SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ISSUE:
WHY ARE TEACHERS NOT APPLYING
FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL POSITIONS?

by

Suzanne Bolin

B.A., University of Manitoba, 1989
B.Ed., University of Winnipeg, 1991

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

© Suzanne Bolin, 2002

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

July 2002

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that are associated with qualified teachers’ decisions not to apply for the role of school principal. Recent research has shown that schools in North America are currently facing a shortage of principals and this shortage is expected to continue. In this study, three teachers, who are qualified for the principal’s position but are not interested, answered semi-structured interview questions. Their responses were taped, transcribed and analyzed to identify common themes.

Findings suggest all of these individuals value the relationships with their students and other teachers. They enjoy teaching and the flexibility that it provides. They perceive the magnitude of the relationships that a principal has to maintain with parents, school board, and senior administration as undesirable. It was concluded that efforts could be made to nurture teachers’ interest and knowledge of the principal’s role. Support for local courses, job shadowing, and mentorship programs are suggestions that are discussed. If continued effort is made, appropriate solutions can be found to help remedy this shortage.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter One</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and Rationale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Two</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the Literature</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Current State of the Shortage</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons Why Teachers Don’t Apply</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Methodology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Four</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons Why These Qualified Teachers Are Not Applying for School Principal Positions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Inspired These Teachers to Think about Administration</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would it take for these Individuals to Apply for a Principalship?</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter Five</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Conclusions</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Implications</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Further Study</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Permission 64
Appendix B: Letter of Permission 65
Appendix C: Informed Consent 66
Appendix D: Interview Questions 68
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation for all the support provided by my teaching colleagues who participated in this Master’s program in education. Without the necessary encouragement provided by these individuals for the past three years, this journey would have been much more difficult. I would like to give a special thank you to Wendy. She always provided me that extra nudge or word of advice to keep me going.

I would like to thank all the instructors that we had through our coursework. I also owe a special thank you to Colin Chasteauneuf, a member of my committee, for helping me make this paper the best that it could be with his proofreading and editing expertise.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my family. My deepest thank you to my husband, Neil, for not only keeping the household running smoothly while I worked, but also encouraging me and putting up with all the emotions of completing this journey. Also thank you to my children, who had to adjust their schedules of eating, sleeping, playing music, watching TV, and using the computer many times. Your support and understanding have made this project possible.
Introduction

There are many talented, energetic teachers who take on responsibilities and roles in the education system that require abundant leadership skills. These teachers are dedicated to accepting challenges that will benefit the students that they teach as well as inspiring and influencing their learning. They are effective in many aspects of school life: teaching excellence; strong communication, interpersonal, and organizational skills; knowledge of curriculum and instructional strategies; and the ability to positively influence students, staff, parents, and others in their school community. However, these are not necessarily the same teachers who are applying for what is considered the top leadership position in the school: the principal. In looking around our schools we are surrounded by excellent teachers who are admirable leaders but there is growing evidence that we are in an era of administrative shortages. Furthermore, it appears that qualified teacher candidates are shying away from these positions.

Significance of the Study

I am currently an elementary classroom teacher in a small town in the interior of British Columbia. I have a general interest in school leadership but have not yet ascertained my own level of commitment to pursue a role in the future as a school administrator. In many school districts one of the major criteria that an individual must possess in order to consider this career path is a Master’s degree. Some teachers attain this level of education but are still not interested in a position as an administrator. I often hear teachers, who not only hold the appropriate qualifications to take on these positions but also seem to display a high level of leadership ability, talking about the possibilities of whether they would ever apply for a principalship. These informal discussions seem
to include a multitude of reasons as to why they would not consider taking on this particular educational role.

Recently, I had a conversation with a school district administrator who expressed concern about the district's difficulty attracting individuals to the school principal positions. The district recognizes that there are qualified individuals in the district but they are not taking up the available opportunities in school administration. The sentiments of these concerns are echoed in some of the recent literature. In a pilot study completed by Echols, Grimmet, and Kitchenham (1999), senior administrators in British Columbia stated that the number of applications was lower than it was two or three years prior to the study. The interviewees in this study also suggested that "experienced teachers are not going into administration today" (p. 28). Results also showed that "all districts reported having difficulty in coming up with a short list of three appropriate candidates for recently advertised positions" (p. 28). The ability to attract qualified individuals into the position of school principal has become an issue for school districts all across North America. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have further information in regards to this group of qualified applicants whose current plans remain far removed from a career in the area of administration.

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that are associated with qualified candidates’ decisions not to apply for the role of school principal. There is growing evidence of a shortage of school principals across North America and qualified candidates are backing away from this form of leadership role. This concern has the potential to lead to a crisis in management of our schools. The statistics describing the
current shortage of administrators demonstrate the importance of investigating more closely this lack of interest in this job that qualified individuals express. Having this information could help district administrators look towards a future of creating potential solutions to alleviate the current and future shortage of school principals.

There have been several studies (e.g., Echols et al, 1999; Williams, 2001) that have recently looked into the matter of school principal shortages. These investigations developed as a response to general anecdotal comments being made by school districts about the difficulties they are having filling the principal positions. The focus of these studies has been mainly on asking the district administrators and current principals their opinions about the cause of the shortage. However, asking a current principal or district administrator about what deters educators from applying does not give school districts a clear idea of what the important issues really are for the potential candidates. Furthermore, these former studies have used predetermined lists of deterrents for participants to rank and for this reason have limited the insight and detail that can be provided through qualitative methods.

The study that I have completed had a different intent and methodology than past studies with similar concerns. In my study, I interviewed three teachers who hold the qualifications for this job, but who do not intend to pursue a career in administration. I hoped to discover what is at the root of this situation by using qualitative methods that would reveal the most important aspect of this critical problem. That is, what would the qualified candidates themselves actually say were the reasons that they are not applying for the school principal jobs? I was interested in the perspectives, experiences, and feelings that led them to a decision not to seek a school administrative position.
Summary

The schools in North America are facing a shortage of principals although there are teachers who are qualified to fill these positions. The unwillingness by these educators to consider this leadership challenge is an issue that requires further investigation. It is essential to discover the nature of this reluctance by asking these individuals about the factors that are associated with their decision not to pursue a career as a school principal. Previous studies have asked administrators their ideas about the causes of this problem but there have been no detailed reports about what the potential candidates themselves are actually saying about this problem. Gaining this perspective will perhaps enable school districts to improve the number of qualified individuals applying for these positions. In the following chapter, I review the literature that describes the current shortage and deterring factors that have been discussed by previous reports and studies.
Review of the Literature

This literature review will cover two areas. First, in order to establish the relevancy and importance of understanding the current pool of principal candidates, I will describe the present state of the principal shortage in North America. This will also include a description of the speculations and current research that reports the reasons for the shortage. Second, I will discuss previous studies that have investigated similar matters of this administrative shortage including factors that have been cited in past research as discouraging applicants from principalships.

The Current State of the Shortage

Recent studies have been undertaken in various parts of North America that clearly demonstrate the need for educators, government and policymakers to take notice of a shortage of school principals. In the United States, the Educational Research Service (ERS, 1998) was commissioned by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and The National Association of Secondary School Principals to conduct an exploratory study of the problem. The study found support for the anecdotal concerns of educators in the area of recruiting school principals. The ERS (1998) researchers telephone-interviewed 400 administrators who were not only responsible for hiring school principals but also met the criteria of having at least one principal vacancy in the year prior to the study. This study unearthed two significant discoveries. First, the education system is already feeling the effects of the shortage and second, this trend is going to continue.

The detection of the shortage of qualified candidates for principal vacancies is stated as a broad concern of many school districts. The ERS (1998) reports, “half of the
surveyed districts reported that there was a shortage of qualified candidates for the principal positions they had attempted to fill" (p. 8). Unfortunately, the study did not clarify whether this lack of qualified candidates is at the root of the problem or if the problem really is that qualified candidates are not applying for the positions. Regardless of this distinction, the difficulty of filling the available principal positions is widespread. For example, Goldstein (2001) reported that “New York City’s schools began last year with 163 temporary principals” (¶ 2) and in Washington, “499 of the 2,700 principal and vice principal positions statewide were available” (Stricherz, 2001, ¶ 5).

Principals are mainly comprised of an aging population and retirement rates have become another key component of the shortage. According to the ERS (1998) study “the average age of principal rose from 46.8 in 1987-88 to 47.7 in 1994-94 with 37 percent over age 50” (p. 5). This same study claims that one of the issues that exacerbate the shortage is the projected number of principals expected to retire. Goldstein (2001) has described this issue in more specific detail with information that more than 40% of the 93,000 principals in the United States will retire in the next five years. He also writes, “39% of Chicago’s principals are already eligible for retirement” (¶ 2).

British Columbia and other provinces in Canada are experiencing these same phenomena. In the pilot study completed by Echols et al. (1999), it was revealed that British Columbia “districts report having considerable difficulty in recruiting appropriately experienced teachers into school administration” (p. 27). Thorbes (2001) cites a study in which “75% of the current crop of administrators will be retired by 2015” (¶ 4). Grimmet (2001) also reported that “80 percent of educators [retire] between 55 and 60” and that “45 percent of B.C. administrators are 50 and over” (¶ 2). In an extensive
Ontario study completed by Williams (2001) the results were equally alarming. The data showed that “by 2009 ... over 80 per cent of all current principals and about 50 per cent of all vice-principals in Ontario’s public school boards will have retired” (p. 50).

It is not only the aging principal population that is reducing the number of candidates willing to take on leadership positions, but it is also the aging population of the teaching force. According to the information gathered from 12 B.C. school districts by Echols et al. (1999), older experienced teachers simply are not interested in taking on the role of the principal. Grimmett (2001) comments, “teachers in BC have gone through a turbulent decade of curriculum change. Teachers who resented the many changes affecting their classrooms have become disillusioned.... Too many changes have bred instability. As a result, an aging teaching force has begun to disengage from leadership challenges” (¶ 3).

Reasons Why Teachers Don’t Apply

There are several reasons for the shortage of school administrators--besides aging populations and retirement rates--which have been examined in the literature. These include several factors which have implications for the teachers’ applying for principals’ position: the principal’s role continues to change, the workload and the stress in the position are not compensated by adequate salaries, there are excessive time demands as a principal, the parental demands are high, there are poor relationships between education and government, there is a lack of recruitment and grooming for the positions, and gender and minority disparity have all been issues.

The changing role of the principal. The role of the principal has a long history of significant transformations. Lockwood (1996) discusses these changes with Philip
Hallinger in a documented interview. Hallinger, a leadership professor, describes this historical change of the principal from a “school manager” in the 1950s to “change agents” (Lockwood, ¶ 3) in the 1980s. At this time, expectations were also developing to include the additional role of improving student achievement through instructional leadership. Currently, principals not only have all of these past roles, but also now have the added role of increasing the leadership capacity of teachers individually and collectively through transformational leadership. According to Copland (2001), James Burns conceived the notion of transformational leadership in the 1970s and Kenneth Leithwood and his associates have recently developed it further. This type of leadership adds further dimensions to the already heavily laden duties of an administrator. Copland (2001) describes this transformational leadership paradigm as:

- building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations,
- creating a productive school culture and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. (Literature Based Conceptions of Principal Leadership section, ¶ 5)

Although Gilman and Lanman Givens (2001) depict the role as less visionary they also describe the changing role as having “too many hats to wear.” The principal’s job description includes:

- the school’s community relations director, disciplinarian, business manager, marketer, safety officer, facilities supervisor, fund-raiser, labor relations officer,
medical supervisor, social service agent, facilitator and enforcer of the laws, policies, and regulations from various levels of government. (p. 73)

The principal’s responsibilities include not only “maintenance of a school climate conducive to student achievement” (Copland, 2001, § 3), but “have reached the point where aggregate expectations for the principalship are so exorbitant that they exceed the limit of what might reasonably be expected from one person” (Copland, 2001, A Shortage of Principals section, § 4). Ferrandino (2001) also attests to these major role changes and provides evidence from the ERS (1998) study that corroborates the report of alteration of purpose and increased demands in the job. Although one of the purposes of this study was to determine the nature and strength of the principal shortage, the researchers also obtained the current superintendents’ opinions about what was discouraging qualified candidates from applying for principal positions. The superintendents were asked the open-ended question, “What do you think discourages qualified applicants?” (p. 6). According to this study, superintendents reported that candidates are deterred by increased demands of putting in longer hours, and managing larger schools and staffs than in past decades.

Not only is the school principal’s job evolving, but Williams (2001) also suggests that “the principalship is no longer perceived to be the prestigious position it once was” (p. 2). This is supported by other findings where superintendents and upper level administrators stated the “nature of job [is] viewed as less satisfying than previously” (ERS, 1998, p. 9) and “the job is no longer perceived as an attractive one anymore” (Echols et al., 1999, p. 28). These researchers are suggesting teachers no longer see an
administrative career path as something to strive for as a means to elevate their status as an educator.

The changing role of the school principal over the years has also contributed to an adversarial relationship with the teachers. The study completed by Echols et al. (1999) in British Columbia pointed out that since the removal of administrative officers from the teachers' union, a principal spends less time on educational leadership and more time managing complex collective agreements. There is little opportunity for principals to provide their own input into the educational environment of the school. Thus, complaints arise about the language in the union agreements from administrators who state they are "running into a wall of 'professional autonomy' or the power of a staff committee" (Echols et al., p. 22).

Williams (2001) suggests that principals feel discomfort "with both the re-definition of their relationship with teachers and the time the administration of the contract takes" (p. 5). According to Thorbes (2000), Peter Grimmett, a professor of studies in education, believes that "it's no wonder teachers are reluctant to cross over into a camp where they fear they'll be viewed as enemies by their former colleagues" (p. 2). Furthermore, Williams found that 39% of the people identified as potential administrative candidates cited "removal of principal/vice-principal from the union" as a deterrent. Williams further describes this by saying that as long as the unions and media "continue their portrayal of the educational milieu in us versus their terms, ... [it] will continue to be a strong disincentive to potential candidates" (p. 44-45). The ERS (1998) and Evans (2000) also issued similar findings showing concern around the loss of tenure as a teacher.
Salary compensation as it compares to workload and stress. In the literature, the survey and interview responses given about the importance of salary in the decision to apply for a school principal position vary. Although the superintendents and principals surveyed (e.g., Cooley & Shen, 2000; ERS, 1998; Whitaker, 2001; Williams, 2001) ranked this as one of the most important issues, the teachers (Cooley & Shen, 2000) did not.

In the pilot study by Echols et al. (1999), extensive interviews with school district officials and local union presidents of 12 school districts revealed some information about why teachers are not interested in school administration. These authors collectively summarized that “teachers have figured out that, by the time one has worked 60 hours a week and come in for every crisis at the school on the weekend, evenings, or during the summer, the hourly pay is not very good” (p. 28). Similarly, there are many studies and reports that endorse this finding (Cooley & Shen, 2000; ERS, 1998; Hopkins, 2001; Tirozzi & Ferandino, 2000; Whitaker, 2001; Williams, 2001). Ferrandino and Tirozzi (2000) explain that new principals are not only sometimes making less money than veteran teachers but they have a longer work year and more responsibilities and pressures.

Sixty percent of superintendent respondents in the ERS (1998) study claimed “compensation insufficient compared to responsibilities” as a discouraging factor. Likewise, Cooley and Shen (2000) found that current principals ranked “salary must be commensurate with responsibilities” as the most important factor influencing applications for administration. Interestingly, Cooley and Shen surveyed not only principals but
teachers as well and their findings showed that the teachers ranked salary as only the fifth important influencing factor.

*Amount of time.* In the Ontario study completed by Williams (2001), the current principals ranked the adequacy of time available for various job tasks as negative factors relating to their job. Of the top five job disincentive factors, three of them relate to time. Sixty-five percent of the respondents marked “adequacy of time to plan for provincially mandated changes” as the number one ranked disincentive factor. “Adequacy of time to work with students” and “amount of time the job requires” were ranked third and fifth respectively. Additionally, 27% of the respondents of the ERS (1998) study claimed “too much time required” as a reason that discourages qualified applicants from applying for the job. Barth (1990) also writes about these same concerns and describes that 56% of individuals left a principalship because of “excessive time demands.”

Another concern cited in the literature is travel time. Williams (2001) stated that “travel time and cost to reach location of principalship” was a deterrent for 26% of the questioned potential candidates. Although Williams (2001) was unable to report on the importance of this issue for current principals and vice-principals because it was not included in their pre-determined list of factors that they had to rank, it was listed as one of the additional factors identified by the survey respondents. “Location of the district” is also a much larger concern for the teachers in the Cooley and Shen (2000) study. The teachers and principals ranked this issue 14th and 21st respectively.

There is also a specific concern about the impact of time on family. Cooley and Shen (2000) included the factor “impact of administrative position on my home life” in their study and found the teachers ranked this as the third most important influencing
factor while current principals ranked this factor as tenth. Although there was a difference between the two groups, it still appears to be important for both groups of educators. Furthermore, in the Williams study (2001), 42% of the potential candidates also raised “lifestyle and family commitments” as a deterrent to seeking administrative positions. Finally, it can also be noted that the additional factors identified by principals in the Williams (2001) study included “workload impacts on family.”

**Parental input and demands.** A growing area of concern for principals is the changing policies and legislation that allows for more parental input into the education system. This is one of the drawbacks to becoming an administrator as cited in the literature not only because of the increased involvement of parents but also the difficulty in satisfying them. The perceptions of current school principals in Williams (2001) study ranked this factor (parental demands) highly, with 71% of principals claiming this as a deterrent. The research done by the ERS (1998) supports this through similar findings. In this case, the item entitled “difficult to satisfy parents/community” had 14% of current administrators cite this as a hindrance to potential applicants. Grimmett (2001) also cites parent input and pressures as a potential negative roadblock in their job. He states, “Parental pressure has been known to prompt a district to rein in school-based attempts at change, leaving some to feel they face community pressures unsupported” (¶ 12).

**Educational relationships.** There are several studies that claim that poor relationships between education and public parties can have a detrimental impact on morale and willingness to take on leadership challenges. First, Williams (2001) discusses the impact of a hostile relationship between the government and educators in detail. He claims that “the rhetoric and name-calling by all disputants is exacting too high a cost on
the provincial system of public education” and because of this “educators with the potential to be excellent principals and vice principals will elect not to follow that career path” (p. 55). Second, the potential applicants of the Cooley and Shen (2000) study state that the teachers surveyed replied that the most critical factor in applying for an administrative position is the relationship between the board, administration, and teachers. Finally, the relationship that educators have with the media is also exacting a toll on the potential principal candidates. Kennedy (2000; as cited in Whitaker, 2001) reports that “the negativity of the media and public towards schools” has been identified by 90 principals as one of the five major reasons why fewer individuals seek to become principals. Other findings (ERS, 1998; Williams, 2001) report identical concerns.

Lack of recruitment and grooming. According to Blackman and Fenwick (2000; as cited in Tracy & Weaver, 2000), approximately 47% public school teachers in the United States have master’s degrees and therefore “many with leadership potential have not been cultivated or tapped for leadership positions” (p. 2). The ERS (1998) determined through their interviews that only 27% of the districts had an aspiring principals program “to recruit and prepare candidates” (p. 14) to be principals. Casavant and Cherkowski (2001) also assert that “many educators believe that preparation programs for new principals have in large part failed to keep pace with the current realities of what is expected from this vital leadership positions” (p. 4).

Gender and minority disparity. Cooley and Shen (2000) suggest that “discriminatory practices among women and minorities [have] also contributed to administrative shortages” (Literature Review section, p. 7). Many authors
(e.g., Blackmore & Kenway, 1993; Hill & Ragland, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1989) have reported on this gender bias in administrative advancement. Although Shakeshaft (1989) has thoroughly described this barrier as keeping women out of school administration, there is some recent evidence that this is changing. Blaum and Fong (1999) report that “women who apply for administrative posts may have a better chance of getting an interview than male applicants” (¶ 1). This statement is based on research completed by Reis, Young, and Jury (1999, as cited in Blaum & Fong, 1999) where they asked male and female principals to “evaluate resumes … of hypothetical male and female candidates” (¶ 6). They found that “150 principals were noticeably more favorable toward the female candidates” (¶ 7). These researchers also commented that “women are being deliberately courted to fill an existing void” (¶ 8) and there are “improved odds for women who want to advance into school administrative positions” (¶ 14).

Even though discrimination is not identified as a factor that discourages applicants in several more recent studies (Echols et al., 1999; ERS, 1998; Evans, 2000; Williams, 2001) there is clear evidence that there remains a disparity in the number of minorities represented in administrative positions. In British Columbia, according to the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation Information Handbook (BCTF) (1995-1996), 63% of all teachers are women, but only 30% of all administrative officers are women. More specifically 27% are principals, 36 % are vice principals, and 29% hold the position of Director of Instruction. This is similar to the situation in other parts of North America. Spencer and Kochan (2000) have pointed out that females make up 83% and 54% of the elementary and secondary teaching populations respectively, but only make up 42% of the national principal average. In addition, Hopkins (1998) describes the number of
minority principals as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Between 1987-88 and 1993-94 the number of minority principals in public schools only increased from 13 to 16 percent.

The ERS (1998, as cited in Hopkins, 1998) reported that “recruiting minority candidates was more often a problem than recruiting female candidates” (p. 3) but also increasing the number of minorities in management positions is an issue for many of the districts. Echols et al. (1998) likewise pointed out that the districts in their study also “acknowledged weaknesses in the area of diversity in the school and central office administration…and few minorities are represented” (p. 20).

Summary

This literature review has provided the reader with information about the current state of the administrative shortage. In addition, there are numerous reasons that are mentioned by past studies and reports about why school districts are currently experiencing this shortage. These studies have mainly focused on the reasons that administrators pronounce as the obstacles in attracting individuals and as a result have neglected to investigate the important attributes of the problem by directly asking potential candidates their reasons for avoiding this career path. In the chapter that follows, I will describe the methods and procedures that will enable me to determine the factors that are affiliated with qualified educators’ decision to not apply for these positions.
Methodology

In order to gain an understanding of the reasons why qualified educators are not choosing a career path in administration, this qualitative study explored and analyzed three individuals’ perspectives. The following sections will describe the chosen methodology and describe the manner in which the study was conducted. It will describe the setting, participants, the interview methods, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Rationale for Methodology

Prior research has not adequately determined the reasons why qualified candidates are choosing not to apply to principal positions (e.g., Cooley & Shen, 2001; Williams, 2001). Essentially these studies have demonstrated limitations in their choice of methodology and participants because they have not focused on the perspective of the principal candidates. Consequently, I have chosen to describe and critique some previous studies as a rationale for the choice of methodology in my study. In doing this, a clear argument will emerge for the methods and procedures followed in my study.

Williams (2001) had current principals “identify individuals they knew who were viable candidates for principal/vice-principal careers but who had opted to not follow that career path” (p. 7). The researchers then proceeded with a telephone interview of the 92 identified individuals comprising one open-ended question, “What are the key factors that have caused you to not seek a principalship?” However, this study gave no indication in their methodology or results that further probes were used to give a complete understanding of each candidate’s feelings about their personal situation. Furthermore, the results are only characterized as a list of fourteen identified deterrents. There is no
recognition of individual comments or concerns that were raised in this portion of the study. Following the open-ended question, this telephone survey then asked these participants to rank a pre-determined list of disincentive factors, the same list that was asked of participants already in administrative positions. Although this study made an attempt to look at this issue from the applicant’s perspective, a very frugal account is given about their individual thoughts.

Other studies (Echols et al., 1999; ERS, 1998) have also neglected the applicants’ perspectives and have instead investigated this problem from a management viewpoint. These two interview and survey studies focused only on asking district administrators such as superintendents or educators already in the role about their perceptions of the factors that are deterring qualified educators from applying for the positions. Furthermore, Echols et al. (1999) did not investigate this topic directly, but only as a result of a related interview question that asked them to “comment on the supply and demand of school-based administrators in your district” (p. 42).

A further criticism of the ERS (1998) investigation is that prior to asking the question “what do you think discourages or prevents qualified applicants from applying for your [school level] principal positions?” (p. 7, author’s insertion), the researchers also made some inquiries which may have influenced the responses to this question. They asked the respondents about whether they have mentorship programs, induction programs and whether they thought candidates have educational preparation. Providing these questions could potentially have affected the responses to the open-ended question that they asked later in the interview.
Cooley and Shen (2000) also chose a methodology that limited the understanding about why qualified candidates are not choosing to become school administrators. Although they included teachers in their sample, their method of using a survey questionnaire with predetermined factors biased their findings. Participants were not asked to discuss their individual perceptions and feelings about this issue and instead were asked to rank a list that was established by the researchers. Even though attempts have been made by studies in the past (e.g., Cooley & Shen, 2000; ERS, 1998) to determine why qualified individuals are not interested in the school principal positions, they have overlooked the candidates' perspectives that could be revealed through a qualitative method.

Patton (1987) explains that using a qualitative design will eliminate "attempting to fit ... people's experiences into predetermined, standardized categories such as the response choices that constitute typical questionnaires or tests" (p. 10). Therefore, qualitative methods were used in my study in order to avoid fitting "diverse various opinions and experiences into predetermined response categories" (Patton, 1987, p. 9). The qualitative design of this study was the appropriate method for evaluating this research question because it provided me with an in-depth look at the local perspective as it relates to this issue. According to Patton (1987):

We cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they
attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 109)

Setting

This study took place in a small town in central British Columbia. All the interviews were prearranged by telephone to take place in a location that was agreeable to the person being interviewed.

Sample

Anne, Bonnie, and Catherine (their names have been changed to ensure anonymity) are elementary school teachers who have undergraduate and Master's degrees in education. These teachers have taught in a variety of elementary schools and school districts in British Columbia. Bonnie has experience in four different school districts in British Columbia while Anne and Catherine have taught mainly in one school district. The number of years experience that these participants bring to the classroom ranges from 16 to 20 years. They encompass a variety of teaching experiences at different grade levels. They have taught an average of five different grade levels at the elementary school level. Bonnie and Catherine have also had additional roles outside of the classroom at various points in their career. This includes learning assistance positions, a library position, and district specialty positions. These participants are currently working as elementary school teachers at different schools in the same school district.

The interview participants were selected purposefully for this study according to the following predetermined set of criteria. The participants currently hold a Master's degree in education. This is a current requirement for a principal’s position in this school district and many other school districts in North America. It was important for the
purpose of the study that the participants have never been school principals, vice-principals or in school board administrative positions. They must also have stated, “At this time I am not interested in applying for a position as an administrator.” The rationale for this is that I was interested only in why qualified candidates have made the decision not to apply for these positions rather than interviewing candidates who are interested in applying. I also did not investigate the reasons previous administrators have vacated these positions.

The participants in my study were female because there are a greater number of females in elementary education and this allowed for an increased pool of candidates for my selection. Furthermore, the disproportionate number of women in education and educational administration highlights the importance of considering gender if we are looking at increasing the overall number of principal candidates. Therefore, it would be helpful to ask women about the factors that deter them from applying for school principal positions.

The participants possessed certain qualities that would enable them to be considered by the school district as potential candidates. This was determined through the following steps. First, I asked the school district superintendent to identify the five most important characteristics required of an individual that they would consider in hiring a principal. This list was solicited through a pre-arranged meeting with the superintendent. The details of the nature of the meeting were left with this individual in advance in order for this individual to have time to think about the best response to my inquiry. I then took the list of qualities that had been suggested by the superintendent and asked several elementary school principals the following question. Would you be
able to identify and name two or three teachers whom you have worked with in a school who meet the given criteria? I also told these principals that I was going to other schools so a pool of 8-10 possible candidates for my study could be identified. From these recommendations, I identified the participants for my study.

Participants were initially approached privately and individually. I first explained that I was undertaking a study and explained the nature of the study. I then asked, "You have been identified as a person who meets the criteria of a potential administrator. Have you ever considered applying for a school principal position but at some point have decided that you would not?" If they answered "yes" they were considered as a possible participant for this study. However, if the individual had decided that they were going to apply for a position as an administrator, they were no longer a potential participant in this study. I then described the nature of the study to the potential participant and the following procedures were explained.

Procedures

Prior to the previously described sampling decisions, all stakeholders were informed of the nature of the study. This included the school district superintendent and the local teachers' union. (See Appendix A and B for letters.)

Ethics. This study accounted for all necessary ethical considerations. The proposal was submitted for approval to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Northern British Columbia prior to beginning the research. The purpose of the research, the timeline and expected dates that the research would take place, a summary of the methodology, participant information and a copy of the intended informed consent were
completed. Copies of the letters that were provided to the stakeholders were also included in the submission to the ethics committee.

Confidentiality. The main risk for the participants in this study was the maintenance of confidentiality throughout the study and it was protected in several ways. First, the interview locations were discussed and decided with the agreement of the participant. Also, the data was protected as described, and only the researcher heard the audio-tapes or read the transcriptions. Finally, because pseudonyms were used, the participants’ names did not appear in the transcriptions or in the results of the study.

Participants were selected based on the decisions outlined in the sampling section. A consent letter (Appendix C) was given to each participant that provided the necessary details about the study. This letter included the required components as outlined by the research ethics approval form. Most importantly, it included the purpose of the study, a description of how confidentiality was to be addressed, and the right of the participant to withdraw at any time. The participants gave informed consent through the reading and signing of this letter.

Potential risks and benefits. Although confidentiality has been described as the main risk, it was also the intent of this research to treat the participants with honesty, dignity and respect, and to place them under no undue stress through physical or mental discomfort. Furthermore, the participants were debriefed following the interview and asked if they had any questions. They were then approached following data analysis to determine the accuracy of my interpretations. Although the participants selected for this study have decided to not become school principals, it is possible that this study may
benefit them by further developing their thinking about their future which may include thoughts about becoming a school principal.

**Instruments**

I designed and used a semi-structured interview, as described by McMillan and Schumacher (1997). Similarly, Patton (1987) describes the semi-structured interview as a combination between an “interview guide” and “standardized open-ended interview” (p. 114). More specifically,

a number of basic questions may be worded quite precisely in a predetermined fashion, while permitting the interviewer more flexibility in probing and considerable freedom in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to undertake whole new areas of inquiry that were not originally included in the interview instrument. (p. 114)

Probing was used as a strategy for clarification or expansion of ideas stated by the participant. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), this allowed the researcher to “follow up on topics that have been raised by asking specific questions … [and] encourages the informant to provide details, and constantly presses for clarification of the informant’s words” (p. 106).

**Data Collection**

Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed. This raw data was stored in a locked filing cabinet at all times other than when it was being transported to an interview site or being used by the researcher. After transcriptions were made, the tapes were erased. While I continued to work with the data, it was also stored and safeguarded in a locked filing cabinet.
Interview questions. Patton (1987) categorizes the types of questions that can be formulated for an interview on any given research topic and consequently the questions for this study were formulated prior to the interview based on some of these categories. Patton (1987) categorizes these questions as behaviour, experience and feeling questions. For the purpose of my investigation it was important to ask questions that drew out the experiences, behaviours, and feelings of the participants. These questions are outlined in Appendix D. As suggested by Patton (1987), I chose to follow a question format that elicited information about the experiences and feelings of the participants on decisions that participants have made in the past and present, and may make in the future. The questions were not given to the participants before the interview. The intent was for each interview to be an hour in duration.

Data Analysis

Patton (1987) describes qualitative data collection as a “sheer mass of information” that can be “overwhelming” (p. 146) and makes several suggestions about the organization and description of the data that facilitate the analysis of the data for my study. First, after the data had been collected and transcribed, several copies were made to ease the analysis. Patton (1987) describes this as having “one to work on and one original as a basic reference (and for safekeeping)” (p.146). Also, as suggested by Patton (1987), I used a computer to help with the organization of the data through cutting and pasting “quotations or observations that go together, that are examples of the same underlying idea, issue, or concept” (p. 149).

The data was analyzed to identify common themes and trends. These patterns and categories were not decided before data collection but instead emerged from the data.
According to Patton (1987) there may be categories that are articulated by the participants themselves or the “analyst may also become aware of categories or patterns for which the [researcher] … did not have labels or terms, and the analyst then develops terms to describe these inductively generated categories” (p. 150).

The findings are based on the data and are descriptive in nature to provide the reader with the understanding of the important information retrieved from the interview responses. Illustrative quotations and descriptions are used to convey the findings of the study.

Summary

This study involved interviewing three teachers who volunteered to be part of this study. These teachers met the necessary criteria for being selected as a participant for this study. These participants answered semi-structured questions with further probing by the researcher and this interview was recorded and transcribed. All ethical considerations were accounted for before, during and after this study. The data was organized, described and analyzed to identify common themes and differences in the statements made by the participants of the study.
Results

This study determined the factors associated with qualified candidates’ decisions to not apply for the role of school principal. The three participants met the criteria for having the potential for becoming a school principal. All three participants, at some point in their career, had thought about the prospect of becoming a school principal and had decided this would not be a career path that they would choose. In the presentation of the results, the participants’ names have all been changed to protect their identities. The results are presented as a series of categories or themes that arose as a result of my analysis and interpretation of the data. These categories will reveal the reasons why these teachers are not currently interested in the position of school principal. I have also described why these individuals considered the possibility of administration as a career in the first place and some information about whether or not these participants would consider administration in the future.

Reasons Why These Qualified Teachers Are Not Applying for School Principal Positions

All three of the participants indicated several reasons for their lack of interest in applying for a school principal position. Although the individuals shared some of these reasons, there also disclosed individual reasons for their lack of interest.

Relationships with students and enjoyment of the classroom. This particular theme arose for all three individuals whom I interviewed. These teachers all discussed the importance of being in the classroom where they can directly impact children. A reason why they would not want to exchange this role for a position as an administrator is their love of being in the classroom and the pure joy that they get out of teaching.
Anne described this as the “niche” that she wants to be in and often mentioned the importance of having fun in her job. She stated, “I like my classroom. I like the autonomous nature of my classroom, my own little world.” Later in the interview she again remarked, “I love the fun aspect of teaching and I love watching the kids learn” and also “I love doing classroom things, working with lessons, watching the kids learn.”

Bonnie also claimed the importance of the enjoyment of teaching and declared, “Right now I enjoy being in the classroom.” Bonnie discussed that she also likes being in the classroom with the students and also mentioned that she thinks being an educator is also about personal growth through her own learning. For this reason, as long as she is still learning things as a classroom teacher, she may not be ready to move into the position of an administrator. She said, “I feel like I still have some things that I want to learn here at this level and I am not tired of it yet. I enjoy it. The day I think that this is not so fun as it was, then maybe I’ll try a new job. Maybe administration will at that point be something that I will pursue … I have to like what I am doing and then if I am still enjoying it and learning then I think … that’s where I need to be because there are things to do.”

Catherine believes that although she thinks administrators can “make fairly good connections with kids,” she does see the administrator’s role as limiting in the amount of time that they can spend with them. She believes, “Just seeing how busy an administrator’s day is … I don’t see them having a lot of time to [work with kids].” She also sees this as a factor to consider and disclosed, “I love my job, too, and I enjoy teaching a lot.” She added, “I see an administrator more as someone taking care of the bits and pieces and I’m not interested in doing that. I like to be working with kids.”
Not only do Anne, Bonnie, and Catherine love working in the classroom environment with the students, they all mentioned that, as a principal, the large number of relationships with behaviour students is really an undesirable aspect of being a principal. Anne explained, “When you are in a principal’s role you oversee everything ... you tend to deal with more of the problems. You tend to have all the problem kids coming to you ... not just the ones in your own classrooms ... I don’t want to deal with the problem kids of the world.” Catherine agreed that dealing with behaviour is a “huge part of the job.” Bonnie realizes if she became a principal she “would have to deal with the behaviour” but she argued, “I don’t think that should become the all-consuming part of the job. And it seems to me that’s the way it seems to be going.”

These three teachers all mentioned the importance of the relationships that they have with their students and the enjoyment that they get out of being in the classroom. They perceive the principal’s role as having to deal with many more negative student issues, such as discipline, and having less positive impact on students directly in the classroom. One of the main reasons that these three teachers would avoid applying for administration at this point in their careers is simply because they enjoy what they do currently and are not willing to give that up for the role of an administrator.

*Time and flexibility.* Time as a factor was mentioned by all three of the participants in this study. For Catherine, time was not considered as a barrier particularly because of how much time a principal works but rather in the limiting choices that they have in the use of their time. She pointed out, “I don’t see myself as having the flexibility and freedom to be as creative as I want to be, that I have in my job now or in the volunteer activities I choose to do.” She further added, “I think administration is a
tough job and wouldn’t allow me the flexibility that I need for myself. I don’t want a job … that I perceive to be all consuming or see myself … putting too much of my time without having the flexibility…. I don’t mind putting tons of time in but that’s my choice as opposed to having to do that.”

Catherine expressed some concern that if she became an administrator she would put in too much time. “I can see it because of the way I work … it would be fairly all consuming for me. I don’t want … something that consumes my life…. I would see that sort of as a life as opposed to a job that I really enjoy. [I want to] have time to do other kinds of community work.” For her personally, the limited flexibility in the role of a school administrator would be an undesirable use of her time.

Interestingly, opposing opinions were expressed about the amount of time a school principal works. Catherine suggested that the time required by each individual principal varies. “I think the range is out there. What I see as an administrator working… maybe … doesn’t look like they’re working. They could be working…. I don’t know all the tasks that they have to do…. Some probably put in fewer hours and some put in more hours.” She later added, “I would say that I think in the system they all put in a lot of hours.” Conversely, Anne does not see the amount of time that a principal works as being as much as a teacher does. She remarked, “They spend an awful lot of time in their offices doing their thing … [some of them spend] a fair bit of time working out in the classrooms with the kids and working with teachers. Furthermore, she mentioned that she doesn’t think they do the same amount of work at home because she doesn’t “see them carrying [work] … home every night.” However, she did add, “Personally I don’t
think they work the hours that we do but I could be very mistaken. I haven’t really looked into it that seriously.”

The issue for Bonnie is that she currently works part-time as a teacher and would have to make a decision to work full-time before applying for administration. She said that earlier in her career she had not thought about administration [because] “I wasn’t intending to work full time and I knew at that time principals always worked full time. That was just the way it existed.”

All three of the teachers interviewed have considered the time commitment that would be necessary if they were to become a principal. Although this is an issue for all three teachers, all three have different perspectives. Catherine wouldn’t mind putting in the required amount time, but sees the role of the principal as constricting her flexibility and creativity in how that time is spent. She prefers to put her energy and working time into tasks of her own personal choice and liking. Time is also a considered factor for Bonnie because she would have to consider working full-time and thus give up some of her own personal time. Anne had a different opinion because she currently thinks that teachers put in as much time as principals working outside of the school hours.

*Relationships with teachers.* All three of the participants in this study talked about administration and the relationship with other teachers and the teacher’s union as one of the potentially unpleasant aspects of this position. Although it wasn’t discussed as the one problem that specifically deters all of them from applying for a principalship, they all have put some thought into this issue. Bonnie and Anne talked about the difficulty that they would have supervising individuals who were struggling in their teaching practice. Both of them talked about the importance of helping and mentoring
teachers who are having difficulty but also having the skill and the courage to supervise them as a necessary part of their job. Anne stated, “Another side of the administration issue is dealing with the teachers ... I mean you are going to see the good, the bad, and the ugly. I would have a hard time ... dealing with a teacher that wasn’t up to standards.”

Bonnie also mentioned that “dealing with incompetence, that’s hard” but believes “that’s the principal’s job.” She related this to being “in there doing the dirty work with helping them” because she believes “you take the time to try to help them and do everything you possibly can to help them to be successful.” Bonnie also mentioned the part of the job as being “very sensitive and very union oriented.” She called herself a “people person” and said “that would be very hard for me.” She voiced further concern for the relationship that she has with the teachers and expresses, “You don’t want to hurt other people’s feelings. Those kinds of things are hard and I think those are the little things that I think about. I think as an administrator ‘Do I want to get into that?’” She affirmed that, “it’s those things in the job that sort of scare me off. I think I really don’t want to have to do that.”

All three individuals expressed concern that if they were an administrator not only are you “on the other side” with a sense of loss in the relationship you have with the teachers but also that you may have to compromise some of your actions of support for the teachers. Anne indicated, “You’re not in the same situation as you are a teacher. You don’t have that camaraderie. You’re not a colleague as much.... It’s a them and us situation.” Bonnie also articulated, “You are also on the other side in a sense...you can provide support to your teachers to a point ... and [you can] think they are completely right but sometimes my actions can’t show [that]. They don’t necessarily show what I
am feeling inside because of what I have to do for my job. Because I am asked to do that by upper administration. [For example], you can’t go out and picket with the teachers.”

Catherine also expressed some of her ideas about management’s relationships with the union as sometimes being between a “rock and a hard place” because “a school-based administrator has to do what senior administration and the board tells them….. Even though they want to be more collegial with the staff … then I think that’s when they are between a rock and a hard place.” She shared that although she does feel “a sense of belonging with the union” and that she “really belonged on the union side as opposed to the management side,” that would not ultimately keep her from applying if she really wanted to be an administrator. Catherine summarized “The union stuff, well that’s fine … if I wanted to be an administrator, I don’t think that would bother me (sort of going over to the dark side). It wouldn’t be a huge barrier for me.”

Not only do these teachers have concern about how taking on a principalship would change the relationships with their colleagues, Anne and Catherine both pointed out that they think that they can make a difference in their school without becoming a principal. Anne commented, “I can share my knowledge [and] my abilities [with teachers] without having a principalship.” Catherine thinks that “an administrator can help the staff work together but teachers can do the same.”

Bonnie sees working with the teachers as one of the most important roles of the principal but she regards this belief as counter to what is currently being practiced in her school district. “I guess the administrators that I have [are not] doing the kinds of things that I think are important. I’m not seeing that right now. I’m seeing it being a lot of paperwork and accountability.” Ultimately, she “would like to see the principals in the
classrooms more” and if she were a principal, she sees the importance of getting into those classrooms and “provid[ing] those teachers with the support or the in-service they need. I think that’s my job as an administrator.” She continued, “I watch and now and as I see the way it’s going, it’s less likely than more likely [I will become a principal] because of the nature of what’s happening in the job.” She defines this as the job becoming “so far removed from the classroom, which sounds odd in a school, it’s almost becoming removed from the school … it’s behaviour problems, it’s paperwork, it’s everything to do with accountability but accountability as I see it now is becoming very narrowly focused. It’s always numbers, test, empirical, have a growth plan. It’s not … okay I see your growth plan, how are you actually doing this or is this just a paper copy.”

For all three individuals, comments were made throughout the interviews about how they have considered the important relationship that they have with teachers when thinking about a principalship. They expressed uneasiness not only over having to supervise other teachers, but also a concern over the loss of being part of the teacher group and losing the support and association that they have with other teachers. Bonnie disclosed that she considers the relationship with the teachers and support provided by the principal as one of the most important components of the job. Her observation of what principals are focusing on in schools currently deters her from applying for a job as a school principal.

*Relationships with parents and the school board.* Anne was one of the participants to mention that dealing with the parents of the entire school population as being one of the “many aspects of the principalship that I just wouldn’t want to touch.” She described that she doesn’t mind doing it with two or three parents in her classroom
but adds, “When you’ve got 14 classrooms, you’ve got two or three parents in every classroom that you have to deal with .... I don’t enjoy that. I don’t want to do it.” Catherine also sees administrators “put[ing] in time with the parent group,” because there are certain aspects of the job that involve working with the parents. “Phoning parents, contacting parents … are all part of the day to day administrative tasks.” Bonnie declared, “I think as a principal you get into those jobs where it isn’t always pleasant” because you are dealing with “teachers, parents [and] upper administration.”

As well as dealing with parents, the participants stated that dealing with the school board would be another one of the pressures that could add to their difficulties as a principal. Anne stated that for her “dealing with the school board and having to mediate that situation … between the school board and the teachers and the parents is just too big a leap.” She talked about “fighting constantly [with the school board] especially if you have the interest of your school and the teachers at heart. It’s an uphill battle constantly.” Catherine also furthered the argument. “I think it’s just too much … working like with all the different personalities and being under pressure with parents, senior administration and the teachers at the school.”

Anne also stated her concern for having the skills to be diplomatic enough with the parents and the school board. She said, “In administration I think that you’d end up being much more held accountable [for what you say] and “I think that I would get into big trouble and I’d be really annoyed with the school board [because of] … the lack of financing.” Bonnie agrees that you need certain skills to work with parents and senior administrators and that you must have the skills to be competent in any circumstance.
She thinks that before she is ready to be an administrator it would be an advantage to continue to work in her classroom right now to become more of an expert with the necessary skills for dealing with difficult situations as a principal. Even though she doesn’t know if being an expert teacher determines readiness for being an administrator, she claimed that “I think that just the more experience that you have dealing with those [difficult] kind of situations ... are the kind of things [that] are really important.” Furthermore, she believes, “I don’t know if you could ever be that expert teacher that’s ready to be an administrator... I feel like there are still things I want to learn.” Bonnie further remarked, “if I apply for it [a principalship] I believe I have the skills to do it. I am not going to apply for it if I don’t believe it. I’d never do that. Like I really believe that if I apply for a job, I’m ready. And I could do this and I will give it one hundred percent. I’ll try my best.”

The relationship and the skills that are necessary to work with the school board and the parents are something that these individuals have taken into account. They realize there are certain abilities that are required that are similar to those they already use in their classrooms. They also recognize that they are currently using these skills with other teachers and parents of the students in their class. However, these individuals do not wish to do this on a larger scale with more parents and the school board members. They perceive this part of the principal’s role to be undesirable.

Political climate. The political climate is something that was discussed by all participants in this study. Some of them made statements and shared their opinions about how the recent changes to legislation and collective agreements influence their current thoughts about administration. Bonnie speaks of the confusion that the changes will cause
at all levels in education, “like with the teachers, with upper administration, with the regular administration. No one seems to know exactly what’s going to happen. And I think, ‘Why would I want to put myself in that situation.’” She also pointed out, “Why would I want to start something like [administration] at this point in time because [the legislation and collective agreement] is all so new. Let’s say next year September, if there was a [principal’s] job … I would think that would not be the time to jump in.”

Catherine spoke of “more pressure [being] on the school based administrators” because of these upcoming changes. “They’ll have to pick up the slack more if we are going to be you know more of a crunch financially, fewer staff and where’s it going to fall to?” However, she also reflected that perhaps the political changes in education will have a positive impact on people applying to administration because “some people might want to get out of administration and the jobs might open. You know people are retiring so if people wanted to give it a try it might be an opportunity in the near future.”

Recent political changes are a factor that was discussed in the interview by these individuals. These changes have created another potential reason for these individuals to not apply for a principal’s position currently or in the future.

**Job security and transfers.** Another common reason given to not to go into administration is the transfers issued to school principals. They are viewed not only as a loss of personal choice but also seemingly too frequent. Anne observes, “You get bounced around a lot. That’s another issue. There is no security in that job. You are at the whim of superintendent of schools who decides ‘Okay, fine. Henry Smith you are going to go off to this school.’ Well that to me, right now the choice is mine if I want to
stay at [school name] or not.... No one is going to push me out. I have enough seniority there that I can stay. So to me there’s the instability as well.”

Bonnie discussed her concern for the frequency of the transfers that are taking place between schools and also noted, “If you are at a school for five years now that’s amazing and when I look how long we know change takes, that long at least. They don’t give them the opportunity. It can’t be very satisfying a job ... for administrators because you work for four or five years and you are finally getting somewhere and you have to be moved. Cause you know that it takes one or two years almost to become part of the team, trusted, people feel comfortable with you.... You have to build that safety and that trust and that takes time.”

Although Catherine did not state that principal transfers were a reason for her avoidance of administration, she still thought that this was problematic and brought it up as what may be a deterring issue for some people. She further remarked, “This district moves administrators around. I don’t know if that’s the best thing. Particularly for beginning administrators where you have to learn the ropes, you have to learn the staff; you have to learn so much. The learning curve is so steep ... then they move you. You know I think they move every five years ... and to build trust, you need to have a certain level of trust and that takes time. And then to gradually move into educational leadership to build your own credibility that takes time. And then in order to be perceived as some kind of educational leader, it takes time. And to move them around I don’t see how that serves them. I have no idea why they do it. That may be something to consider there, ‘Why do they move them around?’ If there’s a need, fine but if there is not a need why do it?”
Interestingly, Bonnie and Anne both did state that they do see the merit of being flexible and moving around. Bonnie indicated, “I believe change is really healthy and I do change fairly often” and Anne agrees with “I think that moving around is not a bad thing. I once believed that people should be more flexible. We should move more often.” However, Bonnie’s current perception of the reasons behind these transfers adds to her leeriness of taking on an administrative role. She stated, “I would say our district solution with problems is you move them to a different school. You don’t deal with the problem and that doesn’t work as far as I can see. If you’re having a problem at a school I actually think rather than move that person, you take the time to try to help them there first and time doesn’t mean a month or two. Change is slow … but we want it really fast. I think you need to take the time.” In thinking about her own personal prospects of becoming a principal and how being transferred would impact her she also argued, “I think that I would be better at making that choice than someone else for me. But then I also think that if something is working really well and I know it’s going well and we’re very successful that I should have the opportunity to stay there and keep going. You have to feel you’ve been successful before you want to change.”

These individuals understand and argue that educators should be flexible and transferring principals can contribute to positive change. However, they see themselves as having more professional autonomy in their role as a teacher because they currently have stability and choice in their current teaching assignments. They have made observations that this district may transfer new principals too quickly without allowing them the time to feel successful in their first principal assignments. They have also
shared that perhaps the principals themselves need to play a bigger role in the decision about when they should be asked to change.

*Family.* Having a family at home with small children was one of the factors mentioned in this study by two of the participants. Bonnie reflected on the first time that she thought about applying for administration “in a smaller rural school which I thought would be most appropriate for me if I was going to start as a principal.” She added, “It was the timing [and] ... when I thought of where my family was, and the age of my kids, it just didn’t fit in very well at that point in time.” She detailed, “I still have [children] at home.” In parenting young children, she sees parenting as “only once that I have that chance to do it and an administrator job will be there forever. It is not going to disappear.” Catherine talked about the first time that she thought about being an administrator was when she “had kids at home” and was just a beginning teacher and had “no extra time” because she already had “a lot of work to do” and “head[ing] in the direction [of being a principal] ... just didn’t appeal to me at the time.”

*What inspired these Teachers to Think about Administration*

Although the teachers who were interviewed for this study indicated that they were not interested in applying to administration, they all admitted that they have entertained thoughts about it throughout their careers. Through the interviews all of them indicated reasons for thinking of becoming an administrator in the first place.

*Women role models.* Anne pointed out, “I finished my Master’s and then I watched [another woman] go off and apply for this job and I thought okay she’s doing that...maybe I should try.” She also observed other women “talking about the Master’s program” and saw “lots of women were going into principalships more and more.”
Bonnie also described how she thinks it made a difference for women thinking about a principalship “once one [woman] got in, in the district office in upper administration.”

Bonnie remarked that having a female colleague encourage her is what initially caused her to think about applying for a principalship “because then it really hadn’t crossed my mind too much before that. Someone else suggested it and that is what put the thought into my head.” She said that “people were asking me to start to think about being a principal because there were principal jobs coming up and I had people approach me to see if I was interested.” She further disclosed that it was a female colleague who said, “You need to be applying for these jobs because we need people like you being a principal.” She summarized that this was the first time she “thought about it a bit.”

Catherine also commented that, “most women don’t automatically see themselves in roles and that’s why it helps to approach women about things because generally they’ll say sure you know, I hadn’t honestly considered that.”

*Increased local opportunity for women.* Bonnie reflected that more women were getting their masters because the opportunity to take courses locally arose. She stated, “It’s really hard for a woman to go away for two to three summers when you have a family … so I think that [local courses] opened the door for a lot of people. Like lots of females. And then I think some of them just were taking courses in leadership, saw some other females modeling it, doing that job.”

*What would it take for these Individuals to Apply for a Principalship?*

*Mentorship.* Catherine observes that “it seems … that maybe [new principals] could use more mentoring.” She thinks that perhaps having something “more formal” would help with people “feeling more secure” in their first years as an administrator.
Bonnie is adamant that if she was ever to become a principal she does not “want to be left out there floundering... and not have any system in place to help.” She claims that she would ask, “How do you help new principals? What kind of in-service do you provide for me? What kind of coaching?” She said, “I want to know what kind of support you are going to give me so I can be successful at this job.” It is important for her to have proof that a formal mentoring program exists before considering a principalship. She stated, “I need to see it in action. I would have to have proof before I applied. I want to see them doing some kind of mentoring with principals. I would want to see that or have proof that that was going to happen.”

Bonnie thinks that it is also important to have the right person as a mentor. She claims that having a similar belief system and philosophy would make a mentoring relationship more successful. “I think I’d probably... feel more comfortable going to certain people that I have worked with and dealt with in the past so I have some relationship with [them]. I don’t know [other administrator’s] belief systems. I don’t know where they are coming from.” And for this reason she declared, “I think if I was to take an administrative role, I would like to have another administrator who I perceived as having the qualities that could help me learn, be a mentor. Someone I could go to, learn from, talk to, invite to my school, you know take the time to teach me [and] to ask for help.” She feels the mentoring relationship has to be with someone who she would feel comfortable with so it would be easy to say, “I don’t know how to do this.” She thinks it would be “hard to go [for help] if you are not close to someone” because “you don’t want to be looked as like you don’t know how to do that.”
Bonnie and Catherine both commented that they were not sure about the status of mentoring in their school district. When asked if she was aware of any mentoring program, Catherine replied, “Maybe they do, I don’t know.” Bonnie seemed more doubtful and remarked, “I’ve never seen it happen” and “I haven’t seen it at any of my schools.” She thinks that if mentoring was happening teachers would be more aware of it because they would see other administrators in her school but stated, “I never see another administrator in our school as a mentor, or helping [the principal] learn something new.”

**Money.** Two of the participants interviewed briefly mentioned money as a factor that they have considered when thinking about a principalship. When asked what it would take to get her to consider a principal position in the future, Anne laughed and said “a whole heck of a lot of money.” Bonnie proclaimed the opposite. “I have heard people who go into [a principalship] and go to interviews; one of their big reasons is because they make more money. And to me that wasn’t even a consideration. Yes, it does happen but it but it wasn’t one of the factors.”

**Location.** Two of the participants interviewed shared that they might apply for a principalship only as a means of securing a job in a different town. Anne declared that “the only thing that would shift me into administration is should there be a position in administration come available say somewhere down in [another town] … I may be tempted to apply for that.” Similarly, for Catherine she shared, “I’m probably leaning toward the idea of retiring early and then going around and working in different locals. My family is spread out … and so I might retire early and then go and be a TOC [Teacher on call] … and if short term administrative officer came up at some point, I might
consider it at that time but certainly not for a career choice ... Like a short term stint thing.”

Thinking outside the box. Bonnie shared her opinion on what may get her or others into school administration sooner. She calls it “think[ing] way out of a box” and would like the school district to consider the potential of having individuals job share a principal’s position. She described what she means by this. “When I say job share I guess it would have to be someone that you were compatible with. Not a job share where it is just two random people. That doesn’t always work. I believe it has to be someone that has a similar philosophy to you.” She thinks it would be an advantage for teachers who want to work part-time and have some flexibility in their working hours. Although she believes, “it would probably cost them more money,” she thinks of the possibilities.

“When I look at it as a teacher who job shares I think you get your money’s worth and more because you have two individuals probably working 75%.... You get a good deal. You get two refreshed people every week that are ready to come in. Pretty high energy because they aren’t there more than they want to be. They are there exactly how much they want to be.”

Summary

The findings of this study identified the factors associated with teachers not applying for principals’ positions from these three individuals’ perspectives. All of the teachers interviewed value the positive relationships that they have with students and enjoy the work that they do in the classroom. They also share a concern that becoming a principal would require a compromise not only in the allocation of their time but also in the choice and flexibility that they currently have in their classroom. Two of these
teachers view the job transfers that principals in this district may have to endure as an infringement on their capabilities to make decisions about their own career path. These individuals are not only concerned about maintaining their relationship with students but they also have regard for their relationship with other teachers. If they were to become a principal they would no longer be part of the union and there are some responsibilities that they some of them would find difficult. Finally, some of teachers view the relationship that the principals have with the parents and the school board as difficult.

These individuals also shared some facts about what might inspire their future considerations of becoming a principal. For more than one individual, a principalship might be considered if it opened up an opportunity for a job in other town. Providing aspiring and new principals with a mentoring program may increase the likelihood of attracting some of these qualified individuals into a position. A final suggestion of creating job-share teams of administrators who want to work part-time may inspire others to become principals.

A discussion of the results and conclusions based on my analysis and interpretation of the data is detailed in the next chapter. The limitations of the study, recommendations, and future considerations for further study will be addressed.
Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine three teachers’ perspectives on the reasons why they are not interested in applying for a school principal’s position. The open-ended interview methodology was chosen to give the participants the opportunity to bring forth their own ideas about this issue. Based on the themes that arose from the detail of the research participants’ experiences, I have developed an understanding of their decisions not to enter educational administration. Briefly, I found that these individuals have some common reasons for currently not choosing this career path: (a) they enjoy teaching and the relationships that they have with their students in the classroom, (b) they enjoy the relationships that they have with the other teachers, (c) they have concerns about the relationships that principals must have with the parents and school board, (d) they don’t like the use of time and lack of flexibility in the job, (e) they have concern about the current political climate and how it will impact on the position, and (f) they like the security they have in their current jobs. This chapter will provide a discussion and conclusion based on the results that were presented in the previous chapter. The limitations of the study, recommendations, and future considerations for further study will also be offered in this chapter.

Attracting teachers into school principal positions is an issue that needs consideration not only because of an ensuing shortage, but also because many qualified individuals cannot be persuaded to apply for these positions. In the literature there is a variety of factors that are explored as to why some educators think that these qualified individuals are not going into school administration. There are two important features to keep in mind when considering these previous studies. First, much of this research has
solicited the opinions of school superintendents and school principals rather than the qualified teachers themselves about what deters them from applying for these positions. Second, these studies (Cooley & Shen, 1998; ERS, 1998; Williams, 2001) gave participants a pre-determined list of factors to rank. I found that to be an unsatisfactory way to ascertain the reasons why qualified teachers are reluctant to apply to school administration. For this reason, my study focused on the more important question of what the qualified individuals themselves would say about why they are shying away from these positions.

Connections of Findings to the Literature

In previous studies (Cooley & Shen, 1998; ERS, 1998; Williams, 2001), numerous reasons are given as to why individuals chose not to become an administrator. These studies present a range of between 13 and 32 reasons why qualified individuals are not applying for principal positions. However, common themes did emerge through these past studies and these are important to point out. These ideas are “compensation insufficient compared to responsibilities” (ERS, 1998), “salary not commensurate with responsibilities” (Cooley & Shen, 2000), “adequacy of time to plan for provincially mandated changes” (Williams, 2001), and “adversarial relationships, growing work stress, and the changing role of administrators” (Echols et. al, 1999).

Two studies (Williams, 2001; Cooley & Shen, 2000) did commit a portion of their study to asking some qualified teachers “to name the major factors they considered in making their decision” not to apply for a school principal position (Williams, 2001, p. 16) or to rank a list of predetermined factors (Cooley & Shen, 2000). Teachers ranked “relationships between the board, administration and teachers as the most critical factor
in applying for an administrative position” (Cooley & Shen, Discussion section, ¶ 2).

Williams (2001) found “perceived inability for principals to effect change” and “lifestyle and family commitments” had been mentioned as critical factors by the highest percentage of the respondents in his study.

A large number of specific factors that deter individuals from applying for school principal positions was reported in the previous literature. Recall that I summarized these into several general themes: the changing role of the principal, salary compensation as it compares to workload and stress, time, parental input and demands, educational relationships, lack of recruitment and grooming and gender and minority disparity. After I analysed my data, I noted that some of the reasons cited in the literature are also echoed in the voices of the participants of this study. However, some of the factors revealed by these individuals are not fully explored by prior studies. In my discussion, I will point out the important features of these similarities and differences between my study and previous research.

Relationships with students and enjoyment of the classroom. I was surprised that one of the prime reasons given by the individuals in this study as to why they are not applying for a principal’s job was nowhere to be found in the literature. These teachers all spoke about the teaching jobs that they have currently and the satisfaction that they get from being in the classroom as one of the reasons why they are not interested in taking on a school administrative position. They see their current role as one that not only makes a positive impact on children but also is enjoyable and creates constant new learning for them. This is a pleasant surprise, knowing that there are individuals who qualify for these positions but who still actively choose teaching students over administration. I
have to question why this has not been a feature of the previous investigations into this matter. Again, it is possible because the literature focuses mainly on what principals and superintendents think are the influencing factors in teachers applying for a principal's position. Perhaps enjoyment of teaching is a not a factor that principals would consider once in an administrative position because they see themselves contributing as meaningfully in an administrative capacity as teachers do in the classroom.

Money. Money is one of the main reasons stated in the literature for teachers to be reluctant to take on a principalship but the individuals of this study did not emphasize this factor as one of the most important conditions. Bonnie mentioned that she assumed that if she became an administrator she would get more money, but clearly stated that this was not a reason that would cause her to apply for the position. Perhaps, again, because previous research mainly solicited the opinions of principals and superintendents, this is the reason for the discrepancy. Conceivably, some teachers also do not really know what the salary is for a principal and how it really compares to their current salary. Furthermore, maybe this only becomes an issue once principals are working in the position and then have a better understanding of how their salary doesn’t compensate for all that is expected in the position.

Gender and minority disparity. Considerable evidence is provided by past studies that there are gender biases and gender discrepancies in the advancement of women in educational administration. However, the individuals of this study did not suggest this as a discouraging factor in their own thoughts about a career as a principal. I am not surprised by this result because even though they are women, they mentioned that a number of individuals have encouraged them to apply for principal positions. They also
mentioned that there are female role models in the district that have not only furthered their education and training but also have more regularly been accepting administrative positions in the school district. Unfortunately, this does not fully negate the fact that there continues to be under-representation of women and minorities in this school district and other school districts across the province.

*Time and flexibility.* The general consensus of the literature is that the job of the principal requires too much time and that individuals have to sacrifice their own personal time and the time they spend with their families in order to do the job. I found this somewhat of a contrast to what the individuals in my study shared. First, these participants did not indicate that they thought the job would require more time than they currently spend as teachers. Catherine made specific points that she thinks that if she were an administrator she would no doubt put in long hours but that doesn’t really vary from what she currently does. She just likes to have the choice of how she spends those long hours and she sees the principal’s role as being more restrictive in how the time is spent. Second, Anne thinks that some principals actually spend less time working than a teacher does because she shares that she is always working evenings and weekends. Finally, Catherine states her opinion that there is a range in the number of hours a principal works just like there is a range in the number of hours a teacher works. Therefore, putting in more time as a principal may be a reality for some individuals but not for others.

*Family.* I was surprised that there was not more emphasis by these participants on the role of their families in deterring them from applying for a principal’s job. Although they expressed at times that they have been a consideration, I would not conclude that
this is one of the main reasons they are not applying for principalships. Perhaps this relates back to the time commitment and their perception that if they were to give up their job as a classroom teacher, they would commit similar amounts of time in their job as a principal.

*Relationships with teachers, parents, and school board.* These individuals expressed some concern over some of the discomfort that they may experience if they shifted their relationship with their colleagues by taking a principal's position. Two of these individuals thought that evaluating teachers would be a difficult part of the job. They also worried that they may not be able to work in the best interest of the teachers because they are being directed to do otherwise by members of the school board. The literature fully explores the fact that teachers are reluctant to become administrators because they will lose the relationship with the union and their tenure as a teacher. Although the participants in my study did not mention concern over losing their seniority or tenure as a teacher, they did express a kinship with the union and had entertained thoughts about what it may be like going over to the "other side."

These participants also expressed concern similar to the literature that dealing with the parents and school board, on a larger scale than they already do as a classroom teacher, is one aspect of the job that they are not interested in. They consider this one of the bigger hassles and undesirable aspects of the position. Although these interviewees did not mention recent legislated changes in British Columbia to the School Act, it may be a new consideration for teachers considering a career as a principal. According to a Ministry of Education News Release (2002), the changes ensure that school planning councils are established in every public school in British Columbia. Parents will "have a
greater role in school planning and decision making” (¶ 1). Parents will be provided with opportunity for “substantial and ongoing input into policies and programs related to student achievement (¶ 4).

**Political climate.** This is one of the factors that at least one of the individuals of this study is keeping her eye on in order to fully ascertain if she is willing to go into the position. As the literature states, the relationship between education and the current government is an inevitable force on the general tone in education. Researchers (Williams, 2000; ERS, 1998) have concluded that the educational climate needs to be improved or the difficulty attracting individuals into the principals jobs will continue. Although these studies were not completed in British Columbia, there is a similar theme in this province. The political climate impacts on the decision teachers make not to pursue careers in school administration. Since British Columbia has just experienced a recent change in government and education laws, there may be few who will accept the challenge of school principal because this is conceivably a time of conflict and uncertainty.

**Lack of recruitment and grooming.** All three of the participants in this study have the qualifications and qualities that would enable them to be school principals. Although these individuals have shared that others have casually suggested that they should apply for a position, I could conclude that there has not been adequate recruitment and grooming of these individuals for positions. Perhaps other equally qualified individuals have not had anyone suggest school administration to him or her. The literature (ERS, 1998) currently shows that there are very few ways that districts are currently recruiting and preparing teachers to become principals.
Perceptions. Although there is a wide range of factors given in the literature, many of those factors were not discussed by the individuals in this study. Likewise, the teachers in this study came up with factors that were not determined by previous studies. I suspect that more of these factors would have been mentioned if I had interviewed more individuals that are qualified and explored their reasons for avoiding school administration. However, for the individuals in this study, the main reasons for their not wanting to apply relates not only to the factors that they have stated, but also to their own personal experiences and current perceptions of the job of the principal. Perhaps each individual has a different understanding of the position and this can greatly affect their reasons for not going into the job. Each teacher has experiences working with different principals, in different schools and school districts. They observe the role of the principal through their eyes as a teacher and their decisions not to apply has also been made based on their perceptions of the job.

Educational Implications

Developing and maintaining the interest of teachers that are qualified for school administration positions is currently a challenge. This challenge will inevitably continue if some attention is not paid to this matter. Although the participants in this study indicated that they clearly were not interested in school administration at this time, they did provide some insight into what might inspire them or others to consider this career.

These individuals have shared their understandings of the principal's job from a teacher's perspective. These individuals commented that there were things that they did not know about the principal's responsibilities because they had not fully investigated it. It is possible that, if there were future opportunities provided for teachers to develop their
knowledge and understanding of the role of the principal, there would be more qualified individuals interested in the role. This might include job-shadowing opportunities or further developing and nurturing of additional school leadership roles. There is a variety of programs for aspiring principals that “offer practical training and guidance to prospective principals…” (NCES, 1997, p. 1). An example is the Aspiring Leaders Academy in the United States where “all of the participants responded that they had a greater understanding of the various roles that administrators play in schools and felt much more confident in their abilities to be effective leaders” (Tracy & Weaver, 2000, Summary section, ¶ 1). School districts could further investigate some of these successful “grow your own” programs and develop programs that suit the individual needs of their own school district.

This study also supports the conclusion that more attention should be focused on developing mentorship programs and then increasing awareness of what mentorship programs are available for principals. The individuals in this study stated that they thought this was a necessary component for all – especially new – principals in the system. These teachers expressed uncertainty about what formal support is in place once a teacher accepts a position as a principal. The expression of interest and desire for these programs should inspire some further investigation by school districts to develop and promote a formal method of mentoring both aspiring and new principals.

This district has provided courses locally that have enabled teachers to get their master’s degree and have the necessary qualifications to become a principal. Some of the teachers in this study commented that having this opportunity to conveniently further their training might not have happened if they had to travel longer distances. Therefore, a
recommendation would be for to continue this type of district support so teachers can obtain the necessary qualifications to become a school principal.

The participants that were interviewed for this study were all women because this allowed for a greater pool from which to select participants. The disproportionate number of women in educational administration reveals that increasing the number of principal candidates will require school districts to consider gender. Holloway (2000) states that “women are not as likely to want to leave teaching” and “are less likely ... to become an administrator than the average male teacher” (p. 85). Consequently, school districts need to explore gender issues and ways of meeting the needs of both genders.

The individuals in this study all commented that some of their aspirations about administration were revealed because they not only had more female role models in administration but also because other individuals had made suggestions that they should think about administration. The findings of Young and McLeod (2001), in their study of women’s decisions to become educational administrators, support these statements. Their results showed “administrative role models ... and the endorsements and/or support that they receive” (p. 462) are factors that influence women’s decisions to enter school administration. This suggests that in order to increase the total pool of candidates for school administration school districts should consider important factors for attracting and retaining women in administrative positions.

Finally, each individual in this study expressed some similar, but also unique, factors as to why they do not want to become a principal. I think school district administrators should be informally discussing, with qualified individuals, their reasons for not wanting to apply for school principal jobs. This increased dialogue may help
school districts respond to the teachers’ perspectives rather than making assumptions about why these individuals are not applying.

**Limitations**

The findings of this study are limited because the data was collected in a small town in the interior of British Columbia and local issues and practices will not necessarily be the same as in other school districts in this province or in other provinces. This study had a small sample of only three teachers and the findings may be distorted because of the type of sample selection. Although this study developed insight and understanding that applies to these three teachers at this particular point in time, these revelations are not well suited for generalizations of a broader population. The design of this methodology has resulted in an in-depth analysis of three individual perspectives but this may not be similar to the breadth that another methodology would provide.

I found it difficult to compare this study directly to the literature simply because I found overwhelming the number of factors that are detailed in these previous studies. Furthermore, these participants did not mention many of the factors that were in the stated in the literature. Although this is a limiting factor and it may have been easier to make direction comparisons to the literature by giving these individuals the list of factors that other studies have investigated, I chose not to do this. I favored doing interviews because I wanted to explore these individuals personal experiences and feelings without trying to fit their opinions into a predetermined category.

The interviewees were elementary teachers chosen by soliciting several principals’ opinions about who met the given criteria. There may be researcher bias because to identify candidates I only asked selected, not all, principals in the district.
There is no assurance that the list of potential participants that they provided was complete or unbiased.

This study provided no criteria for age, experience, or level of teaching seniority of the selected participants. These are several other factors that may have influenced the comments made by the participants.

The current political climate and current issues in education in this province could also be considered a limitation to this study. It is difficult to fully ascertain how comments made during these interviews were impacted on by recent changes to collective agreements and educational legislation in this province. These changes have resulted in funding changes, school closures and lay-offs for some teachers. Furthermore, the practices and relationships between the management and union could be different in this small town than elsewhere. Presently, there is considerable job security here for teachers with seniority and these senior teachers are not normally transferred between schools.

**Opportunities for Further Study**

One area that could be considered for future study would be to choose a larger sample of qualified teachers to interview. It would be interesting to see if the themes from the results of this study would be repeated or if additional themes would emerge.

It would also be interesting to investigate other issues that encompass the theme of attraction and retention of qualified individuals into school administration positions. For example, one could investigate the reasons why some principals become dissatisfied with administration and return to the classroom and teaching. Conversely, one could also look at reasons why principals enjoy administration and what is their motivation for
staying in the job. Furthermore, investigations into motivators for teachers who recently
applied to administration would also provide additional understanding of this theme.
Similarly, one could interview female principals to discover the reasons why they were
drawn into the profession of school administration.

Another study of interest would be to look at the why qualified individuals are not
applying for principalships with gender, age, or previous teaching experience as
variables. It would be interesting to know if men would respond the same way as the
women did in this study or if younger qualified teachers would reflect on this question
differently from older teachers who may be close to retirement or who have much
seniority in their current position.

Summary

School districts should be concerned about the growing evidence that there will
continue to be a shortage of individuals who are willing to become school principals. It is
important for these educators to consider what factors are associated with qualified
candidates’ decisions to not consider this role. The literature provides us with the
understanding that there are many factors that are associated with these decisions. This
study points out additional reasons as to why qualified individuals are not seeking
positions in school administration. In order for this situation to improve, all these factors
must be considered and continued effort and thought must be put into this situation in
order to provide appropriate solutions. Teachers will be ready to consider school
principal positions if the right conditions inspire and encourage their leadership potential.
References


Retrieved October 18, 2001 from
http://www.time.com/time/columnist/printout/0,8816,168379,00.html


http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin067.shtml


Appendix A

Dear XXXXX,

I am writing this letter to request your permission to conduct a research study in the XXXXX School District. This study is a requirement of fulfilling the requirements of the master's degree at the University of Northern British Columbia. Through my research I am going to determine the factors that are associated with qualified candidates’ decisions to not apply for the job of school principal.

This research is being done because there is mounting evidence in the literature of not only a current and continuing shortage of principals in North America, but also a lack of willingness for educators to step into these positions. This study will provide not only information on why qualified applicants are not applying for the positions but perhaps also will give some information about how school districts can increase the number of educators who may be interested in a career as a school administrator. It is my belief that this research will be of benefit to teachers and administrators alike in our school district.

It is my intention to interview three teachers in XXXXX. These participants will be selected by meeting specific criteria. They will be asked questions about their decisions to not apply for positions in school administration. This research will follow all the ethical guidelines that are required by the University of Northern British Columbia.

If you would like to hear more about the results of this research, I would be happy to meet with you once I have completed my project. I am looking forward to your written correspondence to this request at your earliest convenience. Thank you in advance for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely,
Dear XXXXX,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my intent to conduct a research study in the XXXXX School District. This study is a requirement of fulfilling the requirements of the master’s degree at the University of Northern British Columbia. Through my research I am going to determine the factors that are associated with qualified candidates’ decisions to not apply for the job of school principal.

This research is being done because there is mounting evidence in the literature of not only a current and continuing shortage of principals in North America, but also a lack of willingness for educators to step into these positions. This study will provide not only information on why qualified applicants are not applying for the positions but perhaps also will give some information about how school districts can increase the number of educators who may be interested in a career as a school administrator. It is my belief that this research will be of benefit to teachers and administrators alike in our school district.

It is my intention to interview three teachers in XXXXX. These participants will be selected by meeting specific criteria. They will be asked questions about their decisions to not apply for positions in school administration. This research will follow all the ethical guidelines that are required by the University of Northern British Columbia.

If you would like to hear more about the results of this research, I invite you to contact me once I have completed my project. Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Dear XXXXX,

This letter is designed to inform you of the guidelines that will be adhered to for this research project and to obtain your consent to be a participant in this research.

The purpose of the research project is to determine the factors that contribute to qualified teachers not applying for a job as a principal. This research may provide some information about how school districts can increase the number of educators who may be interested in a career as a school administrator.

You were chosen for this research because you meet the following criteria: hold a master’s degree, have thought about being a principal and have decided that you will not pursue a career in school administration, have previously not been a principal, vice-principal, or school district administrator, and were identified as someone who has qualities that would enable them to be a school principal.

As the participant I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be protected by the following:
  Anything that I say in this interview will remain confidential. This interview will be audio-taped and then transcribed by the researcher. The tape will be erased after the data is transcribed. The researcher will be the only individual with access to the data. The data will remain in a locked filing cabinet except when the researcher is working with and/or transporting the data. The transcribed information will be stored for five years. Your name will not appear anywhere in the raw data or the research paper as a pseudonym will be used.
- Participation in this research is entirely voluntary in nature and I have the right to withdraw at any time.
- I will be debriefed about the purposes of the study and I will be approached once again following data analysis to determine the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations.
- A draft copy of the research results will be available for me to read prior to the final research report being submitted.
- The researcher will provide a copy of the research report to me and will be available and the University of Northern British Columbia.

If you have any questions or would like more information please contact the researcher at XXXXXXX.
Complaints about this project should be directed to the Vice-President Research, UNBC, phone 960-5820.

You may request a copy of this signed consent form.

I have read the above information, I understand what is involved in the study and I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

__________________________
Signature of Research Participant

__________________________  _____________
Date

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

__________________________
Signature of Researcher

__________________________  _____________
Date.
Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. When was the first time that you thought about the prospect of becoming a school principal? What was happening in your career at that time? What was going through your mind?

2. When you made up your mind not to apply for a principal’s position, what made you decide that?

3. How did you feel about that decision at that time?

4. Why did you feel that way?

5. Recently, have you had any thoughts about applying for a principalship?

6. What factors have contributed to your recent decision not to apply for a principalship?

7. How do you feel about this decision at this time?

8. Why do you feel that way?

9. In the future, do you think that this is a decision that you will review?

10. What factors might contribute to the change in your decision to apply to this position in the future?