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Principals' Perceptions of Autonomy to Implement Change for English Language Learners

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Isabel Patricia Valdivia

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2012

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

California State University, San Marcos

2012

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my three children who every day teach me that there is so much to learn from life. Thank you for allowing me to enter your little circle. I will never forget how excited you were the evening I announced I was finally finished. Your belief in me gave me the strength to actually finish.

To my husband, for encouraging me to embark on this journey. In the last three years I learned so much about research and even more about life. Obstacles are only small speed bumps in the road of life.

To my mom, the most amazing person I know. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. I love you and thank God every day for you.

I am thankful to Dr. Alice Quiocho for the guidance and gentle push to complete this work. I will miss our weekend meetings. You not only continually cheered me on and reminded me of my goal to finish but you also provided invaluable insight and encouraged my best.

Thanks to my family and friends who have been so understanding during my absence. I am grateful for your patience and support.

Table of Contents

Signature Page iii

Dedication iv

Table of Contents v

List of Figures viii

List of Tables ix

Vita x

Abstract Of The Dissertation xi

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study 1

Background and Context 1

Statement of the Problem 1

Research Questions 5

Theoretical Frameworks 6

Overview of Methodology 7

Significance of the Study 8

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature 15

Introduction to the Literature 15

Early Reform Efforts 16

The Central Office and Reform 17

Balance of District Control and Support 20

District School Relationships 24
Social Network Theory 27
Intellectual Capital 32
Principal Autonomy 34
Summary and Conclusions 34
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology 38
Research Design 39
Context of the Study 40
Participants 42
Interviews 44
Document and Artifact Review 46
Data Analysis 46
Social Network Analysis 46
Qualitative Data 49
Cross Case Analysis 50
Chapter Four: Results and Findings 52
Data and Study Findings 52
Social Network Data Analysis 54
Interview Data Analysis 56
Document Data Analysis 57
District Backgrounds 58
Participants 61

Blue Wave Elementary School District Findings 62

Conclusion Blue Wave Elementary School District 72

Hillsdale Elementary School District Findings 73

Conclusion Hillsdale Elementary School District 82

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion 84

Statement of the Problem 84

Review of Methodology 86

Findings 88

Conclusions 96

Limitations and Challenges 98

Conclusions and Implications for Practice 101

Implications for Future Research 102

Summary 103

Appendix A. Social Network Map 105

Appendix B. Student Achievement Data – Comparison Of Two Study Districts 106

Appendix C. Trust, Innovation, Organizational Learning Scale 107

Appendix D. Informed Consent For Individual Interview 108

Appendix E. Interview Protocol Questions For Principals 111

References 113

List of Figures

Figure 1. BWESD Communication Around Work Related Topics Network 61

Figure 2. BWESD Collaboration Network.....65

Figure 3. BWESD Innovation Around English Learner Strategies.....68

Figure 4. HESD Communication Network 72

Figure 5. HESD Collaboration About Work Network.....75

Figure 6. HESD Innovation Around English Learner Strategies 78

List of Tables

Table 1. Comparison of Factors Found in Studies of Effective Districts 19

Table 2. Comparison of Focus Schools in the Two Case Districts.....60

Table 3. Social Network Maps Summary 87

Table 4. Principal Interviews Summary.....89

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Abstract Of The Dissertation

Principals' Perceptions of Autonomy to Implement Change for English Language Learners

by

Isabel Patricia Valdivia

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2012
California State University, San Marcos, 2012

Professor Alice Quiocho, Chair

For almost three decades a spotlight has been placed on the problems of the American educational system. Reform efforts put into place were intended to improve our schools by ensuring that all students' needs were met and to close the achievement gap however, the number of schools and districts labeled as failing is growing and the achievement gap grows larger. In California, one particular significant subgroup, English language learners, is a group whose population continues to grow in number and yet the number of students in this subgroup who are not meeting state targets grows (California Department of Education, 2009). As this crisis evolves, and a myriad of reform efforts are exhausted, the role of the instructional leader evolves as well.

The latest federal legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has created a high stakes accountability climate by setting federal mandates for increasing levels of student achievement of significant subgroups. Schools and their districts who fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) guidelines for all subgroups are subject to progressive degrees of corrective action. This might include restructuring the school by removing or replacing the school site's instructional leader. As a result, the role of principal takes on even greater importance as educational researchers and policymakers seek reforms to meet these new demands. These reforms or demands for immediate changes, designed to support student achievement may actually constrain the role of the principal as the instructional leader.

The primary purpose of this study was to examine how reform efforts support or constrain principal autonomy in meeting the needs of English language learners. Utilizing the theoretical frameworks of School Reform and Social Network Theory, this study compared the level of principal autonomy in two distinct districts, one centralized and the other decentralized, that is, how information and resources are transmitted. This mixed methods study compared student data, survey results of district and site leaders, principal interviews and a review of documents.

Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

Background and Context

Our country was built on the premise that we are a melting pot. We are a place in which many ideas, races and languages are assimilated. Our country is a place of vast opportunities for success. Our schools are the starting place for those opportunities. Schools are the system whereby all students can get on that road to success. A growing number of students have not been able to melt into the pot or get on this road. The English language learner subgroup is a population that continues to grow in number and yet the number of students in this subgroup who are not meeting state targets grows (California Department of Education, 2009). The reality is that our school system is failing to meet the needs of our English language learners.

Reform efforts put into place over the last three decades were intended to improve our schools by ensuring that all students' needs were met and close the achievement gap, however; the number of schools and districts labeled as failing is growing. As this crisis evolves, and a myriad of reform efforts are exhausted, the role of the instructional leader evolves as well.

Statement of the Problem

A spotlight has been placed on the problems of the American educational system for almost three decades. This increased attention has resulted in escalated accountability across our nation. A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform is the title of the 1983 report by Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in

Education. Its publication is considered a landmark event in modern American educational history. Among other things, the report contributed to the ever-growing sense that American schools are failing miserably, and it touched off a wave of local, state, and federal reform efforts. This wave of reform can be translated into specific guidelines that define student success. A demand for higher standards launched the development of competencies, graduation requirements and finally standards based education. This press for greater accountability, which has led to standardized testing, focused on individual school reform models and enacted through the Comprehensive School Reform legislation, increased funding and expectations for Title 1 and Title VII accountability for underserved populations including ELLs. Finally, greater roles for federal, state and districts in directing the education enterprise and setting requirements for schools were created.

This wave of reform brought the public eye into local schools. States were beginning to dictate higher standards of learning and a development of competencies emerged. The standards of learning increased, as did the expectation for an increase in high school graduation rates.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is the latest federal legislation that enacted theories of standards-based education reform. It is based on the belief that by setting high standards and establishing measurable goals, we can improve individual outcomes in education. In order to be eligible for federal funds, states must develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all student subgroups in certain grades. The goal is that by the year 2014 all students are to score proficient or advanced on state assessments. If a

school district's results are not meeting the growing target, then a series of steps are taken to reform the district. This reform model is top-down, resulting in a centralized structure called the District Assistance Intervention Team (DAIT).

DAIT is one example of a centralized, state mandated district reform model. It evolved in 2006 from an increase of Title 1 schools in Program Improvement (PI). If Title 1 districts do not meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets for two consecutive years, they are labeled as PI. Once classified as PI, DAIT, a provider of fiscal, human, and technical assistance to district leaders, is required to intervene and support the district in making system-wide changes. DAIT assists district leaders in improving teaching and learning practices district-wide (California Department of Education, 2007). Blue Wave Elementary School District, one of the districts in which this study occurs, is currently assigned a DAIT team to improve student performance.

As shown in the previous example, educational policy has pushed for a more centralized approach where district office leaders make instructional decisions for the entire district as opposed to a decentralized method where school sites are given autonomy to make decisions best suited to their needs. Early research also identified some important factors that districts needed to have for successful reform to take place; however, less attention was placed on the inner workings of how leaders supported teachers or how teachers implemented and sustained new district initiatives in their classrooms (Anderson, 2003).

Hillsdale Elementary School District, the other district involved in this study, has consistently made increasing gains in student achievement over the past five years. In fact, this district is one of three districts in California that has consistently continued to

increase student achievement over time. District leaders do not mandate change; instead they provide support to schools. This site-based management or decentralized model allows schools the autonomy to take risks and make their own decisions based on the needs of their individual community. Although principals have autonomy to make decisions based on what is best for their schools, the superintendent holds them accountable for increasing student achievement.

One subgroup whose needs were supposed to be met under NCLB is the English language learner group. This growing group has consistently fallen short of the increasing targets. The reform initiative has actually widened the gap from a 33.4% gap in 2002 to a 37.9% gap (California Department of Education, 2009). English language learners represent the fastest growing segment of the student population by a wide margin. From 1991-1992 through 2001-2001, the number of identified ELLs in public schools grew 95% while total enrollment increased by only 12% (Padolsky, 2004). Many of these students are those that have been in our school systems for more than 10 or more years. This group is referred to as the Long Term English Learners (Colorado Department of Education, 2009).

Although both districts involved in this study have increased the number of ELLs scoring proficient or advanced on state assessments (Appendix B), ELLs still lag behind the white subgroup. In HESD there is a 28% gap whereas in BWESD there is a 43% gap. In spite of consistent improvements, ELLs still lag behind their English counterparts. The broader picture that depicts the academic achievement growth for English learners in California remains dismal.

With reform initiatives placed upon districts and schools and the fact that a growing targeted population is not making expected academic gains, we look to the leadership needs at school sites. Now more than ever, we face an escalating need for high quality principals. The growing attention on leadership is helping researchers to understand that strong principals are critical in developing an effective educational program (Hale & Hunter, 2003). While reform initiatives place the spotlight on principals, they are also attributed to leaders leaving the profession. With reform efforts, the job and duties of the school leader are evolving and growing such that the question arises regarding the average years of experience of each site leader. Now more than ever, schools need strong leadership. Principal burn out has been attributed to a lack of autonomy (Whitaker, 1995).

Reform efforts mandated by the federal government and by the state of California, for schools that do not meet federal benchmark targets, focus on the deficits of districts, schools, educators, and students. Further, these efforts are limiting the decisions principals can make for implementing programs and strategies to meet the community's needs. Examining the strengths in both a centralized and decentralized system allowed me to describe optimal organizational conditions that allow site administrators the autonomy to make sound instructional decisions that consequently support English language learner student performance.

Research Questions

The two districts lend themselves to an interesting multiple case study (Stake, 2009). The following questions guided this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences in district and site leader's perceptions of the formal and informal organizational structures regarding English language learners' instruction?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the ways that the districts support or constrain site leaders ability to use resources (knowledge, information, and innovation) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners?
3. How do principals perceive policies and practices (centralized/decentralized as support for their efforts to implement reform for English language learners?
4. What are the perceptions of site principals about their autonomy to implement best instructional practices for ELLs?

Theoretical Frameworks

This study was theory driven. I looked through the lens of two theoretical models: School Reform and Social Network Theory.

Researchers have demonstrated that districts are a key part of implementing as well as sustaining reform efforts. The factors identified as crucial are strong leadership at all levels, system wide vision and focus on student achievement, district guided curriculum an aligned assessment, data-driven decisions and coherent professional development (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Murphy & Hallinger, 1998; Massell & Goertz, 2002). Although the crucial factors are understood, what is not so widely explored are the relationships between district and site administrators.

Social Network Theory provided insight into the degree of relationships at all levels of the organization and how those relationships support English language learner

student learning. Through this social network, the concept of social capital unraveled. Social capital, as defined by Lin (2001), is the result of resources within the relationship and the social structure that can be moved to increase the success in a purposive action. Social capital, is the vehicle by which resources might be borrowed, leveraged or accessed (Tsai, 2001).

Further, social capital influences the development of intellectual capital. When organizations create structures whereby actors can interact with one another, the opportunities to build relationships and establish trust result in additional social capital. Within this capital, knowledge is transmitted and the actors begin to act in new ways. Therefore, intellectual capital is created through the combination and exchange of knowledge in a group setting leading to new knowledge and action (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

Overview of Methodology

Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data from two neighboring districts completed this mixed methods study. I selected Hillsdale Elementary School District (HESD) and Blue Wave Elementary School District (BWESD) due to the similarity in their demographics; both districts have significant numbers of English language learners. Although their demographics are similar, each district has approached meeting their federal targets in different ways. Hillsdale is somewhat decentralized, allowing for site-based decision-making. In contrast, Blue Wave is in Program Improvement, resulting in the state assigning a District Assistance Intervention Team to the district. Decisions at the

site level are limited to the DAIT plan, resulting in a top-down, centralized approach. Hillsdale has continually met federal AYP targets while Blue Wave has fallen short.

I used an exploratory case study design to examine communication and knowledge networks among principals and central office staff using social network analysis (Scott, 2000; Wasserman and Faust, 1998), semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990) and document analysis (Spradley, 1980). The social network analysis survey was comprised of an online survey that was e-mailed to district and site administrators. Administrators were able to complete the survey at their own pace. The survey was an existing instrument from a number of published studies. A case study approach is appropriate when the phenomenon of interest has a level of complexity that requires multiple data sources and methods to gain an in-depth understanding.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study contribute to the larger field of education in several ways: (1) How district policy and practice support or constrain creativity and innovation at the district and school sites, (2) by informing the work of school and district leadership, to better move knowledge, information and innovation throughout systems in support of increased performance, (3) by influencing organizational structures that support improved student performance, (4) how a site leader's decision making practice supports increased student performance.

Research on district reform within the past two decades has been sparse, however, studies show a variety of factors that are connected with successful district reform initiatives. The federal and state policies of No Child Left Behind exemplify the top-

down nature of district reform efforts for schools in Program Improvement. More current research has shifted to looking at district change more organically through the lens of socio-cultural learning theory, based on creating a culture of learning, which would be able to support educational leaders when dealing with uncertainty and change as well as help teachers refine their practice.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Introduction to the Literature

The previous chapter discussed the impetus for change in America's schools. Over time, the concern that public schools could be better and do better has lead to a variety of federal legislations aimed at improving the quality of America's schools. For example, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 is a landmark document that focused on a call to action to initiate change in American schools. Among other things, the report contributed to the ever-growing (and still present) sense that American schools are failing. This document touched off a wave of local, state, and federal reform efforts. Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 (NCLB), districts have been placed at the front line as federal and state accountability mandates hold districts responsible for improving academic achievement for all significant student subgroups in schools. Since 1983, the ideas and strategies of how to reform and improve America's schools have gone through several iterations and have focused on different components of the system. Relevant to my study was how districts, their policies and structures, including social networks, serve as the center of reform to bring about systemic change to meet the needs of English learners. District policies and structures constituted the context of this study that investigated the effects of the implementation of the change process and the perceived change agents, the school principals in distinctly different district structures. Therefore, the central focus of this study was school principals, and their sense of autonomy to implement change. This literature review begins by exploring

the historical context of reform in American schools and the balance of district control and support around school reform initiatives. Second, I briefly outline the importance of a strong relationship between the district office and site leaders in enacting change for English learners. Third, I review the research on principal autonomy. Lastly, I provide a review of social network theory and discuss how this body of research may serve as a useful lens to understand how social networks may support or constrain change in schools. Social network theory also provides an important rationale for using social network analysis to explore district-school relations and how these relationships either empower or forbid site leaders and the change work with which they have been tasked. Finally in this review, I present two important theoretical constructs which frame SNA: social capital and intellectual capital and explore the effects of ways in which the networks support school principals.

Early Reform Efforts

Throughout the 20th century, reformers have had contradictory beliefs about how local districts should address reform initiatives (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Leverett, 2004; Tyack, 2002). The literature reveals that before A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983) the school reform movement produced small successes resulting from concerted efforts to fix parts that may appear "broken" in low performing schools. Schools were fixing "broken parts" while the rest of the system was not yet part of the change. Nevertheless, these reform efforts provided valuable lessons for future reform efforts.

Numerous studies document the characteristics of improved schools; however, less is known about change efforts in entire districts that show substantial improvement in student achievement. Early in the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) movement, reform models bypassed the role of the district or central office, believing it was more efficient to work directly with individual schools. An example of this would be the effective schools movement. While initiating this reform model, Edmonds (1979) concentrated on the school as the unit of change, ignoring the role of the district office. In fact, many reformers believed that district offices were among the major causes of the problems with schooling (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Mac Iver & Farley, 2003). Effective schools research suggested that schools have the following elements: clear vision, focused instructional leadership, high expectations for students, and staff, safe and orderly learning environments, monitoring of student achievement, increased opportunities for learning and focused time on task, as well as attention to positive home school relations. The research suggested that schools with a focus on the latter elements were more likely to have higher achievement gains for low-income diverse students than schools that did not engage in these practices. Consequently, district offices were disregarded in school reform (Foley, 2001; Louis, 1995; Murphy, 1995).

The Central Office and Reform

Presently, NCLB (2001) has triggered sanctions for an increasing number of schools and districts that fail to meet academic targets and are labeled as "low-performing" or "in need of improvement." Thus, there is an increased urgency to understand what, districts that have shown gains in student achievement do in order to

support increased student achievement. The changes in accountability have increased the focus on the literature regarding the significance of the district office in educational reform. During the past few years "districts have moved from being perceived as a bureaucratic backwater of educational policy to being seen as potent sites and sources of educational reform" (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002, p.1). Today, there is a revived interest in regard to the role of the district office in educational change and reform. More and more policymakers, researchers, and reformers recognize the important role of school districts in charting the course for change and providing the necessary support for looking at current educational practice through new lenses (Balch-Gonzalez, 2003; Corcoran &Lawrence, 2003; MacIver & Farley, 2003).

Recently, studies have explored the role of the district office within the framework of support for school level reform, as well as how the district implements reform throughout the system. In both cases, the research has provided empirical evidence of purposeful practices, policies, and actions that characterize improving districts. The studies of district reform discussed the positive and negative outcomes of large-scale change and have found key factors and conditions (see Table 1.1) that appear necessary for successful systemic reform (Chrispeels & Pollack, 1989; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Hightower, 2002; Murphy & Halinger, 1988; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Masssell & Goertz, 2002; Snipes et al. 2002).

Table 1. Comparison of Factors Found in Studies of Effective Districts

Studies of District Factors	Murphy & Hallinger 1998	Skrla, Scheurich & Johnson 2000	Elmore & Burney 1997	Hightower 2002 Darling-Hammond et al. 2006	Massell & Goertz 2002	Togneri & Anderson 2003	Snipes, Doolittle & Herlihy 2002	McLauphlin & Talbert 2003	Chrispeels & Pollack 1989
Strong Instructional Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
District-guided curriculum & aligned assessment	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
System focus on achievement, consistency of instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Frequent monitoring & use of data for decision making				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Balance of district control and support	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Climate of Urgency		✓		✓		✓			
Shared vision, responsibility		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Coherent professional development			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Collegiality and respect			✓						
Overhaul of district practices				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Classroom focus, targeted interventions				✓	✓		✓	✓	
Involvement of multiple stakeholders						✓	✓	✓	

Adapted from the work of Johnson, 2008

There are over a dozen accepted factors and conditions defining successful district reform as shown in Table 1. The central focus of this portion of the review concentrates

on the balance of district control and support around reform initiatives. Since this study compared two districts and the ways in which they implement reform strategies for English language learners, this concept is important for understanding the role of the district office and how their policies and practices support or constrain the transmission of resources and information about reform to school site principals.

Balance of District Control and Support

Several studies (Massell & Goertz, 2002; Murphy & Hallinger, 1998; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Skrla, Scheurich & Johnson, 2000) discuss the balance of district control and support around reform initiatives. The literature suggests that a districts' success in implementing school-based reform often revolves around a delicate balance between centralized and decentralized control (Elmore & Burney, 1999; Massell & Goertz, 1999).

The concepts of centralization and decentralization are important ones to consider when discussing the balance of district control and support. Centralization refers to the condition whereby the administrative authority for education is vested or assigned to a central authority such as the district office. This central authority has complete power over all resources: money, information, people, technology, etc. It also decides the content of curriculum, controls the budget, is responsible for employment, the building of educational facilities, and discipline policies.

Decentralization, on the other hand, refers to the level to which authority has been passed down to the individual school sites. Site-based management (SBM) is an example of decentralization in which individual schools make their own decisions related to finances and curriculum. However, the locus of power remains in the central office.

SBM was initiated in the mid 1980's to facilitate improvement, innovation, and continuous professional growth (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). Advocates of decentralization believe this control should result in higher student performance; more efficient use of resources; increased skills and satisfaction for school administrators and teachers; and greater community and business involvement in and support for schools (Hannaway & Carnoy, 1993). It is important to note that districts can have aspects of centralization or decentralization in their organizations. The literature suggests that finding a balance between centralization and decentralization may contribute to a more effective organization (Fullan, 1993; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Meyer, 2009).

Several studies (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Corbett & Wilson, 1990; Sarason, 1990) discuss the impact of centralization on district reform. Berman and McLaughlin (1978) conducted a large-scale study that focused on voluntary top down reform efforts. They investigated federally sponsored educational programs adopted in 293 sites. A voluntary reform is one that is taken on voluntarily by the school district. The state or federal government did not mandate the reform efforts described in the study. Even though this reform was voluntary, the study concluded that districts often took on change projects for financial or opportunistic reasons rather than for substantial reasons, such as improvement of student achievement. In many cases district officials viewed the adoption of the voluntary reform primarily as an opportunity to attain much needed short-term financial resources. Furthermore, the study concluded that districts implemented the reform so that the district would appear up-to-date and progressive in the eyes of the community. Lastly, the reform may have been implemented to appease political pressures from the community to address the needs of groups they support. Whatever the

reason underlying the adoption of the voluntary reform, there was an absence of serious educational concerns (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978).

Corbett and Wilson's (1990) study of the impact of compulsory statewide testing in Maryland and Pennsylvania is another example of the effects of a top-down, centralized reform. The following consequences resulted: educators developed almost a "crisis mentality" in their approach to solutions to this reform. They narrowed the range of their instructional strategies, as well as the content of the material they chose to present to students, and they narrowed the range of course offerings. Consequently, there was an unintended outcome: a reduction in teacher motivation, morale, and collegial interaction necessary to bring about the reform. Sarason (1990) argues that billions of dollars have been spent on top-down (centralized) reform efforts with futile results. In addition, Goodland (1992) observes: "top-down, politically driven education reform movements are addressed primarily to restructuring. They have little to say about educating" (p. 238). In conclusion, the literature suggests that centralized reform mandates have had little impact as instruments for educational improvement.

The lack of impact on educational improvement from a centralized reform model has led some to conclude that only decentralized reform can succeed. Site-based management or school-based management (SBM) is the most prominent example of this emphasis. In the 1980's SBM was initiated to facilitate improvement, innovation, and continuous professional growth SBM allowed districts to decentralize, disbursing more of its decision making power to school sites so they could make decisions based on their own context (Leithwood & Menzies, 1998). The goal of SBM was to improve academic achievement by giving more decision making power to teachers and principals since they

were the closest stakeholders to students (Hill & Bonan, 1991).

Taylor and Teddlie (1992) examined classrooms in 33 schools (16 from pilot schools that had established SBM practices and 17 from non-pilot schools in the same district). Their findings concluded that there were higher levels of teacher participation and decision making in the pilot school, but there were no differences in teaching strategies used. Low student involvement in both cases was prominent. Furthermore, there was little evidence of teacher-to-teacher collaboration. Extensive collaboration was reported in only two of the thirty-three schools and both were from the non-pilot schools. The effects of SBM in this study found no relationship between teacher decision-making and teacher collaboration around teaching practice.

Similar findings were obtained in the implementation of the Chicago Reform Act of 1989. This legislation shifted responsibility from the Central Board of Education to Local School Councils (LSCs) for each of the city's 540 public schools and mandated that each school develop School Improvement Plans (SIPs). Easton (1991) found that the majority of the elementary teachers' instructional practices had not changed as a result of SIP or the legislation. Fullan (1991) concluded that restructuring reforms that *decentralized* decision-making from district offices to schools may have altered governance procedures but did not affect the classroom teaching-learning core of schools. In conclusion, decentralized initiatives have not increased academic achievement more than their centralized counterparts.

Several studies (Marsh, 2002; Elmore & Burney 1997; Fullan, 1994; Meyer, 2009) discuss the fine line between the balance between centralization and decentralization. The research suggests that the radical use of centralization or

decentralization in isolation is not effective in bringing about organizational change. These studies discuss the importance of purposeful, strategic planning around those reform initiatives, which are centralized versus decentralized, and how they work synergistically. Murphy and Hallinger (1986; 1988) discuss how "instructionally effective" district leaders indicated that they allowed principals and schools a degree of flexibility when implementing reform initiatives. This suggests a dynamic tension between district control (centralization) and school autonomy. Elmore and Burney (1997) discuss how in their study, District #2 set clear expectations and the district office decentralized the responsibility for the reform to school leaders. This led the district to "walk a fine line" between central authority and school autonomy. Meyer (2009) concludes that the most successful reform would combine both centralized and decentralized structures. "For example, one might allocate all personnel decisions to building-level authorities while centralizing curriculum and quality control that don't change much from school to school or district to district. A centralized curriculum policy and quality control system would create basic standards so that schools could devise their own ways to meet" (Meyer, 2009, p. 471). In addition, Fullan (1993) suggests that neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies for educational reform work. He concludes that a more sophisticated blend of the two is required. The concept of balancing centralization and decentralization may be critical when organizations take on new learning.

District School Relationships

A number of researchers have changed their emphasis to the focus from the

school site as the unit of reform to focusing on the relationships between central offices and school sites in implementing and sustaining reform initiatives (Daly & Finnigan, 2010; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Harris & Chrispeels, 2006; Honig, 2004; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). These studies recognize that school sites are embedded within a larger district context and that this context has a direct impact on the success of change efforts. Elmore & Burney (1997) have evidence that suggests that local school districts can play an active and influential role in mobilizing resources and to support sustained improvement in teaching practices at school sites. Elmore & Burney (1997) studied the successful reform efforts in District 2 in New York City. This study suggests that local districts may have "natural" advantages in supporting district reform through professional development. Furthermore the success in District 2 can be seen as proof that local districts can play an integral role in instructional improvement through professional development. In addition, Togneri & Anderson (2003) conclude that districts can make a difference in successful reform initiatives by providing a clear, coherent instructional framework to support the success of especially low performing schools. Furthermore Marsh and colleagues (2005) discuss how reforming districts implement a system-wide approach to improvement. The evidence suggests that there are relationships between school sites and the district office in implementing coherent reform initiatives.

Daly and Finnigan, 2009 discuss the importance of context when studying school reform. While the district context is important, schools and districts are embedded units of the larger state and educational systems. The state and federal government policies influence both the structure and focus of districts as district staff respond to policy requirements. Districts are not working in isolation. Federal and state policy may be

mandating specific requirements (e.g. NCLB) that require specific structures. In addition, this policy also indirectly affects the way individuals work, collaborate and network. Lasky (2004) suggests that new federal policy context puts increased emphasis on system-wide alignment between school site, school district, state and federal government.

The district-school relationship is important when discussing school reform (Daly & Finnigan, 2009). This is a shift from past practice where schools worked in isolation to achieve their school site goals. There is evidence that an entire system can move to a system of dense network connections as found in the United Kingdom through the National College of School Leadership's (NCSL) Network Learning Group of 104 schools (Earl & Katz, 2007). This study provides evidence that when networks of schools work together, there is an impact on student learning. In addition there is evidence from this study that there is a positive relationship between network attachment and the changes in thinking and practice in schools. This network resulted in positive outcomes in several key areas including expanding the boundaries of teacher leadership, strengthening communities and increasing student achievement (Earl et al., 2006). The conditions present in this network included pervasive communication, shared purpose, work that was shared and challenging across the network, and relationships built on trust that enabled the transfer of knowledge (Earl et al., 2006). Daly & Finnigan (2009) draw conclusions from the latter study to suggest that implications from this work are consistent with literature on district-site relations and potentially hold importance as a way to create and understand networks within school districts. In addition, this work suggests the need for a more interconnected network approach to district reform (Fullan,

2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; McLauglin & Talbert, 2003). This approach requires district and site leaders to think systemically about school sites and see school districts in terms of their interdependent parts.

Successful school districts that applied a more systemic approach to reform suggest strategies that would allow for a stronger network connection between the district office and school sites (Chrispeels, 2004; Honig, 2004; Togneri & Anderson; 2003). These strategies should consider the development of formal and informal social relationships in building increased collaboration between district office and school sites (McLauglin & Talbert, 2003), increasing communication between both entities (Agullard & Goughnour, 2006), distributing leadership across the greater system (Spillane, 2006), and providing opportunities for input on district decision-making (Brazer & Keller, 2008). Daly & Finnigan (2009) suggest that districts should invest in the development of informal social relations as well as creating formal structures for district leaders and school leaders to connect.

The literature suggests that systemic change must be strategic as well as consider and strengthen the relationship between the district office and school sites. The broader literature on social networks suggest that in addition to the focus on formal structures between the district office and school sites, change agents should invest in developing informal social relations in an effort to create a coherent, interdependent system.

Social Network Theory

In order to understand how knowledge around reform strategies is shared across a district, social network theory provides a lens through which to examine how a district's

informal and formal relationship structures may support or constrain the flow of information. One of the basic conceptual foundations in understanding social network theory is the concept of social capital. A number of scholars have written on social capital, each describing a different aspect of the concept and offering detailed understandings of the idea (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Lin (2001) defines social capital as, "The resources embedded in social relations and social structure which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in purposive action" (p. 24). From an organizational perspective, social capital may be conceptualized as an organization's pattern of social relationships, through which the resources of individuals can be accessed, borrowed, or leveraged (Tsai, 2001). In addition, the quality of social ties between individuals in a social system creates a structure that determines opportunities for social capital transactions and access to resources (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Granovetter, 1982; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Strong social ties support the transfer of tacit or implied, complex knowledge (Hansen, 1999; Reagans and McEvily, 2003). Strong ties have also been associated with low-conflict organizations (Nelson, 1989). This is a distinction from human capital, in that human capital refers to training, development, or certifications of individuals (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Dika & Singh, 2002; Lin, 2001). Organizational patterns of social relationships are often assessed by exploring social networks (Tsai & Ghosal, 1998).

Networks can be identified by the content that is exchanged through the social ties or relationships (Scott, 2000;Wasserman and Faust, 1998). For example, friendship networks may primarily be focused at the transfer of personal support, confidential

discussions, and information sharing. Collaboration networks may include information exchange, transfer of knowledge, and advice (Moolenaar, Daly & Sleegers, 2011). In both examples, resources flow through ties (the first being trust, the second knowledge), but the overall structure of the network may look quite different. The content of the resources flowing through the social network creates a structure that defines the purpose of the network.

Social network theory uses nodes and ties to depict social relationships. Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties signify the relationships between the actors. There can be many kinds of ties between the nodes and a social network can be mapped out to show relevant ties between the nodes. These concepts can be displayed in a social network diagram whereby circles are joined by lines (Appendix A). The circles are the nodes or points that are connected to other nodes. Terms commonly used to describe the social network structure at the organizational level are density, reciprocity, and centralization. Density refers to the existing proportion of ties in a network to possible ties; in a dense network, many people are connected to one another, while in a sparse network, there are fewer connections between the individuals in the network. Reciprocity addresses the "mutuality" of ties; a relationship between two people is reciprocal when both individuals indicate a connection with one another. The higher the reciprocity in a network, the more dyadic (one-on-one) relationships are mutual. Centralization of a social network is high when certain individuals are more "popular" in the social network than others, meaning they send and receive more ties. This can translate into some individuals having more access to network resources than others.

Social network researchers often distinguish two types of social networks

according to their function: instrumental and expressive networks (Ibarra, 1993). Instrumental social networks describe relationships among the organization's members who transmit information and resources that can help contribute successfully to the organization's goals (Cole & Weinbaum, 2007). Advice-seeking, advice-giving, and discussing matters related to work would all be examples of instrumental social networks. In contrast, expressive social networks most often refer to affective relationships between the members of an organization that are formed to exchange social resources such as friendship and social support that are not directly aimed at attaining organizational goals. Expressive relationships in comparison to instrumental relationships tend to be stronger, durable, and more difficult to develop given the level of trust that is needed for their formation (Granovetter, 1973; Ibarra, 1993; Marsden, 1988; Uzzi, 1997).

The study of social networks in education is receiving increased attention. Research has been conducted in a variety of settings, including school and teacher networks (Bakkenes, DeBrabander & Imants, 1999; Coburn & Russell, 2008; Daly et al., 2009; Lima, 2007; Moolenaar, Zijlstra, & Sleegers, 2009; Penuel, Frank & Krause, 2007; Penuel, et al., 2009); leadership networks and departmental structures (Friedkin & Slater, 1994; Lima, 2003, 2004; Spillane, 2006); school-parent networks (Horvat, Weininger, & Laureau, 2003); between school networks (Mullen & Kochan, 2000); and student networks (Lubbers, Van der Werf, Kuyper, Offringa, 2006). Many of these studies examined social networks at the individual or dyadic level of analysis.

This study contributes to the existing literature by comparing and contrasting two districts social networks that have different organizational structures: centralized and decentralized and the way they transmit knowledge around reform initiatives for English

language learners. Furthermore, this study examines the quality of social ties and knowledge distribution around reform initiatives between site administrators and the district office. Moreover, while many studies refer to the potential of social networks for innovation, empirical evidence on the relationship between social network structure and district organizational structure is scarce.

Studies on social network theory suggest the need to explore more deeply the formal and informal network structures in districts and schools that facilitate or hinder the flow and exchange of resources. Particularly important to a school or district reform effort may be the density of the communication and knowledge transfer networks (Daly & Finnigan, 2010, p. 117). A principal or district leader sharing information with other colleagues focused on a reform initiative is beneficial to organizational learning. In a qualitative study by Mullen and Kochan (2000) evidence stated that participants' perspectives were broadened because they had been exposed to peers with multiple ideas and different strengths. When educators learn about new ideas from someone they trust they are more willing to try them in their classrooms as opposed to using new ideas learned in a professional development session. The notion of trust in an organization is a valuable asset. If team members trust one another, they will not only be more willing to share ideas with their team, but they may also be willing to take more risks and share information with other groups (Chhuon et al., 2008; Daly & Finnigan, 2010). Therefore, if a district creates structures that allow for more opportunities to collaborate, people may be more likely to establish trusting relationships, and build social capital which has the possibility of leading to intellectual capital.

Intellectual Capital

The creation of social capital influences the development of intellectual capital. Intellectual capital refers to the knowledge created from a social collectivity such as an organization (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) that drives action based on the new knowledge. When structures are created in an organization for people to interact with one another, they have opportunities to build relationships and establish trust. These are two essential building blocks to creating more social capital. Social capital is needed to build intellectual capital. When groups of people who trust each other have opportunities to collaborate not only with their own group, but also with other groups, the knowledge generated enables people to act in new ways. Therefore, intellectual capital is created through the combination and exchange of knowledge in a group setting leading to new knowledge and action (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In order for groups to create intellectual capital there must be opportunities for valuable and rich interaction, people must be motivated to participate, and the new knowledge or information must be synthesized and used (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

A case study by Bolivar and Chrispeels (2010) conducted at two elementary schools describes how a group of parents working with a nonprofit organization were able to build capacity, take collective action, and make change regarding issues at their children's schools. Three key points emerged regarding the development of intellectual capital: (1) commitment to participate and structures created for collaboration, (2) relationships and trust were evident, and (3) collective action occurred. First, the parents were committed to participate on a weekly basis. An efficient and stable network configuration (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010) was set up where parents met on an ongoing

basis for twelve consecutive weeks. Second, this structure allowed parents to establish relationships by collaborating with program leaders and other parents who had similar concerns. This collaboration eventually led to the creation of trusting relationships. Finally, as parents learned more about the school system and had opportunities to interact with each other, formal and informal groups came together and created action plans based on their combined knowledge. When parents shared and exchanged knowledge and took collective action to address a common concern, they were able to transfer their social capital into intellectual capital. Furthermore, the process of working together, grappling with ideas and creating an action plan led to more informal groups working together outside of the program. The leadership, support systems, and going through the process with the facilitator helped create more awareness for parents as well as sustainability in regards to increasing parent support. The authors contend, "intellectual capital as a theoretical construct, but distinct from social capital, explains the potential of bounded groups to engage in meaningful collective action" (p. 22).

Social capital is the basis for creating intellectual capital. The notion of social capital lies in the opportunities individuals have to collaborate with others based on trust, a flow of information within the organization as well as structures and norms that facilitate information exchange. With new reforms, comes new learning, which will usually require surfacing more tacit or implied knowledge and making it more explicit to members of the organization. However, in order for intellectual capital to flourish, structures need to be created that allow ample opportunities for collaboration. In addition, procedures need to be implemented that foster the sharing and exchange as well

as the combination of knowledge of all members that can lead to collective actions that were not previously possible by individual members or units alone.

Principal Autonomy

While strong principal leaders are needed to implement and monitor reform initiatives, their hands are tied with initiatives that are demanding changes to the system. Under NCLB principals are held accountable for raising student achievement. Those principals who do not get satisfactory results are at risk of losing their jobs. Schools falling under program improvement receive funding for additional support or innovative programs. If and when improvement is made, the funding is eliminated. Adamowski, Therriault & Cavanna (2007) in their study of thirty-three elementary school principals found an "autonomy gap", that is, a difference between the authority principals need to implement effective change and the authority they actually have. Principals need the autonomy to get their schools running smoothly; however, they fall into a role of middle manager. They balance the challenge of creating a high quality teaching and learning environment and also accommodate those outside pressures that may include demands of the district, state and reporting requirements. Adamowski, Therriault & Cavanna (2007) conclude that principal autonomy can come in the form of allowing site leaders flexibility in their staffing and in their budgets. Further, by facilitating the creation of informal networks and relationships, along with peer support, the autonomy gap can be lessened.

Summary and Conclusions

District-wide reform is necessary to meet the increasing accountability targets of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The goal of NCLB is for all students in

the nation to be proficient in English language arts and mathematics by the year 2014. Last year, the California Department of Education reported that 298 districts or 2,796 schools serving over one million students did not meet proficiency targets and were designated as Program Improvement (PI). This number will only increase as the target for the number of students required to reach proficiency increases. This need to raise achievement brings about the need to investigate those districts that have demonstrated exemplary achievement for English learners as well as those districts struggling to make achievement gains for this significant group. The principal, as the instructional leader, is the critical component in bringing about the required reform. Therefore in this literature review, I explored research on school and district reform and I will be further analyzing how principals, as agents of change, in two differently organized school districts go about implementing necessary changes to better meet the needs of English language learners.

In the beginning of the review I outlined some of the early history on school improvement and showed that more recent work has focused on the district. Recent research on districts suggests that the central office plays a critical role in the success (or failure) of student achievement (Snipes et al., 2002). A growing number of empirical studies have found several factors associated with successful district reform. This review focused on the balance of district control and support around reform initiatives. The literature suggests that a district's success in implementing school-based reform often revolves around a delicate balance between centralized and decentralized control. The concepts of centralization and decentralization were discussed since they are important concepts to consider when exploring this balance. Though previous studies elaborated on factors that were essential to successful district reform, they neglected to explain the

interworking of how to effectively improve teaching and learning system-wide (Gallucci, 2008).

Current studies on district reform have shifted from identifying factors of effective districts to a more theoretical approach that highlights the role of relationships and learning as part of the reform process with a focus on social capital or the way an organization's pattern of social relationships, through which the resources of individuals can be accessed, borrowed, or leveraged (Tsai, 2001). The relationship between social capital and intellectual capital was discussed since social capital is the basis for intellectual capital. As the most recent literature has shown, one way to measure relational ties is through an analysis of the social network of an organization.

Social Network Analysis is a way to help understand the underlying relationships within an organization. By drawing on external social network data within the case districts, I was able to gain a broad picture of both districts' leadership networks and the ties that bind site administrators together. I then compared and contrasted these networks through the lens of each districts organizational structure: centralized and decentralized. As the literature stated, I was able to analyze nodes and ties and assess connections. Furthermore, I analyzed the density, reciprocity and centralization of network ties within each case district; this gave me further insight into this notion of social capital and intellectual capital. Theoretically, the more connected a network is the more social capital is generated. The literature states that social capital is the basis for generating intellectual capital. However, in order to gain more in-depth information regarding the knowledge that is being shared and if any intellectual capital is being generated, I conducted semi-structured interviews with purposefully selected groups of

site leaders regarding how they communicate, negotiate, and implement reform strategies and I linked it to existing network data.

Research on principal autonomy is sparse and articles written on the subject mostly refer to one study of thirty-three principals. Articles exploring principal autonomy as a link to principal 'burn out' tend to cite the study by Adamowski, Therriault & Cavanna (2007). It is imperative to explore the principal as a change agent since systems are required to reform in order to better meet the needs of English language learners.

The next chapter presents the method of social network analysis and the qualitative component of this study.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

The first chapter of this study presented the critical importance of researching in depth how school reform strategies for English language learners are negotiated, communicated and implemented. The second chapter of this study explored the historical context of reform in American schools and the balance of district control and support around school reform initiatives. This history of reform and social network theory are laid out as current and appropriate frameworks for the understanding of the collaborative processes that provide principals the autonomy to guide, design and implement successful structures for English language learners. This third chapter explains the research design methodology used by this study to explore how reform strategies for English language learners are negotiated, implemented and communicated in two differently organized districts during an age of high accountability.

This study explored, through the history of reform and social network framework, the ways site administrators work, in collaboration, when learning and implementing district reform strategies for English language learners, along with the conditions that allow for creativity and innovation as it relates to reform and the needs of English language learners. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the similarities and differences in site leaders perceptions of the formal and informal organizational structures regarding English language learners' instruction?

2. What are the similarities and differences in the ways in that the districts support or constrain site leaders ability to use resources (knowledge, information and innovation) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners?
3. How do principals perceive policies and practices (Centralized/Decentralized) as support for their efforts to implement reform for English language learners?
4. What are the perceptions of site principals about their autonomy to implement best instructional practices for ELLs?

Research Design

The research design of the study was a comparative multiple case study. A case study is defined by Yin (2003) as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life-context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.13). This design is ideal for the study of complex social organizations like schools and districts in the process of reform.

This study focused on two cases - two school districts. One case focused on a school district involved in the state mandated reform process called DAIT (District Assistance Intervention Team). All schools in this district implement the same reform strategies, in a centralized manner. The other case is a neighboring school district that serves a similar population, but not in Program Improvement or under a mandate for reform. This district appears to implement reform strategies in a more decentralized manner. These cases were selected because they offer contrasting situations to the communication and implementation of reform strategies. Yin (2009) states that multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs. In addition, the conclusions

from two cases, as with two experiments, are more powerful than those coming from a single case alone. In both cases the phenomena studied were how districts communicate, negotiate and implement reform strategies for English language learners and the ways in which the district's organizational structure (decentralized or centralized) may affect these patterns.

A mixed methods approach was used in this study to collect a richer and more robust array of evidence, which is more difficult to accomplish by a single method alone. Yin (2009) states that mixed methods research forces the methods to share the same research questions. This enables the researcher to collect complementary data. I collected data from different sources: survey data from school and district leaders, interviews with site leaders, document evidence and student achievement data and document evidence from school plans. The use of multiple methods in this study served to strengthen the findings and capture a comprehensive picture of how district leaders communicate, negotiate and implement district reform strategies for English language learners.

Context of the Study

One case, The Blue Wave Elementary School District (BWESD), is composed of eleven schools and is in year three of program improvement, since it did not reach federal and state targets for two of its significant subgroups, English language learners and students with disabilities. The district was labeled as Program Improvement and required to hire a state approved District Assistance Intervention Team (DAIT) in the spring of 2008. Specifically, when districts fail to meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

targets after two years, they are put into corrective action by the state and are required to meet certain state mandates and program changes. The DAIT team, comprised of four to six people, must be able to provide technical assistance and job-embedded support, as needed, for district and school leaders to make progress toward meeting standards (California Department of Education [CDE], 2007). The DAIT team assisted the district in rewriting their Local Education Authority (LEA) plan; this plan would serve as each specific school's site plan for two consecutive years.

Blue Wave Elementary School District. BWESD is a small elementary school district described as urban fringe located in Southern California. As with the rest of the state, enrollment in Blue Wave has been declining over the past three years, although the percentage of Hispanic students continues to grow. A continuing trend is the increase in the percentage of students with special needs and English learners. The district has 11 elementary schools. The ethnic breakdown in the district is Hispanic or Latino (78,9%), White (9.3%), African American (4.1%), Asian (1.0%), Filipino (5.1%), Pacific Islander (0.9%) and American Indian (0.6%). Demographic data reveal diversity in the student population in socioeconomic status with 78.8% of the students in the district qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and diversity in linguistic proficiency with 47.4% of the students in the district classified as English learners. The predominant language of 97% of the district's English learners is Spanish (California Department of Education, 2006).

Hillsdale Elementary School District. The other case, Hillside Elementary School District (HESD), is a neighboring district that serves approximately 27,200 students in grades K-6. The district is the largest elementary district in the state of California; it has 44 schools. In contrast to BWESD, HESD, has met all federal targets under NCLB for

all significant demographic groups: African American, Asian, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, white, socio-economically disadvantaged, English learners and students with disabilities. The school district, therefore, has not fallen under program improvement since NCLB legislation was introduced.

HESD is a neighboring school district to BWESD. The ethnic breakdown in the district is Hispanic or Latino (65.4%), White (12.1%), African American (4.2%), Asian (2.5%), Filipino (9.8%), and American Indian (0.4%). Demographic data reveal diversity in the student population in socioeconomic status with 35.9% of the students in the district qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and diversity in linguistic proficiency with 36.5% of the students in the district classified as English learners. The predominant language or 97% of the district's English learner's is Spanish (California Department of Education, 2006).

Participants

Participants in this study were 42 district and site administrators from BWESD and 93 district and site administrators from HESD. All administrators were asked to respond to a Social Network Analysis survey. A total of twenty principals, ten principals from each district, were selected as interview participants for both case studies. The principals were selected based on their school's demographic data. Because HESD is much larger than BWESD, only those schools with a large number of ELLs were considered. The interviews helped to gain a deeper understanding on how reform strategies for English language learners are implemented at the school sites. School administrators were selected as participants since they have the primary responsibility for

leading the work around the communication, negotiation and implementation of district reform strategies for English language learners.

Data Collection

To explore and understand how reform strategies are communicated, negotiated and implemented among district leaders, this project used five main methods of data collection: 1) Social Network Analysis (SNA), 2) interviews (Holstein & Gubruim, 2003, Yin 2003), 3) document review (Merriam, 1998), 4) student achievement data and 5) cross case analysis (Yin, 2009).

Social Network Analysis

The first step in the collection of data consisted of an on-line SNA survey (see Appendix C) administered to all district administrators, in both districts, in the summer of 2010. A 20-30 minute professional development session around the concepts to be studied and the data collection methods to be used was presented to all district administrators in both districts. At the end of this session, voluntary participation in the study was solicited. All district administrators from the two districts were invited to complete the survey; the completion of the survey signified their consent.

The survey was designed to be completed online through the Survey Monkey website guaranteeing confidentiality under a password only known to an external third party. Through the use of a third party (UCSD professor), the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey results were preserved. The survey was based on a 'bounded' approach to network data collection to secure a more complete picture of the network and more valid results (Scott, 2000). A bounded network survey provides the respondents with a list of individuals in their organization - as opposed to relying on

participant memory - for them to check the frequency of different types of interactions with colleagues.

The survey measured distinct networks representing relationships associated with enhanced organizational and school performance: English language learner reform strategy collaboration, flow of English language learner reform strategy information, effort recognition, and the ability to innovate and be creative in regards to reform strategies for English language learners (Cross & Parker, 2004; Lin, 2001; Krackhardt, 2001; Mohrman, et al., 2003). Instrumental and expressive relationships were measured, as they are both key for team performance (Lin, 2001). Specifically, participants were asked to quantitatively assess their relationships with each of the other district administrators within their district on a frequency basis ranging from 0 (no interaction) to 4 (1-2 times a week). The survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Follow up emails were used to encourage full participation.

Interviews

Following an initial analysis of the networks measured, interviews were conducted with ten site administrators from BWESD. All participants were informed of the study's purpose, were invited to participate, and indicated their consent by signing an Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form. Three colleagues from the Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) participated in the interview process to diminish potential bias as a result of the researcher's positionality in one of the two districts. In a similar fashion, interviews were conducted with HESD site administrators from approximately 10 schools with similar demographics (large number of English language learners) to BWESD using

semi-structured interview protocols (Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1980) for an estimated time of one hour (see Appendix E). Also, looked at was network centrality. Centrality refers to how many ties a participant initiates or receives in relation to the specific network being examined. The participant's interactions might be an indicator of influence within the system. Network centrality scores were divided into quartiles. Administrators were looked at from the 1st (least central) and 4th (most central) quartile.

Examining the participants that have influence (more central) and those on the margins (less central) could provide an overview of network perspectives and therefore may be useful in understanding the overall distribution of resources throughout the organization.

While the quantitative data represented by SNA measures informed this study on the structure, frequency, and strength of the interactions among school personnel around reform strategies, the qualitative data, through interviews and document analysis allowed for a collection of information on the actual content and context of these interactions. The interview covered the social and situational aspects of reform, as well as the professional and collaborative relationships among district participants that provide support. Interview questions were designed to gauge the nature of the reform process for English language learners and the ability to innovate and be creative within the system. Participants were asked to describe the process of implementing reform strategies for English language learners at their sites, their routines and resources for professional development planning, their ability to be creative and innovative while implementing reform strategies, as well as their patterns of communication, collaboration and support with district administrators and other site administrators. Interview questions were piloted with a different group of

administrators from other school districts. After the pilot, questions were revised and refined after consultation with the dissertation committee.

Document and Artifact Review

The third data source for this project were the different district documents related to the implementation of reform strategies: Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), the two district's LEA plans, mission and vision statements, school board agendas and minutes directly relating to reform strategies implemented for English language learners and district organizational charts. Documents gathered in the data collection were reviewed and analyzed. Yin (2009) maintains the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. In this study I depended on the SNA analysis and interviews to determine what specific documents to analyze. Content analysis (Merriam, 1998) is the systematic procedure that was used for describing the content of the documents collected.

Data Analysis

A comprehensive data analysis plan weaving together social network, interview, document data and case analysis was developed to maximize use and triangulation of the data collected. Each of the types of data and the analysis performed for each is described in detail.

Social Network Analysis

At the district level, three distinct networks were examined: Communication around Work Related Topics, Collaboration About Work, and Innovation Around English Language Learner Strategies. Recognizing the importance in the literature of ties in the

network strength and ties of stable structural patterns were taken into account in network analysis (Krackhardt, 2001; Marsden & Campbell, 1984).

While the data collection process rendered social networks at various frequencies of interaction, I chose to focus on the most frequent interaction patterns within each of the district networks. These interactions typically represent stable structural patterns (Krackhardt, 2001) and respondents are more accurate at identifying ongoing patterns than determining occasional interactions (Carley & Krackhardt, 1999). In order to be considered a frequent tie, individuals would have had to interact once every two weeks to a couple of times a week (3 and 4 on the rating scale). A series of network measures were conducted using the UCINET software (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman, 2002) on each of these frequent relationships (Communication around Work Related Topics, Collaboration About Work, and Innovation Around English Language Learner Strategies) to better understand and compare network structures across districts.

The density of area and district networks was measured to determine the percentage and total number of ties within each district. The density of a network can be thought of as a measure of network connectedness or cohesion (Blau, 1977). Density is calculated as the number of connections between participants divided by the number of total possible connections in the network. The greater the proportion of ties between actors, the more dense the network. Density was scaled between 0, indicating no relationships between administrators, to 1 where all district leaders are connected to one another. A dense network is thought to be able to move resources more quickly than a network with fewer ties (Scott, 2000).

Reciprocity between site administrators and district administrators will be

measured to establish the percentage of reciprocal relationships within. Higher levels of reciprocity have been associated with increased organizational performance and complex knowledge exchange (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). Reciprocity was calculated using a scale of 0 to 1, with 0 representing no mutual relationship present in the district administrator site administrator relationship, and 1 representing a relationship in which all relationships are reciprocated controlling for the size of the network.

For each of the individual participants, their normalized centrality in the social networks was calculated by determining the relative amount of ties a participant received and sent in each of the networks divided by the size of the network. Centrality was analyzed as network data to shed light on the research questions, and used for the purpose of identifying key individuals in the network. Network centrality measures can be used as an index of individuals' activities and roles within the group. Highly central participants in a network have increased access to resources and a high potential to create new linkages that may enhance capacity building (Stuart, 1998; Tsai, 2000). Those less central to the organization may be on the periphery and receive less access to knowledge, and often do not have the opportunities to gain from the resources and information held by those in more central positions (Burt, 2000).

Organizations undergoing important changes can sometimes become highly centralized when new knowledge such as the implementation of new reform strategies for English language learners are not equally shared. This would mean that a core group of individuals in the organization have the majority of the knowledge or information. In order to determine the extent to which reform strategy knowledge is centralized in the school district, a core periphery (CP) measure was conducted to understand the overall

structure of its network. A CP network structure is defined as one with a dense cohesive central core of participants with less connected participants on the periphery (Borgatti & Everett, 1999; Wasserman & Faust, 1998). The CP measure compares an obtained network structure to a theoretically perfect CP model (completely centralized) and reports the correlation between the two. The measure is also useful in determining the degree to which participants belong either to the core or to the periphery, an important feature that determines how well they are able to access resources and participate within the district.

Qualitative Data

Interview data was audio-recorded. I transcribed some interviews and sent the remainder to be transcribed by a transcription service, Casting Words. Transcriptions were organized and questions were sorted. Once sorted, the responses were hand coded by looking for recurring themes. Coding by hand allowed me to carefully read the responses and sort by true meaning rather than just by words. The process allowed for a thorough and systematic analysis and coding of the qualitative data collected.

The study used the process of meaning condensation described by Kvale (1996) to interpret the transcribed interview. Responses were coded and grouped for comparison between site administrators' perspectives. The first cut of interview data analysis allowed for important themes to emerge "out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1990, p. 390). Qualitative data was analyzed using a constant comparative analysis method (Boeije, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) through checking and rechecking emerging themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process of constant comparison "stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive

and explanatory categories" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341) and provides a deeper understanding of the data. Emerging themes were analyzed and reexamined looking for patterns across groups. Themes and patterns that emerged were examined through the lens of socio-cultural learning theory.

Finally, content analysis was conducted on the data collected through documents, artifacts, and cross-case analysis using a thematic approach (Trochim, 2001) to examine patterns and deviations from the social network and interview data. This analysis identified significant themes and regularities, patterns, and dissimilarities resulting in a series of propositions in response to the focus of this study and the specific research questions posed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Cross Case Analysis

Single case study analysis was utilized to begin to extract themes based on the research questions. It was important that the complexity of each case be understood before beginning cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2006). Cross-case analysis was undertaken to understand the phenomena across cases. Stake (2006) refers to these phenomena as the quintain – both its commonality and differences across the two school districts. The term quintain is used because it refers to the umbrella that groups both cases together. Cross-case analysis was used to understand the phenomena as it appeared in both cases. I made assertions about the phenomena by taking evidence from the case studies to show how similarities or differences characterize the quintain. Independent themes were extracted from each individual case that relate to the research questions. The highly reductive process of cross-case analysis allowed me to keep the

most important experiential findings, although much of the uniqueness of each single case may have been lost (Stake, 2006).

Chapter Four: Results and Findings

Data and Study Findings

In this chapter the results of a comparative analysis of principals' perception of autonomy in the two case districts are analyzed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used to analyze the data. A brief overview of the districts precedes the analysis of results. Findings are organized to answer each of the research questions, and the guiding themes of school reform, balance and control of district support to schools, district school relationship, and social-network theory with an emphasis on intellectual capital. Interviews, document analysis, and a survey were used to gather data.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify, examine principal's perceptions of autonomy to implement programs for English language learners in two neighboring school districts. In the study, autonomy is examined through the lenses of two school district offices support or constraint of principals' abilities to implement learning initiatives within the district's structure. The overall achievement rankings of the two districts differ. One district has been successful in meeting all NCLB achievement targets while one district has not met federal targets and has been assigned to work with a District Assistance Intervention Team (DAIT) in the state of California. Further, district policies were compared to see how they affected the informal and formal collaborative structures in both districts. Lastly, the conditions and structures that allow leaders to be innovative and creative with the goal of increased student achievement were explored and compared. Examining and comparing the strengths of both districts allowed me to describe optimal organizational conditions that support student performance over time.

The research questions that guided the analysis of interviews, document analysis, and survey results were:

1. What are the similarities and differences in district and site leader's perceptions of the formal and informal organizational structures that support English language learners' instruction?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the ways that the districts support or constrain site leaders' abilities to use resources (knowledge, information, and innovation) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners?
3. How do principals perceive policies and practices (centralized/decentralized as supportive of their efforts to implement reform for English language learners?
4. What are the perceptions of site principals about their autonomy to implement best instructional practices for ELLs?

To answer the research questions, an analysis of descriptive statistics was completed along with an independent sample t-test for each of the constructs. Each survey item was examined in isolation to determine the mean value of that construct's presence at each district. Questions were then grouped together in constructs and analyzed to determine if there was a significant difference in the means between the two districts. Findings in the survey were cross-referenced with interview data to determine if there was support for the conclusions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings from each of the districts.

Social Network Data Analysis

To analyze the social network data, a series of network measures were conducted using the UCINET software (Borgatti et al. 2002) to better understand the structure of each network. Given the extensive literature on the importance of tie intensity in networks, the fact that respondents are more accurate at identifying ongoing patterns than determining occasional interactions (Carley & Krackhardt 1999), and that I was interested in stable structural patterns (Krackhardt 2001), the data was dichotomized to include only the most frequent communication and knowledge ties between actors or principal communicators. In order to be considered a frequent tie, individuals would have had to communicate or share knowledge once every two weeks to a couple of times a week (4 and 5 on the survey rating scale). In using frequency as a proxy for tie intensity, I built on the work of Borgatti (2007) who outlined four distinct types of relationships studied in social network analysis: Proximities (e.g., similarities or distances), Relations (e.g., kinship or roles), Flows (e.g., the exchange of money or goods), and Interactions (e.g., talking with, helping). Borgatti argues the most appropriate measure of intensity of tie is specific to the type or relationships the tie represents. For example, the strength of a proximity-based tie should reflect ‘‘how proximal’’ two nodes are, either representing very small distances or very high correlations between profiles. For interactional ties, the type of relationships I researched in this study were: Principal to principal and principal to central office. The strength of the tie was measured by quantity (how frequently do you interact) and the quality (how ‘good’ is the interaction) of the tie was found in the qualitative data (interviews). In this study I first looked at the quantitative aspects of the interaction measured by frequency in order to provide more comparability across

respondents. The qualitative aspect of 'quality' was found as support from the interviews. I used both because using frequency alone has limitations such as not acknowledging the role of quality (measured through expressive relations) may play on communication and knowledge networks (Marsden & Campbell 1984).

A density measure was run to determine the percentage of frequent ties within the communication and knowledge network in total. The density of a network is the number of connections between actors divided by the number of total possible connections and can be thought of as how tightly knit a network is. A dense network, meaning one with a high percentage of ties, is thought to be able to move resources more quickly than a network with fewer ties (Scott 2000). The data were also block-partitioned into central office and site level administrators so that the density of communication and knowledge flow between ties in these subgroups could be analyzed.

Centrality measures were taken on each of the actors to determine the total amount of ties an actor initiates and receives in each of the communication and knowledge networks. Centrality has been thought of as an index of activity (Freeman 1979). Highly central actors in a network have increased access to resources and a high potential to create new linkages that may enhance social capital and build organizational capabilities (Stuart 1998; Tsai 2000). Those who are less central to the organization may be on the periphery and receive less information and often do not have the opportunities to gain from the resources and information held by those in more central positions. Moreover, these less central individuals are more likely to receive only the resources deemed necessary by those in a more centralized position (Burt 2000), thus potentially restricting their perspective of the overall organization. Centrality therefore can be

considered a point of intersection in which the person in the center of the intersection is able to disproportionately and more quickly amass resources, thus allowing this central individual to influence the network by determining where the resources flow (Raider & Krackhardt 2001).

Given my interest in the relations between district and site administrators, an External/Internal ratio analysis was conducted. This is often referred to as an E-I index, which indicates the extent to which the overall organization is characterized by interunit, as opposed to intraunit, strong ties (Krackhardt & Stern 1988). The scale ranges from -1 completely internal (intraunit) ties to +1 completely external (interunit). This network measure assesses the relationship between external and internal ties based on a specific actor attribute (in this case work location, meaning either central office or site) by comparing the numbers of ties within groups and between groups. A group (in this case central office administrators or site administrators) is considered externally focused if relationships are more uniformly dense over the entire network (interunit), or internally focused if there is a small dense core of relationships within a segment of the network (intraunit). High E-I indices (more externally focused) have been associated with large-scale successful organizational change (Krackhardt & Stern 1988; McGrath & Krackhardt 2003) and greater unit cooperation (Nelson 1989) while low E-I scores potentially limit how well an organization negotiates external pressures (McGrath & Krackhardt 2003).

Interview Data Analysis

Interview results were used to explore the perceptions of the twenty principals in

different structural positions (more and less central) in the network. Interviews were conducted with ten principals from each of the two districts in order to: capture site leaders perception of the formal and informal organizational structures of each respective district, determine how intellectual capital is supported or constrained and, to determine if district policy plays a role in supporting English learners. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The first cut of the interview data consisted of an inductive analysis that allowed important themes to emerge ‘‘out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis’’ (Patton 1990, p. 390). Interview data were analyzed using a constant comparative analysis method (Boeije 2002; Glaser & Strauss 1967), as well as checking and rechecking emerging themes (Miles & Huberman 1994). Responses were grouped to the prompt and compared between the two districts, as well as those in the least and most central positions in the network. The themes that arose from this preliminary analysis were then re-examined, looking for patterns across the district and structural position as connected to the social network survey findings. This process of constant comparison ‘‘stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories’’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 341). In order to ensure the trustworthiness of interpretations, member-checking procedures were carried out as emerging themes developed and were shared with participants (Miles & Huberman 1994).

Document Data Analysis

Document analysis helped to identify similar schools. School demographic data was reviewed and averaged to determine similar schools or a similar cluster of principals

in both districts. This information was used to select principals to be interviewed. Document analysis also provided additional insight into the two case districts. The documents gathered added transparency and increased the trustworthiness of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). School plans of the selected schools were reviewed to determine the overall organizational structure and the level of support provided at the district level.

District Backgrounds

The two districts purposely selected for study have different paths toward improvement. Although there are significant differences in size of the districts, as will be discussed below, there are also important similarities in demographic contexts and school structures, which helps to make the comparison a valid one. District office and school site leadership relations were explored at the district level in both districts. However, for the qualitative portion of the study, schools that matched in their student demographics (high number of English language learners) were the focus, in order to ensure comparability.

The first case is Blue Wave Elementary School District (BWESD), which is composed of eleven schools and is in year three of program improvement since it has not reached federal and state targets for two of its significant subgroups, English language learners and students with disabilities. The district was labeled Program Improvement and required to hire a state approved District Assistance Intervention Team (DAIT) in the spring of 2008. Specifically, when districts fail to meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets after two years, they are put into corrective action by the state and are

required to meet certain state mandates and program changes. The DAIT team, comprised of four to six people, must be able to provide technical assistance and job-embedded support, as needed, for district and school leaders to make progress toward meeting standards (California Department of Education [CDE], 2007). The DAIT team assisted the district in rewriting their Local Education Authority (LEA) plan; this plan would serve as each specific school's site plan for two consecutive years. Further, the goals outlined in this plan were mirrored in each site's individual plan.

The plan includes systemic ways that instruction must be provided. This includes specific intervention times and programs as well as a research based framework realized in a protocol for each instructional lesson taught. This protocol is comprised of six components of effective teaching. Blue Wave's observation protocol focused on: 1) clear and measurable objectives, 2) direct instruction and formative assessment, 3) academic vocabulary instruction, 4) student engagement, 5) specific feedback and 6) selected student engagement strategies. Site principals and academic coaches were trained to use the observation protocol to provide objective feedback on how well the six components of the protocol were being implemented.

BWESD is a small elementary school district described as urban fringe located in Southern California. As with the rest of the state, enrollment in Blue Wave has been declining over the past three years, although the percentage of Hispanic students continues to grow. A continuing trend is the increase in the percentage of students with special needs and English learners. The district has 11 elementary schools. The ethnic breakdown in the district is Hispanic or Latino (78,9%), White (9.3%), African American (4.1%), Asian (1.0%), Filipino (5.1%), Pacific Islander (0.9%) and American Indian

(0.6%). Demographic data reveal considerable poverty in the student population in socioeconomic status with 78.8% of the students in the district qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and diversity in linguistic proficiency with 47.4% of the students in the district classified as English learners. The predominant language of 97% of the district's English learners is Spanish (California Department of Education, 2006).

The other case, Hillsdale Elementary School District (HESD), is a neighboring district that serves approximately 27,200 students in grades K-6. The district is the largest elementary district in the state of California; it has 44 schools. In contrast to the BWESD, HESD, has met all federal targets under NCLB for all significant demographic groups: African American, Asian, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, white, socio-economically disadvantaged, English learners and students with disabilities. The school district, therefore, has not fallen under program improvement since the NCLB legislation was introduced.

The ethnic composition in the HESD is Hispanic or Latino (65.4%), White (12.1%), African American (4.2%), Asian (2.5%), Filipino (9.8%), and American Indian (0.4%). Although similar to BWESD, demographic data reveal more diversity in the student population in terms of socioeconomic status with 35.9% of the students in the district qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch and diversity in linguistic proficiency with 36.5% of the students in the district classified as English learners. Similar to BWESD, the predominant language of 97% of the district's English learner's is Spanish (California Department of Education, 2006).

District-wide data was collected for both districts, but for purposes of detailed study of only principals, a subset of demographically and socio-economically matched schools were studied from HESD and compared with similar schools in BWESD.

Participants

The quantitative component of this study includes forty-two site and district administrators from BWESD and ninety-three district and site administrators from HESD. All administrators were asked to respond to a Social Network Analysis survey. To gain a deeper understanding of how reform strategies for English language learners are implemented, ten principals from each of the two school districts were selected to be interviewed. BWESD is a small district and its schools have a very large number of English language learners. HESD is a much larger district and schools in this district range from those that have a high number of English language learners to those that have virtually none. In order to create similar groups, the student demographics for BWESD were averaged. The student demographics in those schools in HSESD with a high number of ELLs were averaged and compared to BWESD. Once schools similar student demographics were reached, those principals were selected to be interviewed.

Once transcribed, principal interviews were given a number. Principals from BWESD were assigned an odd number and principals from HESD were given an even number.

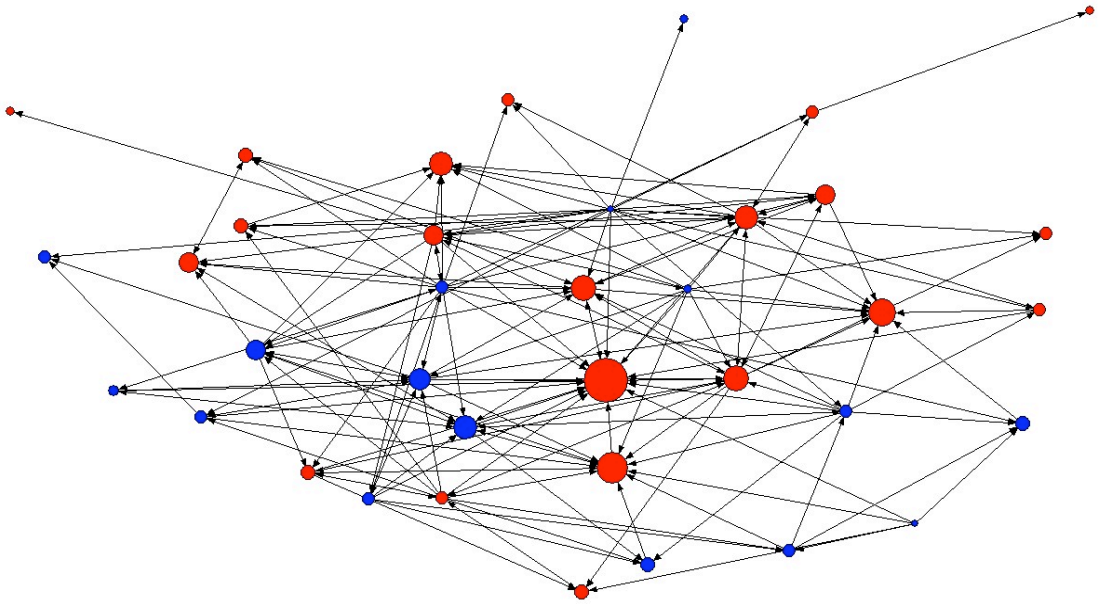
The demographics described above of the principal clusters selected to be interviewed can be seen in the shaded portion of the table that follows.

Table 2. Comparison of Focus Schools in the Two Case Districts
(Of Principals interviewed)

District	English Learners	Hispanic/Latino	Low SES	2010 API
BWESD (10 School's demographic average)	47.4	78.9	79.1	773.3
HESD (10 School's demographic average)	48.9	81.2	54.7	851.2

Blue Wave Elementary School District Findings

In this case I analyzed three social network maps around general or specific topics of interest: communication around work related topics, collaboration around work related issues and innovative ideas around English learner strategies. The maps represent instrumental social relations, which reflect the flow of information, resources and communication between principals or from district administrators. The three maps help to understand the way that site leaders perceive the districts organizational structure. They also provide a visual of how the formal and informal network structures of the district may support or constrain the transmission of knowledge and resources that support English learners.



Red Node= Central Office Admin
Blue Node = School Site Admin
→ = Incoming Tie
← = Outgoing Tie
↔ = Reciprocated Tie

Figure 1. BWESD Communication around Work Related Topics Network *(How often do you turn to each administrator for information on work related topics...and at what frequency?)*

Figure 1 represents perceptions of communication around work related topics at BWESD at the most frequent level (anywhere between once every two weeks to a couple of times a week). The map and the measures suggest it is a dense network with principals communicating with other principals or central office leaders as well as central office leaders communicating with each other. There are two central office administrators who will only have contact with one other central office administrator and there is one principal who will only have contact with one other principal. According to the network measures there are relatively frequent connections among district administrators and

principals within this district (Density = .13). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 1,722 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 224 ties (or 13% of possible ties). The overall reciprocity of the entire leadership team was .1973. This means that 20% of the existing communication relationships were reciprocated.

There is a dense web of principal and district office connections in this district as shown by the clusters of blue and red nodes. However, there is a division between principals and the central office. The E-I index for principals was .06, signifying that principals are externally connected and seek to collaborate with both the central office staff and other principals. Principals are seeking out other principals and are also seeking out central office staff when discussing work related topics. On the other hand, the E-I index for the district office administrators is -.14, signifying that district office administrators communicate more within their peer group than with principals at the school sites. There are three large red nodes, district office administrators that appear to be more centralized. District central office staff tend to talk to one another regarding work related topics. These administrators are not seeking out site principals. These fairly dense communication ties are triangulated by interview data that describes communication in BWESD that is built from trust.

Communication. Fifty percent of the principals in BWESD spoke of conversations and activities they have with their colleagues or site academic coach. “My coach and I spend a lot of time looking at our data and looking for ways to support teachers” (B1). “ I feel comfortable talking to my district director of instructional services, I feel I can call anyone on my team” (B5). “I talk to my benchmark team on a

regular basis about questions I might have or for clarification on how to get something done" (B11). The conversations they have are mostly around similar curriculum and programs that are in place. "We have the GVC curriculum and benchmark assessments so we get together with our team and talk about our results and possible interventions" (B3). "We are all on the same page with SRA so we can talk about how we can support one another" (B5). Forty percent of the principals talked about the conversations as a need or as a constraint in the system. "We need more opportunities to talk with colleagues rather than watch inspirational videos" (B9). "I don't always have time to talk to other principals because I am trying to implement this and that" (B11). One principal, (B1) offered advice for the system, "We should build an environment where debate and different opinions are encouraged."

Mandates. In describing the types of conversations, Sixty percent of the principals spoke about their conversations being around mandates or things they are mandated to implement or monitor. "Most of the time, I am having conversations to get clarifications on the protocol" (B3). "Mandates inhibit some of the things that we could be doing to move more students to proficiency – things like writer's workshop or balanced literacy" (B5). "All we ever do is talk about the district mandates set out to us from the DAIT sanctions" (B17). A principal more central in the network (B9) describes the mandate conversations, "We are given programs and told to implement them immediately, we have to talk about how to do it with limited resources."

Trust. Forty percent of the principals spoke about having trusting relationships with other administrators or with their site academic coach. "I can call with anything and don't have to worry about being judged" (B5). "District administrators are supportive of

site administrators, I go to my instructional site team for support, I know I can trust them" (B11).

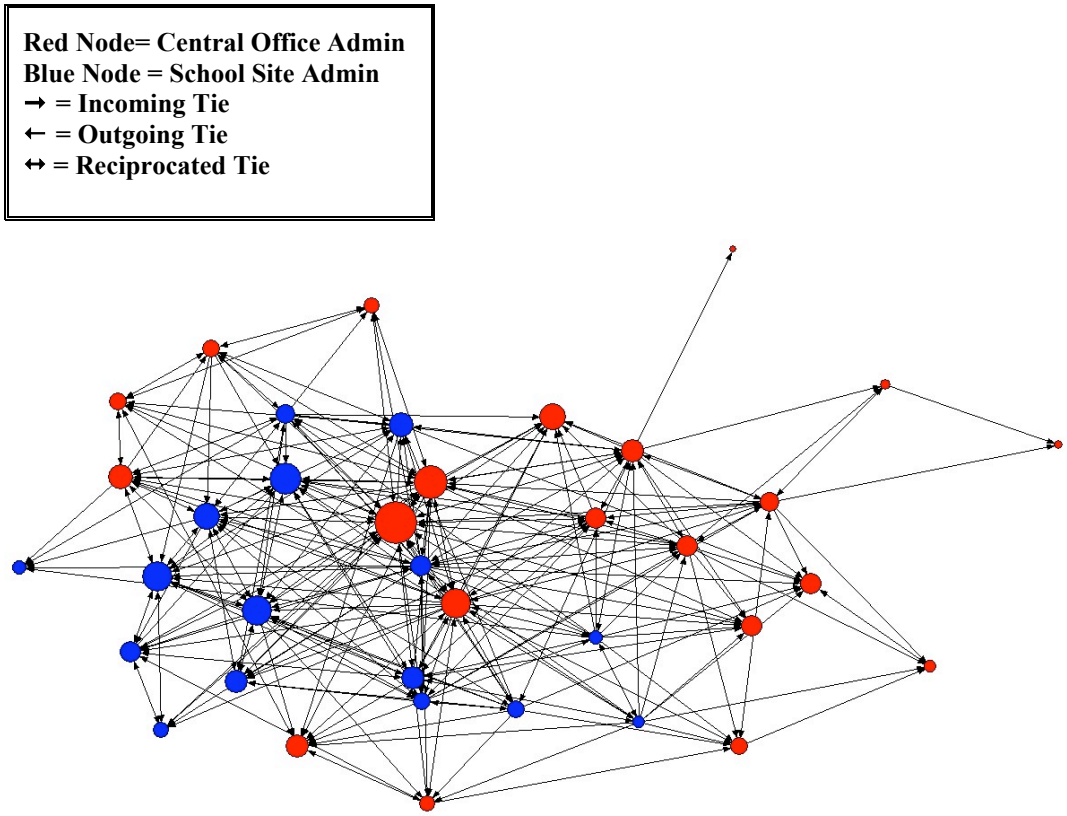
Forty percent of the principals spoke of lacking trust. "The implementation of research-based strategies has helped but it constrains teachers and makes them believe they cannot be trusted" (B7). "The strategies we are requiring are really good, they're research-based, but you can't do other things that you know would be beneficial like writer's workshop: it's like we cant be trusted" (B19). Two principals felt a lack of trust in dealing with sub-par teachers. "With everything being the same, there is more support for teaching and learning, but I am still not confident I am fully trusted when it comes to a union issue" (B13). "We need more support from district administrators with sub-par teachers" (B15).

While the first network was specifically focused on communication around work related topics, the network becomes almost twice as dense with the survey question that focuses specifically on collaboration about work. As can be seen in Figure 2, the collaboration network has more than doubled in density (Density = .25) as the communication network (Density = .13). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 1722 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 431 ties (or 25% possible ties). While it is difficult to fully interpret the meaning of this density figure, D = .25 is considered dense because of the limited time in an administrators day for regular collaboration. This data suggests that the leadership at BWESD collaborates on a more regular basis than they communicate with each other around work related topics. The overall reciprocity of the entire leadership team was .4156. This means that 42% of the existing collaboration relationships were

reciprocated. The reciprocated ties in terms of collaboration are consistent with the increased density of this network compared to the communication network.

As seen in Figure 2, there are three central office administrators who are central in the network as shown by the large red nodes that are internally connected. The E-I index for district office administrators was -.14, signifying that district office administrators collaborate more frequently with their peers. Similarly, the E-I index for principals is -.06, signifying that principals are also collaborating more frequently with their principal peers. This finding is implying that although there is a dense collaboration network, the

Figure 2. BWESD Collaboration Network (To whom do you collaborate with about your work…and at what frequency?)



network has a division of site administrators collaborating with one another and district office having their own collaborative teams. This pattern of a high level of collaboration is triangulated by interview data that supports the collaborative culture in BWESD.

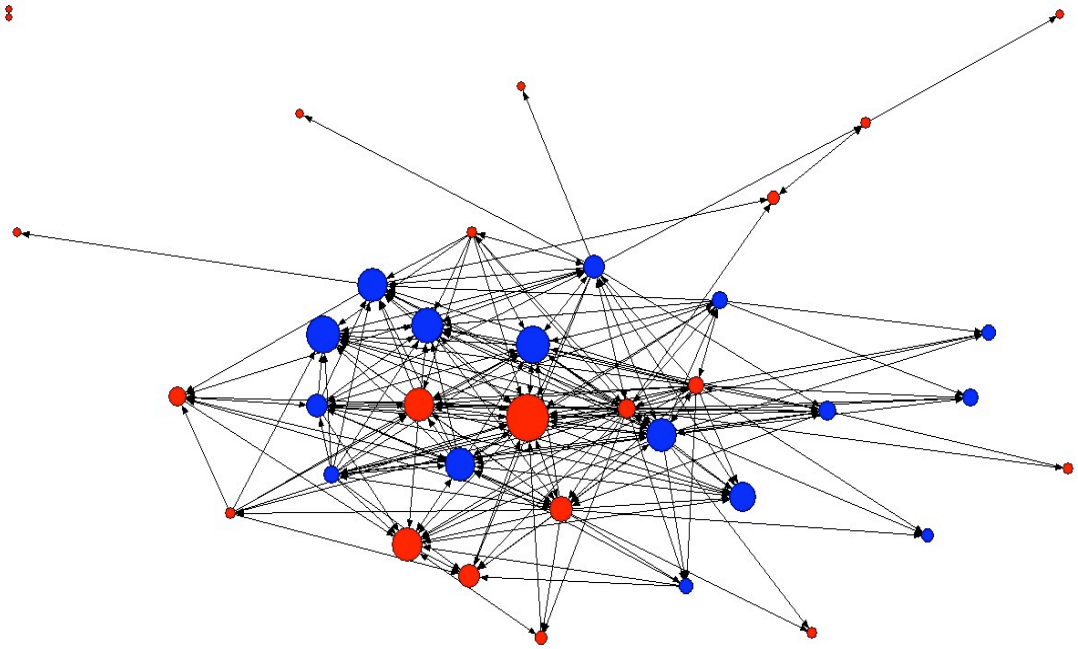
Collaboration. One hundred percent of the site administrators reported that they collaborate frequently to address the needs of English learners. "I feel I can call any other principal with anything" (B5). "When I talk to other principals, we are mostly collaborating" (B13). The majority of the conversations revolve around particular programs that are being used.

Eighty percent of the principals mentioned district adopted programs. "We have been working with X, with the Language! Program" (B7). "We're looking at our programs. We're analyzing. We're looking at our instruction of SRA" (B9). Very few of the conversations were about problem solving or about looking at alternative ways to instruct students. "I just met with a principal last week because we have had really low CELDT scores, we met with the principal of a particular school that has had fantastic CELDT scores" (B3).

Forty percent of the principals reported lacking support from the district office or the district office being a constraint. "People have forgotten what its like to be down here, especially with NCLB and testing. I don't think the district knows what really works and what doesn't" (B19). One more central principal (B5) reported, "I think there is a disconnect with the amount of work that were doing down here and how busy we are. I wonder why we are having more meetings." "They just don't know what we do, I mean patriotism and service learning are good but really? Do we have to spend time doing

that?"(B9). "We seem to have more constraints than supports from the district office" (17).

Figure 3 represents perceptions of Innovation around EL strategies. This map is more similar to Communication figure. Like the last two networks, Innovation around EL strategies is also dense (Density = .17). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 1722 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 293 ties (17% possible ties). The network is less dense than the Collaboration network (Density = 0.25) yet higher in density than the network for Communication Around Work Related Topics (Density = 0.13). This data suggests that the leadership at HESD are collaborating to a high degree and according to the maps, their conversations might revolve more around innovative strategies for EL students than over work related topics. The overall reciprocity for Innovative Strategies for EL Students of the entire leadership team was .2275. This means that 23% of the existing communication relationships were reciprocated. This is slightly more than that of Communication around Work Related topics (20%) and a little more than half of that of Collaboration (42%).



Red Node= Central Office Admin
Blue Node = School Site Admin
→ = Incoming Tie
← = Outgoing Tie
↔ = Reciprocated Tie

Figure 3. BWESD Innovation around English Learner strategies (How often is this administrator willing to take a risk on innovative ideas around EL strategies… and at what frequency?)

Figure 3 shows a dense web of principal connections in this district as shown by the blue clusters that seem to form a circle. Within the dense principal network there are a few key central office staff that play key roles, as noted in the red nodes. The E-I index for principals was -.07 indicating that principals are having more conversations with like peers around English learners. On the other hand, the E-I index for district office administrators was .06, signifying that district office administrators are more externally connected and are collaborating more frequently

with principals as well as with their peers. This finding is different than the other two network maps. This pattern is triangulated by interview data that indicate effective collaboration in HESD.

Autonomy. Forty percent of the school principals in BWESD expressed a sense of autonomy over instructional programs and resources for English learners. "They are allowing us to be autonomous based on the fact that it gets results" (B1). "I'm not being told what to do so I feel like I can use my knowledge to make decisions on where we are going" (B3). "I have the autonomy to decide who will be a part of the program, the grade level and the impact teachers, therefore I feel autonomous" (B5).

Lack of autonomy. Ninety percent of the principals expressed frustration over mandates that limit the amount of autonomy they might have. "Centralization means that we don't have a lot of autonomy in our sites. We feel restricted to take innovative risks" (B1). "We're mandated to implement (the program) Language! There is no gray area for the most part" (B3). "Program improvement creates that hard to be innovative" (B19). "The mandate of using only using district curriculum prohibits the principals from making some decisions on innovative things they might like to put into classrooms" (B7). The centralized structure guides most site leaders to a level of sameness in how they implement policies and practices across their sites. " We do have consistency with our curriculum" (B3). " The first thing that we have done is to focus on our ELD program and compose a plan for our language learners such that we are all on the same page on how and when to transition students" (B17). "Everybody is doing SRA" (B11). This sameness allows principals to feel that they can communicate with one another for support. "The protocol helps in that all principals look at the same thing when going into

classrooms" (B3). However, there is little room for creativity or innovation. "It's difficult to take creative risks or any risk in our district (B19) "we haven't branched out as far as doing a lot of different things, because of DAIT" (B7). "It's difficult to take creative risks or any risk in our district. Even when you do take a risk, your are treated like a child because every move or decision must be micro-managed" (B17).

Centralization. Seventy percent of the principals recognize that the formal structure of the district is centralized. "We are centralized in how information is sent out – top down" (B1). "We are centralized in how we do things" (B1). Most viewed this structure as negative. "Information is disseminated in a top down fashion. We are told what to do and when to implement" (B19). A few principals viewed the structure as a support. "We have consistency with our curriculum and our benchmark assessments" (B5).

Conclusion Blue Wave Elementary School District

After analyzing the data, several major findings about the principal leadership network in BWESD emerged in terms of how actors in the system see the formal and informal organizational structure and how players in the system describe district supports or constraints around the transmission of resources for English language learners: (1) Dense communication ties around work related topics are mostly about mandates. Communication may be impacted by low trust or a lack of trust. (2) Dense collaboration ties and the quality of collaboration may be negatively impacted by site administrators being disconnected with the central office and a need for principals to collaborate with one another around mandated programs. (3) Site administrators are densely connected

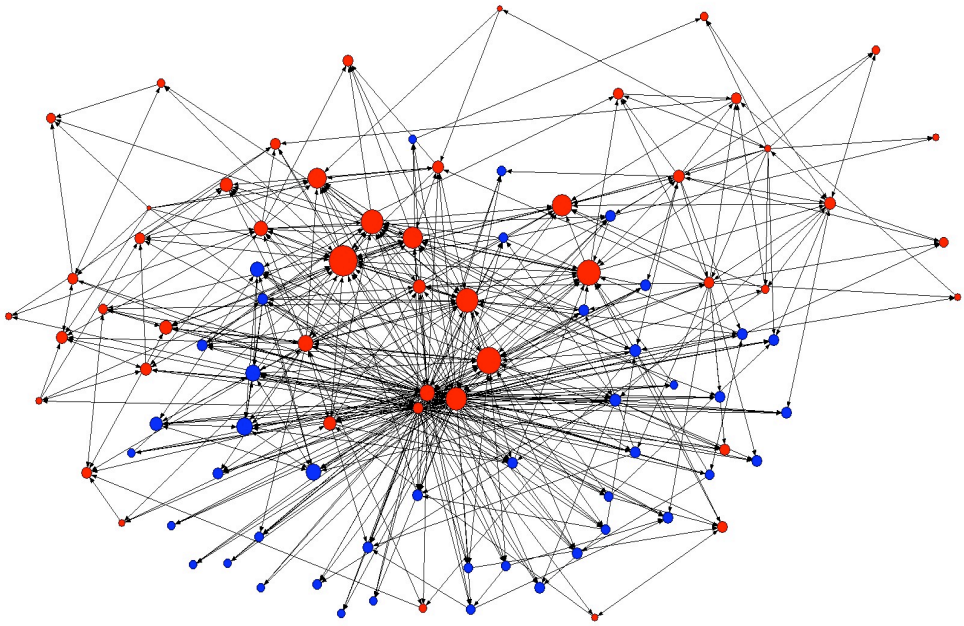
when discussing English learner needs. The conversations revolve around mandates therefore hindering their sense of autonomy. (4) The overall structure of Blue Wave is centralized.

Hillsdale Elementary School District Findings

In this case I analyzed the same three social network maps around general or specific topics of interest: communication around work related topics, collaboration around work related issues and innovative ideas around English learner strategies. The maps represent instrumental social relations, which reflect the flow of information, resources and communication between principals or from district administrators. The three maps help to understand the way that site leaders perceive the districts organizational structure. They also provide a visual of how the formal and informal network structures of the district may support or constrain the transmission of knowledge and resources that support English learners.

Figure 4 represents perceptions of communication around work related topics in the study district at the most frequent level (anywhere between once every two weeks to a couple of times a week). The map and the measures suggest it is a dense network with principals communicating with other principals or central office leaders as well as central office leaders communicating with each other. According to the network measures there are relatively frequent connections among district administrators and principals within this district (Density = .06). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 8,556 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 513 ties (or 6% of possible ties). The overall reciprocity of the entire leadership team was

.2313. This means that 23% of the existing communication relationships were reciprocated.



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→ = Incoming Tie
← = Outgoing Tie
↔ = Reciprocated Tie

Figure 4. HESD Communication network (How often do you turn to each administrator for information on work related topics...and at what frequency?)

There is a dense web of principal and district office connections in this district as shown by the clusters of blue and red nodes. The E-I index for principals was .51, signifying that principals are externally connected and seek to collaborate with both the central office staff and other principals. On the other hand, the E-I index for the district office administrators is -.35, signifying that district office administrators communicate more within their peer group than with principals at the school sites. These dense

communication ties are triangulated by interview data that describes positive communication in HESD that is built on trust.

Communication. All principals in HESD participate in cohort collaborative teams. Ten out of ten (one hundred percent) of the principals spoke of the frequent conversations and activities they have with their colleagues. "We meet and collaborate around the data to look at instructional time and form intervention groups" (H10). All ten principals spoke positively of the benefits of their cohort experience. "A beneficial piece is that we always meet together in groups of teachers and principals" (H14). "We gain from our experiences by sharing and dialoguing about how we work with individual students" (H2). "Collaboration with our cohorts are really valuable for meeting the demands of our kids" (H6). "Our work with our cohort helps us to bring good teaching practices to the classroom" (H8). "We are given the freedom to pick our other schools that we get to work with, that we have walk throughs and that we have trainings gives us the opportunities to grow. The district gives us resources, but they are the same. We learn from working with our cohort" (H18).

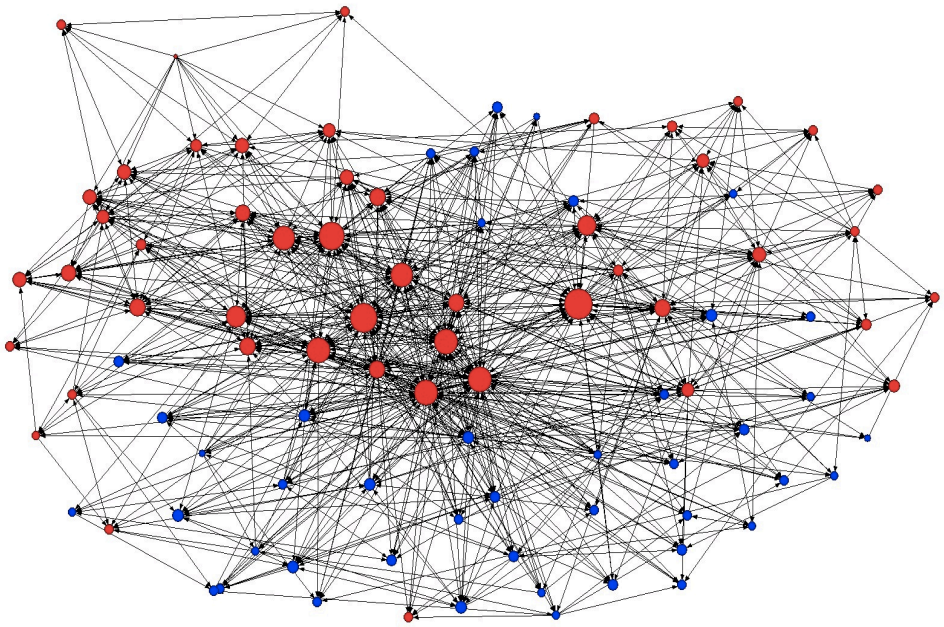
Reflective professional conversations. All principals (ten out of ten) reported that their conversations are focused around ideas or strategies that promote professional growth. These conversations take place with one another and they also take place with district administrators. "I talk with my cohort at least once a week. Through email, we might communicate maybe two or three times a week. We share ideas" (H6). "At the end of the school year, we actually sat down and he said… here's something that I am thinking, here are some things that I'm seeing. So I started to develop that relationship with him and what he saw and hot it could be taken tot the next level" (H10). "I stay

really connected with my executive director. He has his opinions and ideas. I have mine, but I respect and learn from that" (H12).

Trust. Seventy percent of the principals spoke about having trusting relationships with one another. One principal reports out about the trust he has for his peer group, "I have at least four people that I know I can trust implicitly and discuss issues of personnel and get advice. We create these little survivor clusters" (H10). Eighty percent of the principals spoke about the trust that district leaders have on their ability to make decisions for their site. "They allow me to do what I think will work best for students and the school. I did not have to ask anyone's permission to get the programs that I got" (H2). Another principal (H16) spoke about the freedom he has, "I feel there's truly great freedom to take what the district gives you and make it work at your site."

While the first network was specifically focused on communication around work related topics, a somewhat similar pattern arises with the survey question that focuses specifically on collaboration about work. As can be seen in Figure 5, the collaboration network is doubled in density (Density = .12) as the communication network (Density = .06). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 8,556 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 1026 ties (or 12% possible ties). While it is difficult to fully interpret the meaning of this density figure, D = .12 is considered dense because of the limited time in an administrators day for regular collaboration. This data suggests that the leadership at HESD collaborates on a more regular basis than they communicate with each other around work related topics. The overall reciprocity of the entire leadership team was .3639. This means that 36% of the existing collaboration relationships were reciprocated. The reciprocated ties in terms

of collaboration are consistent with the increased density of this network compared to the communication network.



Red Node= Central Office Admin
Blue Node = School Site Admin
→ = Incoming Tie
← = Outgoing Tie
↔ = Reciprocated Tie

Figure 5. HESD Collaboration About Work Network (To whom do you collaborate with about your work…and at what frequency?)

As shown in Figure 5 central office administrators are central in the network as shown by the large red nodes that are internally connected. The E-I index for district office administrators was -.38, signifying that district office administrators collaborate more frequently with their peers. On the other hand, the E-I index for principals is .39, signifying that principals are externally connected and collaborate with district office

administrators as well as with their peers. This finding is similar to the E-I index for the communication network. This pattern is triangulated by interview data that indicate effective collaboration in HESD.

Collaboration. One hundred percent of the site administrators reported that collaboration was a key reason for their school's success in student achievement. "We meet regularly in cohort groups to collaborate on instructional strategies that work with kids. We gain from our experiences by sharing and dialoguing about how we work with students and how we train teachers to effectively teach our students" (H2). The collaboration extends to sharing of professional reads, "We use drop box to share and talk about stuff" (H10). The strong collaborative model between administrators carries over to principals collaborating with teachers at their school site. "It's beneficial that we always meet in groups to collaborate with teachers and principals. We will then split up the groups to meet with like groups; always around the focus" (H14). One principal (H10) describes a process for collaborating, "We collaborate for a couple of hours every week. I meet with the teachers individually three times a year where they bring their data and we talk about students they need to get going with different processes, kids that are not doing well. What else can we do for them?" This same principal reaches outside of the district, "Whenever I have a contact at a different district, people that I trust and respect, I like to ask them what schools would be worthwhile to visit." One principal (H16) discusses the change process at the school site, "We have a process in place where the whole staff agrees on what our areas of deficiency are. If we're going to create a plan of improvement, we have to have some agreement on where we think the holes or gaps

are. The best way to get change is when it is generated from within the staff at the school site."

Culture of collaboration and support. Seventy percent of the principals went on to explain that their collaborative process served as a means to provide support for one another and the success of their schools. " We are given mandates but never given models of what implementation should look like, with our cohort, we support one another with the implementation and supporting one another to make sure it is successful" (H6). "The district supports us by inviting us to participate in cohorts, the cohorts help one another out with professional development" (H8). One principal describes the support as, "the superintendent allows me to do what I think will work best for the students and the school; my cohort allows me to bounce ideas off of them. They provide support and hold me accountable to do what I said I am going to do" (20).

Figure 6 represents perceptions of Innovation around EL strategies. This map is similar to the previous two figures. Like the last two networks, Innovation around EL strategies is also dense (Density = .09). This network measure indicates that out of a possible 8,556 ties between individuals that could occur weekly or bi-monthly, these leaders engaged in 770 ties (or 9% possible ties). The network is less dense than the Collaboration network (Density = 0.12) yet higher in density than the network for Communication Around Work Related Topics (Density = 0.06). This data suggests that the leadership at HESD are collaborating to a high degree and according to the maps, their conversations might revolve more around innovative strategies for EL students than over work related topics. The overall reciprocity for Innovative Strategies for EL Students of the entire leadership team was .1554. This means that 16% of the existing

communication relationships were reciprocated. This is less than that of Communication around Work Related topics (23%) and less than half of that of Collaboration (36%).

Figure 6 shows a dense web of principal connections in this district as shown by the blue clusters that seem to form a circle. Within the dense principal network there are a few key central office staff that play key roles, as noted in the red nodes. The E-I index for principals was -.07 indicating that principals are having more conversations with like peers around English learners. On the other hand, the E-I index for district office

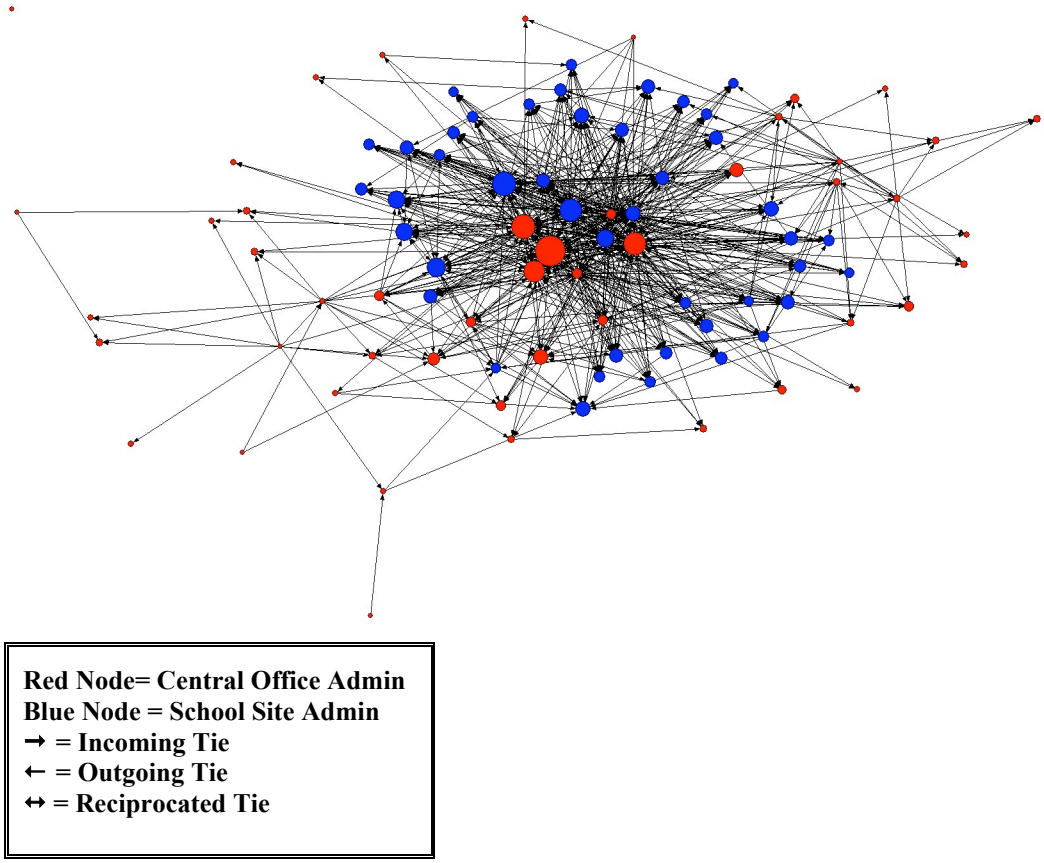


Figure 6. HESD Innovation around EL strategies (How often is this administrator willing to take a risk on innovative ideas around EL strategies… and at what frequency?)

administrators was .06, signifying that district office administrators are more externally connected and are collaborating more frequently with principals as well as with their

peers. This finding is different than the other two network maps. This pattern is triangulated by interview data that indicate effective collaboration in HESD.

Autonomy. Ninety percent of the school principals in HESD expressed a sense of autonomy over instructional programs and resources for English learners. "I am allowed to do what I think will work best for the students and for the school" (H20). "The autonomy of having some control over your professional development program, the instructional program, is really key" (H14). Principals added that they are allowed to select programs or strategies they feel are right for their school. "Allowing individual school sites and individual principals to be creative with some of the things or programs they choose – site based leadership, being very creative with how they see that working with their individual school sites" (H10).

District vision. All HESD principals, one hundred percent, expressed a clear understanding of the district vision and their expectation to attain student success. "One big piece is that we have a vision as a district. This is where we need to go. These are some of the rules that apply. But as far as which path you are going to take to get there, its up to you. There are initiatives that we suggest that we recommend that we think are good for you. How you are going to take those back to your site and do them is completely up to you" (H2). "One of the things that I respected the most and that has allowed me and my group of schools to move forward has been the fact that we have not been so restricted. Even when the district comes up with initiatives that are good, solid, but we don't add those to what were doing at our site" (H12). "We know where we want to go as a district but each of us is allowed to go our heart ways" (H12). One principal expressed a difference in priorities with the district. "I think sometimes where we are

hindered is in the priorities that maybe we feel are set by the district verses the priorities that we might have at our own particular sites" (H6).

Decentralized and highly accountable. Eighty percent of the principals stated that their organizational structure is decentralized. "We are a site based decision making district" (H6). "Our system is very decentralized. Every school is pretty much on their own to make decisions" (14). Although the decentralized structure of BWESD allows for principals to make decisions for what is best for their site there is a high amount of accountability. Principals are clear on the vision and all principals (one hundred percent) spoke of their need to ensure that there is an increase in student achievement. "The district holds schools accountable. There is a constant push to achieve more and more each year" (H8). One principal (H10) reported, "The culture is absolute accountability. Student achievement is first. The mandate is student achievement. That's the mandate I know."

Conclusion Hillsdale Elementary School District

After analyzing the data, several major findings about the principal leadership network in HESD emerged in terms of how actors in the system see the formal and informal organizational structure and how players in the system describe district supports or constraints around the transmission of resources for English language learners: (1) Dense communication ties are grounded in trust and an effective principal communication structure. (2) Dense collaboration ties are grounded a strong collaborative culture that supports professional growth. (3) Dense ties around innovation around English language learner strategies are grounded on a very clear understanding of

the district vision. (4) High accountability for a continuous increase in student achievement challenges site leaders to adapt initiatives and become autonomous. (5) Site administrators support one another through their formal, decentralized structure.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of the study including a statement of the problem, a brief review of methodology, and a summary and discussion of the results. Subsequent sections discuss limitations, conclusions, implications for practice and suggestions for future research.

Statement of the Problem

As stated in chapter 1, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), is the latest federal legislation that has put pressure on schools to increase the number of students scoring proficient on state assessments. It is based on the belief that by setting high standards and establishing measurable goals, we can improve individual outcomes in education. This federal legislation pressures schools by tying federal fund eligibility to student performance. Further, by the year 2014, it is expected that all student subgroups are to score proficient or advanced on state assessments. In order to avoid being labeled as low performing, this has resulted in schools focusing on groups of students that are significant in number. One such group is English language learner. One of the target districts has received sanctions for its English learners consistently failing to meet benchmarks. Performing under this label for an extended period of time has resulted in the sanction of reform to the organization.

Additionally, educational policy has pushed for a more centralized approach where district office leaders make instructional decisions for the entire district as opposed to a decentralized method where school sites are given autonomy to make decisions best

suited to their needs. Early research has identified some important factors that districts need to have for successful reform to take place; however, less attention has been placed on the inner workings of how leaders support teachers or how teachers implement and sustain new district initiatives in their classrooms (Anderson, 2003).

With reform initiatives placed upon districts and schools and the fact that a growing targeted population is not making expected academic gains, there is an escalating need for high quality principals. The growing attention on leadership is helping researchers to understand that strong principals are critical in developing an effective educational program (Hale & Hunter, 2003).

While reform initiatives place the spotlight on principals, they are also attributed to leaders leaving the profession. With reform efforts, the job and duties of the school leader are evolving and growing. Now more than ever, schools need strong leadership. Additionally, Principal burn out has been attributed to a lack of autonomy (Whitaker, 1995).

Reform efforts mandated by the federal government and by the state of California, for schools that do not meet federal benchmark targets, focus on the deficits of districts, schools, educators, and students. Further, these efforts are limiting the decisions principals can make for implementing programs and strategies to meet the community's needs. Examining the strengths in both a centralized and decentralized system allowed me examine optimal organizational conditions that allow site administrators the autonomy to make sound instructional decisions that will support English language learner student performance. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences in district and site leader's perceptions of the formal and informal organizational structures that support English language learners' instruction?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the ways that the districts support or constrain site leaders' abilities to use resources (knowledge, information, and innovation) to improve the academic achievement of English language learners?
3. How do principals perceive policies and practices (centralized/decentralized as supportive of their efforts to implement reform for English language learners?
4. What are the perceptions of site principals about their autonomy to implement best instructional practices for ELLs?

Review of Methodology

The research design of the study was a comparative multiple case study. Leaders of two different districts were interviewed to gain an understanding how they communicate, negotiate and implement reform strategies for English language learners. The ways in which each district's organizational structure affects principals' autonomy was explored.

A mixed methods approach was used in the study to collect a rich and robust array of evidence. Data was collected from: survey data from school and district leaders, interviews with site leaders, document evidence and student achievement data.

Social network analysis. All District and school leaders in the two case districts

were invited to complete an on-line Social Network Analysis survey (see Appendix C). Forty two district and site administrators from BWESD and ninety three district and site administrators from HESD completed the survey on Survey Monkey (Finley, 1999). Completion of the survey signified consent. Each district had at least ninety six percent participation rate. Confidentiality was maintained under a password only known to an external third party (UCSD professor), the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey results will be preserved. The survey was based on a 'bounded' approach to network data (Scott, 2000). A bounded network survey provides the respondents with a list of individuals in their organization - as opposed to relying on participant memory - for them to check the frequency of different types of interactions with colleagues.

The survey measured distinct networks representing relationships associated with enhanced organizational and school performance: English language learner reform strategy collaboration, flow of English language learner reform strategy information, effort recognition, and the ability to innovate and be creative in regards to reform strategies for English language learners (Cross & Parker, 2004; Lin, 2001; Krackhardt, 2001; Mohrman, et al., 2003). Instrumental and expressive relationships were measured, as they are both key for team performance (Lin, 2001). Specifically, participants were asked to quantitatively assess their relationships with each of the other district administrators within their district on a frequency basis ranging from 0 (no interaction) to 4 (1-2 times a week).

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with ten site administrators from each of the districts. Using semi-structured interview protocols (Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1980) (see Appendix E). Administrators from schools with similar demographics were

interviewed for an estimated time of one hour. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, invited to participate, and indicated their consent by signing an IRB consent form. Two colleagues from the JDP program participated in the interview process to diminish potential bias as a result of the researcher's positionality in one of the two districts. Interview questions were designed to gauge the nature of the reform process for English language learners and the ability to innovate and be creative within the system. Participants were asked to describe the process of implementing reform strategies for English language learners at their sites, their routines and resources for professional development planning, their ability to be creative and innovative while implementing reform strategies, as well as their patterns of communication, collaboration and support with district administrators and other site administrators.

Document analysis. Documents examined as part of the study included school plans and assessment data as reported by the CDE (California Department of Education). The documents were triangulated with the findings in both the survey and interviews. In addition, the documents were used to develop an understanding of the formal structure of the district.

Findings

The study resulted in five main findings around communication, collaboration, trust and autonomy. These five concepts summarize the essence of this project and speak directly to the impact of principal autonomy on the achievement of English learner students. The tables below summarize the data from the previous chapter.

Table 3. Social Network Maps Summary

Blue Wave Elementary School District

Communication Around Work Related Topics					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
1722	224 (13%)	.13	.1973 (20%)	.06 ↔	-.14 (With like peers)

Collaboration					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
1722	431 (25%)	.25	.4156 (42%)	-.06 (With like peers)	-.14 (With like peers)

Innovation around ELL					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
1722	293 (17%)	.17	.2275 (23%)	-.06 (With like peers)	.10 ↔

Table 3. Social Network Maps Summary (Continued)

Hillsdale Elementary School District

Communication Around Work Related Topics					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
8556	513 Ties (6%)	.06	.2313 (23%)	.51 ↔	-.35 (With like peers)

Collaboration					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
8556	1026 (12%)	.12	.3639 (36%)	.39 ↔	-.38 (With like peers)

Innovation around ELL					
Possible Ties	**Actual**	**Density**	**Reciprocity**	**E-I Principals**	**E-I Dist. Admin.**
8556	770 (9%)	.09	.1554 (16%)	-.07 (With like peers)	.06 ↔

Table 4. Principal Interviews Summary

Blue Wave Elementary School District		Hillsdale Elementary School District
Communication +50% Communicate with others -40% Needs or constraints Mandates +60% about mandates Trust +40% have trusting relationships -40% lack trust	**Communication**	Communication +100% with cohort, positive cohort experience Reflective professional conversations +100% focused on instructional practices Trust +70% trust of others and supported by others +80% feel trusted by district
Collaboration 100% about ELs 80% about dist. adopted programs 40% lack district Support/ feel constrained	**Collaboration**	Collaboration +100% Key for student success Collaborative support culture +70% support for successful implementation
Autonomy 40% Autonomy over programs and resources Lack of autonomy 90% Lack of autonomy due to mandates Centralization 70% (most negative), (few positive)	**Innovation ELL**	Autonomy +90% over programs and resources +100% Clear understanding of district vision High accountability 100% Understand need to increase achievement Decentralization 80% described the organization as decentralized 100% Understand goal to raise achievement

Taking into account the amount of tasks that administrators must accomplish in one day, both districts have dense ties (see Table 3). The actual number or percentage of ties cannot be compared from one district to another since the size of the districts and number of survey participants is significantly different. If looking at the ties of HESD, it

may appear that they are more dense than BWESD because of the larger number of actors.

Principals balance the challenge of creating a high quality teaching and learning environment and also accommodate those outside pressures that may include demands of the district, state and reporting requirements. This balance is not as evident in BWESD. Site leaders are mostly communicating needs and constraints rather than having the high level of reflective professional conversations or the trust expressed by HESD administrators. Adamowski, Therriault & Cavanna (2007) conclude that principal autonomy can come in the form of allowing site leaders flexibility in their staffing and in their budgets. Further, by facilitating the creation of informal networks and relationships, along with peer support, autonomy increases. This is the case with HESD whose site leaders express a higher level of autonomy and trust.

Murphy and Hallinger's (1986; 1988) work suggests a dynamic tension between district control (centralization) and school autonomy. This was evident in BWESD principal interviews. Principals have a clear understanding that the district's formal structure is centralized as information is disseminated top down. A very low number of principals expressed autonomy over programs and most indicated that they lack autonomy because of the district's requirement that they remain highly focused on the implementation of state and federal mandates. HESD, on the other hand, had a large number of principals stating that the district's formal structure is decentralized and an almost equal amount of site administrators described the autonomy to make decisions on what is best for their particular site. This autonomy was linked to high accountability but a clear understanding that the goal is student achievement and principals are free to take

the path they know will get them there.

In looking at the principal autonomy linked to retention, one principal in HESD was clearly frustrated and reported a lack of autonomy. This principal left the district the year following the interview. A higher number of BWESD principals expressed a lack of autonomy due to mandates. Although those principals remained in the district the following year, many have left to other school districts since.

The district-school relationship is important when discussing school reform (Daly & Finnigan, 2009). The National College of School Leadership's (NCSL) Network Learning Group study (Earl & Katz, 2007) provides evidence that when networks of schools work together, there is an impact on student learning. This was found in HESD where principals collaborate around effective instructional practices wit their cohorts. This formal collaborative leads to principals working with one another and also bringing teachers into this process. Further, they expressed frequent opportunities to communicate with one another and have reflective professional conversations. This might contribute to higher student academic achievement. BWESD principals did not describe a formal structure. About half of the site leaders expressed a need for more time for collaboration at meetings rather than being talked at during their gatherings. They communicate mostly with their site academic coaches or with one another. Their conversations are mostly about mandates.

The network maps around collaboration demonstrated a stark difference between the districts. HESD principals collaborate with one another and they also collaborate reach out to district administrators. BWESD administrators mostly collaborate only with one another. Its site leaders mostly collaborate with one another. In this district, the E-I

index is showing that there is minimal collaboration between the district office and the school sites. Chrispeels, 2004; Honig, 2004; Togneri & Anderson; 2003 found that successful school districts that applied a more systemic approach to reform suggest strategies that would allow for a stronger network connection between the district office and school sites. This is certainly the case for HESD who has a systemic approach for collaboration.

A principal or district leader sharing information with other colleagues focused on a reform initiative is beneficial to organizational learning. Mullen and Kochan (2000) found evidence that participants' perspectives were broadened because they had been exposed to peers with multiple ideas and different strengths. Further, when educators learn about new ideas from someone they trust they are more willing to try them in their classrooms as opposed to using new ideas learned in a professional development session. The notion of trust in an organization is a valuable asset. If team members trust one another, they will not only be more willing to share ideas with their team, but they may also be willing to take more risks and share information with other groups (Chhuon et al., 2008; Daly & Finnigan, 2010). HESD is an example of this since they have a high percentage of communication networks and collaborate on a regular basis they also have almost all principals expressing a sense of autonomy. BWESD has its principals collaborating with one another, however about half of its administrators communicate with others around work related topics and there is a similar percentage trusting others. BWESD created the cohort model that serves as a foundation that facilitates opportunities to collaborate. This collaboration is likely the gateway to establishing trusting relationships, and building social capital.

The quality of social ties between individuals in a social system creates a structure that determines opportunities for social capital transactions and access to resources (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Granovetter, 1982; Lin, 2001; Putnam, 1993). Strong social ties support the transfer of tacit or implied, complex knowledge (Hansen, 1999; Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Strong evidence of this was found in the interview transcripts around communication about work related topics. In the network maps, both districts have dense ties however HESD's principals all described a formal communication structure. In their conversations, they are reflective about instructional practices and have a high level of trust. BWESD, whose conversations are mostly about what they have to do (mandates) have only half of its principals expressing positive communication practices and express a need to have more time to talk and about half do not trust others of feel that they are trusted.

Strong social ties are the basis for an organization to create intellectual capital. Intellectual capital is created through the combination and exchange of knowledge in a group setting leading to new knowledge and action (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2010; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In order for groups to create intellectual capital there must be opportunities for valuable and rich interaction, people must be motivated to participate, and the new knowledge or information must be synthesized and used (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The notion of social capital lies in the opportunities individuals have to collaborate with others based on trust, a flow of information within the organization as well as structures and norms that facilitate information exchange. Both organizations have a structure for collaboration. In HESD principals are reaching out to and are being reached out to by district office administrators. BWESD

administrators work in isolation from their cross group peers. Further, that they communicate about might lead to higher intellectual capital. BWED principals are working on implementing mandates whereas HESD are working on raising student achievement.

Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest several important conclusions. First, significant to this study is that the informal organizational structures are more significant in the support instruction for English language learners. It is not necessarily how information is disseminated but instead the message that is given from the district office. Although the decentralized district has made most significant gains, it may not necessarily be due to how information is disseminated but what is actually communicated. The central office in the decentralized district clearly articulated the vision of student achievement. Site leaders in the centralized district focused on the mandates. Because the vision in the centralized district was not clearly stated, the mandates imposed on the district, became the vision. The decentralized district provided a clear understanding of what must be accomplished and the levels of support have resulted in formal collaborative teams that meet on a regular basis. The teams meet on how to get to the goal and they are not only problem solving and planning instructional strategies but also developing a strong collaborative network structure. These networks in turn lead to the development of trusting relationships that can create intellectual capital in educators.

Second, is that HESD has high levels of accountability. Principals all expressed

knowing the goal and further a sense of urgency to attain the goal due to accountability reports due to the board, district administrators and principal colleagues. A process of visiting one another, setting goals and holding one another accountable for attaining the goals is the norm. Further, it was noted in School Site Plans that student programs are reviewed closely each year. Those programs that do not provide acceptable results are eliminated or no longer continued. BWESD principal interview responses around accountability were mostly about how to implement programs or the effectiveness of implementing a program and not the student success from utilizing a particular program or intervention.

Third is that central offices provide support or constrain site leaders with how collaboration takes place and with the vision that is provided. The district office with the vision for student achievement stated the vision, made sure everyone understood it and provided support with formal collaborative structures. Central office administrators also encouraged site administrators to make decisions on programs and strategies that best supported their site. Central office administrators in the centralized district constrained the decision making process when the slew of mandates became what they mostly collaborated about. This practice resulted in site administrators lacking autonomy and feeling constrained to make decisions. Further, student achievement was found to be higher when social interactions were found to go from site leaders to district administrators and from district administrators to site leaders. The district with the lower student achievement had site leaders collaborating with other site leaders and district office administrators only collaborating with like peers. Suggesting that the flow of knowledge and information might get stagnant when actors are only collaborating with

job a like peers.

The fourth finding is that policies and practices that present themselves as mandates can constrain efforts to implement reform for English language learners. Site leaders from the centralized district were mostly told what to do and how to do it. A lower number of site leaders in this district reported feeling autonomous and trust. A much higher number of leaders from the decentralized district reported a sense of autonomy and trust. These principals reported participating in reflective professional conversations with peers. One can infer that these frequent reflective professional conversations might result in higher student performance.

The final finding is that principals who collaborate on a regular basis, feel trusted and have autonomy over decisions of what is best for students can make a positive impact on the achievement of English language learners.

Limitations and Challenges

This research study is valuable in generating descriptions of how reform strategies are communicated and implemented across two districts and proving the methodological and theoretical use of distributed leadership and social network theories. However, there are a number of factors that limit the scope and generalizability of this study including: limited context and sample size, researcher positionality, and temporal concerns.

Regarding sample size and context, although both case designs provided important theoretical and practical insights, it is a multiple case study of two school districts, which limits the generalizability of its findings. In terms of context, individual

pieces of data were collected from two districts. The pieces were viewed in isolation of other documents that may have better supported or explained their purpose. Although HESD is a neighboring district the percentage of the district's Title 1 population is significantly less than that of BWESD. To allow greater generalizibility, I interviewed site leaders of schools at HESD that have similar populations to the ten schools in BWESD. Furthermore, limitations to the qualitative data might arise from the impossibility to interview all possible candidates. This may have lead to some sample bias since district administrators interview data was not collected, analyzed, or reported.

Another limitation of the study involved temporal concerns. The study represented both a point in time for data collection as well as the particular developmental phase of the implementation of the reform strategies studied. Hence, findings may not have been generalizable to all phases of implementation. In addition, natural changes in leadership occur in schools and districts, at the point when interviews were taking place, HESD was interviewing a new superintendent. BWESD was going through some administrative changes at the school site levels as well as at the central office. Changes in leadership could result in a change of how reform strategies are communicated and implemented.

Positionality. The final delimiter of the study was related to the positionality of the researcher. As the researcher was an administrator in one of the school districts, there is the possibility that teachers and other interviewees may have somehow considered the interviews evaluative. To mitigate this, other members of the JDP program will be interviewing participants. It should be noted however that the researcher's positionality included advantages for the proposed research. The relationship between the researcher,

the principals and the teachers allowed for complete access to all sources of data along with the time and resources that this represented for the districts.

The potential effects of the researcher's position on data collection and analysis was addressed in a number of ways. All interviewees were expressly informed about the exploratory character of this study which was not to seek to answer if the way the district implements reform strategies for English language learners works or not, nor to evaluate teachers in any capacity, but instead to find out the form and context of school and district collaborative relationships. The role that Dr. Alice Quiocho, Dr. Alan Daly, Dr. Carolyn Hofstetter, and Dr. Carol Van Vooren, committee members of this study, was extremely important in this regard. Their position as researchers and university professors in the initial presentation of the project to the districts was essential in reinforcing the independent nature of the researcher and the data collection processes potentially leading to openness on the side of participants. In addition, participants were informed of the extreme steps taken by the researcher to ensure complete confidentiality by creating a coding system for respondents and restricting access to data collected.

Attention to the aforementioned delimiters was critical in the way data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Yin (2003) describes the enhancement of construct validity and trustworthiness of the study to be associated with using multiple sources of evidence and establishing a chain of evidence, which was outlined in the methods section of this study. In order to address delimiters around data bias in this study, the researcher had other scholars, familiar with the work, also review the data. Furthermore, two members of the JDP program interviewed participants to ensure trustworthiness and anonymity. Careful triangulation of SNA, interview, observation and document review

data was also critical for uncovering any possible biases and to report consistent findings. This process met the requirements noted by Yin (2003) and allowed the reader to trace the research process, "from the conclusions back to the initial research questions or from the questions to the conclusions" (p. 105). The objective of this work was to ensure well-documented procedures that will enable others to replicate the study.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

There is a need for dialogue about how to facilitate site leaders to engage in more open discussions about how to best meet the needs of English language learners. The facilitation of this process needs to come from district leaders that will demonstrate trust in their site leaders. Trust, being paired with opportunities to communicate with others about reflective, professional conversations can be then linked to positive student achievement outcomes.

An implication for practice from this conclusion is that districts need to provide a clearly articulated vision and commit to building structures where site leaders can build upon their communication network structure that can result in intellectual capital.

This work suggests the need for a more interconnected network approach to reform efforts (Fullan, 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; McLauglin & Talbert, 2003). This approach requires district and site leaders to think systemically about school sites and see school districts in terms of their interdependent parts.

These strategies should consider the development of formal and informal social relationships in building increased collaboration between district office and school sites (McLauglin & Talbert, 2003), increasing communication between both entities (Agullard

& Goughnour, 2006), distributing leadership across the greater system (Spillane, 2006), and providing opportunities for input on district decision-making (Brazer & Keller, 2008). Daly & Finnigan (2009) suggest that districts should invest in the development of informal social relations as well as creating formal structures for district leaders and school leaders to connect.

The notion of trust in an organization is a valuable asset. If team members trust one another, they will not only be more willing to share ideas with their team, but they may also be willing to take more risks and share information with other groups (Chhuon et al., 2008; Daly & Finnigan, 2010). If a district creates structures that allow for more opportunities to collaborate, people may be more likely to establish trusting relationships, and build social capital which has the possibility of leading to intellectual capital.

Implications for Future Research

Several areas for further research emerged from this study. First, it would be valuable to conduct other studies in similar districts. Similar size districts might allow for measures such as density to be compared across organizations.

Second, as more and more schools and districts fall into program improvement status, it is important to examine specific strategies or approaches that might result in higher academic success. In a study found particular practices that help to make a school district successful. A more focused study would look at the conversations that take place or the strategies that are being implemented daily in classrooms.

Third, add to the sparse literature around autonomy of principals. The research on this topic has been mainly about principals leaving the field. Currently the literature

exploring principal autonomy is extremely limited in the area of education. There is a need to have more published articles around the topic of principal autonomy and how that might impact student achievement. Understanding conditions that increase principal autonomy might help in is area.

Summary

In this cross case study, different tools were used to determine what could make a positive impact on the success of English language learners in two districts. The social network maps, principal interviews and document analysis enriched my understanding of the importance of interdependent school to school and central office to school relationships.

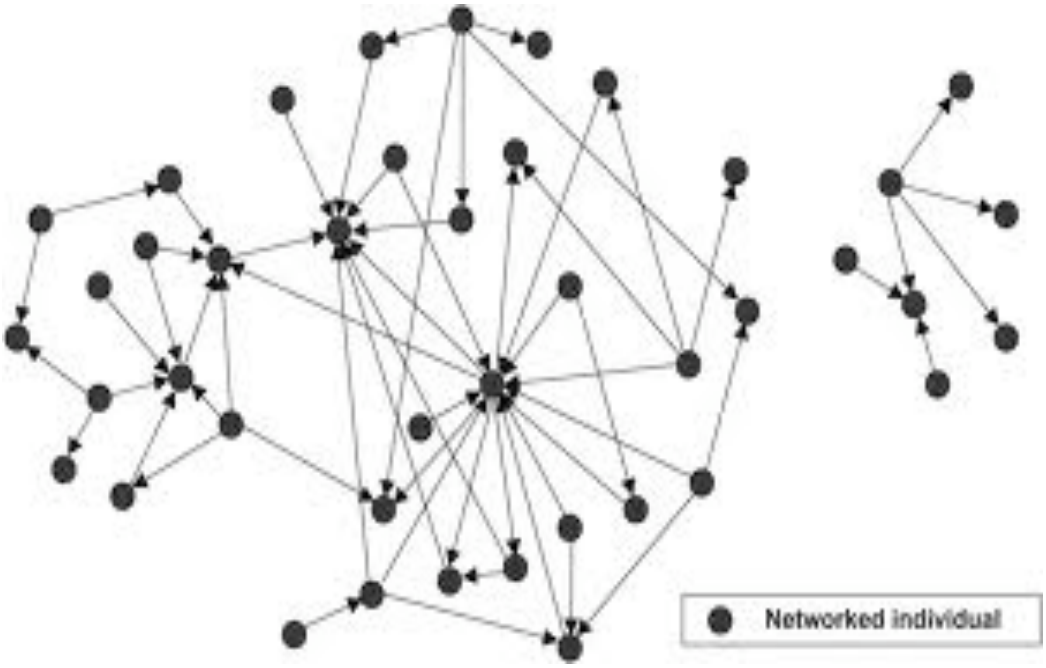
Based in this in depth research of the two case districts, I am suggest the following for districts that are looking to make a stronger impact on the significant subgroup of English language learners: (1) Begin the school year with a survey that will give information of what works well, what to work on and even determine if there is a need to revise the vision/goals for the district. (2) Ensure that there is clear communication and that communication flow in all directions. Principals to principals and principal to central office administrators as well as central office to school sites. (3) Formalize the communication structure such that the site administrators are clustered or put into cohorts for the purpose of collaborating about instructional needs/topics and resources. This cohort or team would benefit from being associated with or working with a central office administrator that will provide guidance throughout the year. (4) Provide time and a structure for frequent collaborative meetings to discuss, plan and check on

progress. These meetings must be guided by the district's vision. With this, facilitate conversations regarding ways to meet student needs.

By looking at two districts, one that is making great academic progress and one that has not made the desired gains, there was an opportunity to make a close side by side examination of differences in the two districts that are making a positive impact on achievement. Without this close comparison, there might just be a list of factors or elements that might make a difference. One example being the cohort model. Principals at HESD are clustered in cohorts. Principals in BWESD are also clustered. Blue Wave's teams are clustered in data teams. One might think that both have site leaders collaborating and working with their team. After close examination, interview transcripts offer more information. This information provides that BWED's cohorts are guided by a central office administrator, meet on a regular basis, talk about topics that impact student achievement and hold one another accountable. These elements are not present in BWED's data team model.

This study communicates to all other struggling districts those elements that are working well and making a positive impact in the achievement of English language learners. HESD has many factors that are not found in BWESD. What is working in BWESD, must be replicated at HESD.

Appendix A. Social Network Map



KEY

○ = node

→ = **tie**

Appendix B. Student Achievement Data – Comparison Of Two Study Districts

Percent Proficient or Advanced on the CST in English Language Arts and Math:

Comparison of 2004 and 2009

English Language Arts Comparison				
Groups	**2004**		**2009**	
	BWESD	**HESD**	**BWESD**	**HESD**
District-wide	25%	37%	43%	62%
Hispanic or Latino	19%	27%	39%	55%
White	44%	55%	62%	75%
SED	19%	22%	38%	48%
English Learners	5%	20%	19%	47%
SWD	5%	13%	22%	40%

Mathematics Comparison				
Groups	**2004**		**2009**	
	BWESD	**HESD**	**BWESD**	**HESD**
District-wide	36%	44%	55%	68%
Hispanic or Latino	31%	36%	51%	63%
White	50%	60%	69%	79%
SED	30%	30%	51%	59%
English Learners	19%	31%	40%	60%
SWD	11%	17%	34%	44%

Appendix C. Trust, Innovation, Organizational Learning Scale

Innovation Scale

Principals/District Administrators are continuously learning and seeking new ideas
Principals/District Administrators are generally willing to try new ideas
Principals/District Administrators are constantly trying to improve their leadership
Principals/District Administrators have a positive 'can-do' attitude
Principals/District Administrators are willing to take risks to make the district better
Principals/District Administrators are encouraged to 'stretch and grow'
Principals/District Administrators are continuously developing new approaches to support instruction?

Organizational Learning Scale

MESD/BWESD administrators serve as a resource for one another
MESD/BWESD experiments with new ways of thinking.
MESD/BWESD has a formal process for evaluating programs or practices.
MESD/BWESD rarely examines common instructional practices.
MESD/BWESD frequently discusses the theory behind instructional practice.
MESD/BWESD values authentic professional development.
MESD/BWESD time is made available for education/training activities for school staff.
MESD/BWESD has forums for sharing information among staff

Trust Scale

Administrators typically support each other.
Even in difficult situations, administrators can depend on each other.
Administrators trust each other.
Administrators are open with each other.
Administrators have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.
Administrators are suspicious of each other.
When administrators tell you something you can believe it.
Site administrators do their jobs well.
ESSC/Central Office administrators do their jobs well.

Appendix D. Informed Consent For Individual Interview

California State University
SAN MARCOS

College of Education California State University San Marcos San Marcos, CA

92096-0001

Informed Consent

Implementing Innovative Strategies for English Language Learners: Principal Autonomy and Innovation

Invitation to Participate

Patricia Valdivia, a graduate student in the joint doctoral program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is conducting a study that explores ways that principals might implement innovative programs, strategies or practices to meet the needs of English language learners.

As a site principal or district leader, you can provide insight on how principals implement effective strategies for English language learners in their schools.

Description of Procedures and Risks

The conversational style individual interview will take place in your office and should last no more than one hour. You will be asked twelve to thirteen questions about your experience implementing innovative strategies or programs at your site or district. With your permission, the interview will be recorded for the purpose of capturing your full response. All interviews will be scheduled and completed during the month January 2011.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. The questions were crafted to gather information that will inform the educational community about how current reform strategies have affected principal autonomy when implementing innovative programs and strategies to enhance learning opportunities for English language learners. As passionate educators, we can at times, become emotionally involved in our work. This could possibly result in strong reactions or feelings when answering questions. Secondly, should participants choose to share their responses with others, this might result in dissemination of confidential information.

To eliminate or further minimize the risks, you will be interviewed by a researcher

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92096-0001

not affiliated with your school district. Your responses will be recorded and coded by number rather than by your name. This will safeguard your responses to ensure that they are kept confidential by the researchers. During the interview, you have the option of not responding or skipping questions.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate.

Benefits

Although your participation will yield minimal or no direct benefits to you, we believe that the study will add to the literature on educational leadership and will positively affect learning opportunities for English language learners.

Questions/Contact Information

This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Isabel Patricia Valdivia by phone or e-mail: pvaldivia@sbusd.k12.ca.us , (619)425-9626, or her committee chairperson, Dr. Alice Quiocho, aquiocho@csusm.edu , (760)750-4035. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

□ I agree to participate in this research study.

□ I agree to have the interview recorded.

_____ _____

Participant's Name Date

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature

Appendix E. Interview Protocol Questions For Principals

Interview Questions for Site Administrators

1. HESD/BWESD has made an impact by significantly increasing student achievement over the past five years.
    a. What does the district do that you think may be contributing to this positive student achievement?
    b. What do you do at your school to contribute to increasing student achievement?

2. Are there things you feel need to be changed at the district that would contribute to positive growth?
    a. Are there things that need to be changed at your school that would contribute to increased positive growth?

3. You may or may not be familiar with other districts' practices, but do you think there are any unique things being done at HESD/BWESD that may help to explain the positive achievement trend?

4. Is there anything that the district mandates or requires schools to do that you think has contributed to your school's student achievement goals?
    a. Are there any mandates that get in the way?

5. What kind of decisions (autonomy) has the district delegated to schools?
    a. What kinds of things do you get to decide that has contributed to your school's development and to student achievement?

6. In trying to accomplish goals/improve achievement for students, whom do you turn to for support?
    a. Is there anyone in your cohort you turn to for support?
    b. Is there anyone in the district office you turn to for support?

7. Some reports have indicated that schools find it hard to be innovative under NCLB. In the last couple of years can you describe a time in which you feel you

and your school implemented an innovation or took a creative risk that you think paid off for students.

a. What did you do?
b. Who was involved?
c. Who supported you from the district? School sites?
d. What was the outcome?
e. How did you feel? Your faculty feel?
f. What could be done to have more innovative moments like that one?

8. Have you done anything innovative in meeting the needs of English learners?
    a. Tell me about the process?
    b. How did you know it was successful?

9. Is the process you used in implementing this innovation typical of how change happens in your school?
    a. If not, tell me how it typically happens.
    b. Is there anything else about the process you'd like to add?

10. What can the district do to encourage innovation?

11. District and schools all over the state are struggling to meet the needs of English learners, are there supports/practices in this school that you think have really made a difference?
    a. What about District practices that have helped ELs
    b. How did you know it was successful?

12. Is the process you used in implementing this innovation typical of how change happens in your school?
    a. If not, tell me how it typically happens.
    b. Is there anything else about the process you'd like to add?

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