper and lower level leadership roles. Upper level leaders have the ability to develop a vision of what their organization should be, combined with the ability to communicate this vision to others. Lower level, or second level leaders, typically carry out work that is more short term.

The leadership of the vice principals in this study fluctuates between the higher and lower levels. At times they are able to articulate a vision and follow through with it. At other times, they are carrying out someone else’s orders. This can create some significant challenges. Hartzell (1993) states that vice principals are often not granted full responsibility or authority for the jobs they are given. They share duties and accountability with other people on staff. This requires resolving differences and negotiating philosophies before a plan can be put into action. Their effectiveness is in a large part dependent on their ability to influence
and persuade others to comply with their wishes. Vice principals therefore “must succeed in influencing those above them in the hierarchy to acquire the resources (and sometimes the authority) they need to influence and facilitate those below” (p. 710).

I noticed a situation reflecting this in my conversations with Dan. Dan was discussing the frustration of teachers not handing in their monthly reports on time and how this is something these same teachers would never accept from their own students. I asked Dan what he does about this.

I don’t have to do a whole lot. My principal just says to me, “Did you get all your monthly overviews this month?” And then the next Monday morning, it’s sort of like get your reports in. And then he will tell me at certain points, just give me names. If they’re not handing them in, then I’m wasting too much time going after them.

(Dan, Interview 1, page 41, 42 of 49)

Dan has been able to gain the co-operation of his principal in an aspect of his job that he views as very important. The result is that Dan gets his monthly curriculum reports in a timely manner.

The participants’ state of mind as teacher first, principal second can be seen as a combination of two factors. First, these vice principals spend most of their time teaching. They are teachers at heart and in fact. Second, in their administrative function, there is someone else, the principal, who ultimately has the final say in the day-to-day operations of the school.
It is interesting that although my participants see themselves as teachers, they believe that their colleagues see them as something else. Each one of the participants feels that many of their colleagues tend to view them as administrators. Al says,

I think some see me as a vice principal, mostly the newer staff. And I think the staff that’s more experienced see me as a colleague. (Al, Interview 1, page 4 of 23)

Al has been in his school the longest of the four participants and as such has worked alongside many of his colleagues for a long time. The other three participants, however, expressed that, in general, they are viewed as administrators. These perceptions are based in part on the reactions they receive in the staff room. Jon related a story of how one Friday, just before the weekly closing devotions, his principal was away and the teachers in the room were just kind of waiting for me to say go ahead. And that was strange for me, right? And I know I’m the vice principal, but you know, it’s not my job to say devotions start now... so that whole thing has been a little interesting. Don’t start until the administrator says so, and don’t leave until the administrator says you can leave. It’s a bit of a class dismissed kind of mentality. (Jon, Interview 1, page 24 of 34)

Ron and Dan related similar stories of the suddenly quiet staff room in which conversations end as soon as they enter the room. Dan says,
Dan: Now, do you walk into the staff room sometimes and it gets quiet?

Phil: Yes, you find that too?

Dan: Yeah, yeah. It didn’t happen the first year, it didn’t at all. It’s happened more in the last couple of years. Not always, but you know, all of a sudden, and after, there’s things teachers won’t talk to me about that I know they’ll talk to each other about. (Dan, Interview 1, page 45 of 49)

Similarly, Ron stated,

All of a sudden some of the gripe sessions that are held during coffee at recess {laughing}, I could come in and some conversations just evaporated like that. Which I found humourous actually. I didn’t take it personally, I found it more humourous. (Ron, Interview 1, page 10 of 31)

There is an interesting tension at work here. The participants in this study seek to work with and among their staff. They view themselves as teachers and, as mentioned in a previous section, they believe their position as teacher gives them credibility with their colleagues to lead curriculum. However, the reaction they sometimes get, as illustrated in the above quotes, is that of a teacher’s reaction to an administrator. Although the vice principal title does offer them opportunities for leadership, as was previously mentioned, it can also negatively affect their collegial relationship with the staff. It can be completely isolating. The two perceptions are obviously in conflict with each other.
Research suggests that the conflict that is apparent here is typical of many vice principals. Vice principals are quite literally in the middle between the principal and the staff. They are both administrators and teachers but are not completely one or the other. Glanz (1994b) writes,

Assistant principals are faced with a basic role conflict. They by the very nature of their positions in the school hierarchy, are authorized to enforce organizational mandates and ensure administrative efficiency....On the other hand, many are responsible for promoting teacher effectiveness and student leaning. (p. 578)

Glanz quotes Marshall (1992) who writes,

An assistant principal might be required to help teachers develop coordinated curricula – a “teacher support” function. But this function conflicts with the monitoring, supervising, and evaluating functions....The assistant may be working with a teacher as a colleague in one meeting and, perhaps one hour later, the same assistant may be meeting to chastise the same teacher for noncompliance with the district’s new homework policy. (pp. 6, 7)

The issue of identity is a tricky one, mostly because in reality the vice principals are not in control of how teachers will perceive them. By their own admission, they are both vice principal and teacher at the same time. However, their identity is fluid. They self-identify as well as have their identities ascribed to them by others. Teachers will identify the vice principals in this study as either teacher colleagues, assistant administrators, or someone in between, depending on
the context of the situation. The vice principals need to be sensitive to the context in which they are working. They need to be aware of the way in which their identity and the way they are identified changes from situation to situation.

When the vice principal is perceived in the same light as the principal, he or she may find it difficult to perform the duties that are required. This is not to say that vice principals should avoid conflict. As leaders, they are bound to run up against opposition from time to time. What is important is that they stay focused on their goals. More specifically, they need to focus on achieving their goals as vice principals, a position distinct from that of the principal.

Al spoke about the pitfalls of vice principals acting like principals in our interview. For him, the vice principal needs to have a clear focus on what his or her goals are as well as a plan for attaining this vision as vice principal. He said, I’m not really interested at this point in becoming a principal. It’s easier for me to have clear direction of what I want to do and I can look out for everyone. If you’re kind of looking at the principalship, you’d want to start acting like a principal. That might make it kind of fuzzy. (Al, Interview 1, page 6 of 23)

Al wanted to ensure that he acted like a vice principal, which for him meant improving curriculum for the sake of the students while looking out for everyone’s needs. Al believes that in his role as vice principal, he is able keep a good ear to the “heartbeat of the staff” and has a “good idea of the community” in which he works. He wants to maintain this position.
Jon too mentioned the importance of the curriculum vice principal avoiding the mindset of becoming a principal, mostly because it would distract him from curriculum. He said,

I signed on for this job because I thought I could do this job. And someday, sure, I may want to be a principal, but that shouldn’t shape everything I do here. Because then I’m going to get lost in some of the bureaucracy of the job. And I’d rather stay with the students more. (Jon, Focus Group, page 40 of 46)

The participants see the principalship as getting in the way of genuine curriculum leadership. As I mentioned earlier, the governance structure of these independent schools tends to place the principal as the chief operating officer of the school. This position prevents principals from having a clear and sustained focus on curriculum. More specifically, it can detach the principals from the people and the relationships involved in the curriculum.

It was interesting to hear from Ron in this regard. Ron is preparing to become the principal in the school he is currently working in. This has changed his curriculum leadership and the amount of time he can give to it. He said,

Since I’ve been named principal for next year, I’ve done less curriculum work. Just because now I’m doing some of the other things that need to get done on my time. (Ron, Focus Group, page 40 of 49)

Ron has recognized the need to bring someone else alongside him to take over the curriculum work that he had been doing. He realizes that as a full-time
principal, he will not be able to effectively co-ordinate the curriculum of his school as he had been doing. He is currently looking for someone whose skills and relationships with the staff will complement his own leadership. He is looking for someone to lead curriculum, not as a principal, but as a vice principal, whose full attention is on curriculum in the same way his has been.

In order to be effective, the authority of those in leadership positions needs to be authentic. People have to be drawn to that person by qualities that go beyond administrative titles. Going back to Al’s concern, vice principals who are seen or who see themselves simply as teachers-in-charge or as principal want-to-bes may be well positioned to lead the curriculum if curriculum is understood in the narrow sense of a program of studies. It does not take a vice principal to collect curriculum reports and track the completion of units. However, vice principals who recognize a larger curriculum at work in their schools as well as their unique position in the middle of people living out a curriculum together are well placed to make a genuine difference on staff.

The advantage of a vice principal leading curriculum in place of a principal is only realized when vice principals take advantage of their central position on staff. As a teacher, the vice principal should be able to offer curriculum leadership that is grounded in the realities of life in the classroom. They are neither teachers-in-charge nor principal want-to-bes. They are something else. As Ron said,

The VP is sometimes the Fifth Business. (Ron, Interview 2, page 3 of 22)
The uniqueness of this position needs to be reflected in the leadership that is offered.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed findings of my research on the curriculum leadership of the vice principal in independent elementary schools. My participants and I agree that vice principals are well positioned to lead and co-ordinate curriculum. This is not always a clean-cut process. It is filled with tension and sometimes conflict. However, out of this conflict can emerge a genuine opportunity to provide leadership that is framed by the human context (Macpherson et al., 1996) of school life.

The human context of this curriculum leadership stems from the fact that although my participants' work necessarily starts with curriculum material, they see themselves as working primarily with people. Further, they experience teaching as an aspect of curriculum development (Connelly, 1972) and that curriculum is a classroom process (Doyle, 1992). Their leadership is in part an effort to provide teachers with the awareness, tools, and confidence to more consciously develop their curriculum and themselves as professionals as they plan and teach their daily lessons.

I have found that my participants spend much of their time connecting and communicating between teachers, curriculum materials, students, and administration. Initially, their job starts with the material, making decisions on what needs to be taught and what curriculum resources will best accomplish these goals. Once decided, their task becomes one of encouraging the teachers to learn to
use the material in their own unique ways so that the written material can be translated into something relevant in the lives of the students. They not only encourage teachers to grow with the new material, but also encourage and seek to establish ways in which the teachers can learn together and from each other professionally. This is more than what Marshall et al. (1996) call a "bridging role" (p. 281), improving relationships between teachers, students and the community. They are not simply trying to improve relationships in order to make life more livable for their colleagues and students. They are making connections in order to improve the curriculum and support student learning.

As part of this connective activity, an important aspect of their job is pulling teachers out of their classrooms into professional conversation with their colleagues. However, they also realize that the isolation of the classroom is a reality that some teachers enjoy. It is their space, where they can exercise their professional control in a way that is appropriate to who they are as a person and as a teacher. In fact, isolation according to Donaldson (2001) is almost a rite of passage for the teaching profession, spending time alone with a class of children and coming out satisfied that the students have learned. Even though this isolation leaves teachers "out of touch with the professional and emotional resources that can make their work both more effective and more rewarding" (p. 26), collaboration remains voluntary.

The pressures that pull teachers away from each other may hamper traditional, top-down curriculum leadership. Conversely, top-down curriculum
leadership may fail by not recognizing the more natural connections that exist between teachers already. Consider the following:

Each individual planet, then, finds its own place in the gravitational fields of the galaxy. Some are pulled more strongly together and affect one another’s orbits while others are repelled. Still others seem nearly unaffected by the presence of other teachers, staff, and administrators. For leaders in the classic mold, leadership involves exerting stronger central gravitational pull, tightening up orbits, and over-powering teacher-to-teacher counterforces. In their efforts, they threaten to violate the “permissive association” norm; and this can provoke outright protest and passive resistance. (Donaldson, 2001, pp. 26, 27)

The vice principals that I have spoken with are well aware of the individual planets in their schools’ galaxy. They do not function as a central force that dominates the interactions in their schools. Rather, by being a teacher and an administrator, they are actually participants in a number of different orbits simultaneously. This position enables them to recognize needs and desires and to make improvements as well as provide opportunities for growth and dialogue in a way that does not dominate but rather suggests, encourages, and supports teachers. Even in times when they find themselves dictating the changes that need to be made, the vice principal quickly aligns him or herself with the staff implementing the changes.
This type of curriculum leadership cannot be exercised in a hierarchical manner. Rather, it can only be accomplished with an ethic of care (Marshall et al., 1996) and a commitment to service or servant leadership (Van Brummelen, 2002). It requires a holistic perspective of curriculum as it is experienced in the school. The vice principal is well positioned for such a task.

In order to lead with such a holistic perspective, vice principals need to develop a sense of the legitimacy of their work with this larger curriculum. As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, my participants defined curriculum as a written program of studies. There was a tendency to describe curriculum in very technical and manageable terms. Yet their activities and their stories betray a broader understanding of curriculum as one that is in fact lived and experienced differently by individuals in their schools. They co-ordinate a program of studies, but they do so from a position where they are mediating between different groups of people, connecting various elements of the curriculum that have been artificially separated. They monitor the implementation of new programs but do so knowing that such implementation may be exciting for one teacher and a threat to another. They track timetables and the completion of units, but do so knowing that teachers will take detours with their students depending on circumstances that arise.

My participants' underlying holistic understanding of curriculum has led to transformational tendencies in their leadership. It seems to me that the further down the continuum one goes from curriculum-as-plan to curriculum-as-lived, the more transformational and inclusive the leadership style will tend to be. Our beliefs become obvious through our actions. The data suggest that my participants
prefer to lead alongside their colleagues rather than over them, encouraging professional dialogue and teamwork and establishing a climate that facilitates responsive teacher creativity. The curricular conceptions that support such leadership need to be brought out into the open and discussed publicly.

The uniqueness of the curriculum leadership of vice principals is that it is contextualized in their role as a teacher and in the curriculum as it is lived out in the classroom. Vice principals such as the participants in this study and I need to better articulate our work with this lived curriculum and more openly discuss it as an important element of our role on staff. We need to frame our discussions of curriculum in this broader human context so that the balance between the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum that is lived can be more obviously understood. We need to challenge views of curriculum that separate it from the people who experience it firsthand. We need to go public (Henderson & Hawthorn, 2000, Palmer, 1998) and begin to talk about how we experience curriculum in both our role as teacher and as vice principal. In doing so, vice principals can add legitimacy to the importance of their role as curriculum leaders. We need to explain that we are leading curriculum not just because the principal did not have time for it or interest in it. We need to be willing and able to explain that when all is said and done, the vice principal is the right person for the job.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this research, I held a view of curriculum that was organic and dynamic in nature and that accounted not only for what was written in the curriculum manuals but also included the experiences of students while they were at school. After reflecting on my findings and the experiences of my participants, I am even more convinced that curriculum is dynamic and growing continuously. I am also more convinced than ever that everyone at any given school plays a part in the delivery and development of this curriculum.

This has implications for curriculum leadership. Curriculum leadership cannot be properly exercised through top-down administrative structures. Doing so may provide people at the peripheries of the school with the perception that the curriculum and the school is well managed. However, those more intensely involved in the curriculum (teachers, administrators, students) know or at least feel differently. The surface may be smooth, but the currents just underneath the surface may be turbulent. These rough undercurrents do not often show themselves publicly until they have become a full-blown storm. Teachers all of a sudden seem to fall apart, test scores take a nosedive, student behavior turns for the worse, and, an issue especially important for independent schools, families leave and enrolment declines.

By taking the position that curriculum is bigger than the program of studies, that it exists in the relationships and interactions of people with curriculum documents and each other, the undercurrents can become apparent earlier. In order to cocreate such a curriculum, the leader needs to first be aware of the relationships...
and their nature. They also must ensure that the different players in the curriculum do not work in isolation from each other, which is so often the case in our busy schools. Everyone who is involved in the curriculum must be aware of each other. They must be heard and encouraged to listen.

The leader of such a curriculum must be in a central position, someone who is already involved in many of these key relationships. The vice principal is in such a position and is therefore well placed to provide curriculum leadership (Morrison, 1995). The vice principal is able to connect the various elements of the curriculum in a subtle, even natural way. As middle leaders, my participants are not inclined towards seeking and maintaining power and control. Rather, they are working to get all of the other players in the curriculum to acknowledge and actively participate in their curriculum development role. This is especially the case with the day-to-day curriculum leadership of individual teachers.

The effort to ensure that teachers are more aware of their own curriculum leadership seems to go against the way in which many teachers view their work. Elliott, Brooker, Macpherson, and Mc Inman (1999) propose that “curriculum leadership involves actions in which all teachers engage, irrespective of whether they are conscious of their efforts or not” (p. 175). When they surveyed teachers about their curriculum leadership activities, only 29% said that they had participated in curriculum leadership. They found that there were three factors that were significant in teacher engagement in what they saw as curriculum leadership activities: the way in which curriculum is conceived in their school, the ways in
which the teachers interact in their school, and the organization of the school (p. 178).

The vice principals in this study were working to establish conditions in which the first two factors, conceptions of curriculum and collegiality, were addressed and improved. The third factor, the organization of the school, is one that is beyond their control; however, the fact that the participants were already leading curriculum in place of or alongside the principal indicates that the organization of the schools has already made it more likely that teachers could begin to see their activities as curriculum leadership.

The very fact that there is a vice principal in charge of curriculum may in fact have the opposite effect on a staff, however. Sabar et al. (1993) studied the work of two curriculum co-ordinators. One was an external co-ordinator who traveled from school to school to help implement projects; the other was an internal co-ordinator who was a staff member who helped her colleagues organize and develop their programs. The researchers found that where there was an external co-ordinator, teachers sought to achieve independence. They knew the co-ordinator was leaving. Where there was an internal co-ordinator, the teachers may have been more prone to let the co-ordinator lead the way. The risk is that by having a colleague available to help with curriculum, teachers may wait to be told what to do and hand over development issues to the expert.

The above-mentioned situation provides a narrow view of curriculum leadership. A common perception of curriculum co-ordination includes the following three tasks: ordering resources, keeping up to date in subject areas, and
giving advice to staff when required (Edwards, 1993). Certainly these are aspects of my participants’ curriculum leadership; however, to limit their role to these three areas is to ignore important opportunities that are available for genuine professional and instructional improvement. Vice principals in curriculum leadership positions need to be constantly aware that their role is much more than that of a resource person. Their role is to connect the curriculum and push the story forward.

The logical end result of such leadership is that teachers be recognized and recognize themselves as curriculum leaders in their schools and be given a more active role in policy making that affects their teaching and their students’ learning. My participants feel they have become better teachers as a result of their active participation in curriculum co-ordination. It would be wonderful if all teachers could have such an opportunity in their career, both for themselves and their students. At a minimum, time should be made available so that teachers can study the curriculum they use and reflectively analyze the choices they make in planning daily lessons. Teachers should also be granted a larger say in the materials they use in their classrooms. Their opinions should not be asked for just so that they feel included. Their voices need to be heard loud and clear, and their input should have some significant impact on policy decision-making.

That Whole Gender Thing

Throughout this research, I have been conscious that gender would play a role in the way in which curriculum leadership is experienced. I did not find in my research that there were any great disparities between the male and female participants and their perceptions of what they do. However, this does not mean
the experience is the same for male and female administrators. This was not a research question I was seeking to answer, but it most certainly is part of this discussion.

In my first interview with the only female participant, I was wondering how to go about approaching this topic. As it turned out, I didn’t have to. We were talking about principals burning out and finding new people to step into the principal role, when this participant stated the following,

[My principal] and I were talking about this whole gender thing, right? And how people your age [in their 30s] are stepping up to become principals, but not women your age because women your age are into having babies right now. Like you are into teaching, and they are too, but a lot of them are stepping out for 10 years. And then they want to come back in, right? So as far as administration goes, experience is one of the things that people look at. They’re still going to look at the men to be the principals rather then women…but you know the reason is the child, the baby thing. They’re taking a couple years off, or even if they go for their maternity leaves and come back, not many of them have the energy to go into a principal’s job having little kids at home, no matter how helpful or how they divide the labour at home between mom and dad…dad could be there just as much as mom, right, but somehow the women are not able to take on the added pressure at this point. I don’t know….We’re going to lose those leaders. And we have those
single women like [ ] who get put into that position early on and fly with it. But we are not seeing women in their early 30s becoming principals.

This was the only time gender was brought up as an issue by any of my participants. I did ask one participant if gender was an issue, and he stated that he did not think it was. This perception is based on the fact that there are many female administrators within the OACS school system. In fact, three of the eight administrators represented in this study (vice principals and their principal colleagues) are female.

Still, the fact is that the experience is different for male and female administrators, as the previous quote indicates. The road to the upper administrative positions is often a longer one for women than it is for men. Personally speaking, I can see this is the case. I am 33 years old, I am a teacher and a vice principal, and am working on completing my Master’s. In the meantime, my wife and I have had four children. My wife is also a teacher, and yet she has put her career on hold in order to stay home with our children. There is nothing oppressive about this arrangement; these are choices we have made together. Still, when my wife returns to teaching, she will likely be 10 years behind me.

Further, as was mentioned in my findings, the perception of the principal position is a paternalistic one, where the principal and the vice principal function like dad and mom respectively. This may lead to female aspirants lacking a "leadership image" or even "credibility" (Rees, 1991, p. 11) both institutionally and in how they see themselves. For me, this raises the following question: What is
the advantage for our schools of having female administrators if they must function within a paternalistic leadership model?

The problem of the loss of young female leaders, or any potential leader for that matter, would not be so great if curriculum leadership were not so narrowly defined as residing in the office of one or two people, namely the principal and the vice principal. Young leaders may never gain valuable leadership experience due to the fact that the position of leader in education is so huge. It seems as if leadership has become an all-or-nothing position. However, if educational leaders can begin to pass leadership for specific projects and areas of school governance over to teachers, as they have done with the vice principals in this study, then a leadership team can begin to develop in which all staff members contribute to the health of the school. By taking a team approach to leadership, people with leadership abilities can put their talents to use without waiting until they are ready or even willing to take on the entire leadership package. For young educational leaders, this means that they can exercise authentic leadership in the areas in which they are gifted without worrying about career advancement while at the same time allowing their leadership qualities to be displayed.

This approach to leadership has implications for the vice principal position, especially for vice principals working with curriculum. The vice principalship is an important aspect of educational leadership in its own right. It can be used as a steppingstone to the principal’s office. However, its importance and the importance of the people holding this position need to be acknowledged and strengthened.
Curriculum Vice Principal as a Career?

Hill (1994) states that the vice principal position as it is treated in Ontario is merely a rite of passage. It is a customary stop on an administrator’s climb up the ladder of success. As a result, very little thought has been put into the position. Few boards have clearly spelled out what they want their vice principal to do other than what the principal deems appropriate. It is not viewed as a legitimate career in and of itself.

This is a topic that my participants and I spent some time on during the focus group session. Should the curriculum vice principal position be viewed as a career position and not a transitory one? The answer was yes, it should be. The following excerpt from the focus group illustrates this.

Dan: I think where I’m at is perfectly legitimate. I don’t feel like I need to move over for someone else to train. But I do share the concern with principals. How then do we train vice principals if the vice principals think their jobs are legitimate outside of becoming a training field for [the principalship]?

Ron: And in relationship to that, in order for our schools’ curriculum to advance now, we need somebody who is wholeheartedly dedicated to curriculum. And is creative and gifted in that area. Not somebody who is training to become a principal. There’s a big difference there. (Focus Group, page 43 of 46)

This is not to say that the vice principal should not be thinking about becoming a principal. Interestingly, it is Ron who is looking at becoming a
principal in the near future. However, he has not viewed his time as a vice principal as a rite of passage. For him, the improvement of curriculum and student learning was the goal of his work.

From my participants' perspectives, the curriculum vice principal position is a career in and of itself. In fact, Dan believes that it is his role to teach the board and the principal that the vice principal position is legitimate as a career. Harvey (1994) states that vice principals need to develop a high level of awareness of the role they play in their schools and how this guides their daily practice. Porter (1996) echoes this sentiment, believing that not only do vice principals need to develop a more positive self-perception as agents of change, they also must call attention to the inherent worth of their position (p. 28). My participants have done this and feel the need to communicate this to the communities in which they work. They do not see becoming a principal as moving up. In fact, as Ron states, since he has made his intentions to become a principal known,

so many people have said, “Well, you’re moving up.” Well, no.

I’m changing my role. (Focus Group, page 39 of 46)

Having arrived at this conclusion, the participants also understand that the vice principal position can be used as training for future principals to some extent. A vice principal who has no intention of becoming a principal can be perceived as holding back future principals by denying them valuable administrative experience.

AI: [My principal] is looking at me and saying, “If you’re not interested in [the principal job], why don’t you get out of the vp role and have somebody else do that who wants to become a principal?”
Because, basically the message I got was, you are preventing people from becoming a principal by being in that position. You're stopping someone from going up the ladder,

Ron: Which makes the job description of the vp,

Jon: Temporary

Ron: Redundant. Like it makes it a non-issue because the top [priority] should be preparing to become a principal. It's never listed though, but that kind of conversation implies that. (Focus Group, page 39 of 46)

Curriculum leadership is too important an area to be used as part of an overall strategy to improve one's career. Further, the literature suggests that the roles of the vice principal and the principal are so completely different that to call one training for the other would be a stretch to say the least. Still, the perception remains that those in the vice principal position either want to “move up” or have been prevented from doing so. It will take continued work to change this perception. Vice principals will have to do this themselves.

A way to begin is to focus on the reason why they have been given the job of curriculum leadership in the first place. All of the various administrative and leadership tasks that need to be accomplished in a school add up to more than what one person can effectively accomplish on his or her own. This is especially the case in independent schools where the focus of much of the schools’ operations is clearly zeroed in on the principal. The principal needs to implement policy set by the board. At the same time, there are internal issues, including staffing and
student behavior, that need to be consistently dealt with. This requires knowing both the staff and the curriculum and the changes that are occurring in each. This is where the leadership of the vice principal can be extremely effective. As Marshall et al. (1996) note, vice principals are sensitive to the context in which problems and challenges arise within their schools (p. 284). Together the vice principal and the principal can provide leadership that is holistic in its perspective and responsive in its approach. This team approach needs to be recognized and honored.

Leadership needs to be distributed according to the needs of the school and the people it serves. It should also be distributed according to the gifts and strength of the people on staff. When seen in this light, the vice principal position is not a stepping-stone. It is an important element of the leadership team in elementary schools. It is a good line of work and can certainly make for a fulfilling career.

**Job Descriptions**

Having established the value of the curriculum leadership of the vice principal, one has to acknowledge that vice principals do not work in a vacuum. They are part of an administrative team working within a specific school culture. Just because the vice principal is in a good place to lead curriculum does not mean it is going to happen. There are other forces at work.

One of the factors working against the curriculum leadership of vice principals is that, as assistants, their work is often defined by someone else. Hill (1994) found that in Ontario, school boards have been given the authority via Regulation 262 to hire vice principals to perform duties as delegated by the principals (p. 5). Vice principals often take on tasks that the principal has no
interest in doing. The result is that the job description of the vice principal is often a “mosaic of partial responsibilities” (Hartzell, 1993, p. 715). Curriculum leadership for the vice principal is difficult given the variety of tasks they are often given and the fact that it is within the principal’s power to change their work at any point (Marshall, 1992). Where they are not perceived as having authority over curriculum, either formal or informal, they must work with the ever-present possibility that their decisions will be overridden or bypassed (Hartzell, p. 714).

My participants work under very different circumstances. It is true that they have a variety of tasks to perform, the most important one being the classroom teaching they have been hired to do. However, their job stems more out of the fact that their principals realize that curriculum leadership is an area that is important and that, given all of their many tasks, is an area that needed to be given to someone else in order to make sure it was addressed. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, my participants have not been given anyone’s dirty work.

A significant aspect of my participants’ experience is that they have played a key role in defining what their job actually is in their schools. Their principals or their boards asked them to work with curriculum, but the shape that work takes has been left up to them. Ron has been asked to write his own job description by his principal. Jon had been given a job description that he feels describes what the previous vice principal had done. He has taken on some of those duties but also feels free to ignore those that he feels are no longer necessary. In all cases, my participants report to their principals and sometimes to their education committees
about what they are doing, but none were being told what to do. They are truly curriculum leaders in their schools.

My participants feel free to set direction in curriculum and also feel they have the power, formal and informal, to accomplish their goals. However, they do not see curriculum as their turf exclusively. They do not want the principal to stay out of their business. This is contrary to the perceptions held by the vice principals in the study by Marshall et al. (1996) who consistently reported that “the best thing their school districts, principals, or superintendents did for them was to ‘leave [them] alone,’ ‘allow [them] to develop programming without interfering’” (p. 287). My participants express the desire to have their principal’s support, not only to rubber stamp decisions they have made regarding the school program, but also to verbalize and visibly demonstrate their support in front of the staff and the community. For my participants, the collegiality they desire among the teachers is also desirable within the leadership team they are a part of.

Training and Support

Three of the four vice principals in this study intend on remaining where they are. They believe it is important to understand how this role can be supported and how one can train for it. According to McChesney (1986), the prevailing conception of qualification for a vice principal in Ontario is the completion of two Ministry principal courses. However, since the vice principal role is distinct from the principal’s and since many are making careers out of the vice principal position, the question becomes, Are principal’s courses relevant and useful? Or do the course designers assume that vice principals are all trying to become principals?
My participants have taken one or more principal’s courses and have found them helpful in the work that they do. Courses that focused on theories of instruction and staff supervision were especially helpful. The principal’s courses can be used to help vice principals be more effective with some of the specific tasks they perform. They can also be helpful in the more human context of their work. As Dan said,

I’m not taking [these courses] to train as a principal. I’m taking them to become a better vice principal and to better understand my principal. (Focus Group, page 42 of 46)

Principal’s courses can be useful for the professional development of vice principals. However, what may be of equal value is networking among the vice principals themselves. The importance of networking was discussed during the focus group session with my participants. I made the following entry in my journal after the focus group interview.

This session was very constructive in a number of ways. I presented my preliminary findings to my participants and was able to receive feedback. Understanding was deepened. More important perhaps is the fact that this session created an opportunity for us to talk about the realities of our work and share experiences about how things are for others in our position. Although we all work in different circumstances, we experience many of the same challenges. This sharing of ideas will hopefully help my participants as they return to
their schools. If nothing else, they now know they are not alone.

(Research Journal, May 2, 2005)

It struck me as interesting throughout this research that for a group of professionals whose role is one of making connections between other people, we have actually been quite disconnected from each other. There are reasons for this, the primary one being that we are classroom teachers and find it difficult and often even counterproductive to be away from our students. Planning for substitute teachers takes time. However, there is much to learn from each other.

There are many mentorship programs available that prepare vice principals to become principals. These programs typically focus on searching for potential teacher leaders and helping them move towards becoming a principal. Lovely (1999) writes about one such program in which competent teachers with leadership potential enter the administrative sphere as Elementary Teaching Assistant Principals (ETAP). The ETAPs teach full time but lead curriculum as committee chairs. They can also serve as liaison between parent and community groups. After the ETAP is the Elementary Assistant Principal (EAP) whose role is typical of most vice principals as reviewed in Chapter Two of this thesis. The ETAPs and the EAPs work together in schools, performing their various duties, but at the same time become familiar with procedural issues typical of organizational administration. Their work is done under the guidance and with the support of the principal.

Such an approach to recruitment and training would be valuable for the leadership of any school. First, it honours the breadth of the administrative task in
a school by distributing it among several people. Second, in principle, it allows individuals to use their specific administrative gifts appropriately. It does not, however, address the specific professional development needs of vice principals who intend to remain vice principals and who would like to become better at their chosen role.

A board of education in Calgary, Alberta piloted such an approach in the 1980s. They developed a training program specifically for vice principals. This program used in-service, mentorship, and observation as tools for professional development. The significant aspect of the mentorship was that the mentors were peers, fellow vice principals, and not superiors. The participants in this voluntary program met once a month to discuss their work, the relation of research and theory to their jobs and to observe other vice principals in action (LaRose, 1987).

When combined with appropriate principal courses, this type of peer coaching may be extremely effective in aiding vice principals in their professional development as vice principals and not as aspiring principals. The training would still be there for those who would like to become a principal or even further understand their own principal's needs, but the support and advice of peers would also be available. Networks could be established that the vice principal could fall back on as needed.

Vice principals need to make more intentional effort to reflect together on their role in elementary schools. As Jon said, they have stepped into something different. Steps need to be taken to understand the role, to come to grips with its burdens and blessings, and to move forward together. Gatherings such as the focus
group session that I held are useful in this regard. So too is the type of qualitative research I have conducted for this thesis. I realized this when Ron asked me if he could have a colleague read the my first draft. He works with a teacher whom he would like to encourage to become a curriculum vice principal. He would like her to know what the job is like before she accepts the position. As Ron says,

I think there's valuable stuff in there that I would like to have known beforehand. I don't know what I would have done with it. Maybe I wouldn't have jumped in {laughter}. (Focus Group, page 44 of 46)

The curriculum leadership of the vice principal is good work and is an important leadership role in elementary schools. It is the Fifth Business, and as Robertson Davis (1996) wrote,

You cannot imagine the plot without Fifth Business! It's not spectacular, but it is a good line of work, I can tell you, and those who play it sometimes have a career that outlasts the golden voices.

Are you the Fifth Business? You had better find out. (p. 231)

The vice principals in this study know who they are. The task now is to support each other in their work and to find ways to more clearly understand and advocate for its importance in their schools and their communities.
Further Study

In this study, I looked at the role of the vice principal within the context of an administrative team. Throughout the study, I have become increasingly interested in how these teams function, what makes for a good partnership and what dynamics are involved when leadership is distributed among several people. Specifically I wonder about the following:

1. What effect does gender have on administrative teams? My participants represent a variety of administrative gender combinations that include a male vice principal with a male principal, a female vice principal with a male principal, and two males vice principals working with two female principals. What effect do these various combinations have on the nature of the leadership exercised in each school?

2. Serious study should be conducted on different team approaches to educational leadership. I know of one independent elementary school that is implementing a team approach by dividing the administrative responsibilities among three administrators: a half-time principal who is responsible for curriculum and two teaching vice principals who will share the other 50% administrative time. All administrators will be classroom teachers for at least 50% of their time at school.

In this thesis I have explored the perspectives of vice principals on their curriculum leadership. It would be beneficial to examine the perspectives of both principals and teachers on this leadership. Specifically, I wonder the following;
1. How do teachers view the curriculum vice principal role? How does this compare with their perception of the principal’s role?

2. What do principals expect of their vice principals in terms of curriculum leadership?

3. How do the teachers’ perspectives of their principal’s leadership change when curriculum leadership is delegated to the vice principal?

Finally, research should be conducted into the connection between conceptions of curriculum and leadership activities and style. I have suggested that the further along the continuum one goes from understanding curriculum as planned to curriculum as lived, the more transformational one’s leadership style will tend to be. By looking at the connection between curricular conceptions and curriculum leadership, educators will be able to more clearly define where they want our schools to go and how they want them to get there.
References


Lapadat, J. C., & Lindsay, A. C. (1999). Transcription in research and practice: From standardization of technique to interpretive positionings. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*, 64-86.


Appendix A

Research Ethics Board Clearance

Brock University

DATE: December 02, 2004
FROM: Linda Rose Krasnor, Chair
Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Susan Tilley, Education
Philip TEEUWSEn

FILE: 04-119 - TEEUWSen

TITLE: The Experiences and Perspectives at the Vice Principal Curriculum in Christian Elementary Schools

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as Clarified

This project has received ethics clearance for the period of December 02, 2004 to August 30, 2005 subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The clearance may be extended upon request. The study may now proceed.

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. During the course of research no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment, or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/forms/forms.html to complete the appropriate form Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form Continuing Review/Final Report is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.
Appendix B

First Interview Schedule

Demographics

How long have you been a teacher? In how many schools?
How long have you been vice principal curriculum? What was the process in getting this position? Have you had any training or courses to support your work?
How is your time split between teaching and administration?
Have you been a vice principal at any other school?

Role as vice principal curriculum.

What do you do as vice principal curriculum?
What do you understand by the term curriculum?
Is the work you do different then what you expected? How so?
What is the most surprising aspect of your job? What is the most fulfilling aspect of your job? What is the most stressful/troublesome aspect of your job?

Role in Interpersonal Relationships

Describe your relationship with the principal. With the teachers.
You are both teacher and administrator. Describe the conflicts and opportunities associated with this position.
Do you find yourself managing relationships and interpersonal conflict? Describe? Why you?
Under what circumstances would a teacher come to you and not the principal? Can you describe such a time?

Role as Educational Leader

Describe the leadership you provide at your school. How does it differ from the leadership provided by the principal? Whose vision do you implement, your principal’s or your own?
Do you feel that the leadership you provide is understood and appreciated by the teachers, the principals, the school community?
Does the leadership of the vice principal curriculum need to be more formally spelled out? Can it be?
Appendix C

Second Interview Schedule

1. Many vps feel that they “have entered a wasteland between the borders of classroom practice and school leadership” (McChesney, 1986). Much of the literature surrounding vps reflects this sense of role conflict. This has also come up in the interviews. Vps in our schools are both teachers and administrators. They view themselves primarily as teachers but feel their colleagues see them as administrators in many ways. There is a tension there but the participants of this study find it a tension they can live with.

Is this a good tension? Is it necessary? Does it simply reflect the true nature of education (or schooling) when it is taken as a whole and not in bits and pieces? Is this tension to be avoided or would avoiding it cause us to miss important elements of our job? Do you feel like you work in a wasteland or a no-man’s land?

2. Dialogue and communication seems to be an element of curriculum vp experience. It seems that by being in the middle, vps are able to break the isolation that so many in our schools find themselves in, teachers and administrators included. Perhaps this is because the difference in power is limited so communication is genuine. Perhaps it is because the vp is already in the know or involved in the business of both the principal and the teacher.

Is the vp position one that is ideal for drawing teachers and administrators out? Can the vp establish a safe place for teachers and administrators to share and solve problems together? Should this be a focus of the vp role? Is this a role that would be harder without the work with curriculum?

3. Williams (1995) writes, “One responsibility of assistant principals is to create a climate in which teachers feel comfortable in developing worthwhile programs.” This is an interesting statement especially considering that part of the role is to ensure the school’s program is taught.

How do you / can you create a climate where teachers feel comfortable about developing their programs?

4. The term “curriculum” or at least the definition the participants use as a guide in their work is the program of studies; what is taught (the curriculum as planned). This is ultimately what we are hired to deal with. It is what we “produce”. However, the experiences as described by the participants reveal a much broader understanding of curriculum. All touched on their work with what Schwab called the common places of curriculum; the material, students, teachers and the milieu. All also expressed one way or an other a feeling that their work as curriculum coordinators is never finished. This experience reflects a dynamic nature of curriculum.
The vp curriculum deals with all these commonplaces, but I wonder if our real work is making sure that the relationships that exist between these commonplaces are healthy and running smoothly.

4. The vice principal, with all of their connections in the school seems to be fairly in tune with the prevailing school culture. As such they can play a major role in setting the tone of the school.

Can the curriculum vp be seen as a barometer (Harvey, 1994) of the school culture? Does the culture reflect the vp or does the vp reflect the culture?

5. The participants emphasized the importance they placed on vision and Christian perspective. This is interesting. We all see our job as dealing with the written program (the what) yet we all emphasized the vision and perspective (the why).

What would curriculum coordination be without the vision?