New Principal Coaching as a Safety Net

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This study examines new principal coaching as an induction process and explores the emotional dimensions of educational leadership. Twelve principal coaches and new principals—six of each—participated in this qualitative study that employed emergent coding (Creswell, 2008; Denzin, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1998; Spradley, 1979). The major finding: new principal coaching provides a safe place for first and second-year principals to express how they relate to demands from both a personal and professional perspective, including offering a safe place for emotional intensity.

Keywords: coaching, new principals, principals, head teachers, adult learning, work-related stress, emotional leadership, emotional intelligence, and emotional management.

In a time when the demands placed on principals and their impact on student outcomes is unmistakable (Bush, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, LaPointe, & Weeks, 2007), administrators are required to transform schools into systems-thinking organizations that promote student and adult learning (Moore, 2009). According to Bush (2009),

> [These]…additional responsibilities…[and] greater complexity of the external environment, increase the need for principals to receive effective preparation for their demanding role […] there should be *an entitlement* for them to be developed appropriately; a moral obligation. (p. 377)

Schmidt (2010) adds, "Leadership preparation programs in the new millennium need to train and assist our school leaders emotionally as well as cognitively" (p. 626). New principal coaching offers the potential of responding to this "moral obligation."

Nonetheless, little attention seems to be paid to the importance of emotion in leadership development preparation programs and research. In a high-stakes accountability era, the preparation and induction of principals have focused primarily on school effectiveness and improvement, and the role of the educational leader in both of these, with little attention given to emotional preparation (Brennan & Ruairc, 2011; Notman, 2012). According to Brennan and Ruairc (2011), "[…] the quality of staff relationships and the emotional climate of schools influences and shapes the emotional experience of principals, impacting their actions and decisions, which in turn affect the quality of relationships, the emotional climate of schools and the emotional experience of

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principals" (p. 145). Boyland (2011) citing Colbert (2008) suggests that work-related stress is closely associated with the emotional experiences of principals and role performance. Implying the importance of attending to job-related stresses, work overload, emotional demands, and burnout to mitigate high principal turnover.

Gmelch and Torelli (1994) argue:

> […] the problem of task overload due to the huge variety and number of duties principals are responsible for each day […] Keeping job-related stress under control is a critical step towards avoiding health issues, burnout, and job or career change. (p. 7)

The purpose of this study was to explore new principal coaching as an induction process that could be responsive to work-related stress, the emotional dimensions of leadership, and the personal domain of principals. The study was guided by the following research questions: 1) How do new principal coaches structure the coaching process in support of new principal learning? 2) How do new principals experience their coaching program? and 3) How does coaching enhance their experience as novice administrators?

Literature Review

In theory, new principal coaching offers the promise of serving as an effective component of new principal induction, where learning entails personal, professional, emotional, and social transformation. The underlying assumption is that learning and development involve a progression along trajectories of participation and self growth, with the learners developing patterns of participation that add to their identities as learners. It is assumed that they increasingly take initiative and responsibility for their learning and goal achievement (Greeno, 1997; and Lave & Wenger, 1991). This is consistent with transformative learning theory and "deep learning," as learners make their assumptions explicit and reflect upon them (Dirkx, 2006).

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) contend that "it is especially important to know who the adult learner is, how the social context shapes the learning the adults are engaged in, why adults are engaged in these learning activities, how adults learn […]" (as cited in Sammut, 2014, p. 39). While there has been considerable research into stress in teachers, there has been comparatively little work on head teachers in the United Kingdom (Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005), or principals in the US. A few studies, such as those by Anderson (1991), Daresh (1995), Parkay, Currie, and Rhodes (1992), and Parkay and Hall (1992), conducted *before* the implementation of high-stakes accountability, document emotional stresses like anxiety, doubt, and frustration among new principals.

A few studies focus on the coaching of new principals (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland, & Trips, 2009). However, there is more extensive literature related to the broader field of mentoring new principals (Silver et al., 2009). Consistent with the literature on socialization and induction, coaches and mentors of new principals are reported as helping to support the fulfillment of professional, career, and psychosocial functions. Mentors are also found to socialize new principals into the profession, sharing with beginners the norms of being a leader (Crow & Matthews, 1998). Finally, mentors appear to serve a psychosocial function by providing a relationship that alleviates new principals' sense of isolation and anxiety (Hopkins-Thompson, 2000).

This study's theoretical framework was based upon sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning and transformative learning theory. Sociocultural and constructivist learning theory posit that social interaction precedes development; consciousness and cognition are said to be the end product of socialization and social behavior (Vygotsky, 1980). From this perspective, in an effort to make meaning, the learner is seen to draw upon prior knowledge, schemas, experience, and sociocultural context (Hudson, 1999; Lave & Wegner, 1991; Palinscar, 1998; Voss, Wiley, & Carretero, 1995). Learning and understanding are viewed as fundamentally social, taking place in socially and culturally shaped contexts, which are continually changing with dynamic interactions between the external and the internal aspects of development (Palincsar, 1998). The perspective of transformative learning adds the dimension of critical reflection and the potential of life-altering transformation to the adult learning process. According to Mezirow (1990) "[…] reflection includes making inferences, generalizations, analogies, discriminations, and evaluations, as well as feeling, remembering, and solving problems." (p. 5)

Consistent with a social-constructivist lens, emotional experiences are embedded in the conditions that construct them. Thus emotions do not exist in a vacuum, nor can we completely understand what we are feeling based solely on introspection due to the presumed sociocultural nature of cognition (Armon-Jones, 1986). Culture "plays a role in the organization of emotions at a variety of levels. Most importantly, culture provides the content of the appraisals that generate emotions" (Cornelius, 2000, p. 5). In addition to sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning, the study's theoretical framework was informed by research on adult learning and work-related identity and learning. According to Shuck, Albornoz, and Winberg (2007) understanding the interaction between learning and emotion "through the constructivist perspective presents a unique opportunity to appreciate the learner's perspective and the construction of knowledge through experience" (p. 108).

Eteläbelto, Littleton, Lahti, and Wirtanen (2005), and Sfard and Prusak (2005) argue that a work-related identity becomes the missing link between learning and the sociocultural environment, where identity is formed at the intersection of the social and the individual. Collin (2009) similarly asserts "[b]oth the organizational context and individuals' positions in the organization as well as personal aims and previous experience together form the basis for the individual's identity construction and learning processes" (p. 32). Dutton, Roberts, and Bednar (2010) understand change in identity or self-definition as a developmental process occurring over time, in that identity is dynamic—progressing and adapting.

In the field of adult education, emotions are understood as an important characteristic of learning and a feature of everyday experience (Callahan, 2002; Dirkx, 2006; Yorks & Kasl, 2002; Perry, 2006; Reeve, 2001; Wolfe, 2006). According to Dirkx (2001 and 2006) and Shuck et al. (2013), emotions serve as motivation to pursue desires, create purpose, and provide the context for learning experiences. "As our bodies respond biologically, our minds respond cognitively to create the affective component of feeling. The experience of emotion revolves around the creation of feeling and is operationally defined as the participatory effect of the biological and cognitive response" (Heron (1992) as cited in Shuck et al., 2007, p. 110).

Recent research on the emotional practices of school leaders offers both a better understanding of the emotional dimensions of the principalship, and "provides an additional much needed challenge to the recent proliferation of a technical-rational, managerial discourse on leadership" (Brennan & Ruaric, 2011, p. 129). Gross and Thompson (2007) highlight the important roles that emotions play as they "ready necessary behavioural

responses, tune our decision making, [and] enhance memory for important events and facilitate interpersonal interactions" (p. 4). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) point to the importance of emotionally intelligent school leaders being able to "improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions" (p. 3).

Ilies, Curseu, Dimotakis, and Spitzmuller (2013) underscore the importance of the emotional exchange between leaders and those they lead. Their findings "support a model by which emotional expressiveness relates to leadership outcomes through idealized influence, and also support the importance of relational authenticity as a foundation for influencing followers" (p. 10). Notman (2012), too, notes the importance of attending to the personal domain of principals within the framework of holistic leadership, while citing the lack of attention to personal development in existing principal support structures. As Beatty (2008) states, "Leaders who know themselves, are far more likely to be able to get to know others in a non-defensive non-aggressive way. Having faced their own anxieties […] (p. 152)" (as cited in Notman, 2012, p. 474)

In the 1980's, researchers attributed moderate levels of job stress to the principalship (Hembling & Gilliland, 1981). Carr (1994), Whitaker and Turner (2000), and Federici and Skaalvik (2012) identified job-related stress as a growing problem for principals. Since the advent of No Child Left Behind in the U.S. and high-stakes accountability internationally, researchers have begun to describe the principalship as a stressful position, with levels of stress increasing (Brock & Grady, 2002; Queen & Queen, 2005; Whitaker & Turner, 2000). In a study by Fields (2005), findings indicate that first-year principals were stressed most by uncontrollable job-related demands on their time:

> Participants described how difficult it is to manage time when there are overwhelming job responsibilities… This in turn had a negative effect on their personal life and resulted in feelings of guilt for lack of time spent with family members and for their own health and well being. (p. 4)

This study sought to add to the understanding of the relationship between new principal coaching, principals' work-related stress, and their emotional development. This led to the exploration of new principal coaching by investigating the role the coaches played in supporting principals when they experienced loneliness, role strain, self-doubt, and emotional stress. The study was therefore designed to learn about coaching from both the new principals' and the coaches' perspectives.

Methodology

Design

This qualitative study explored the experiences of new principal coaching as an aspect of new principal induction from the perspective of both the coach and principal. Interview data were analyzed through a qualitative, constant-comparative approach; the participating coaches' and principals' voices were employed to discover their views. Data analysis employed emergent coding (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1998; Spradley, 1979). The study took place in the San Francisco Bay Area, in the state of California, USA.

The study focused on discovering what coaches and principals had to say about new

principal coaching as a practice. We were not concerned with controlling, limiting, or measuring responses. We attended to what coaches and new principals thought, the ways they described coaching, and the significance they attached to the work.

Sampling

The overall target population was comprised of coaches of new principals and new principals themselves. The accessible sample consisted of two broad groups. The first group was 34 new principal coaches, all affiliated with a San Francisco Bay Area university. They were retired principals coaching first-and second-year principals as part of an established induction process. The second group was made up of 23 principals from a San Francisco Bay Area mid-size urban school district that was ethnically, linguistically, racially, and socio-economically diverse.

When asked to participate in the study, the coaches' and principals' response rate was strong. Eighty-two percent (28 out of 34) of the coaches and 74 percent (17 out of 23) of the principals participated in the initial telephone interview phase of the study. Ultimately, six of the 28 coaches and six of the 17 principals who had participated in the phone interview were subsequently selected to participate in the case study portion of the study. The six coaches represented four school districts, both genders, and all three levels of schools (elementary K-8, middle school, and high school). The new principals represented differing years of experience, school levels, and degree of satisfaction with coaching as captured by the survey.

Data Collection

Data collection for the study involved gathering data on three primary areas: 1) How the coaches structure the coaching process in support of new principal learning during an induction process; 2) How new principals experience coaching; and 3) In what ways coaching enhances their experience as novice administrators. Data collection procedures for the coaches involved an initial telephone interview followed by three face-to-face interviews. The telephone interview posed three major questions. For each question there were follow-up probes on accessibility and adequacy of contact time.

Data gathered from principals were conducted in two phases. The first phased involved a school district satisfaction survey consisting of 57 questions. This served as the starting point for participant selection. The survey was divided into the following sections: background information, contact time between principal and coach, characteristics of the principal-coach relationship, effectiveness of coaching, and additional professional development. Survey data were included in the study for the comparability participants' levels of satisfaction with current and prior program participants and participant's responses relative to subsequent phone and in-person interview data.

General research approach. Six coaches participated in three face-to-face interviews using semi-structured interview protocols and four scenarios. The interviews comprised the second phase of the data collection. Coaches were asked nine questions. During the interviews they were encouraged to express their ideas freely and provide information that they considered important. Topics and questions were presented to the interviewees to draw out their thoughts about their roles, the coaching relationship, effective and ineffective strategies or processes, and how they supported the development of new principal knowledge and problem solving.

The six new principals participated in two additional face-to-face semi-structured

interviews in order to allow for their conceptions of the coaching experience and its impact on them to naturally emerge. Following Henning's (2004) admonitions, "we do not want to place this understanding in the boundaries of an instrument that we designed beforehand, because the boundaries of the instrument will limit the data to those very boundaries" (p. 9).

Data analysis. In the study all face-to-face interviews were recorded live and transcribed verbatim. Using procedures established by Spradley (1979), Glaser and Strauss (1998), Denzin and Lincoln (2008), and Creswell (2008), all data were reviewed first to identify emerging descriptive codes. Examining the data again for interpretive codes, the codes were clustered to investigate relationships between categories, resulting in the identification of findings. The data were then re-examined for negative examples and outliers.

For interview transcripts, systematic content analysis were conducted in order to identify how coaches articulated their learning designs for new principals, how new principals conceptualized the coaching experience, and what its impact was on them. First-level coding classified coaches' and principals' statements to better understand how they designed new principal learning. Second-level coding produced the following categories: the roles coaches performed, the behaviors they described, and the actions they took to support new principal learning.

Findings

The major finding of the study suggests that coaching serves as a safe place for new principals to express how they relate to the new demands of the job from a personal and professional perspective. New principal coaching appears to provide a place for the expression of emotional intensity; it offers a person to talk with and support while making difficult work decisions. It reports that new principal coaching offers a space of support to grow into the principalship, and to identify areas of strength and needed professional growth, and underscores the importance of the coaches' responsiveness to the emotional stress and isolation of the new principals, acting not as supervisors or evaluators but as supporters. Central to the finding is the importance of relationship and enhanced psychosocial functioning.

A Safe Place Humanistically and Professionally

Finding that coaching is a safe place humanistically and professionally indicates that coaching can potentially play a substantive role in enabling new principals to lead while learning. Coaching was found to provide principals with a safe person to talk with and a supportive thought partner when making difficult workplace decisions. This finding is divided into four areas:

The need for conversations that provide a sense of safety. Coaching provides first year survival for beginning principals, supporting them through challenging and difficult conversations. Hannah, a first year principal, recounts, "I think you feel more assured in your decisions for having had a coach […] there's always this sense I could have done it differently or I could have done it better…." Giselle, another first year principal, states,

> I would find myself feeling not so deflated... It would reassure me I was on the right path... receiving affirmation. There are times where the position is just so lonely and you just question 'Am I doing this right?' and…[my coach]

> would reassure me [...] reassuring me, I'm not a failure.

The prior passage captures the emotional tenor of Giselle's experience of feeling "hopeless" and "lonely." Coaching kept her from feeling like a "failure." She goes on, "I felt I wasn't being judged by her… I'm not going to be self-editing… I could be on the verge of crying or saying 'I don't think I'm coming back. I don't think I can do it.'"

In these statements Giselle describes the emotional intensity of coaching conversations where she was "on the verge of crying." Having a coach "who would totally listen and have the time every time" led to Giselle considering herself "lucky." Hannah and Mateus, another first year principal, provide similar descriptions of "feeling down," discouraged, and "isolated" as the sole administrators of an elementary school. Mateus recounts,

> Having the coach… very nurturing. They can also build confidence 'oh look at what you're doing.' If you're feeling down, 'oh, look at what you did.' It's like reinforcing the positive and it's so often, especially at an elementary site, there's no other administrators, it's super isolating…

Mateus' coach played a "nurturing" and "validating" role: one that Mateus identified as pivotal in his staying in the position.

> Many moments that I just didn't want to do it anymore and I would call my coach, and she talked me down of the ledge. Literally, 'why am I doing this? I hate it. …And it's like 'well, you know—think about this.' Just kind of naming it, framing it, this is normal… Not having the guidance…would have been too much…

Mateus' statement evokes a powerful image of what it meant for Mateus to feel like he could not remain a principal—"she talked me down off the ledge." Once again, the coach was depicted as "lifesaver." Like Hannah, Mateus describes an emotional intensity in coaching conversations when he reported, "I just didn't want to do it anymore" or said, "why am I doing this? I hate it." The images of the "lifesaver" or the coach who "talked me down off the ledge" illuminate the considerable stress involved in being a new principal and the positive benefit of coaching as a safety net.

A safe person who can provide the space to have emotionally charged conversations. The principals in the study understood the power and benefit of someone listening and providing a supportive presence. The coaches understood what it meant for new principals to simultaneously lead and learn the requisite roles and functions in an often stressful and lonely enterprise. In addition to supporting principals' professional growth, the coaches provided emotional support. In Maria's words, "my role is to support them in any way they want support." In the end, coaching was primarily about being in a relationship, as Cheryl, another induction coach, stated: "[Coaching is] a relationship in which the principal is able to share her reality, where she genuinely feels safe and accepted." Half of the coaches described having formed a relationship with new principals that persisted beyond the formal coaching encounter for several years. As Trish, a seasoned coach, noted, "The need for a safe and trusted person to talk to about what is happening at the school continues after the coaching has stopped. Five years out, I get calls from principals I coached."

Space to confront insecurities when making difficult decisions. Decision-making was a primary leadership competency identified by coaches and principals as a key growth area. Giselle's recollection of how her coach carefully talked her through past and future difficult encounters echoes the coaching experience of other principals. Her coach debriefed

tough conversations by asking her, “What’s the background of this person? What led to her freaking out? How did I handle it? Did you think about doing this?” According to Giselle, such questioning strategies pushed her to think through the complexities of the exchanges. “... she’d make me talk it through and kind of practice or we would predict or at least we would just come up with worst case scenarios of what could happen next and prepare myself .” Through role-playing, Giselle was able to prepare for “worst case scenarios.” Her coach pushed her to think through the intended and unintended consequences of conversations and decisions.

Support for new principal decision-making. The coaches used questioning and reflective practices to support new principal decision-making, problem solving, and independent thinking. For example, Ruth’s intent as a coach was to "develop [the new principal's] problem-solving abilities and become an independent thinker” through the use of processes she believed would support the development of self-questioning.

Connie, a new principal coach, put it this way: "The [new] principal will be reflective and intentional as she grows in the position…be[coming] less reactive and more proactive." Paul, another coach, asserted, “By the time the two years are up, they're able to reflect.” Connie reflected, “When a new principal has to make a tough decision, coaching gives them a place to turn… as they are trying to come to that final decision.” Coaching appears to provide new principals a safe and thoughtful person to talk with about the many challenging decisions that they need to make. As Maria notes, "They are relieved to have someone to talk with when preparing for a difficult meeting with their supervisor, teacher or parent. As they talk, their body and voice become less tight, calmer…"

New Principal Coaching as a Safety Net

The new principals’ experiences of isolation and emotional stress were a dominant theme. Study participants characterized new principal coaching as a safety net that gave them the space and support they needed to identify and address the uncertainty and stress associated with being a principal. Coaching afforded them a sense of security as they grew into the job, supported by a relationship where they were free to acknowledge what they did not know while taking on the demanding work of being a principal. This finding is divided into two areas:

Allowing for emotional stress. When the new principals discussed the stress and isolation involved in transitioning into the principalship, they described emotional intensity, isolation, and uncertainty in the position, as well as the emotional support provided by their coaches. Giselle, Hannah, and Mateus, all first year principals, each recount vivid feelings of being overwhelmed to the point of contemplating leaving the profession. Constance and Sam, too, recalled the onslaught of administrative demands.

When talking about the experience of being coached, the principals recollected sharing with their coaches the emotional costs of serving as a principal. Having someone safe to share what they experienced and felt provoked the following: “I could be crying or saying ‘… I’m not coming back.’ (Constance).”

The emotional stress and isolation that the new principals experienced included anxiety, doubt, and frustration, as exemplified the statements of Giselle and Mateus. Giselle’s recounted “…the position is just so lonely and you just question ‘Am I doing this right?’ and [my coach] would reassure me. … Just…reassuring me, I’m not a failure.” Captured in the way Mateus’ talked about coaching as

> …very nurturing. '…oh look at what you're doing.' If you're feeling down, 'oh, look at what you did.' It's like reinforcing the positive and it's so often, especially at an elementary site. There [are] no other administrators. It's super isolating, and not having validation is difficult.

Feelings of anxiety, doubt, and frustration come through in these passages, a sense of "Am I doing this right?" or "...I could have done it better." New principals felt their coaches provided them with needed emotional support.

Acknowledging and working through emotional stress. The coaches understood the emotional stress and isolation experienced by principals while simultaneously leading a school community and learning how to be a principal. They expressed the importance of a safe place, which meant a relationship where the new principal could expose and explore lack of knowledge, make mistakes, and work through emotional stress as they developed their leadership skills with increased confidence, independence, and a diminished sense of isolation. Cheryl stated, "Where coaches come in, is making it okay. [It's] okay not to know..." Committed to new principal success, the coaches attended to the principals' immediate needs and sense of self. As Connie reported,

> … [T]he skill I bring to coaching is the ability to listen, reflect, and provide feedback to the person and help them…to be able to achieve their vision.

The Importance of Relationship

New principal coaching, as described by these coaches, was aligned with Rogerian beliefs and values (Rogers, 2003). Overwhelmingly, establishing and maintaining a positive relationship of unconditional positive regard with the new principal was perceived as an essential aspect of the coaching process. The data indicated that the coaching relationship was supportive, nonjudgmental, accepting, non-supervisorial, and confidential. Coaches approached the principals as a whole person.

Discussion and Implications

Demands placed on principals and school heads are high throughout the world (Bush, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), as nations consider the appropriate changes needed to compete at an international level. Leading schools during times of change is an emotionally charged pursuit. Principals are constantly being challenged by the conflicting demands placed on them by their districts, teachers, students, and members of the community. Yet according to Brennan & Ruaric (2011), "The exploration of the emotional practice of school leadership is a recent focus of inquiry with respect to scholarship on school leadership and management" (p. 129).

The story of new principal coaching presented in this study, woven from the reflections of six coaches and the personal stories of six new principals, reveals potentially significant insights. The findings suggest that new principal coaching, as external agency, could be useful in attending to work stress, isolation, and emotional stress, and also offer a counterbalance to the tendency to study the technocratic dimensions of school reform and the role of educational leadership in impacting learning outcomes; this type of research ignores the emotional dimensions of being a principal, and fails to acknowledge the existence of emotions in the workplace, let alone how they impact performance. According to Grandey (2000) how an individual attends to emotional regulation in the workplace matters. We want

to elicit two major emotional spheres emerging from our study: stress and intensity.

Emotional Stress

What becomes clear in this study is the critical role a safe place and a safety net plays in lessening the sense of isolation and emotional stress associated with being a new principal. Both the principals and coaches described the coaching experience with consistency. The coaches supported the new principals as they went through what they were experiencing, in all their uncertainty, and without judgment. They allowed them to express the emotions and self-doubt without overreacting. This represented a stance consistent with Costa and Garmston's (2002) cognitive coaching recommendation regarding nonjudgmental responses, Peterson's (1996) characterization of mutual trust, and the Rogerian (2003) humanistic psychology approach of unconditional positive regard.

The importance new principals placed on having someone to talk with when experiencing the isolation and emotional stress associated with the principalship is consistent with the assertions of Anderson (1991), Daresh (1995), and Parkay et al. (1992) about the benefit of having a non-evaluative person to talk with when experiencing anxiety, doubt, and frustration. Overwhelmingly, the principals in the study experienced deep stress and anxiety in their new positions. Although Constance and Sam felt overwhelmed by the administrative demands of being a principal, they did not consider leaving the profession. On the other hand, Giselle, Hannah, and Mateus were all so overwhelmed that they nearly did leave the administrative field. Yet what helped all of them was having a coach, a safe person to talk with during times of challenge, not knowing, and crisis.

The coaches in the study offered support to principals in personalized ways, providing a safe place from where they could lead their school communities while learning how to be a principal. The descriptions of new principal coaching in this study are consistent with what is reported in the executive coaching literature. Work is done with clients - i.e. school principals - in ways that acknowledge these clients' strengths and areas of need, helping them learn more about themselves and others, becoming more conscious about their actions, and being more effective (Sherman & Freas, 2004).

The gratefulness that the new principals expressed toward their coaches is consistent with the findings of Coleman, Low, Bush, and Chew (1996) and Dukess (2001). The new principals appreciated having a specific individual to go to who would listen to their problems and conduct a conversation that was confidential and non-judgmental to reduce their sense of isolation and anxiety. Providing another perspective, these conversations also improved their self-confidence and self-esteem as a leader, helping them understand that the problems they encountered were not unique and that their solutions were satisfactory (Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, & Weindling 1995).

Emotional Intensity

The principals' candid discussions of the emotional stress and challenges of being a new principal and the coaches' attention to these needs all suggest the importance of providing new principals with a safe place to authentically acknowledge the challenges, frustrations, and areas of needed growth. This is congruent with the discussions of Anderson (1991), Daresh (1995), and Parkay et al. (1992) concerning these same issue areas. Brennan and Ruairc (2011), too, have identified the impact of a principal's emotional management and emotional intelligence.

Coaching as a safety net appears to play a critical role in the development and retention of new principals. For instance, when Hannah talked about her coaching experience, she expressed the overall sense of being supported. Using a developmental framework, she drew a parallel where principals, like teachers, go through a developmental trajectory where the first year is an overwhelming one given the sheer amount of paperwork and protocols. Having someone she could go to, for even as she put it the "lamest questions", made it possible for her to survive the first year.

> I think you feel more assured in your decisions…for having had a coach, especially in the beginning…there's always this sense I could have done it differently or I could have done it better… just the idea of the coach and working with a coach just really builds your sense of self in the job…you can go to them for like the lamest question… You can share with them things that I don't think that most people would share even with their peer or even with their friend.

The full impact and potential benefit of the coach as a safe person for conversations, together with the development of emotions-related management approaches and emotional intelligence in school leaders, are certainly areas for further research. This study suggests that there is a potential benefit of coaching in alleviating the sense of isolation, uncertainty, and doubt as well as the development of emotions-related management and emotional intelligence as articulated by the participants.

Conclusion

This study suggests that new principal coaching as an induction practice has the potential to attend to both the work-related stress and emotional dimensions of being a novice principal. Additionally the study suggests that coaching—though not therapy—has the potential to enhance new principals' psychosocial and emotional functioning. Coaching provided a safe place for new principals to express how they relate to the new demands from both a personal and professional perspective. As a result, new principals reported being better able to manage the emotional and professional demands of the job.

While the findings of this study seem promising, the issue of attending to stress and other emotional dimensions of leadership continues to be a neglected area in field of principal preparation, based upon a review of the 2014 California Professional Standards for Education Leaders and the 2011 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISSLC) for Educational Administration. In the California standards, for instance, there are no references the emotional dimensions of leadership. In the ISSLC standards there is only one statement about "modeling emotional intelligence […]" (p. 138).

Although the findings of this study are limited to the sample, the potential for application to similar school settings in other locations exists. Researchers are encouraged to examine new principal coaching and the emotional dimensions of school leadership as a developmental process. The role of new-principal coaching affecting the number of principals leaving the profession—which typically occurs at the end of their first and second year—represents an important line of research. Exploring coaching as a safety net for new principals during times of emotional stress, isolation, self-doubt and uncertainty would also be a worthwhile pursuit due to the limited research and attention given to date to these characteristic demands of the principalship.

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