Pay-for-Performance and a Decade of Reform: Changes in Principal Roles with the Rise of the Peer Coach

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Pay-for-Performance and a Decade of Reform:
Changes in Principal Roles with the Rise of the Peer Coach

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By
Renee Brandner

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
2016
Pay-for-Performance and a Decade of Reform:
Changes in Principal Roles with the Rise of the Peer Coach

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality.
We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

Dissertation Committee

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March 3, 2016

Final Approval Date
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ABSTRACT

I conducted a phenomenological study to determine how the Minnesota merit pay bill Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q-Comp) affected the roles and responsibilities of principals. I reviewed scholarly literature regarding changes in the historical role of principals and fluctuations in educational pay-for-performance plans since the 20th century. I examined supervision responsibilities of principals and similarities in the role of the peer coach. Analytical theories, including Fullan’s (2007) change theory and Bolman and Deal’s (2013) multi-frame thinking, added to the conceptual framework of the study. In-depth interviews with principals with experience in their roles both prior to and during the implementation of Q-Comp revealed initial uncertainty and subsequent adjustments to changes in the evaluation of tenured teachers, including collaboration with peer coaches in a shared leadership role. Principals also shared their perceptions of the impact peer coaches had on the roles and responsibilities of their positions over the course of ten years. The data revealed four factors representing changes in principals’ roles due to the implementation of Q-Comp: (a) supporting and evaluating tenured teachers, (b) addressing concerns regarding poorly performing tenured teachers, (c) maintaining oversight of school culture, and (d) improving the quality of learning and teaching through collaborative efforts with teachers and peer coaches. Based on the findings, my recommendations focus on the need for principals to (a) adapt to change and develop new symbols to represent the culture of the school, (b) recognize peer coaches as instructional leaders, (c) maximize the leadership role of principals, and (d) improve school culture through growing professionalism.

Keywords: merit pay, commitment, teachers, professional development, principals’ roles
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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

My first experiences observing effective teachers began when I was a junior high school student. Although my purpose in the classroom was to learn, not to judge the performances of my instructors, I soon recognized effective teachers by the way I responded to them as a student. These teachers motivated me to learn the content and think critically about the topics.

Later, when I served as a classroom teacher in a junior high school, I recognized the value of collaborating with other teachers. Effective teachers made good colleagues because they shared views, brainstormed ideas, offered feedback, and reflected on lessons. My collaboration with them influenced my instruction because I valued their thoughts and improved.

Now, I serve as the principal of a junior high school in a suburban district, and in my leadership capacity I have yet another view of tenured teachers and instruction. Over the past 11 years I have supervised teachers frequently through formal and informal class observations. I evaluate their performances to determine whether teachers meet standards based on several criteria, and, using those evaluations, I make employment decisions affecting their careers.

Evaluating teacher performance is a primary responsibility of school leaders. One challenge in my role concerns establishing conditions to ensure professional growth and instructional improvement. In 2005, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill titled Compensation for Quality Teaching (Q-Comp; Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). Q-Comp was a voluntary program with various requirements individual school districts could weave together into a proposal. Q-Comp was an effort to improve school-wide achievement by putting in place a system in which administration evaluated teachers based on multiple criteria (Minnesota Department of Education, 2005). The premise was schools could have the greatest impact on student achievement by having effective instructors (Marzano & Toth, 2013).
Q-Comp required districts to submit a proposal including three factors: adjusted teacher pay schedules, a list of requirements for professional development in order to earn merit pay, and teacher career ladder positions (Minnesota Department of Education, 2005). The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) presented school districts with an example of a title for the teacher ladder position: peer coach (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). Peer coaches set and evaluated goals with teachers, conducted pre- and post-observation conferences with teachers, and evaluated classroom teachers via observation. Q-Comp motivated school districts to write local plans because upon the plan’s approval, the MDE awarded the districts additional funding to compensate teachers for meeting measurable improvement goals (Minnesota Department of Education, 2005).

Prior to Q-Comp, many school districts had established policies regarding annual performance reviews for tenured teachers. I learned about the policy in my district from a co-worker when I took my first administrative position. He also told me none of the principals ever conducted these reviews. Shamefully, we continued to ignore tenured teacher observations, although we did evaluate probationary teachers three times per year as required under the state statute (Employment; Contracts; Termination, Minn. Stat. § 122A.40, 2014).

After Q-Comp became available, my district was an early adopter of the program. Q-Comp brought about changes for tenured teachers by formalizing the role of instructional or peer coaches as qualified observers of teacher performance during some part of a teacher’s career. This change in practice influenced the role of principals in several ways.

After an initial period of implementing Q-Comp, I started to consider how it affected principals, and the potential consequences of this new program on my authority and ability to make decisions based on the performance of tenured teachers. Traditionally, the supervision of
tenured teachers was solely the responsibility of principals. For example, in a graduate level administrative program, faculty trained me in the techniques of conducting teacher observations to prepare me to evaluate teacher performance in the classroom. Instead of reducing my duties, the onset of Q-Comp necessitated additional training, provided by my district. Principals took a refresher course in teacher observation and shared with peer coaches the information they learned, giving peer coaches a mini-course on how to conduct a clinical observation of teaching.

Once the Q-Comp initiative started, I began to realize parallel elements in my position as a principal and the roles of peer coaches. In my district, a peer coach observed tenured teachers and conducted goal-setting sessions to establish improvement goals with teachers. Peer coaches’ responsibilities, like mine, also involved holding pre-observation and post-observation conferences with teachers to discuss the results of a classroom observation. Peer coaches collected and analyzed data about how a teacher’s performance compared to the teacher evaluation criteria established by the district. Our school stored the documents created by the peer coach reviews in the district office, but not in personnel files.

I had many concerns and questions about Q-Comp early on, including how the data gathered by peer coaches might affect employee performance reviews written by the principal. I was also concerned how peer coach involvement might affect the quality of instruction in the school. I wondered whether peer observation data would deliver honest and sometimes critical feedback needed by a principal who had the ultimate authority to evaluate teacher performance. Would the data gathered by peer coaches jeopardize my authority as a principal to make employment decisions concerning underperforming teachers? What if the documents obtained from a peer coach observation contradicted my data regarding unsatisfactory teacher performance? I believed I maintained authority for employee ratings, but I wondered whether a
teacher could challenge my recommendations by using contradictory data collected during a peer coach’s observation. Some of my concerns involved the narrow focus of performance reviews, and the potential to mask unsatisfactory performance with a favorable rating in order to qualify for merit pay.

Peer coaches met with tenured teachers several times each year and I wondered what influence they might have on teachers’ performances. I hoped the peer coach’s direction aligned with the school and district vision. In addition, the district Q-Comp plan restricted communication between the principal and the peer coach. The only communication exchange allowed was about the structure of Q-Comp, not the actual results of the observations. Q-Comp strictly forbade conversations about teachers, data, or trends. In the early years, I had limited access to the results of the peer coach’s performance reviews or information about how the peer coach functioned. After peer coaches took over the role of observing tenured teachers on “low cycle” (two or three years in a row), my duties changed. Although I still possessed the authority to visit classrooms and conduct observations of tenured teachers, the teachers viewed this activity as redundant. I also had more work to do to meet district requirements for performing teacher reviews on “high cycle” (once every three or four years).

Although Q-Comp seemed to be about teacher performance, I noticed my roles and responsibilities as a principal were changing. To gain a better understanding of how Q-Comp affected principals, and their perspectives on the changes in their roles and duties, I decided to conduct a study on how principals perceived changes in their roles after the implementation of the peer coach model in districts that adopted Q-Comp. My study concerns a change effort covering nearly a decade after the passage of the law pertaining to Q-Comp.
Statement of the Problem, Purpose, and Significance

Since the 1980s, school districts have been under increasing pressure to improve schools and earn back public trust (Marzano & Toth, 2013). One of the key factors identified as a means for achieving progress is having high-performing teachers. Teachers are the most influential element in the process of student instruction (Hattie, 2012). To emphasize teacher performance and increased accountability for student achievement results, in 2005 the State of Minnesota developed the Q-Comp incentive pay program. The purpose of my study was to learn how this new program introducing greater accountability for the observation of tenured teachers, and the introduction of a peer coaching model, affected principals’ roles and authority. I also conducted my study in an effort to understand how the new system affected principals and teachers based on the principals’ perceptions of implementing a major change. I designed my study to determine how a significant change, like Q-Comp, affected a school based on the principals’ perceptions of the change.

I investigated the important roles principals play as instructional leaders. An instructional leader facilitates growth for teachers. Quality instruction is the most important factor in improving student learning, but leadership is the second most important factor (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). Principals are essential because they are key instructional leaders who influence teachers’ classroom instruction and student achievement (Connelly, n.d.).

Principal leadership is nearly as important as the quality of instruction with respect to the impact schools have on student achievement (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013). The role of the principal includes the authority to supervise teachers, but what dynamic changes occur when others are involved in leadership? For example, Q-Comp
introduced the peer coach position to many schools. The purpose of most coaching is to improve students’ educational achievements by improving the quality of teacher instruction in the classroom (Knight, 2009). As a result of peer coaching, the circumstances in which a principal was the sole instructional leader changed. Legislative leaders had to consider the ineffectiveness of administrative control and give merit to the importance of involving other stakeholders in the process (Derrington, 2011). Principals also needed to learn about and understand the role of the peer coach and determine the impact these coaches had on their roles as principals. According to Knight (2009), both the principal and the peer coach need to work constantly toward that goal of improving instruction. The principal and the peer coach both have roles in the classroom and with teachers. The role of the principal “has come to mean not the management of instruction but the management of the structures and processes around instruction” (Elmore, 2000, p. 6).

My study is significant because it examined how an externally mandated reform, Q-Comp, manifested in schools. I investigated the changing roles of principals caused by the addition of the peer-coaching model and the challenges principals faced supervising tenured teachers for continuous instructional development. I chose a qualitative method of research to understand fully the perspectives of the principals given the changes resulting from Q-Comp. The study results gave insight into the lived experiences of principals and the perceived impact Q-Comp had on their schools.

**Research Question**

How do principals experience and make meaning of the changes in their supervisory roles, responsibilities, and authority after the implementation of a new program featuring pay-for-performance involving tenured teachers and the addition of a peer coach to conduct teacher observations?
Definition of Terms

I provided definitions of the following terms for the purposes of this study:

**Teacher professionalism:** teacher instruction and skill reflecting a high standard of practice while adapting to new technologies, supporting other colleagues, and sharing expertise (General Teaching Council, as cited in Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005).

**Principal authority:** the support and influence of a school principal to facilitate an effective evaluation process with a classroom teacher (Derrington, 2011).

**Career ladder:** salary schedule in which teachers’ earnings increase as they acquire more educational credits and years of experience (Chait, 2007).

**Dismissal:** termination of a tenured teacher’s contract substantiated by several sources of demonstrated failure in addition to other legal grounds for dismissal, such as neglect of duty, unbecoming conduct, and other good and just cause (Ellis, 1984).

**Incompetent teaching:** "lacking the requisite or adequate abilities, capacities, or qualities needed to reach a reasonable set of standards" (Lexington Public Schools, as cited in Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000, p. 7).

**Mediocre teaching:** "inefficient in the context of teacher performance means not producing the effect intended or desired within a reasonable period of time whether or not the teacher has knowledge or capability” (Lexington Public Schools, as cited in Platt et al., 2000, p. 7).

**Pay for performance** (also called merit pay): a financial incentive offered to teachers based on performance related to student achievement (Springer & Gardner, 2010).
**Peer review, peer evaluation, or peer assessment:** a procedure in which one teacher visits another teacher’s classroom and judges the instructor’s performance (Van Note Chism, 1999).

**Performance-based compensation:** incentives directed at specific teacher behaviors, such as participating in training, working in underperforming schools, or mentoring other teachers. The teacher behaviors recognized relate to school or district goals, or actions generally believed to support better student outcomes (Gratz, 2010).

**Teacher performance measure:** Federal government plan used to judge teacher performance based on student test scores (Gratz, 2010).

**Dissertation Overview**

This chapter began with an introduction of the topic and an explanation of how I became interested in studying it. The chapter also contains: (a) an overview of the research topic, (b) the research question, and (c) definitions of terms. The second chapter is a scholarly review of literature organized into categories including teacher effectiveness, teacher evaluation and compensation, performance pay plans, and administrative responses to ineffective teaching.

In the third chapter, I explain my research methodology. I explain why I selected phenomenology, an approach within the qualitative tradition (Creswell, 2012). I include participant selection, data collection and analysis, as well as ethical guidelines. I also examine the reliability and validity of the study.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters reveal the data collected during the study. Chapter Four contains descriptions of principals’ practices prior to Q-Comp and the changes resulting from Q-Comp implementation. I use Chapter Five to explore how principals redefined their
roles and duties due to the addition of peer or instructional coaches. In Chapter Six, I describe the evolution of the peer coach position and how it affected principals’ roles within the school.

In Chapter Seven, I analyze and interpret the data by developing themes and comparing them to current educational theory. Last, in Chapter Eight, I summarize my findings and develop conclusions for educational leaders and recommendations for future researchers.
CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review contains descriptions and analyses of existing scholarly literature related to the changing roles and responsibilities of principals. The experiences of principals changed when a new performance pay initiative that included the creation of a peer coaching position became part of the educational landscape. I reviewed literature describing historical and current practices related to several broad themes associated with my study; I also explored existing theoretical frameworks. I researched both qualitative and quantitative studies as they relate to performance pay plans, specifically Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q-Comp) in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). I organized review findings into three themes: (a) the changing roles and responsibilities of principals in an era of increased accountability for student achievement; (b) the history and context related to pay-for-performance, or merit pay, for teachers; and (c) the role of peer coaches in providing professional development and conducting teacher performance reviews. My theoretical overview begins with a description of Fullan’s (2007) theories of change, followed by Bolman and Deals’ (2013) multi-frame thinking and Glickman, Gordon, and Gordon-Ross’s (2009) theories of developmental supervision.

The Changing Roles and Responsibilities of Principals

I reviewed literature on changes in principal roles and responsibilities, selecting studies most closely aligned with my research question. I divided changing roles and responsibilities of principals into three areas: traditional roles and responsibilities of principals, principals as instructional leaders of teachers, and principals as evaluators and supervisors of teachers. I divided studies regarding the duties of teacher supervision into two categories: historical and
contemporary views of the practice. Finally, I addressed the principal’s responsibility to define the parameters of, and delineate between, high-quality and low-quality teaching.

**Traditional Leadership and Managerial Role of the Principal**

The role of principal originated at the classroom level, and was almost entirely absent in scholarly literature prior to the early 19th century (Rousmaniere, 2007). At the start of the 19th century, principals often were simply lead teachers primarily assigned to conduct classroom instruction (Rousmaniere, 2007) and performed little or no administrative duties. Principals at this time, especially in rural districts, functioned as both teachers and administrators. The 19th century marked the beginning of the evolution of the modern day principal. By the mid-1930s, the role of principal began to reflect the familiar role played by principals today (Goodykoontz & Lane, as cited in Rousmaniere, 2007). During the 1930s, 70% of elementary principals did not have any teaching responsibilities. Rather, they took responsibility for upholding school routines and systems.

The role of the principal in the 1940s was similar to that of a factory middle manager who brought the authority of the central office to the “shop floor” or classroom (Rousmaniere, 2007). The district administration supplied principals with offices suitable for the execution of paperwork and other tasks delegated to them by the district office. However, by the 1940s, principals became targets of criticism. Critics lamented principals spent too much time in their offices when they should have been managing instruction in classrooms (Rousmaniere, 2007). While researchers noted this tension between the principal’s duties as an authority figure or a classroom instruction manager, I found no succinct list of principals’ responsibilities during the 1940s.
The role of the principal from 1950–1980 developed with ideals of management in mind (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Hoerr (2008) noted principals performed many duties, whether delegated or not, in areas of school safety, cleanliness, athletics, student discipline, parent relationships, and personnel. The public viewed principals as school managers who used power to enforce policies and routines (Alvoid & Black, 2014). Forces began pulling principals in different directions in the middle of the 20th century. Some criticized principals for managing daily agendas rather than performing work as educational engineers (Krug, 1965). Yet, typically, central office staff evaluated principals on the efficiency of their routines using that as the criteria for performance (Krug, 1965).

By 2000, the role of principals underwent another significant change. Principals’ roles as instructional leaders moved to the forefront (Alvoid & Black, 2014) as principals played a strong role in molding teachers’ performances and instruction. Previously, principals used quantitative measures to describe teacher performance; however, principals’ new roles included ensuring the professional growth of teachers in relationship to student achievement outcomes (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Principals must now be competent in understanding student achievement data, curricula, and the craft of developing human capital (Alvoid & Black, 2014).

Over the last 100 years, principal roles changed from the role of “head” teacher with extra duties to managers of people and resources, and now to instructional leaders.

**Principal as Instructional Leader**

Over the past 20 years, the field of education has changed more than ever before (Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011; Marzano & Toth, 2013). Federal and state initiatives created changes directly affecting teachers and principals (Marzano & Toth, 2013). Today, the criteria for principals’ success include elements other than management. Principals now
implement policies in a useful and relevant way for teacher development and growth (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Park & Datnow, 2009; Spillane et al., 2002). The contemporary role of principals is not only to evaluate teachers, but also to assist in the development of teacher instructional growth. The role of the principal in the 21st century includes increasing demands and expectations (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Leithwood, Strauss, & Anderson, 2007).

One factor affecting the role of principals concerns legislative action mandating both an increase in teacher accountability and development of teacher supervision models (Cosner, Kimball, Barkowski, Carl, & Jones, 2014). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) brought the role of the principal to the forefront of educational reform. NCLB required schools to reach a level of proficiency on standardized tests. The responsibilities of principals multiplied as accountability for schools grew. NCLB, and other accountability plans, weighed heavily on school principals as they strove to implement additional mandated changes such as new curriculum standards and student assessments (Cosner et al., 2014). Due to NCLB, principals’ responsibilities and accountability for student learning increased. These increases are not without additional cost. The expanding duties of principals exacerbated existing time constraints as well as fiscal limitations and cognitive challenges (Cosner et al., 2014).

Louis and Robinson (2012) used case studies and surveys to examine whether federal or state mandates influenced how principals led their schools. They surveyed teachers and principals in seven schools across six states. They found effective principals bridged the gap between accountability measures and the needs of the organization by thinking strategically about how accountability measures might be an asset to promote school improvement (Louis & Robinson, 2012). When principals found elements in the plan they felt they could support, researchers were able to predict a positive corresponding outcome. Similarly, researchers
predicted a negative outcome when principals harbored a negative attitude toward a corresponding element in the initiative (Louis & Robinson, 2012). In summary, principals’ attitudes regarding accountability measures were predictive of mandate success or failure.

The role of principal as an instructional leader included responsibilities for teacher professional development. The change in principals’ roles included implementing new learning for teachers to use in the classroom. The importance of principals’ roles changed dramatically with increases in accountability measures and emphasis on teacher performance (Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010). The quality of teachers’ work reflected the work of the principal. Gains in student achievement would be evident when principals and teachers were successful (Lynch, 2012). The assumed outcome was that the merit of the principals and their dedication to research-based instruction were directly connected and reflected in the quality of the teachers, and presumably student achievement.

In 2007, Leithwood et al. interviewed 31 principals to determine how school leaders’ efficacy as a collective group (district administrators, principals, teacher leaders) and school conditions affected student learning. They found principals provided teachers and administrators with meaningful professional development to ensure they reached common goals. The researchers recommended districts contribute to principals’ senses of efficacy by having a clear, shared vision; ensuring principals prioritized the improvement of instruction; and providing to administrators and teachers access to meaningful professional development (Leithwood et al., 2007).

Although principals’ efficacy and shared visions proved important to teacher and student success, an analysis of the way principals work provided additional context. Neumerski (2009) conducted an analysis of what scholars know about the interaction of instructional leaders with
one another. He examined interactions between principals, teachers, and coaches to gain an understanding of how leadership takes place in schools. The analysis of the literature allowed findings from each area of research to merge and generate new knowledge about how leadership can improve instruction (Neumerski, 2009). Educators commonly understand principals’ leadership, but know little about the leadership roles of teachers and coaches. Neumerski’s (2009) analysis found a lack of studies concerning the interactions among school leaders and their roles. Instead, most studies focused on principals’ actions and behaviors.

The increase in accountability pushed principals to find measures to ensure teachers implemented high-performance strategies in their classrooms. As a result, new protocols for principals to increase teacher accountability developed. Bradley (2014) studied how a teacher evaluation model used by principals promoted growth for teachers. She conducted interviews with four principals and two teachers at each school. When principals used evidence from classroom walk-throughs combined with data from formal teacher evaluations, both principals and teachers saw changes to instruction in the targeted goal areas (Bradley, 2014). Principals explained students learned best when teachers had training specifically targeting student discussions or asking high-level questions. Bradley also found the principal was important in the shift from a punitive climate to a culture of teacher growth and professionalism. The study revealed the importance of principals having a clear vision for the school, and protecting time for teacher collaboration (Bradley, 2014).

A case study of three states’ pilot teacher evaluation models addressed the implementation and effectiveness of the new models (Cosner et al., 2014). Researchers found when administrators increased teacher performance feedback it had a positive impact on teacher growth. The study highlighted the merits of principals’ guidance and instructional coaching.
Teachers receiving this guidance and coaching from principals responded with improved instruction. The case study also showed the state’s new evaluation plans increased the amount of time principals spent evaluating teachers, as well as time spent in conferences with them (Cosner et al., 2014).

Although the duties of school principals continue to evolve, principals remain the primary supervisors and evaluators of teachers. School principals continue to be responsible for the performance of teachers in their schools, and providing feedback to teachers and the school district regarding this performance. I now shift from a discussion of principals’ roles as instructional leaders to a summary of scholarly literature on teacher supervision and evaluation.

Principal as a Supervisor and Evaluator of Teachers

Principals have supervised and evaluated teachers since the 1960s. However, as models of teacher evaluation changed over time, a few models maintained the greatest popularity. I divided the literature reviewed into two sections. The first section addresses the years 1960–2000, and the second section presents a contemporary view from 2001 to present day practice.

History of teacher evaluation models (1960–2000). School districts must improve the performance of their teaching force if they want to realize gains in student achievement (Chait, 2007). Teacher supervision and evaluation play an important role in improving student learning (Aseltine, Farynierz, & Rigazio-DiGilio, 2006; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004); therefore, teacher supervision models should clarify how school districts measure the instructional capacity of teachers.

Teacher supervision and evaluation emerged as important foci for principals and other school administrators in education reform (Aseltine et al., 2006; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2004; Marzano & Toth, 2013). Before the 1960s, principals conducted mostly informal teacher
evaluations and did not follow many guidelines (Aseltine et al., 2006). Prior to 1960, administrators measured and judged teaching using criteria such as whether the desks were in straight rows or the teacher had legible penmanship. Teacher supervision focused on classroom and student management, rather than on student learning. In the 1960s, administrators performed teacher observations sporadically and inconsistently (Aseltine et al., 2006).

Goldhammer led a group of Harvard researchers in the development of a system for teacher evaluation in 1969 called the clinical supervision model (CSM; Wiles & Bondi, 2002). The CSM dictated that classroom teachers set goals and determine which methods of student learning to assess (Wiles & Bondi, 2002). Shortly after the development of CSM, Hunter presented a new teacher-planning model based on education psychology research (Nolan & Hoover, 2004). Hunter’s adapted model focused on the principal’s role as an objective observer. Hunter’s work was widely used in school districts across the United States for decades (Nolan & Hoover, 2004).

Hunter’s (1985) model was known by many names, including, “A Clinical Theory of Instruction, ITIP, Mastery Teaching, PET, Clinical Teaching, Target Teaching, the UCLA Model, [and] the Hunter model” (p. 58). Hunter’s model assumed the decisions a teacher made throughout a lesson affected student learning (Hunter, 1985).

Hunter’s (1985) design allowed an observer to consider teaching decisions and assess the effects. According to Hunter (1983), teaching is a process of making decisions and implementing them before, during, and after instruction. Hunter (1985) believed effectively executing these points of decision increased the probability of student learning, and credited her model with increasing the effectiveness of marginal teachers.
Hunter (1985) explained she did not create her model to evaluate teachers, but rather to increase excellence in teachers and their profession. She expressed concern that educational leaders who lacked training in the model would not partake in on-going development of the model (Hunter, 1985). For example, untrained administrators might believe every element of her design should be included in a single lesson. Hunter (1985) wrote, “Any observer who uses a checklist to make sure a teacher is using all seven elements does not understand the model” (p. 59). Hunter also advocated aligned professional development for teachers, giving them a common language for discussion (Marzano et al., 2011).

Ultimately, by the 1980s the Hunter model was widely used to evaluate teachers and to measure any classroom situation based on specified elements of teaching (Marzano et al., 2011; Nolan & Hoover, 2004). The Hunter supervision model focused on a process and product formation observed by an impartial administrator (Nolan & Hoover, 2004). Hunter (1983) eventually supported the evaluation model through script taping. Script taping was a practice in which the observer wrote down everything teachers and students said during the observation (Hunter, 1983). The model required administrators to script notes during the lesson, analyze the teacher’s performance in prescribed categories, and share the findings in a conference after the observation (Marzano et al., 2011; Nolan & Hoover, 2004). Administrators categorized teaching behaviors into those practices that (a) promoted learning; (b) used valuable time and energy yet lacked a contribution to learning; and (c) actually interfered with learning (Hunter, as cited in Marzano et al., 2011).

Both Hunter’s and Goldhammer’s supervision models had limitations because they focused on only a few teaching elements (Marzano et al., 2011). They also lacked attention to formative supervision (Marzano et al., 2011; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). For competent teachers,
these two models defined teaching practice, but they were not as meaningful for evaluating student growth and improving learning capacity (Marzano et al., 2011).

**Contemporary view of teacher evaluation.** During the 1990s, Danielson (2011) developed a framework for teacher observation adapted from Hunter’s research on classroom performance. Danielson studied with the Educational Testing Service where she and her colleagues measured the competence of pre-service teachers (Marzano et al., 2011). Danielson designed a framework intended to look at the large components of instruction, but also to examine the intricacies of instruction (Marzano et al., 2011).

Danielson’s framework included a rubric offering a comprehensive definition or classification of tasks found in both the art and science of teaching (Glickman, 2002; Marzano et al., 2011). Using Danielson’s rubric, principals or teachers focused on observation based on broad or narrow elements of teaching. School districts modified Danielson’s framework for evaluation purposes (Glickman, 2002). The shift to an observational approach based on performance allowed for the integration of many aspects of current best practices into a single package, with student learning at the core (Aseltine et al., 2006).

Danielson (2012) recognized the challenge inherent in identifying good practice solely through classroom observation because effective teaching also involves work behind the scenes. However, she determined observation of instruction and interaction with students was crucial to any system of teacher evaluation because classroom practices are most important (Danielson, 2012).

Danielson’s (2011) Framework for Teaching identified good teaching practice in four domains: (a) planning and preparation, (b) classroom environment, (c) instruction, and (d) professional responsibilities. Each of the four domains contains five subcomponents, giving the
observer detailed descriptions to rate a teacher’s performance on a scale of 1–4 (Danielson, 2011). Danielson (2012) thought distinguishing between levels was essential.

According to Danielson (2012), observers must be trained and acquire skills to engage in fair and reliable classroom observations. The observer must collect evidence, but must also interpret the evidence using the scale rating the levels of performance (Danielson, 2012). Supervisors require training to have reflective conversations with teachers about their lessons. Thinking through how they could improve their lessons allows teachers to achieve growth (Danielson, 2012).

In the 21st century, a shift from supervision of teachers to evaluation of student learning took place. This change involves evaluating teaching based on the results of student learning (Marzano et al., 2011). Newer observational methods continue to come into play, in addition to formal classroom observations. Some of the new methods include lesson studies, peer coaching, and walk-through observations (Aseltine et al., 2006), and may be used by peer teachers or administrative supervisors. These activities help individual teachers and enhance the focus on qualitative aspects of teaching and learning (Aseltine et al., 2006; Marzano et al., 2011).

Supervising teachers entails more than single observations, rather, it should be an accumulation of perspectives about the teacher’s performance over the duration of the school year (Aseltine et al., 2006). Supervision may include an observation, but teachers may also be involved in peer coaching or classroom walk-throughs (Aseltine et al., 2006). Principals with supervision responsibilities encounter teachers who exhibit a wide spectrum of abilities. Discovering teachers who are performing below an acceptable level and encouraging growth are important for schools seeking increased student achievement.
High-Quality versus Low-Quality Teaching

Consensus regarding what constitutes high-quality teacher performance remains elusive (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008). In 2008, Ingvarson and Rowe studied the impact of teacher capacity and professionalism from pre-service teacher education to subsequent professional teacher development of instructors practicing in their field. They studied evaluations of teaching standards and how the specificity of those standards affected the quality of teaching. The researchers defined quality in the study as an explicit understanding of what teachers should know about content, and what teachers should be able to do instructionally (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008). Ingvarson and Rowe concluded policies and processes affiliated with the current model need to realign teacher quality with evolving elements such as student performance and merit pay. As the field of education changes, the ways principals measure the quality of teacher performance change as well.

A principal, as a supervisor of tenured teachers, meets teachers on a continuum, including those with low performance, those with mediocre instruction, and those with satisfactory performance. Teachers with low and mediocre performance require the most attention. An administrator must document the deficiencies of the incompetent teacher using various indicators of performance (Platt, Tripp, Ogden, & Fraser, 2000). For example, an incompetent teacher may demonstrate a lack of routines or discipline in the classroom, be unable to communicate learning objectives, or fail to set standards for the quality of student work (Platt et al., 2000).

A mediocre teacher may be more difficult to identify due to a mixture of strengths and weaknesses (Platt et al., 2000). Detecting their under-performance as compared to peers presents a challenge. These teachers are “just doing the job,” and their work lies somewhere between incompetence and excellence (Platt et al., 2000). Platt et al. (2000) equated the term mediocre to
marginal or substandard teacher performance, thereby distinguishing mediocre from fully incompetent. Mediocre teachers perform just above or just below the level of expected performance and fail to produce desired outcomes in a reasonable amount of time, regardless of their capabilities. They are teachers who do not plan a lesson with key outcomes in mind or consider students' prior knowledge (Platt et al., 2000). Mediocre and under-performing teachers may benefit from principal or peer coaching. Mediocre tenured teachers present the greatest challenge to principals. They are performing at an acceptable level, but they are probably not capable of increasing student achievement to affect accountability measures (Platt et al., 2000). Motivating the mediocre tenured teacher is a sizeable dilemma for principals who are under pressure to improve student achievement.

Discussions surrounding the question of motivation often center on teacher salary. Increasingly, state and district officials recognize the single teacher salary schedule has done little to encourage teachers to improve instruction (Chait, 2007). The premise was that financially rewarding teachers would motivate them to perform their instructional duties at a higher level (Chait, 2007). Debates about whether performance pay is a viable way to improve teacher performance are at the core of educational reform (Chait, 2007).

**Performance Pay for Teachers**

Pay-for-performance plans, or merit pay plans, were intended to provide incentives to improve performance. I reviewed scholarly literature regarding the history of pay-for-performance plans and how they influenced instruction and student achievement. I divided my findings into historical and modern views of pay-for-performance plans, and then narrowed my lens to look at the origins of the plan incorporated by the State of Minnesota.
History of pay-for-performance for teachers. Actions to pay teachers for performance have been notable since the early 1900s. As early as 1918, 48% of school districts in the United States utilized some form of merit pay (Chamberlin, Chamberlin, Wragg, Haynes, & Wragg, 2002). Murane and Cohen (1986) acknowledged limited information about these plans exist; however, they determined most plans did not last.

Since the 1920s, the popularity of merit pay plans has waxed and waned, never gaining widespread popularity in schools. In 1923, the National Educational Association (NEA) found 33% of school districts used merit pay (Murane & Cohen, 1986), but in 1928 the NEA found that only 18% of schools maintained merit pay plans (Chamberlin et al., 2002; Johnson, 1984; Murane & Cohen, 1986). By the 1950s, only 4% of large school districts used merit pay systems (Murane & Cohen, 1986).

Merit pay plans did not experience resurgence in schools until the 1960s (Johnson, 1984). Sputnik reignited interest in merit pay for teachers and 10% of school districts had a plan, but numbers dropped to a little over 5% in the 1970s (Murane & Cohen, 1986). Although paying teachers for their performance is not new, the use of merit pay has fluctuated over the decades (Murane & Cohen, 1986).

For example, in 1983, “A Nation at Risk,” written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, criticized America’s education standards, consequently starting a debate about teachers’ pay (Chait, 2007; Goldstein, 2014). Also, in 1983 President Reagan expressed a belief that teachers should be paid and promoted based on both merit and competence if the nation’s schools were to improve (Gratz, 2009; Johnson, 1984). Together, the president’s comments and “A Nation at Risk” swayed public opinion and built a narrative about the country’s issues with underperforming teachers (Goldstein, 2014). The fact American
student achievement was well below competing foreign countries strengthened the notion that the teacher population consisted of the lowest-performing college graduates (Goldstein, 2014).

The president recommended incentives for teachers, such as merit pay and new salary approaches, to motivate teachers to higher standards (Goldstein, 2014). As a result, some states quickly developed performance pay plans, but few of them would have any staying power (Goldstein, 2014). The experiments in teacher merit pay failed to demonstrate success and, therefore, they did not stick (Gratz, 2009; Goldstein, 2014). Most states developed underfunded plans that were overly bureaucratic and unpopular. By 1988 merit pay plans drastically declined across the country and the *New York Times* declared merit pay plans flawed and their existence irrelevant (Goldstein, 2014).

As President George W. Bush moved into office, the landscape of education underwent another drastic change (Goldstein, 2014). Bush created the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), a federal law requiring states to develop standardized tests to measure the achievement and prove the proficiency of their students (Goldstein, 2014). Additionally, the provisions of NCLB included rating and comparing schools to one another based on these scores and chronically underperforming schools were subject to sanctions (Goldstein, 2014). Instructional accountability for student achievement increased in all schools (Goldstein, 2014). One component of NCLB required teachers be “highly qualified” and certified to ensure they could teach to the standards established (Goldstein, 2014). Over time, many states struggled to make anticipated gains in student achievement and NCLB did not offer the solution President Bush had hoped it would.

In 2006, the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF), a federal incentive program, awarded 37 grants to school districts in order to support high-needs schools through performance-based
teacher and principal compensation systems (Chait, 2007). The grants required the receiving schools to establish a pay system that embedded within it at least some measure of student achievement. TIF significantly increased the number of schools paying teachers based on merit or performance (Chait, 2007).

**Modern models of performance pay plans.** In 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) into law. ARRA legislation intended to stimulate the economy, create jobs, and invest in education and other critical sectors (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The ARRA established a foundation for education reform by investing in innovative strategies focused on both improved student achievement and long-term effectiveness. A significant component of ARRA legislation was the inclusion of teacher development models (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

The ARRA provided $4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund (RTTF). The Department of Education established RTTF as a competitive grant program. The Department designed the program to encourage states to innovate and initiate reform by making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and implementing or improving four core education reform areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). RTTF selected schools with a great deal of emphasis on great teachers and leaders (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The grant criteria emphasized a plan for improving teacher and principal effectiveness by utilizing both performance pay and support systems believed to correlate with a strong teacher work force. RTTF offered states and school districts an important financial incentive to improve student performance. States responded by holding special legislative sessions to eliminate some of the biggest barriers to evaluating teacher performance (Springer & Gardner, 2010).
Proponents of performance pay insisted such programs attract and retain teachers who have excellent skills, while repelling those teachers of a lesser caliber (Springer & Gardner, 2010). RTTF fostered a hope in its supporters that teachers in career positions would improve their performance as a direct result of monetary incentives. Supporters of RTTF also believed pay-for-performance incentives would raise the quality of teachers overall, by attracting more effective workers into the profession (Podgursky & Springer, 2007; Springer & Gardner, 2010).

Podgursky and Springer (2007) evaluated performance-pay programs and summarized them using a control design study. They concluded the bonuses and payouts to individuals were positive enough to justify further research into the design of performance-pay systems. They suggested strategic implementation of performance pay held promise for improving teacher quality (Podgursky & Springer, 2007).

By 2005, two leading U.S. teacher unions, the NEA and the American Federation of Teachers, changed their position in favor of teacher compensation based on merit (Springer & Gardner, 2010). Traditionally, teachers’ unions opposed merit pay reforms, but both unions were part of the development and implementation of several high-profile programs (Springer & Gardner, 2010). By 2010, at least three states invested $550 million dollars in teacher pay-for-performance plans (Springer & Gardner, 2010).

Figlio and Kenny (2006) used data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey, as well as their own surveys, to examine teacher incentive pay programs tied to student achievement in over 500 schools. They found pay-for-performance boosted student achievement on standardized tests. The effects were greatest in high poverty schools, and if teacher bonuses were awarded on an individual rather than group basis.
Gratz (2009) participated in a comprehensive four-year pilot study of the Denver Public Schools pay-for-performance program. Gratz (2009, 2010) found the complexities of defining teacher quality and determining how to measure student achievement were challenging. The implementation of the pay-for-performance program was overwhelming because the initiative included numerous dissimilar elements, thereby increasing the difficulty of developing a streamlined, systematic course. In fact, the complexity of the program inadvertently resulted in a negative correlation to pay for a number of teachers. Contrary to the stated purpose, an unintended consequence of the pay-for-performance program may have been to reduce teacher motivation, or drive teachers from the field (Gratz, 2010).

Gratz (2010) noted opponents of performance plans challenged the belief teachers lack motivation and need financial incentive to teach more effectively. Furthermore, opponents of merit pay argued teachers will not become better instructors as a result of increased monetary compensation because teachers are not in a state of self-restraint, holding back their teaching skills while waiting for more money (Gratz, 2010; Marzano et al., 2011). Teachers generally do not select their profession for the salary it provides. Indeed, the public recognizes teaching as a low-paying vocation (Gratz, 2010; Marzano et al., 2011).

Surprisingly, teacher performance and compensation appear to have no correlation. According to Chait (2007), teaching is unlike other professions because a career ladder salary schedule determines teacher pay. Earnings increase as a teacher earns more educational credits and years of experience. The majority of the United States’ public school districts pay teachers based on these two criteria. However, neither the number of years of teaching experience nor the number of classes taken by a teacher correlate with student achievement (Goldhaber, 2002). Teacher compensation, based solely upon educational credits and experience, does not correlate
directly to student learning in the classroom (Chait, 2007). In response, new proposals to alter traditional teacher compensation developed, including performance pay plans (Chait, 2007).

According to Gratz (2010), defining teacher performance is a challenge, and being able to measure it proves even more difficult. Performance pay plans may compensate teachers for student achievement or for the skills they can visibly demonstrate, such as instructional performance (Chait, 2007). These systems try to estimate how the teacher’s instruction relates to student learning.

Several states implemented performance pay plans and have had them in place long enough to review the progress (Chait, 2007). My study concerns the roles and responsibilities of principals during a major change effort. The subjects of my study are all professionals in Minnesota, a state that proposed and offered a performance pay plan to its school districts over the past 10 years.

**Minnesota’s experiences with performance pay.** In Minnesota, the state legislature in July 2005 (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.) enacted a plan called Compensation for Quality Teachers (Q-Comp). School districts chose to participate in Q-Comp in exchange for additional district funding opportunities (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). The voluntary program allowed local school districts to work with their own teacher representatives to design a merit pay plan to meet the five criteria required by the law (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.).

The five criteria for Q-Comp included: (a) career ladder/advancement options, (b) job-embedded professional development, (c) teacher evaluation, (d) performance pay, and (e) an alternative salary schedule (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). As of 2011, 50 public school districts and 54 charter schools in Minnesota participated in Q-Comp (Minnesota
The Minnesota Department of Education presented Q-Comp as a way of encouraging school districts to implement performance pay correlated to classroom performance. Increasingly, school districts offer pay-for-performance plans according to laws, rules, or policies as a way to address mediocre teaching (Platt et al., 2000).

In Minnesota, districts with Q-Comp plans receive targeted funding from the state (Chait, 2007). Many school districts revised teacher contracts to provide opportunities to receive performance bonuses (Chait, 2007). Policy makers and the public may believe performance pay results in better instruction because they see it as a means of increasing scrutiny of both teacher effectiveness and the quality of teaching (Chait, 2007).

One of the tenets of Q-Comp is a requirement to create teacher leader positions. While the state legislature did not offer a specific definition of a teacher leader position, many school districts developed a position called peer coach. A peer coach, also called an instructional coach, met the Q-Comp criteria as a teacher working outside the classroom. Peer coaches influenced not only teachers, but also changed the overall school environment. In a gently balanced school culture, peer coaches might also influence the way in which principals conduct their responsibilities.

The Role of the Peer Coach

I examined scholarly literature to understand how peer reviews of teaching may influence the quality of student instruction. Peer coaches are involved in coaching classroom teachers regarding instruction. Peer coaches provide feedback to influence the classroom teacher positively, which, in turn, positively affects student achievement. I reviewed literature concerning teacher interaction with coaches, the amount of time spent with the coach, and the coach’s impact on teacher efficacy.
Researchers have explored whether peer coaches help or hinder the building principal in evaluating teachers (Cosner et al., 2014). A 2015 case study of schools in three pay-for-performance states found having additional non-administrative evaluators delegated to conduct some aspects of teacher evaluation could be effective. The findings suggested district or regional educational officers could be appropriate, effective, designated, non-administrative evaluators (Cosner et al., 2014). For example, district administrators, particularly content certified administrators, could conduct teacher evaluations to alleviate some of a principal’s evaluation burden. However, the researchers felt that to maintain credibility, designated, non-administrative evaluators alone would not be sufficient; a leader from the teacher’s own school would need to be involved in that teacher’s evaluation (Cosner et al., 2014). The researchers also noted teacher training supported the teacher evaluation processes, but warned teachers would first have to be identified carefully and then trained as expert teacher evaluators (Cosner et al., 2014).

Ross’s (1992) study of the relationship between teacher interactions with a coach and student achievement involved 18 middle school history teachers who worked with six instructional coaches. Ross (1992) predicted teachers who interacted more often with peer coaches would see higher student achievement results. In the study, Ross (1992) observed that increasing professional development for teachers increased teachers’ sense of efficacy. Teachers who relied on school administrators for evaluations had less involvement with peer coaches, which, in turn, correlated with lower student achievement (Ross, 1992).

In a contrary study, Shidler (2008) investigated the possible linkage between the number of hours spent coaching teachers in an early childhood environment and changes in instructional efficacy and student achievement. Over the course of three years, Shidler’s study results contradicted Ross’s (1992) study; Shidler (2008) found no correlation of teacher efficacy and
student outcomes to the number of hours spent receiving coaching. Shidler’s (2008) study identified best practices associated with effective coaching. Best practices included instruction for specific content, modeling of techniques and instructional practices, observation of teacher practices, and consultation for reflection.

Knight (2009) led a study of a coaching program in Kansas working with classroom teachers at the middle school level. He asked participants to answer questions related to coaching and efficacy and rate the coaches’ skills as they related to their roles as teachers. The findings suggested teachers found coaches helpful as long as the coaches did not move beyond the scope of their roles with a specific content, modeling of lesson implementation, or lesson reflection (Knight, 2009). Studies of peer coaching and its effects on teacher effectiveness appear limited in the literature.

Tension remains among researchers about the effectiveness of merit pay. A gap in scholarly literature exists regarding the effect of performance pay and corresponding changes to administrative roles and authority, particularly as they relate to making employment recommendations. This gap includes a lack of literature describing the relationship between merit pay and peer coaches and their impact on principals.

In the next section, I describe theories I adopted for analysis of my review findings and analysis of participant data. I used several theories to form my conceptual framework. These theories include Developmental Supervision (Glickman, et. al, 2009), Fullan’s (2007) theory of change as applied to school reform, and Bolman and Deal’s multi-frame thinking (2013).

Theoretical Structure to Changes for the Principal

The data collected from participants in the study created a picture of changes that took place when Q-Comp plans began in their school districts. Part of the changes included the
addition of a peer coach who held many of the same responsibilities as the principal. An examination of theoretical structures built an understanding of changes that occurred as a result of Q-Comp. I begin with an overview of Fullan’s (2007) theory of change and then describe Glickman, Ross, and Ross-Gordon’s developmental supervision (2009). I finish the introduction of analytical theory with Bolman and Deal’s multi-frame thinking (2013).

Fullan’s Theory of Change

The role of principal has become more complicated and unclear in recent decades (Fullan, 2007). Understanding principals’ roles and perspectives with respect to school changes is essential to understanding how principals deal effectively with change (Fullan, 2007). The expectation that principals will be instructional leaders and fulfill their roles within a changing system presents substantial challenges.

The supervisory responsibilities of principals, which have changed since the 1970s, challenge them more than ever to find balance in their leadership roles (Sergiovanni, 1975). Principals are essential players in either promoting or inhibiting change, and the complexities of leadership roles during times of change may tip the scale one way or the other (Fullan, 2007). Principals must have a solid understanding of both curriculum and instruction so they can understand and support teachers (Fullan, 2007).

Principals are responsible for two competing tasks: (a) being responsive to the needs of teachers and students and running a school smoothly and (b) leading instruction and improving test scores (Fullan, 2007). In 1997, Fullan cited a 1984 study by Edu Con that noted because of increased demands on principals’ time, as well as an increased number of directives, principals felt their effectiveness had decreased. With respect to motivation, Fullan (2007) asked the question: “If principals energize teachers in complex times, what is going to energize the
principal? The principal who has adapted successfully to the changes in leadership may be a basis for helping other principals be successful” (Fullan, 2007, p. 141).

Fullan (2007) studied principals who successfully led change and identified several important factors regarding those principals. They (a) effectively facilitated inclusive groups toward change, (b) maintained an institutional focus on student learning, (c) managed their duties efficiently, and (d) provided both pressure and support for teachers with respect to making changes. Fullan found that school leaders who focused on relationships and professional standards while seeking new ideas and still monitoring student performance were the most successful at improving the success of their schools.

Elmore (2000) believed only a minority of current leaders could lead change because, due to systems problems, only a handful of leaders met the above role criteria for being change leaders. Systems problems included a lack of support and development for this type of work. I planned to use Fullan’s (2007) theory of change to analyze the responses from administrators, determining changes they perceived in their roles and comparing their responses using theory regarding principals’ roles in leading change. Theories related to developmental supervision guided my study about how principals support and supervise effective and ineffective teachers.

**Developmental Supervision**

Developmental supervision should match the developmental level, expertise, and commitment of a teacher. “One way to describe developmental supervision is to say that it provides teachers with as much initial choice as they are ready to assume, then fosters teachers’
decision-making capacity and expanded choice over time” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009, p. 152). The long-term goal of supervision is helping teachers assume full responsibility for instructional improvement. Glickman et al. (2009) established three levels of teacher development: the concrete operations stage, the formal operations stage, and the post-formal operations stage. Supervisors take into account teachers’ teaching abilities and personal evolutions at each level.

Teachers with low conceptual levels and low moral reasoning exist in a fearful stage of ego development and qualify for the “concrete operations stage” of cognitive development (Glickman et al., 2009, p. 151). Teachers in this stage have trouble defining problems, possess fewer ways to address problems, and often will not accept decision-making responsibilities. These teachers need supervisory direction because they often experience serious instructional problems (Glickman et al., 2009).

The formal operations stage applies to teachers with moderate levels of cognitive development (Glickman et al., 2009, p. 151). Teachers in this middle range of development have a reasonable amount of moral reasoning and will likely have a conforming stage of ego development. They have cross-categorical levels of consciousness. In the formal operations stage teachers have some moderate levels of expertise and commitment. Teachers performing at this level fare best with a “collaborative supervisory approach” (Glickman et al., 2009, p.151). At the formal operations stage, teachers work with supervisors and generate some solutions to instructional dilemmas, but may still need help examining all options and developing plans for improvement. The benefit of collaborative supervision is that it enables a teacher to share ideas and examine possible changes with perceptions and proposals offered by the supervisor. The
collaborative supervising approach gives limited independence with some guidance (Glickman et al., 2009).

Fairly high levels of conceptual knowledge and moral reasoning mark the “post-formal operations stage” of cognitive development (Glickman et al., 2009, p. 151). A teacher in this stage is in an autonomous stage of ego development, meaning he or she has a good deal of expertise and commitment. These teachers are ready for self-direction and benefit from a “nondirective supervisory approach” (p. 151). These teachers are autonomous and creative, think about things from many different angles, and establish and execute action plans (Glickman et al., 2009).

Administrators choose the best phase of development supervision based on the characteristics and actions of the teacher (Glickman et al., 2009). Developmental supervision involves administrative decisions regarding the most effective approach to adopt for specific teachers. This may include a directed supervisory approach, collaborative supervisory approach, or a non-directive supervisory approach (Glickman et al., 2009). The collaborative and non-directive supervisory approaches can be used by supervisors or teachers who are instructional leaders or peer coaches.

Gordon (1989, 1990, as cited in Glickman et al., 2009) examined supervisor flexibility in a study in which supervisors trained in developmental supervision worked with separate teacher triads. The supervisors selected a supervisory approach based on observations and audiotapes of teacher conferences. They attempted information directive supervision with one teacher, collaborative supervision with another teacher, and non-directive supervision with a third participant. They taped and analyzed subsequent conferences with the teachers to determine the effectiveness of the approaches used. Gordon found that 93% of supervisors could implement
information directive supervision, 100% could engage in collaborative supervision, and only 70% were able to use non-directive supervision (Glickman et al., 2009, p. 154). The implication from this study is that supervisors need help with the most difficult practice: nondirective supervision. According to Glickman et al. (2009), “a good rule of thumb is to prepare to use a collaborative approach, but be ready to shift to a nondirective or directive approach if necessary” (p. 154).

**Multi-Frame Thinking**

People see and make sense of the world through mental models; internal images of how the world works (Bolman & Deal, 2013). These mental models affect how people act and how they view the world. They also limit people to a singular view of the world because their mental models influence their perception and judgment. People prefer the comfort of their usual model and will block out information that does not fit into their preconceptions (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Bolman and Deal (2013) developed four frames to use when examining dynamics influencing organizations: structural, political, human resource, and symbolic frames. These frames challenge leaders to move beyond their own mental models and gain perspectives by looking at situations in new ways. Using a multi-frame thinking model, or looking at an issue from more than one frame, a leader gains insight about what is affecting people and shaping the organization.

In the structural frame, the focus is on having clear roles and responsibilities for those in the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Having and using effective procedures to maximize efficiency are priorities. The structural frame is about getting the right people matched with the responsibilities for which they are best suited. The result is an increased efficiency towards reaching goals, and saving time and money.
Individuals or coalitions vying for power within an organization are the focus of the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Individuals build alliances and negotiate agreements to achieve outcomes aligned with their values. The political frame can be untidy as people make alliances with each other and exert influence to get their desired outcomes (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

The human resources frame focuses on the idea that serving employees and making an investment in them will lead to the best results (Bolman & Deal, 2013). If organizations keep the needs of their people in mind, those people will be dedicated and committed to carrying out the goals of the organization.

The symbolic frame represents the idea that organizations have symbols and rituals that reinforce the values of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). People hand down stories that align the culture (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In this frame, there are heroes who represent the values of the organization. The people in the organization follow their emotions. When the organization experiences changes, people within it create new symbols and rituals to reinforce the culture.

Analyzing a situation through multi-frame thinking brings new perspectives to existing perceptions. Organizational leaders who look through more than one frame will find insight into underlying assumptions in specific situations. Applying the four frames to my study of Q-Comp, in conjunction with Fullan’s (2007) change theory, helped explain my findings and gave meaning to the research.

**Summary**

Principals have competing roles that create daily challenges. Traditional principal roles require management, leadership, and time to ensure efficient daily operations. At the same time,
principals face mounting pressure to devote more time to instructional leadership by increasing their role and participation in meaningful teacher development and supervision.

Many experts in education sought to determine the relationship between student achievement and classroom teacher performance (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Teacher performance is primarily the responsibility of the principal (Cosner et al., 2014). I began by reviewing the traditional managerial roles of the principal and looked at how the role of the principal changed due to increased teacher accountability for student achievement. Then, I addressed the changes in the roles of principals regarding teacher supervision through historical and contemporary lenses. Next, I considered the history of pay-for-performance plans, or merit pay, for teachers, including Minnesota’s Quality Compensation for Teachers (Q-Comp).

Minnesota’s Q-Comp performance pay plan incorporates administrative and peer performance reviews in many districts (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). Scholarly literature yielded conflicting results regarding pay-for-performance’s effect on administrative roles, responsibilities, and authority. Research exists describing the principal’s perspectives of the effectiveness of peer coaches, but I found little about how the role of the coach affected the roles and responsibilities of principals through their perspectives. Similarly, I found research involving the principals’ perspectives regarding performance pay for teachers focused on the impact on instruction, rather than effects on principals’ and their roles.

The purpose of this study was to learn how Q-Comp, a new program introducing greater accountability for the observation of tenured teachers, and the introduction of a peer coaching model affected principals’ roles and authority. My study concerns how principals experience and make meaning of the changes in their supervisory roles, responsibilities, and authority after
the implementation of a new program featuring pay-for-performance involving tenured teachers and the addition of a peer coach to conduct teacher observations. Using a phenomenological approach, I obtained descriptive data about the experiences of principals who were administrators before and after the introduction of Q-Comp. Phenomenological inquiry provides a deep understanding of a number of individuals’ common experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012).

In Chapter Three, I explain why I chose qualitative research to investigate the experiences of principals during a major change effort. I explain why phenomenology worked for my study, and describe how I selected participants. I consider ethical challenges as well as the reliability and validity of my study. I describe data collection and the methods used for analysis.
CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

I adopted the following question to frame my study: How do administrators experience changes in their supervisory roles, authority, and duties related to teacher performance reviews and employment recommendations as a result of changes in teacher leadership roles and school culture? In this chapter I describe the methods used for conducting the study, beginning with a description of the research design and procedures used to conduct my research. First, I describe qualitative research and why I selected phenomenology, an approach within the qualitative tradition (Creswell, 2012). I include the processes I used to receive permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), select participants, collect data, and analyze my data. I also explain procedures adopted to ensure ethical treatment of participants and protection of participant confidentiality. Last, I address reliability and validity in conducting qualitative research, research experience and bias, and the limitations of this study.

Qualitative Research: Phenomenological Approach

I selected qualitative research because of the dynamic nature of my research question and the number of factors influencing administrative action with regard to teacher performance reviews in a changing school environment. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for the nature of this study because this research method allows exploration of participant experiences in greater depth (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative inquiry allows researchers to develop meaning from the context of a situation, including the setting or organization where the study takes place, and the perspectives and experiences of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). “Qualitative researchers seek data which represent a personal experience in particular situations” (Stake, 2010, p. 88). In qualitative research, researchers become involved in the study because of their relationships with the subjects (Creswell, 2012). Researchers play a central role in the
qualitative research process because they conduct interviews, make observations, gather data, and interpret the collected data (Creswell, 2012).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) described the qualitative research process as having as much value as the outcome of the research. Qualitative methods allow researchers to investigate a question and see its complexity, locating many factors influencing the experiences and perceptions of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

In qualitative research, participants determine the direction of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). My study investigated the work and role of administrators as they experienced and reflected on changes in their practice. I interviewed administrators to learn how they experienced changes in their leadership roles, particularly related to teacher evaluation and employment recommendations, due to the shift in the nature of performance reviews and peer collaboration. Their perceptions and experiences led the investigation in several directions of inquiry. As I learned from the participants, I used their experiences to guide my investigation. I selected phenomenology as an approach within the qualitative tradition because the central feature of this type of method involves gaining an understanding of how individuals describe and interpret their experience (Creswell, 2012).

The philosophical assumptions of traditional science focus on relationships between people’s consciousness and objects in their lives (Moustakas, 1994). However, phenomenology is dissatisfied with the perspective of traditional science (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers use the principles of phenomenology to gather descriptions of the experiences of subjects and use the experiences to make meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological researchers seek to understand the essence of human encounters related to an experience as described by those involved (Creswell, 2012). This type of research looks for common experiences of participants.
Interviews usually serve as the primary method of data collection, and understanding the perspective of the participant is a key component (Creswell, 2012).

Researchers develop meaning in qualitative research based on participants’ perceptions of experiences rather than events occurring in isolation from participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The researcher elicits rich, detailed descriptions of specific encounters individuals experience as part of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I used my experience as a principal to understand and interpret the experiences of principals in a changing environment, but tried to set aside my personal views, and remain open and impartial while I collected the information. The phenomenological approach allowed me to focus on the participants’ understanding of their experiences as they made meaning of their lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

I followed recommended methods of preparation, data collection, and analysis using the phenomenological approach outlined by Moustakas (1994). Using these methods, I was able to extract the essence of the change phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994). I used an intuitive and reflective process by gathering and examining different perspectives and contemplations of participants (Moustakas, 1994).

**Institutional Review Board**

I gained permission to conduct my study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of St. Thomas (Appendix A). The IRB’s purpose is to ensure the rights, safety, and welfare of people involved in research. The regulations ensure compliance with federal guidelines, as well as the moral responsibilities to maintain the respect and welfare of participants. The review process involved explaining the purpose of my study, the procedures, research question, and necessary safeguards to the IRB.
In my application, I proposed research involving human subjects. I received a letter from the University of St. Thomas stating that my IRB application met all of the criteria necessary for full status and I was able to proceed with the research. I then selected participants and obtained written permission from principals who participated in my study (see Appendix B). I also obtained verbal approval from the participants before the interview. During the course of my study, the University of St. Thomas granted two extensions to renew my approval while I finished my study.

**Ethical Considerations**

Researchers encounter ethical dilemmas in every step of a research study. I applied and continued to adhere to the ethical standards of research found in guidelines established for research with human subjects and submitted a request to conduct the study to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of St. Thomas. Participant confidentiality was a key concern as I conducted this research study. As a researcher, I protected the confidentiality of participants by discussing the objective of the study and the voluntary nature of their role. I discussed and reviewed the guidelines, and provided opportunities for participants to ask questions. I assigned pseudonyms to participants and school districts. I asked principals to maintain the confidentiality of employees working in their school districts. I avoided deception and deceit (Creswell, 2012). I promised research participants anonymity for the information provided during the interviews. I transcribed the initial recordings verbatim, although the candidates did not review them. I uploaded my transcripts into HyperRESEARCH™ (n.d.) and used the software to code the transcripts; I also kept paper notes to organize my ideas. I kept paper documents in a secure location in my office and organized electronic files on two
password-protected drives. All materials will remain in these secure locations and I plan to destroy them within six years of the defense of my dissertation.

**Sampling Method and Rationale**

After gaining IRB approval, I began to organize my research participants. In my first round of interviews, I met with nine principals who experienced changes in teacher evaluation and supervision processes *before* and *after* the adoption of pay-for-performance plans. I planned to learn how greater teacher leadership in peer reviews of other teachers and peer collaboration activities changed principals’ perceptions of their role and experiences. I recruited a group of principals with at least two years of administrative experience prior to the introduction of Q-Comp and with at least two years of experience with Q-Comp in place. I selected potential candidates based on recommendations from colleagues and professional networks. I made initial contact with the principals via an electronic mail message containing a description of what type of candidate I was looking for and the nature of my research study. I confirmed the principal administrative experience matched my selection criteria.

Participants represented both genders equally; five men and five women contributed. All principals previously served as administrators in at least two districts except for Karen, Jeff, and Rob. They each served in a single school district prior to Q-Comp implementation. At the time of the first interviews, three of the principals Jeff, Rena, and Karen had fewer than 10 years of administrative experience. Paul and Rob each had 11 years of administrative experience and Carl had 12 years. Four of the principals Carol, Penny, Don, and Leah had over 15 years of administrative experience prior to the introduction of Q-Comp.

Although one of the principals did not meet criteria, Karen (a pseudonym) worked on the implementation of Q-Comp at the district level, and offered a unique perspective on the
implementation of a new school reform. I interviewed nine principals over a two-year period between 2013 and 2014. In 2015, I conducted follow-up interviews with seven of the nine original participants still working in the same position (see Table 1). I was unable to contact Leah, and Rob was not available for an interview; they did not participate in the second round of interviews. The purpose of the follow-up interview was to learn more about the changes and current status of Q-Comp as it related to the role of the peer coaches in teacher evaluation, and the changes made since my earlier interviews.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained that an “elite sample” involves those individuals considered to be well-informed, influential people in an organization. The principals I selected knew the history and policies surrounding Q-Comp plans and had sufficient experience in the “old and new” ways to describe the differences in their roles as principals. All of the participants possessed experience with some type of peer coaching model, and knew the established practices with regard to the implementation of peer coaching and principal, teacher, and peer coach collaboration.
Table 1

*Participants in Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal (District)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Administrative Experience at Time of First Interview</th>
<th>Number of Districts Served as Administrator Prior to Q-Comp</th>
<th>Position During Second Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leah (District A)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unable to contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul (District A)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Principal in District A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff (District B)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Principal in District B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don (District B)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Principal in District B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid (District C)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Principal in District C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny (District C)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Principal in District C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob (District D)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unable to interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (District E)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Principal in District E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol (District E)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Principal in District E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rena (District F)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Principal in District F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen (District G)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 years + (3 years Q-Comp Administrator)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Principal in District G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant Recruitment and Selection

In phenomenological studies, the first step is to obtain raw data from first-person accounts of a situation using open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). The questions should reflect the involvement of the subject and the commitment of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher examines the perceptions of the subject within the context of a situation. During the interview, focus should be on the comprehensive totality of the experience rather than its parts (Moustakas, 1994). The objective is to determine exactly what the experience meant for the subject who had the experience. In this case, I noted some key ideas while I interviewed the participants, but was careful to focus on their stories holistically.

The phenomenological tradition uses in-depth interviews with a small number of participants (Creswell, 2012). In qualitative research, interviews serve a number of purposes: “(a) obtaining unique information or interpretations held by the person interviewed, (b) collecting a numerical aggregation of information from many persons, [and] (c) finding out about ‘a thing’ that the researchers were unable to observe themselves” (Stake, 2010, p. 95).

Purposes (a) and (c) apply to my study because I investigated how principals experienced changes in their professional roles and responsibilities related to teacher evaluation and employment decisions. These changes occurred due to shifts in principal and teacher professional roles created by the adoption of Q-Comp plans and changes in professional culture, including a greater emphasis on teacher leadership and peer collaboration.

Prior to conducting interviews, I considered my preconceptions related to the topic of study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and also identified areas for potential bias and investigation. While my expertise as a principal may help me ask questions about an event, as a phenomenological researcher I had to set aside my experiences to understand participant views...
(Creswell, 2012). I focused on withholding judgment and opinions, allowing the participants to
describe their experiences freely, resisting the urge to prematurely categorize or judge their
experiences during the interview process.

As in most research, selection of the research subjects was essential. Selecting subjects
purposefully allowed me to inquire naturally about subjects, enabling me to capture the
experiences of participants as they lived them (Patton, 1987). In my research I pre-screened
potential participants to determine whether their professional backgrounds and experiences met
the selection criteria. I accessed school district websites and used my principal network to find
Q-Comp districts and locate administrators. I recruited the participants through phone calls and
emails, inviting them to participate in the study. I did not have a gender requirement for this
study, although the resultant range of diversity within the participant population improved the
reliability and validity of the study described later in this section.

I anticipated that finding principals for my study would be a challenge because of the
requirement for continuous service in one school (at least four years) and the added condition of
experience with the “old” and “new” systems of employee evaluation of compensation systems.
These constraints left me unable to find a suitable number of participants. As a result, I
acknowledged experience in other school districts prior to Q-Comp.

I began the process with an email explaining my research and asking principals if they
would be willing to participate in my study. The letter briefly described the purpose and
commitment needed from participants and informed them of the study’s purpose and
requirements. I attached a copy of the consent form and informed the participants I would
collect the consent form upon our meeting.
Data Collection

I contacted potential candidates via electronic mail and met with them in person to request permission to describe my study and their potential involvement in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I requested voluntary participation and promised the interviewees and their school district anonymity and confidentiality (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). I followed Moustaka’s (1994) recommended procedures for recording long interviews with possible follow-up when necessary. As the researcher, I attempted to establish familiar yet professionally respectful rapport with participants. When I made initial contact with participants, I sent each principal an electronic consent form. Establishing a process for data collection forced me to consider what type of interviews yield the most helpful information under these circumstances (Creswell, 2012). Once a principal agreed to participate in the study, I set up an appointment to meet in person. When we met, I provided a consent form because I had not received a signed copy before our appointment. Participants signed the consent form and gave the document to me (see Appendix B).

Before I began an interview, I read a statement to participants to restate the reason for my study, to make them aware I would ask for consent to record the interview, and to let them know they did not have to answer questions if they chose not to. I asked the participants if they had any questions before I began the interview. I also asked them to acknowledge that I was recording the interview as the tape began and notified them they could stop the interview at any time. I also took written notes during the interview.

I asked participants to provide examples of peer coaching and reviews of teaching as well as pay-for-performance policies and guidelines. I asked them to share their feelings about events and share stories of their experiences as they answered semi-structured questions (Appendix C).
used to begin the interview. Basically, I asked them to describe their experiences as principals before and during the change associated with Q-Comp regarding their roles and authority. The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions I had reviewed previously and revised after receiving input from two colleagues (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The questions provided insight regarding how principals experienced employee evaluations in the old and new systems.

During the interviews, I remained open to the direction of the interviewees because their insights provided an important direction to the interview. The qualitative process is a descriptive and inductive form of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I followed a scripted list of interview questions, but asked follow up or clarification questions as appropriate. I attempted to gather enough information so I could describe the experiences of the administrators and their personal experiences based on the subjects’ stories (Moustakas, 1994). The objective was to determine what the experience meant for the participant (Moustakas, 1994). During the interview, I noted some key ideas expressed by the participants, but I also focused on the story as a whole.

In many cases, I found that principals were unclear about the policies in their school districts. As a result, I contacted MDE to obtain the acceptance letters MDE had sent to each school district in response to their Q-Comp proposal. The letter outlined specific elements of each district’s unique Q-Comp plan and helped clarify some of the confusion around details in specific districts.

I followed a similar process for the second interview of my research. In the second round of interviews, I emailed principals to request a follow-up interview. I scheduled phone interviews and recorded them. I reminded principals of the confidentiality agreement and reiterated that they could stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer questions (see
Appendix D & E). The participants acknowledged the recording device was running just before I started the interview. At the end of both the first and second round of interviews, I asked the participants if I could contact them if I had additional questions or required clarification. I downloaded transcripts onto a computer and sent them via electronic mail to either a transcriptionist or Rev.com. These services sent the transcripts back to me via electronic mail. These audio recordings and notes are also in storage in my home office and the electronic documents are on two password-protected servers. All materials will remain in these secure locations and I plan to destroy them within six years of my dissertation defense.

**Data Analysis**

After I received transcriptions of the interviews, I listened to each interview to start my preliminary data analysis. I uploaded the electronic transcript files into software, HyperRESEARCH™ (n.d.), designed to help analyze data. I used a coding strategy in HyperRESEARCH™ to begin to making sense of the data. Analyzing data involves a close examination of small pieces of information and later interpreting its meaning with a new perspective.

Research involves both the analysis (the taking things apart) and synthesis (putting things back together). We gather data. We increase our experience. We look closely at the patches of collected data, the parts of our experience; that is, we analyze. And we put our parts together, often in different ways than before. We synthesize. (Stake, 2010, p. 133)

All participant statements used in the initial coding of data were the exact words spoken (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) advised researchers to use a process of horizontalization, which involves examining every statement as if it had equal value. Analyzing data allows researchers to know what something is and provide the structure necessary to develop meaning. During data analysis, researchers attempt to derive a general meaning from participants’ collective account of the situation at hand (Moustakas, 1994). A process of phenomenological
reduction, or categorizing (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), then takes place. Similar ideas, patterns, or themes held by participants are noted (Creswell, 2012). After the initial coding I reviewed transcripts again and took notes to identify participant statements relevant to the research questions (Moustakas, 1994).

Data analysis involves coding and organizing data into manageable ideas and then searching for themes and meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Moustakas (1994) recommended that researchers be aware of what pieces are external factors in the situation and what the internal relationships are between the subject and the phenomenon. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), data interpretation involves joining ideas as they relate to a theory and interpreting the implications, while explaining why these findings are important. Finally, researchers need to summarize data and consider the implications and outcomes of the research (Moustakas, 1994).

As data analysis continued, I read the transcript of each interview several times. I highlighted text and attached coding terms to segments of text. I developed approximately 50 codes. I then examined the codes and tried to group them into categories and themes of related topics. I made tables and kept notes on my ideas. I went back several times to recode information or to pursue a new code I had not yet used. Developing themes involves going back and forth between notable statements in the transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). Common themes across participant data represented the essence of principals’ changes and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I made numerous charts and notes to refine information and determine the best method for effectively communicating my findings. I also eliminated data outside of the study focus. I selected key quotes and summarized my findings. During this data analysis I discovered the legislature had passed statute with a new teacher evaluation requirement (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013).
At that point, I planned my second round of interviews, which allowed me to design follow-up questions to fill in gaps in my data analysis up to that point and learn about how the roles of principals and peer coaches had changed over time. I continued to refine categories and make decisions about how the data fit together and how best to organize the data.

**Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research**

Reliability and validity differ in qualitative research as compared to quantitative research. Qualitative studies seek trustworthiness, rigor, and high quality methods as indicators of reliability and validity (Golafshani, 2003). Researchers must work to eliminate bias and represent data truthfully (Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, reliability corresponds to how the researcher can persuade his audience that the findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research calls for credibility, conformability, and neutrality as essential factors for reliability and validity. Researchers can use both the process and the product of research to examine the research study for consistency (Hoepfl, as cited in Golafshani, 2003).

Qualitative researchers redefined validity (Stenbacka, 2001). Stenbacka argued qualitative research validity is the *quality* of the research (as cited in Golafshani, 2003). This type of research required me to accept that bias is part of validity (Davies & Dodd, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). Ideas of rigorous research must be re-examined by looking at the social interactions involved in interviewing (Davies & Dodd, as cited in Golafshani, 2003).

The external validity or generalizability (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) of this study is limited. This study may have some implications for school districts to consider as they adopt and revise Q-Comp plans, teacher contracts, and possibly human resource procedures related to teacher observations and documents generated with regard to employee decisions.
Researcher’s Background and Position

In phenomenological research, withholding judgements helps preserve the meanings of the participants and reduce bias (Moustakas, 1994). As a secondary school principal, I have been involved in the evaluation of teachers in a school district with a Q-Comp plan in place. The interview participants were my colleagues in suburban school districts in the area. I was cautious during the interviews to be professional and use a respectful tone and demeanor. I was also aware that my biases could influence the data and interpretation. I guarded against a premature and biased analysis of the data. As in most phenomenological studies, I am limited in my ability to understand fully the participants’ perspectives (Creswell, 2012). However, I conscientiously developed a careful understanding of the participants’ experiences.

My direct knowledge and professional associations with school administrators affected the study. For example, I expected the interviewees to speak freely in a fairly casual manner, while maintaining a professional demeanor and using vocabulary expected of fellow administrators. The familiarity of having similar positions created a more inviting relationship for discussion.

I had the background and expertise to ask initial and follow-up questions regarding my research topic. In qualitative research one is able to glean information through a personal perspective (Neuman, 2006). I asked follow-up questions about the participants’ experiences based on my own experience with changes in principal roles and implementing a similar school reform. A friendly, collegial relationship with interview subjects allowed participants to communicate more freely and honestly with me.
Summary

My study concerned how principals experience and make meaning of the changes in their supervisory roles, responsibilities, and authority after the implementation of a new program featuring pay-for-performance involving tenured teachers and the addition of a peer coach to conduct teacher observations. Using a phenomenological approach, I obtained descriptive data about the experiences of principals who were administrators before and after Q-Comp. Phenomenological inquiry provides a deep understanding of a number of individuals’ common experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012).
**CHAPTER FOUR – CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES**

I examined how principals experienced and made meaning of changes in their supervisory roles, duties, and authority after the implementation of a state program concerning tenured teacher performance and merit pay. Before this implementation, school principals traditionally held the most important leadership roles in schools, but the new merit pay system created opportunities for teachers to become instructional leaders in their schools as peer coaches, leading to shifts in principals’ roles and responsibilities. Lead teachers or peer coaches perform work related to employee evaluation, a task previously reserved for principals as a part of their supervisory roles.

In the review of literature, I described the provisions of a new state law, Q-Comp, enacted in July 2005, which placed a heavy emphasis on teacher professional development and included peer observations of teachers. The new practice emphasized using student data to improve instructional skills and support a professional culture focused on student learning. The state statute provided guidance for probationary teachers, but the new Q-Comp provisions primarily affected tenured teachers, who were the subjects of teacher observations not previously required by the state.

The guidelines for tenured teacher observations and the evaluation processes were broad, allowing individual school districts to establish guidelines and to negotiate with teachers to win endorsement, and subsequent approval, from the state. One of the few specific requirements of Q-Comp involved observations by more than one trained evaluator. Q-Comp did not require an administrator to be one of the trained observers. The observer may be a peer or an administrator. This change opened the door for teacher leadership and also reduced the role and authority traditionally held by principals regarding teacher performance reviews.
Observations of tenured teachers' performance, whether conducted by peers or administrators, contribute partially to the determination of merit pay. Evaluations of teacher competence in instruction is weighted based on observations and data about school-wide student achievement gains as measured by standardized assessments or other determined measures of student achievement. According to the Q-Comp application, “Each district creates a plan determining how each of these areas will be measured, what type of achievement must be demonstrated, and how much pay will be awarded per teacher if the standard of performance is demonstrated” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2005).

As a result, Q-Comp provided opportunities for instructional coaches or peers to conduct clinical observations of teachers without involving principals. These teacher colleagues also determined whether tenured teachers accomplished professional goals. Peer coaches used data from classroom observations and professional development activities to guide the professional growth of classroom teachers. As a result, the principal’s responsibilities regarding observations of tenured teachers changed in various ways, depending on the negotiated terms in teachers’ contracts with regard to the approved Q-Comp plan in each school district.

The new process meant some work previously performed by principals now fell to teacher-leaders and peer coaches. This chapter contains descriptions of existing practices and changes resulting from the implementation of Q-Comp in three distinct phases. The first phase examines how principals observed tenured teachers before the adoption of Q-Comp in their districts. I examine the development of Q-Comp plans and then compare the new plans to existing practice.

Next, I describe changes in the principal’s role after implementation of Q-Comp. I show how principals redefined their responsibilities to maintain a vital role in the supervision process,
particularly concerning teachers who were not performing at a satisfactory level (the second phase). Finally, I describe a third phase in Q-Comp, namely, new principal requirements for teacher evaluation and changes in practice requiring more administrative oversight of tenured teachers.

**Tenured Teacher Observations and Performance Reviews Prior to Q-Comp**

This study concerned principals and tenured teachers because they comprise the majority of teachers in school districts across the state of Minnesota. Teachers are “probationary teachers” during their first three years in a school district, and may be “non-renewed” at the sole discretion of the district. According to the 2014 revision of Minnesota State Statue 122A.40, subd. 5,

> evaluation must occur at least three times periodically throughout each school year for a teacher performing services during that school year. . . . During the probationary period any annual contract with any teacher may or may not be renewed as the school board shall see fit.

Probationary teachers experience a high level of administrative involvement, which may correlate to the decisions made by principals and districts about whether or not to retain teachers in their positions.

Typically, administrators observe probationary teachers three times per year, which means principals have a relatively high level of involvement and interaction with non-tenured teachers. However, the interaction with tenured teachers by principals varied considerably between districts before the implementation of Q-Comp. In this study of Q-Comp practices, I examined principals’ roles and practices aimed primarily at the improvement of practice and oversight of tenured teachers. I first summarize how principals described existing practices before the enactment of Q-Comp and then show changes in practice with the implementation of Q-Comp.
Over the 10-year period after the implementation of Q-Comp two major changes occurred regarding the observation of tenured teachers. Principals’ descriptions of practice before Q-Comp revealed the variation in approaches to observing tenured teachers. Policies about formal observations by administrators working in seven districts ranged from periodic reviews of tenured teachers to no formal policy requiring periodic observations. The practices included annual or sometimes infrequent observations of teachers.

I first describe the districts with the most intensive observation practices. Principals in these districts held a high standard for consistent review of tenured teachers based on their “intensity of practice.” I defined intensity of practice using the number of observations performed by an administrator and whether the district simply adopted an existing observation rubric to measure teacher performance or created a unique process and rubric. I assumed a local process and rubric showed a higher level of value and engagement in teacher observation. Last, I considered administrators’ investments in the plan, as well as how they followed the policies put in place.

Annual Reviews of Tenured Teachers

Four principals Carol, Penny, Paul, and Leah reported their school districts adopted a formal system requiring annual reviews of tenured teachers prior to Q-Comp. In the best of these districts, which I will refer to as high-performing districts, the evaluation framework included a well-defined policy with regard to the number of teacher observations, and ways in which administrators followed the prescribed policies.

Carol explained that in her district they customized a “local” model for teacher observation, instead of adopting a popular model, such as Danielson (2011), as a gauge for teacher performance. Penny said, “In this district, before we became a Q-Comp school, we
observed . . . every tenured teacher every year.” Similarly, Leah thought that prior to Q-Comp, tenured teachers in her district had a salary schedule that included one annual formal observation by an administrator. These principals gave a significant amount of attention to tenured teachers because they established standards for effective teaching and monitored instructional progress as part of a professional practice and focus on quality instruction.

Principals observing tenured teachers every year had the strongest level of involvement in teacher observation in place before Q-Comp. Table 2 outlines the amount of administrative involvement in a teacher’s career evaluations over a 10-year period, demonstrating the high intensity of principal involvement in probationary teacher observations and the decline in involvement once a teacher is tenured. The intensity of principals’ involvement declines in many districts when teachers become tenured; however, principals still observed teachers in high-intensity districts yearly (see Table 2).

**An Alternative to Administrative Observations**

One district had an alternative to the high-intensity observation model. Leah’s district did not have tenured teacher observations prior to Q-Comp, but the district adopted a different, non-observation based on an alternative model of teacher supervision. I ranked this as a high-intensity district because the practice focused on teachers reporting student progress using an action research model. Leah, one of the subjects of the study, explained:

Prior to putting Q-Comp in place in our school district . . . we . . . [used an] action research model for teachers. [The teachers] were . . . experimenting [by declaring] I have a hypothesis, I believe my children can grow from this to this in this area and here are the actions I’m going take to make that happen . . . [It was] logical and reality based and it rewarded teachers for analyzing data and analyzing instructional practice and, you know, measuring progress.

Principals monitored teacher performance based on student growth, and administrators evaluated teacher performance using achievement data instead of teacher observations.
Although administrators would not directly observe instruction in the classroom, they could get a picture of whether or not students were making gains based on achievement data. Less intense districts adopted a rotation or cycle for conducting tenured teacher observations.

Table 2.

*Annual Evaluation Cycle Prior to Q-Comp*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Year</th>
<th>Number of Principal Observations</th>
<th>Number of Peer Coach Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limited Administrative Involvement**

**Rotations in Tenured Teacher Observations**

In some school districts, a rotating schedule provided limited administrative involvement. Some school districts divided teachers into groups based on the number and/or intensity of the annual review. “High-cycle” year, the highest level of a principal’s involvement, referred to the year in which an administrator observed a tenured teacher. Conversely, in “low-cycle” years
administrators did not observe tenured teachers. Administrators observed teachers in the high cycle for one year, and in the following year (or two years), peer coaches observed teachers. A high-cycle year involved a review by an administrator observing the teacher once in three years, and a low-cycle review involved only peer coach observations. Table 4 illustrates the range of administrative oversight of teachers on a rotation cycle.

Once tenured in these districts, the level of intensity with regard to teacher observations declined substantially. Conducting observations once every three years was the most frequent rotation cycle (see Table 3). The level of intensity regarding principal observation of tenured teachers declined rapidly, amounting to only two observations of tenured teachers over a seven-year period (Years 4-10) during a three-year cycle, and only one observation of tenured teachers during a four- or five-year cycle (Years 4-10). Table 4 illustrates a four-year rotation cycle. Once tenured, principal classroom observations of teachers may amount to one or two 60-minute observations over a seven-year period.
Table 3.

*Three-Year Cycle Prior to Q-Comp*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Year</th>
<th>Number of Principal Observations</th>
<th>Number of Peer Coach Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six principals, Rena, Rob, Penney, Don, Sid, and Paul reported they did not observe tenured teachers annually, but followed a rotation cycle for completing observations. Rena said in her previous district, where she was an administrator before Q-Comp, tenured teachers were on a three-year rotation cycle. Rob explained his district observed a tenured teacher once every four years, as did Don’s and Penney’s. Rob said his district also had some teacher goal setting in place related to technology. Sid and Paul stated that in their current districts, principals observed tenured teachers once every five years.
Table 4.

*Four-Year Cycle Prior to Q-Comp*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Year</th>
<th>Number of Principal Observations</th>
<th>Number of Peer Coach Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Probationary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Tenure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Tenure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**No Formal Requirements or Practice**

Five administrators, Leah, Jeff, Carl, Penny, and Don described a complete lack of structure in either policy or practice regarding tenured-teacher observations prior to Q-Comp. These districts had the lowest intensity of administrative involvement. Each of these districts left choices about teacher observations to principals.

Leah also explained her previous district had a model in which administrators reviewed teachers’ lesson plans. The plan for teacher supervision focused on the lesson-planning components from Hunter’s model (Nolan & Hoover, 2004). Jeff, Carl, and Penny did not recall any policy regarding required observations of tenured teachers in their current districts prior to Q-Comp. Penny’s district did not have a formal tenured teacher evaluation model in place when
she started working there. Four principals, Paul, Rob, Don, and Carl reported having worked previously in schools with policies and practices in place for tenured teacher observations before Q-Comp. Several principals raised doubts about the quality of teacher observations or their effectiveness even when observation practices were in place.

Paul, Rob, Don, and Carl all expressed concern about the effectiveness of the plans and the limited ability of a single annual observation to affect teacher growth. Paul said even in his previous district, in which annual observations occurred, an administrator could certainly gather data in an annual observation, but a growth model with a focus on improving teacher performance was difficult without additional observations. Later, Paul moved to a district with a five-year rotation involving a single observation of tenured teachers in each cycle, and reported his role affecting change diminished even more.

In Rob’s district, a teacher evaluation policy was in place, but Rob thought administrators’ practices did not align with the policy. Rob said he did not “believe most principals were doing the tenured teacher observations with fidelity prior to Q-Comp.”

I would say [these observations before Q-Comp.] were probably more of a passive policy [something one had to] remember to get . . . done. It’s sort of something to check off the list versus how do you really help teachers grow. . . . If you were a teacher who was functioning effectively . . . there was not a lot of attention paid to your professional development.

Rob also noted that some of the goal-setting practices that were part of the teacher evaluation model had little impact on teachers. He explained that while teachers did some professional development goal setting, for example, in professional growth targets in technology, the motivation for the goals was in part due to the district passing a technology referendum. Rob said, “I would say the fidelity and the follow-up that went with that were mixed. It wasn’t really effective.”
Don’s district also had a rotation for observations in place. He believed many districts lacked a formal process and this created a gap in the number and quality of formative conversations with teachers as well. Don explained:

There really was no schedule or structure to observing tenured teachers [before Q-Comp]. I think my experience is probably similar to a lot of administrators’ experiences that came through during that course of time. There were tenured teachers that may have [gone] years without getting evaluated. I mean the focus was on doing the probationary teachers. . . . [As a] result [of that] experience . . . I didn’t have as many instructionally focused conversations with teachers.

Carl was shocked when he came to his new district and discovered tenured teachers had not had an observation recently.

When I first got the job here, I found out that tenured teachers hadn’t been observed for years. Years! . . . I just needed to know the truth. One of the teachers told me that in 28 years, “I’ve never been observed.”

This experience was quite common. Scott described the effects of a weak or non-existent model of teacher supervision. He said a lack of teacher observations in his district worked against teacher collaboration. “There didn’t have to be a consistent level of commitment from all, because we weren’t all evaluated.”

Principals described their experiences and the number of formal observations of tenured teachers before Q-Comp. The number of tenured-teacher observations varied from one observation annually to no observations over long periods. In some districts, principals observed teachers annually, providing a high intensity of administrative guidance. One district adopted an alternative to the observation model, allowing teachers to research practices around their instruction and reporting their findings to the administrator. Many districts used a rotation of observation years (from three–five years), providing limited administrative guidance. Finally, several districts adopted no formal requirements for administrative observations, or the principal reported that the culture of administrators was such that they did not follow the policies in place.
Summary

Principals recognized the policies in their districts, which required administrators to conduct few or no observations, were ineffective. This lack of consistent practice (with the exception of high-intensity districts) set the stage for the development of a more comprehensive plan regarding observations of tenured teachers. Q-Comp required principal or peer observation of all tenured teachers every year. However, Q-Comp did not require administrators to be the sole observers or evaluators of teacher performance. In the next section, I describe how school districts developed their Q-Comp plans and sought approval for changes in practice from the Minnesota Department of Education.
CHAPTER FIVE – DISTRICTS DEVELOP Q-COMP PLANS

Q-Comp program guidelines required individual districts to devise a plan addressing five key areas: (a) career ladder advancement options, (b) job-embedded professional development, (c) teacher evaluation, (d) performance pay, and (e) an alternative salary schedule. To meet the requirements of career ladder advancement, districts created the position of instructional or peer coach. This new position allowed some teachers to advance their careers by becoming peer coaches and coaching other tenured teachers. Peer or instructional coaches performed some duties previously reserved for licensed principals. For example, coaches met with teachers and established mutually agreeable performance goals. They evaluated whether teachers met performance goals using data submitted by teachers under review. After determining whether teachers met their performance goals, coaches certified teacher eligibility for performance pay.

Coaches also conducted formal or clinical observations of teaching. Q-Comp plans addressed the number and cycle of required clinical observations of tenured teachers conducted by peer coaches and/or principals. These observations of teachers either supplemented or took the place of observations previously conducted by principals. Q-Comp plans established new roles for teacher leaders, and, as a result, changed principals’ roles and duties.

Principal Roles and Responsibilities Start to Change

This study concerned how principals redefined their roles and duties in response to the addition of peer or instructional coaches. The Q-Comp plans defined the way principals and coaches worked together. This included observing performances of teachers, and creating formal reports from the observations. In the next section, I examine differences in principals’ and coaches’ roles and authority with respect to teacher performance reviews after adoption of Q-Comp.
Responsibility for Tenured Teacher Observations Changes

The addition of peer coaches in school districts adopting Q-Comp added a new twist to administrators’ roles. Since some principals were unsure, at times, about the specific details of the Q-Comp plans adopted by their districts, I compared the findings from my interviews with the Q-Comp Summary Letters sent to the districts by the Minnesota Department of Education. The letters succinctly outline the Q-Comp plan proposed by each school district. These letters, in combination with the principals’ perceptions, created a more accurate picture of how the principals’ observation roles changed.

Changes to the Principals’ Roles in Observations

The Q-Comp plans submitted to the state were unique to each school district; the dynamic of how teachers functioned as peer coaches or instructional coaches varied from school district to school district. Teachers’ unions also had to approve the plans annually in cooperation with the school district. However, in every district someone observed tenured teachers at least three times each year, whether it was a principal, a teacher acting as a peer coach, or a peer colleague.

I examined how principals’ roles in observations changed with the implementation of Q-Comp. First, I compared how the role of principals conducting annual observations of teachers compared to the new requirements after districts adopted Q-Comp. Four of the principals had an increased administrative role in observations of tenured teachers, four principals’ roles stayed the same, and three of the principals had decreased roles in observations.

Four of the principals, Rena, Paul, Leah, and Jeff began observing teachers more frequently after their districts adopted Q-Comp. These four principals, who had low levels of involvement before Q-Comp, stated they increased their roles in observing tenured teachers after
the implementation of Q-Comp. For example, Rena previously experienced observing teachers on a rotation once every three years. After Q-Comp, she said her district began requiring principals to observe teachers annually. Paul, Leah, and Jeff were not adhering to a policy requiring teacher observations before Q-Comp. However, after the adoption of Q-Comp, Paul and Leah began observing teachers in a rotation once every three years. Paul, however, admitted Q-Comp required that he be only minimally involved in the teacher evaluation process. “We're pretty removed from the process at this point.” Jeff also began a rotation in which he observed teachers once every four years.

Four of the principals, Rob, Don, Carl, and Karen did not change the number of observations after adoption of Q-Comp compared to their practices before Q-Comp. Rob and Don continued to observe teachers on a rotation of once every four years. Carl and Karen reported that they did not observe tenured teachers prior to Q-Comp nor did they after the adoption of Q-Comp. In Karen's district, principals were no longer involved with formal tenured teacher observations. Karen said, “[Our] part of [supervision as principals] is to do what is called the Domain 4 part of [Framework for Teaching (Danielson, 2011)], which is about professional growth, their responsibilities, how are you growing as a person. That’s mainly our role in it.” Karen went on to explain that once a teacher “moves into continuing contract, we don’t have a formal evaluation process that we use for them. They work through their Q-Comp peer coach.”

Although the number of observations principals made changed, coaches also began observing teachers and changing the culture. Principals’ roles were affected indirectly by the addition of peer coaches who began observing teachers and giving the teachers feedback. Additionally, the addition of peer coaches introduced documentation of the observations.
Three principals, Penny, Sid, and Carol reported working in school districts that had adopted a formal system requiring reviews of tenured teachers prior to Q-Comp, but that their direct involvement in observations decreased after the adoption. In District C, Penny had been observing teachers once every three years. After her district adopted Q-Comp, the administrators were no longer required to conduct formal observations of tenured teachers.

Prior to Q-Comp, Sid’s role involved observing teachers once every five years. Under the Q-Comp policies he was no longer required to observe tenured teachers. Carol reported she had observed teachers annually before Q-Comp, but that it was no longer a part of her role to observe tenured teachers. Table 5 illustrates the principals’ roles in observations organized by district, and their practices before and after Q-Comp.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal (District)</th>
<th>Before Q-Comp in Current District According to Principal</th>
<th>Principal Observations with Q-Comp</th>
<th>Peer Coach Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leah (District A)</td>
<td>0; action research previous district lesson plan review</td>
<td>1 time every 3 years</td>
<td>3 times per year, but 2x in year observed by admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul (District A)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 time every 3 years</td>
<td>3 times per year, but 2x in year observed by admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeff (District B)</td>
<td>not sure</td>
<td>1 time every 4 years</td>
<td>3 times per year, but 2x in year observed by admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don (District B)</td>
<td>1 time every 4 years</td>
<td>1 time every 4 years</td>
<td>3 times per year, but 2x in year observed by admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sid (District C)</td>
<td>1 time every 5 years</td>
<td>0; Only if teacher chooses to have administrator conduct 1 of the 3 observations</td>
<td>3 (unclear who will do each of them)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penny (District C)</td>
<td>1 time per year Previous district had 5-year cycle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2–3 per year; teacher chooses model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob (District D)</td>
<td>1 time every 4 years</td>
<td>1 time every 4 years</td>
<td>3 times per year, but 2x in year observed by admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl (District E)</td>
<td>0; Previous district had 5-year cycle</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>3 times per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol (District E)</td>
<td>1 time per year</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>3 times per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rena (District F)</td>
<td>1 time every 3 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 times per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen District G</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Karen reported 2 times per year; MDE letter indicates 4 times per year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Peer Coaches Acquire Principals’ Responsibilities

The frequency of principal observations varied from district to district; however, the new role of peer coach became common. In each of the school districts, a teacher on special assignment acting as an instructional coach, or another teacher colleague, conducted classroom observations each year. Ten of the 11 principals (all but Karen) stated that three observations took place each year regardless of whether or not a principal was involved in one of the observations. In districts with a rotation model, coaches did all three observations in a low-cycle year, and conducted two in a high-cycle year; the administrator conducted the third evaluation. Therefore, in low-cycle years, the principal was not required to conduct a formal observation of a teacher or discuss the observed performance. In districts where principals no longer conducted any evaluations, their roles diminished. First, because they did not observe in low-cycle years and in some districts the principal was not required to make any observations. Second, the role of principals changed as peer coaches developed in the Q-Comp system and schools relied on them for observations.

The only outlier to this pattern was Rena’s district. She said coaches conducted three observations per year. Rena’s district began observing teachers annually, but later she mentioned teachers were only being “observed” in Domain 4 of Danielson’s (2011) Frameworks, which is a non-instructional domain titled Professional Practice.

Seven principals confirmed that peer coaches conducted two to three observations per year depending on whether or not the administrator also observed the teacher in a given year. Leah, Penny, Sid, Paul, Jeff, Don, and Rob said the Q-Comp coach observed teachers three times each year. Each of these principals said if a teacher was on a low cycle, a coach would observe a tenured teacher three times. Penny explained, “If you are a teacher that’s not on [a high cycle] . . .
. all three [observations that year] will be the teacher-instructional coach.” The other six principals constrained by the same model were not required to observe teachers in low-cycle years.

**Districts Accommodate Teacher Choice**

Four principals said their districts gave teachers options for peer coach observations. Rob, Carl, Don, and Sid said that in their districts the Q-Comp plan contained options about who would assess classroom instruction. Rob and Carl explained how their districts varied the observer during low-cycle years, using the same model in both districts. Carl stated, “Two observations are done by [instructional coaches] and then the third is a peer-to-peer (classroom teacher) observation.” Similarly, Sid explained in his district each teacher could choose one of two models for peer observations. He explained peer coaches observed teachers unless teachers chose to request the principal observe in lieu of one of the coaches. Sid said he was not aware of any teachers who selected the option for the principal to conduct the observation.

Two principals, Paul and Sid explained that in their districts Q-Comp guidelines allowed teachers to choose between two models for observation when peer coaches were observing. Teachers had a choice between three full class period classroom observations or a 10-observation mini-observation model in which the coach stops in 10 times for approximately 10 minutes each time.

Three principals, Carl, Carol, and Karen said a peer coach conducted all three observations each year. The principal did not have a defined role in the formal observation of teachers. Karen said her district had a regular plan for peer coaches to be in classrooms assessing instruction. She said, “at this point, they do . . . [the classroom observations each] year.”
Some Principals were Unclear about Where Observation Data is Stored

The Q-Comp program and peer coach observation paperwork was complicated in some districts. As peer coaches began to take responsibility for teacher observations, they created documentation. The data may have been part of an official employee record; however, in most cases districts stored the data in a location specifically designated for Q-Comp materials. In fact, many principals were unsure where the data were stored. Rob said the coaches generated three documents for each observation. He said, “I don’t believe the documentation goes anywhere.” Penny knew the paperwork was “stored somewhere because it’s . . . data that we need to provide as evidence for the Q-Comp program, but I don’t believe those go in their . . . observation file.” Rena said, “I think if I wanted to, I could [see the paperwork from the coaches].”

Paul noted that in his district,

Those documents are kept with the peer observers and . . . they are on a rotating cycle so [a teacher] might not get the same observer the entire time . . . so they pass that paper off . . . [and at the end] it goes to the . . . coordinator. . . . [Only] certain aspects, or a final sheet, are… sent to the district for compensation because it’s tied to compensation.

Paul clarified that this sheet would, “tell . . . if they’ve been proficient, they’ve met their targets . . . [and whether] they should receive compensation for it. It’s not all the documents.” He explained it was simply an indication of meets or does not meet. Paul felt he could “seek out paperwork” if he had a concern about a teacher.

Leah said concerning paperwork, everything “is collected in . . . [a] system and keeping records of observations and all of those things are part of that.” Jeff said, “The . . . plans they put together are very confidential unless a teacher wants to share the information with you.” He was unsure where the paperwork went. Paul added, “I don’t necessarily see the [peer observers’ paperwork].”
As peer coaches began to take on significant roles in modeling and evaluating instruction in classrooms, the role of principals as instructional leaders diminished. The participating principals were all licensed administrators. Their academic training included coursework in teacher supervision and each earned a license to take on such a role. However, peer coaches most often were not trained administrators. I considered how the peer coach would be trained and prepared for such a role.

**Coach and Administrator Training**

Under the Q-Comp system peer coaches took on significant new responsibilities previously reserved for school administrators. To prepare for this new role, the MDE required districts to submit a professional development plan for review and approval. The plan outlined the professional development activities designed to prepare coaches to conduct clinical observations of teaching. The department reviewed district plans and sent acceptance letters to districts, giving them permission to begin the program. Although professional development plans and activities differed among districts, every district adopted some type of training to prepare coaches for their new roles.

After receiving approval, district leaders implemented the plans. Some principals knew of, and even participated in, professional development activities planned for peer coaches, while other principals lacked knowledge of the type and quality of preparation experiences provided. Two principals, Karen and Leah knew about the professional development activities and led the peer coaching seminars in their districts. The contact and collaboration between principals and coaches started with professional development activities and continued with the provisions in the negotiated agreement regarding the working relationship between principals and coaches.
The only district that seemed to have a long-term collaborative plan for teacher and administrative observation with a focus on inter-rater reliability was District E. Carl and Carol’s district established a plan to ensure “inter-rater reliability by training all team members and principals/supervisors in observing for the ‘look fors’ in each . . . standard. In addition, observers will be paired up for multiple practice observations and conduct discrepancy analysis of performance results.” This model implied peer coaches and principals were equals.

Four principals, Leah, Paul, Jeff, and Don worked in school districts in which extensive peer coach training took place. Leah and Paul’s District A sent a letter that contained the statement:

Administrators, teacher instructional coaches, department chairs, the district literacy specialist and the district director of testing and assessment will be trained in Charlotte Danielson’s Frameworks of Teaching and district-adopted rubrics. Administrators and teacher instructional coaches will also be trained in methods of peer coaching, evaluation, and instructional practices related to literacy.

Sid and Penny worked in District C, which had an indirect approach intended to focus on inter-rater reliability through a committee. Their district’s letter included the statement, “The district will ensure a process is in place for inter-rater reliability through training in coordination with regular meetings of the Coordination Committee.” The Coordination Committee included teacher leaders, peer coaches, administrators, and the director of learning and accountability.

Three of the principals, Rob, Karen and, Rena representing Districts E, F, and G, respectively, experienced the adoption of peer coaches under a plan that had vague guidelines for training. In fact, District G’s statement was so vague that the state asked them to submit additional information, which I was unable to obtain.

The amount of training coaches received was limited, which led me to wonder whether the information shared between coaches and administrators supported the principals’
instructional goals. I considered the documents created by the peer coaches and wondered how the information might inform a principal about a tenured teacher’s instructional effectiveness.

**Information Shared Between Administrators and Coaches**

The responsibility for classroom observations of tenured teachers had shifted from principals to peer coaches. I wondered how this shift in responsibility affected principals’ goals. Did the feedback coaches gave to teachers help or hinder the principals’ supervisory roles? The exchanges of information between principals and coaches ran along a continuum of interaction. The continuum ranged from a consultant system, with a “firewall” intended to eliminate conversations between principals and peer coaches, to a team approach, that allowed a coach to speak to the principal when the coach perceived the teacher’s performance was unsatisfactory. In some cases, the coaches’ documentation of performance was available. However, on the other end of the continuum, two principals reported they worked with peer coaches in a team model. This model allowed coaches to communicate openly with administrators regarding a teacher’s instruction.

Overall, in a majority of cases peer coaches acted as consultants to the principals. In these cases, principals felt the negotiated terms of employee contracts did not allow for verbally sharing information between them and peer coaches.

**Consultant Approach to Supervision**

Seven of the principals, Penny, Jeff, Karen, Rob, Paul, Carol, and Sid felt their Q-Comp plans had some type of communication firewall in the negotiated agreement restricting communication between principals and instructional coaches. Penny said she would not know the coach’s opinion of an individual teacher’s instruction because “that’s on purpose, there’s a firewall.” Jeff said that in his district the firewall was intentional and purposeful. He said the Q-
Comp committee thought this process through and were conscientious about making sure the coach’s role is strictly a coach’s role, meaning the position did not infringe on the authority of the principal.

Karen said, “I can read anything a peer coach writes, but . . . I call it a firewall where a peer coach isn’t going to come to me and report a staff member.” Both Karen and Rob felt coaches sometimes had to work around the established system to communicate with the principal. Karen explained what might happen: “One of those two [coaches] could come back to the administrator and say ‘we had a chance to pop into so-and-so’s classroom.’” Rob agreed; his district has an established firewall preventing the instructional coaches from coming to talk to a principal about what they saw in the classroom. Rob explained how this firewall created a problem.

Instructional coaches are not evaluative, yet they also are watching when things are not going well, and so that’s been a challenge. . . . Now the hard part is how do you, as the administrator . . . get the information from the coaches to say, like, this person is struggling. . . . I know some of our coaches have struggled with them; they’re seeing [we as administrators have not seen]. . . . When you’re watching so many good teachers, and then you see a couple that just aren’t the same. It becomes apparent, and so then I know that times they’ll go to the Q-Comp facilitator and then possibly the union president to say we’ve got some concerns.

Paul said there is an exception when the firewall could be broken. In his district, the principal felt the Q-Comp agreement held a provision for communication in situations in which the peer coach observed teaching practices that were unsatisfactory. Paul explained how his district isolates communication. “I don’t see the peer . . . [observation paperwork] unless there’s some concern.”

**Performance Data Passively Available to Principals**

Karen, Carol, Sid, Penny, and Rob said even with a firewall in place, data about teacher performance is passively available or not available until the end of the school year, indicating a
process lacking in formative development. Karen and Carol explained they could see some of
the data electronically. Karen said she also used to get a paper copy at the end of the year.
Karen said when she used to get paper copies she was more likely to review the coaches’
paperwork. Karen said:

Now I need to go in and click on them and read them. It is good to read so that I see what
they are doing in teaching and I learn a lot from the peer coaches, just how I do my own
evaluations.

Four of the principals, Sid, Penny, Paul, and Rob received a summative overview
concerning whether or not teachers met their goals. Sid said the details of what teachers set as
instructional goals and whether or not they achieve them does not go back to the principal. He
added, “All we know is that they did or did not achieve the goal.” Penny said at the end of the
year the peer coach meets with the principal, and teachers who have not demonstrated
proficiency are given remediation opportunities. Then, additional observations with peer
coaches are scheduled.

Rob said, “Whether or not they made the goal is available. In the online system . . . I can
see whether or not they’re meeting targets.” I asked him whether he could see comments or just
checkmarks. Rob said, “Just the date of the observations. I do not get to see the summary of the
conversation nor the notes from the observation.”

**Overriding the Firewall for Deficient Performance**

Four principals, Don, Paul, Sid, and Karen noted there was a provision in the Q-Comp
agreement for instances in which a teacher is performing poorly. Don said in his district coaches
might notify principals if they were severely concerned about a teacher’s performance.

There is a mechanism within the context of Q-Comp for that [information] . . . to come
back to us . . . [Information] that a teacher is struggling [or that] they are not proficient in
these particular areas of these particular aspects.
He went on to explain that the information comes through peer reviews. “We have formal paperwork and so they’re doing their observations or meeting with teachers, and then they would bring it to the administrator’s attention that this is an area of concern [or] an area of issue.”

Although Paul told me early in the interview there was a firewall in his district, he later contradicted himself and added, “The instructional coach needs to verify that the teacher meets or exceeds the standards . . . in each area and if the coach doesn’t honestly feel like they can say that then they will notify the principal.” Paul continued to explain that the coaches were very conscious about maintaining that firewall. He said even before the coach brought concerns to him, he had recognized the issues regarding that teacher’s performance.

Sid and Karen both felt they could circumvent the firewall if a teacher was performing at the lowest (unsatisfactory) level. Sid said his district had a unique way to bridge some of the gaps in communication. One way was via the Q-Comp Advisory Committee. The committee included instructional coaches and the teachers’ union president. He said, “There’s this ongoing discussion as the year progresses about what kind of impact we’re having, what would we change for the upcoming year so that a plan can be presented.” Sid believed these meetings presented an opportunity to mold the Q-Comp plan based on the ideas of well-intentioned stakeholders. He added, the advisory committee “probably helps us spread the good will that does truly exist because not everybody can be there, and understand that we’re trying to make improvements that are helpful.”

Rena simply hopes the coach will feel obligated to tell her if there is a concern about a teacher. Rena remarked, “If there’s a concern, I am hoping that the coach is having a
conversation with me about it.” She did not believe that this type of situation had occurred in her building to date.

Although the consultant model isolated the principal from what the coaches were doing, some of the principals felt there were benefits to the model. They felt having a gap in communication meant the teacher could trust the coach more. Other principals thought the information about the trends the coaches were seeing was valuable.

Principal Reports Concerns to the Coach

Karen, Leah, and Rena said they might use the coach to help them support a struggling teacher. Karen indicated she might give a struggling teacher the option of getting assistance from the coach. She might allow that teacher to decide whether the peer coach might help improve her performance, but Karen generally reserved this approach for probationary teachers.

I would like to invite your peer coach to our meeting . . . or you can take my notes and talk with your peer coach without me, but I think [the coach would] . . . be a good resource [we involve them].

She also noted she might follow up with a corrective action plan.

Then I believe it . . . becomes my responsibility to do the observations and evaluations. They might be able to maintain the peer coach just for coaching but they will no longer be working with the performance pay system with them.

Leah acknowledged a principal could override the existing system if a concern came to her attention. Leah said, “The coaches do the observations, unless a principal [says] that they wanted to be conducting more observations.” Leah explained if she were concerned about a teacher, she would talk to the instructional coach and the teacher. For example, Leah reported she directed the instructional coach by saying, “Work with Mrs. Smith on this. Okay?” She added, “I will often say [to the teacher about whom I’m concerned] ‘I’m going to ask Mrs. Jones to work with you on making sure this happens.’”
Rena said she, too, would talk to the peer coach if she were concerned about a teacher. Rena explained, “When the teacher is doing poorly in general . . . I’m going to the coach and having a conversation.” In these instances, principals are using coaches as assistants or support staff to help them do their jobs.

**Administrators Support the Firewall**

Although the firewall restricted communication between principals and coaches, and lowered the information available to principals, some of them appreciated the firewall. The principals explained the creation of the firewall and the reasons it existed.

Three principals, Jeff, Don, and Rob saw the peer coach as a support. The role of the instructional coach was to be purely a part of a support system in Jeff’s district. He explained the coach is not there to evaluate. He distinctly stated that the principal is the evaluator. He believed the creators of the district’s Q-Comp plan intentionally established a wall. Similarly, Leah viewed the role of the coach as that of a mentor.

They’re a coach and they’re helping someone to get better, they’re not evaluating, per se, they’re identifying where a teacher falls out of rubric in a given lesson opportunity. In my supervision, I’m supervising that teacher for 178 days a year, and, so, my record-keeping [and] my judgments are based on my administrative kinds of preparation.

Although Don does not discuss individual teacher performance with coaches, he felt the coaches know his vision for moving forward. Don thinks they can contribute by communicating a holistic picture of what they see. In some ways, Don sees coaches as a tool with which he can measure his progress. He said:

In our district, we also have instructional coaches now at each building. We work closely with them so that they know exactly . . . where you want to head as a building . . . so that everything is really aligned . . . when teachers are having their pre- and post-conferences and being evaluated or coached through Q-Comp. All of those reflective conversations support the overall vision and mission that you have for your building. So, I think that’s where most of your energy goes into as an administrator, ensuring that that system is really working to the benefit of the vision and mission you’re trying to accomplish.
Don and Rob both believed the firewall helps establish trust between the instructional coach and the observed teacher. Don said:

I think you want to establish that trust and a relational factor . . . that teachers can go in and observe each other and engage in those conversations and not have to be concerned that that’s part of some evaluation process.

Rob felt that it is “really to create trust . . . between the coaches and the teachers. . . . If that didn’t exist then whose side . . . are the coaches on?” Jeff reflected, “I think they’re trying to make sure that . . . [there is] a clear line that the coach isn’t there to evaluate; the coach is there to develop instructional strategies”.

Paul and Don supported the concept of a firewall. Paul believed the firewall was “critical to the success of the program [to maintain] the trust between the teacher and instructional coach.” Paul explained the system was set up this way to avoid a conflict, because if the teacher feels the instructional coach is a “snitch” for the principal then there will be no productive conversations. He thought the rubric builds a framework for discussions.

Don said he did not engage in conversations specific to individual teachers, but that he did value the coaches’ input and had conversations about trends they were seeing.

I think that was purposely set up so that the culture across the teachers would be that coaching is about personal growth. It’s not evaluative. . . . The peer observations are simply shared between the observer and the person being observed. . . . In terms of any write-ups or any documentation from peer observations . . . I don’t see those. Those aren’t something that comes to me, which is perfectly okay.

The consultant approach had some variations, but none of the principals working with a consultant approach collaborated with their peer coaches unless a teacher was really struggling. Some districts had systems in place for coaches to alert principals if they observed poor performance.
A Team Approach to Teacher Supervision

The team approach to supervision is on the other end of the continuum of principal communication with peer coaches. In the team approach, principals served as the sole evaluators of employee performance, but collaborated with peer coaches, who were still active participants, in the coaching and development of teachers with the assistance of other teachers (peer coaches). Principals worked closely with peer coaches.

Carol and Carl, principals in District E, engaged in a team approach with peer coaches. In Carol's district, the instructional coaches “try to be very open about what is going on between teachers, instructional coaches, and principals.” Carol and her instructional coach meet regularly. Carol stated:

If a teacher . . . isn’t achieving the standard, [the instructional coach is] free to share . . . information with . . . [the principal] about teacher performance. . . . Whether they’re good, bad, whatever . . . [Q-Comp] is very transparent.

She does not supervise tenured teachers on a cycle, but does so when a concern arises. Carol said, “Right now if a teacher is involved with a formal observation with a licensed administrator it’s because something was flagged . . . when the [instructional] coach did an observation that suggested that an administrator was needed.”

Carol thought the culture of her school allowed the instructional coach to be transparent with the classroom teachers as well. When a teacher’s performance is in question, Carol felt teachers would be aware that the coach would involve the principal. Carol explained:

I always make sure that there is a . . . transparency there between the teacher and the coach . . . [and] that the coach has shared with the teacher that I’m probably the next step. [The coach will] encourage the teacher to come to me.

Carl said he and his instructional coach share information openly. In his district, as the building principal he is able to communicate openly with the instructional coach. Carl explained
how concerns about a teacher might come to his attention. “I have a conversation with the instructional coach. . . . I will tell you right up front: I spend much more time in conversation with the instructional coach than I do looking at that paperwork.”

**Paperwork Shared in Team Model**

Carl and Carol also had access to written information that could be included in the exchange between the instructional coach and the school administrator. In some districts, the summative paperwork with basic information about the formal observation was passively available to principals. Carl said, “The summative [sheet] get[s] loaded into a system that I can view, too.” He explained that the teacher, the coach, and human resources all have access to them. He added, “We tell our coaches I don’t want them taking all their time doing paperwork. One reason might be that the paperwork is limited by the amount of information written.” Carl explained the information was limited because “they summarize…with check [marks] and short statements [about] what that meeting was like. . . . [I tell them ‘I would rather have you] spend your time in conversation with your colleague, not creating the paperwork.’”

Carol, who also worked in District E, commented on the written paperwork available to her. “One [of the ways] we share information is that all of those observations [by an instructional coach] are uploaded into a system that I can access so I can see the observation notes.” She added, "I have the summary [of Q-Comp paperwork]. . . . they upload everything. . . . I can see [whether or not there is a] classroom management issue, for instance.” She noted, “We really view . . . those observation times as an opportunity for growth rather than focusing so much on the proficiency side of things.” Carol believed legislators intended Q-Comp to be a teacher growth model. According to Carol, Q-Comp does not focus on being proficient. . . . We focus on how can we help you grow in this particular area and we really encourage teachers to choose . . . rubrics within the standards in which they
need support on . . . that there can be some professional growth on. . . . So we work more from a “how can I grow and get better as a teacher,” rather than that whole proficiency piece.

The team approach to supervision allows the coaches and the principal to share information. Information is available in a written format, but also shared verbally. “In our building . . . we have a team of observers. I meet with them . . . on a somewhat regular basis just to hear how things are going.” The team model allows both peer coaches and the principal to maintain a role in the formative process of teacher growth. However, only two principals used this model, both of whom worked in the same school district. The consultant model was far more prevalent, even though it may be limiting the amount of time teachers are in the classroom.

**Principals Make Adaptations to Appear Vital in Supervisory Roles**

In the absence of regular clinical supervision or formal observation as a means of data collection, school principals have found other ways to measure the instructional skills of teachers. The change in the administrative role with respect to tenured teacher observations has left some principals feeling they need to develop new ways to monitor teacher performance. Principals discussed strategies for monitoring teacher performance and described how they used the information. Principals agreed they use the classroom walk-through model and non-instructional data collection more frequently.

**Collecting Data about Instruction**

The participating principals had a low level of involvement before Q-Comp. The addition of instructional coaches diluted principals’ roles because the observation tasks are similar. Principals felt they needed to maintain an instructional leader role. I asked principals about other ways they collected data about teachers’ performances. Administrative walk-throughs were a common element used among the principals interviewed.
All of the principals except Sid stated they conduct classroom walk-throughs as a means of collecting information about teacher performance. David (2007) defined walk-throughs and their purpose in an article published in *Educational Leadership*:

These observations typically involve looking at how well teachers are implementing a particular program or set of practices that the district or school has adopted. . . . Afterward, they report their findings formally or informally to one or more audiences. Walk-throughs are *not* intended to evaluate individual teachers or principals or even to identify them by name in post-observation reports. Rather, the goals of walk-throughs are to help administrators and teachers learn more about instruction and to identify what training and support teachers need. (italics in original, p. 81)

Seven principals, Paul, Penny, Jeff, Rob, Don, Karen, and Carl were all using walk-throughs as a way to monitor teacher performance. Many of them used walk-throughs as a primary method to monitor teachers’ practices. Paul said:

After cycling through Q-Comp, you know, we realized . . . we wanted to be in classrooms and so, we are doing just stop-in kind of interviews . . . kind of observations with regards to teachers and so, it’s kind of that walk-about sort of . . . idea. . . . This past week, I was in . . . the sixth grade classrooms, one for a half a period, one for the other half of a period, just kind of, touching base, seeing, seeing what’s going on within those pieces. . . . That’s something that we implemented so, there isn’t really a formal structure but teachers did give feedback that they miss seeing administrators in the classrooms and we were always invited. So, there, when, you know, when people are doing certain things, they’ll say, “Oh, come on in, we’re doing this today,” or you pass them in the hallway and they say, “If you have a couple of minutes, come in and see this.”

Penny said she conducts “informal drop-in observations . . . [which are] an individual school structure [versus a district initiative].” Jeff said he does "quick walk-throughs. . . . It’s personal conversations with the teachers beforehand . . . just getting a general sense of where things are at [in the school] . . . walking through the building.” Rob also felt that it was important that he be in the classroom. He said he set a goal of being in classrooms frequently on an informal basis to focus on observing kids in the classroom. Don and Karen also felt they learned a lot during walk-throughs. Karen felt that walk-throughs and being in teachers’ classrooms were important to support teachers and students. She said one of the things about,
“… being in there [during walk-throughs] is that I feel like it’s a lot more than about the teacher’s performance.”

Carl said walk-throughs are part of the regular practice in his school. Carl said principals are in classrooms quite a bit. He explained they are typically looking at things associated with current initiatives. Carl also disclosed some of his walk-throughs are non-instructional. He included attendance at meetings with teachers as walk-through data.

Leah developed systems for classroom walk-throughs. She said the district procedures related to Q-Comp would not be sufficient for her to supervise teachers adequately. As a result, Leah put together a rubric to measure teacher performance. She explained:

I have to be in classrooms daily. . . . I’ve created a rubric based on what the district expectations are and then what would be exemplary and I’ve collected data by looking at all their Schoology types and then I have actually given feedback on how’s it going. . . . I do that publicly and privately.

Walk-through data become a way to enhance principals’ roles in supervising tenured teachers. Principals also told me about several other ways in which they learn about teachers’ performances. They gain important information by considering non-instructional data.

**Non-Instructional-Based Data Collection**

While walk-throughs were the only way principals gathered instructional data directly from the classrooms, principals described other non-instructional methods of collecting teacher performance data. All principals reported using a different type of secondary source data collection as a means of monitoring teacher progress. Principals gathered information most frequently from parent or student feedback. They also used assessment data and information from other staff members.

Six principals, Carl, Don, Paul, Sid, Rena, and Leah all mentioned they used information from parents and students when they felt something indicated the principal needed to examine
teacher performance. Carl and Don said they gathered data through conversations they have with parents of students in the teachers’ classes or with students who are in the class. Paul also made use of parent feedback. Paul mentioned speaking to parents in person and on the phone, and communicating through e-mails. Rob said he also used parent information to gather data and believes it is very informative. Rob said, “Parent feedback, [via] calling [with] both compliments and an occasional concern” is informative. Sid said things come to his attention “through parent reports or teachers have concerns about each other sometimes [about] what’s happening across a grade level or within a department.” Sid noted, “That's not part of a paid evaluation system, but it certainly leads to conversations and then a variety of outcomes could come from those including improvement plans or goals set between the teacher and myself.” Rena and Leah not only spoke to parents, they also observed teachers interacting with students and parents.

Collecting Additional Data to Indirectly Measure Teacher Performance

The principals interviewed said assessment data were another component of teacher performance measurements. Six principals, Carol, Jeff, Paul, Carl, Leah, and Rena used assessment data as an indicator of a teacher’s performance. Carol had the most detailed description about how data informed her about teacher performance.

Carol takes an in-depth look at teacher data and meets with the teacher to discuss student progress. Carol said she looks at North West Education Assessment (NWEA) data, progress-monitoring data, and historical data. She is looking for what type of online progress reporting system the teachers have. Carol said she also meets with teachers regularly. Carol explained, “I have . . . what I call teacher talks, at least three teacher talks each year with individual teachers . .
and we talk about each individual child’s performance.” Carol gave an example of some work she had done recently with the data.

I just disaggregated a bunch of information to find out what kind of growth our key students were making . . . in both reading and math to see if it was typical [or] if it was accelerated. For example, what progress has this cohort made historically, what kind of growth they made last year; we see if there are things in place for them [the students] to support them.

Carol also explained they examine students who are not performing at grade level or below 50% of proficiency. Carol also works closely with the teachers to determine what they can learn from the data. She said they analyze reports from DIBELS and take a look at yearly progress data.

I take a look at that with them, not just more formative data. [not only] NWEA, we take a look at either weekly or bi-weekly data that the teacher is acquiring to find out how students are progressing. . . . That’s an opportunity then for us to ask the question is what I’m doing as teacher, is that making, is that making the biggest difference for the child, or is there something I need to do differently to make sure that we can accelerate . . . support that child in growing?

Leah and Carl said they also used teachers’ own record keeping or grades as data to monitor teacher performance. Leah said she pays attention to a teacher’s ability to keep on top of record keeping or the use of technology. She looked at classroom data to determine what type of impact teachers’ instruction was making on students. She said, “I wouldn’t know what’s going on in reading, writing, math, science, social studies. . . . I meet one-on-one with every teacher, that’s really critical.”

Carl also said he uses data related to student grades. He tries to identify trouble spots as opposed to celebrations of good teachers. He clarified that every term they review grade distributions of teachers against the team; for example, he compares the distributions of grades for the geometry course among all the geometry teachers.
Although Carol looks at data, three principals observe teachers looking at data. All three of these principals have used professional learning community meetings as a way to measure growth. Jeff said he gathers data related to meetings in a different way. He uses minutes from collaborative team meetings, or feedback he gets from workshops about programs they have initiated within the building. Jeff said the result is “a lot more informal conversations and journaling type things.” Paul said, "We have a professional learning communities and . . . teachers are all connected to PLCs. [They attend] meetings in the professional learning communities and they’ve talked about the . . . [progress].” Carl revealed:

We are a gigantic school and . . . I hate that we have to do this but part of our documentation for meetings is we have a little checklist for staff meetings and stuff like that. I’d rather not do that frankly…I think people would still come to meetings if we didn’t have Q-Comp.

While these principals were using data from meetings to gauge teacher performance, one principal said he also learned about teacher performance from other teachers or other meetings. Jeff said that one source of information about his staff is teachers’ colleagues.

A lot of times, their colleagues will come to me with concerns . . . or if there’s a particular event that is happening in their life personally. . . . a lot of times those things come to my office and I kind of keep an eye on that.”

Rena agreed, and added that she also gathers information from their work via “committees that they’re on.”

**Summary**

The implementation of Q-Comp changed the role of principals. Q-Comp led to the addition of peer coaches who had more responsibility for teacher observations than administrators did. The Q-Comp plans in each district established guidelines about the way principals and coaches work together, including performance observations, and formal reports.
created from the observations. These changes affected the roles and authority of both principals and coaches as they related to teacher performance reviews.
CHAPTER SIX
THE RISE OF THE PEER COACH AND CHANGES IN PRINCIPAL ROLES

In my study, I addressed the roles and practices of principals before Q-Comp implementation and the changes occurring after the participants’ school districts adopted Q-Comp. During this time of change, principals continued to refine their functions and responsibilities in an attempt to adapt to their altered roles.

I conducted initial interviews with nine principals in 2013 to probe their experiences with Q-Comp. In 2015, I interviewed seven of the original nine principals to gain an updated perspective regarding roles, perceptions, and practices. I specifically sought to know about the participants’ lived experiences after the inclusion of instructional coaches and changes in practices. I focused on principals’ perceptions of their roles and changes over the past decade, a period roughly approximating the passage and implementation of Q-Comp. I learned implementing Q-Comp affected more than principal roles—a new collaboration developed between and among principals, peer coaches, and teachers, increasing the perceived level of professionalism and renewing focus on student learning. Additionally, principals reported increased awareness with regard to addressing poor teacher performance.

The Impact of Q-Comp Changes in Schools

The Q-Comp plan included changes in teacher performance reviews. In this chapter, I describe how administrators changed their roles and interactions with teachers, the impact of these changes on school culture, and the changes that occurred after implementation of the peer coach model. Two primary themes emerged. The first theme concerns how the roles and responsibilities of principals changed over time after the implementation of Q-Comp and the addition of peer coaches involved in conducting formal teacher observations and reviews. The
second theme concerns the change in school culture and the relationship between principals and coaches.

**Changes in Principal Roles and Responsibilities**

The role of the principal changed when Q-Comp became a district initiative. The participants identified several changes. Principals incorporated new methods for monitoring instruction and focused their efforts on under-performing and pre-tenured faculty. Principals also raised the level of professional dialogue with teachers about instruction, using walk-throughs, and increasing opportunities to engage in professional dialogue focusing on instruction.

Principals also developed relationships with peer coaches over time, and discovered ways to work successfully with them. The principals respected the work of the peer coaches. They established relationships and defined roles helping them share leadership while maintaining their roles and authority as the heads of their schools.

Principals worried less about conducting formal observations of tenured teachers due to the implementation of peer coaches. Instead, they concentrated their efforts on assessing non-tenured teacher performance and those tenured teachers performing unsatisfactorily. To stay in touch with tenured teachers on low cycle, five principals, Don, Karen, Jeff, Penny, and Carl conducted classroom visits periodically to maintain their involvement with, and knowledge of, instructional practices in their schools.

Principals felt a gap existed in their day-to-day knowledge of teacher performance and student learning. To stay connected to the work of teachers on a daily basis, principals replaced formal classroom observations with informal classroom walk-throughs to increase contact time with teachers. In some cases, the district put a precise protocol in place regarding classroom
walk-throughs. Principals used classroom walk-throughs to monitor teacher practices and positively influence school culture.

Many principals selected walk-throughs as a way to get a view of teacher instruction, but some districts eventually developed requirements for conducting walk-throughs. Five principals, Carl, Penny, Jeff, Karen, and Rena explained they relied heavily on walk-throughs. Carl said he was in a position to visit more classrooms because of the walk-through protocol compared to the time needed to conduct a formal observation. He noted that although the district had similar walk-through protocols in place for many years, it did not require walk-throughs. Penny said her district created a “mini walk-through” or what she called, “just opportunities to sit in on tenured teachers’ classroom[s] . . . because . . . time spent in classrooms [was] lost without observations.” Jeff felt walk-throughs helped him be proactive about concerns and made him more involved in the process of teacher development. Karen explained that in the last six years she had conducted many walk-throughs. She felt she probably would not use the data for evaluation, but it gave her a clear understanding of the instruction at all grade levels. Karen explained she watched instruction, but did not write notes about her visits unless she had concerns about the teacher. Rena explained she was required by the district to conduct walk-throughs each week.

Surprisingly, a walk-through was not always a short visit to the classroom. In fact, many activities counted as walk-throughs depending on the individual principal. One principal had a broad interpretation of the term walk-through. Rena stated any time she attended a meeting or was in a classroom could count as one of her walk-throughs.

Classroom walk-throughs were just one of the new practices adopted by principals. After the implementation of Q-Comp, principals also increased the number of formal conversations with teachers. In many cases, principals initiated conversations in order to assist teachers in
developing student achievement goals and personal instructional goals in the fall. Principals also stated they met with teachers again at the end of the year to measure progress toward those goals.

The participants changed the way they gathered information about teacher performance. One important area to consider was how the evolution in their roles changed the manner in which principals addressed under-performing tenured teachers. The principals explained how they addressed concerns about teacher performance in an era of Q-Comp.

Four principals, Karen, Carol, Paul, and Sid reported they would observe a tenured teacher if they believed he or she was struggling. Although principals indicated teacher performance was important, they seemed satisfied with the efforts of their current staff. Karen said she would observe a tenured teacher if she learned the teacher was struggling. Carol explained that if a coach reported a teacher did not meet proficiency, she would observe the teacher the following year (essentially moving the teacher to high cycle). Paul revealed that when he identified performance concerns, he provided a continuous improvement plan for the teacher to improve practice.

Sid discussed why the lack of time makes it hard to conduct more observations.

I do very little observation of tenured teachers. It is not because I do not think it is important. It is not because I do not want to. It is purely an issue of time management. There are so many tasks to complete. In an elementary setting with teachers being on leave and even a small amount of turnover on an annual basis, I have so many observations to do of non-tenured staff, like the pre-observation, the observation, the post, doing my write-ups, among all the other things. I just have not been able to make that happen. I feel like it is something I have missed [out] on, but it’s the reality and the truth.

Two principals, Carl and Don said they observed a teacher in low cycle when concerns came to their attention. Both become more involved in classroom observation in order to address issues. Carl noted that he had experience observing a tenured teacher in low cycle. Don recalled
an experience two years earlier in which he conducted a formal observation as part of an improvement plan process.

Principals felt they changed their roles by having more dialogue with teachers. Principals found discussions with teachers were a key element in their new roles. Five administrators said their roles involved conversations with teachers in which they contemplated the teacher’s instructional practices. When principals conducted a formal evaluation, they had a conference before the observation to learn about the lesson plan and a meeting afterward for reflection and to share feedback. Tenured teachers involved in Q-Comp had a conference in the fall to set instructional goals with either a coach or a principal and met again in the spring to discuss their progress toward the goal.

Don, Karen, Jeff, and Paul found themselves spending more time deliberating about teaching and speaking about instruction to building staff. Don said he involved high-cycle teachers through a conference with him in the fall and again in the spring. In these meetings, they discussed the goals the teacher set for himself or herself. Karen made it a priority to be in classrooms talking about what she was seeing at the time. Paul revealed the observation protocols for administrators allowed additional time, which facilitated more collegial or coaching conversations.

Principals scheduled goal-setting meetings with teachers in the fall. They met again in the spring to reflect on those goals. One principal, Carl, described how he has recently scheduled more meetings with each classroom teacher than ever before. In these meetings, they discuss goals, which may include feedback to teachers about walk-through data. The meetings may also include discussion based on the work the teacher is doing in the professional learning community meetings with other teachers.
The responsibilities of principals changed in the Q-Comp era. Principals went to classrooms more frequently to observe teachers or to conduct classroom walk-throughs. New responsibilities layered on those duties, which previously existed, and the additional workload was an overwhelming concern for many of them. The principals admitted the scope of their jobs was stressful at times given the changes and additional duties.

Some principals struggled with the change in roles and duties. Four principals (Don, Carol, Carl, and Sid) found that they did not have enough time because of the new requirements for teacher performance reviews. Don believed Q-Comp added another layer of management responsibilities. He felt the downside to Q-Comp was that it created another “bureaucratic system” that schools and districts have to manage. Carol thought there was more time spent on the teacher evaluation process than before Q-Comp. She said it feels like she is jumping through hoops if she does not always focus on her responsibilities and carry them out efficiently.

Carl remembered that every spring he found himself in a time management struggle because of all the meetings he scheduled with teachers. Sid found himself spending time trying to resolve issues arising between employees because of the additional elements of Q-Comp.

Carl stated he shifted a higher percentage of his time toward work related to instructional leadership rather than management. He believed the administrator is also a coach in his own respect. He noted the difference between being an administrative coach and a peer coach is the administrative coach also has to implement programs.

Similarly, Jeff recognized the increase in work. He felt the new responsibilities resulted in a loss of flexibility. He thought there was an overwhelming amount of required paperwork and documentation in Q-Comp. He also worried that teachers might be losing the value and power of personal conversations with the principal.
Penny believed her role expanded which, in turn, increased peer engagement. She explained that conversations about uniform expectations and a focus on key components of effective teaching were useful. Penny said in the past, her primary focus was on instruction, but now her district implemented more significant data points such as classroom assessments.

Karen was the only principal who expressed concerns about the social and emotional needs of students, rather than the adults. Karen’s concern about Q-Comp was the time commitment required and how that conflicted with meeting the needs of students. She was concerned Q-Comp distracted teachers from meeting students’ needs. Karen felt that the standards jeopardized community building in the classroom and enjoyable times for kids. She said, “I think we always have to question ourselves, is this [the] best use of our time?”

One principal worried about how teachers viewed the role of the principal given the Q-Comp changes. Rena was concerned about how teachers perceived her as an instructional leader. She wondered whether teachers saw her as the instructional leader in light of the role of the coach.

Q-Comp changed the roles of principals. The participating principals said they focused most of their attention on under-performing and pre-tenured faculty. They found new ways to monitor instruction in classrooms. They also concentrated on having conversations with teachers emphasizing professional dialogue about instruction. The principals began working with peer coaches who changed the school environment.

**Principals and Peer Coaches**

Although the principals experienced changes in their roles after the addition of the new role of peer coach, they valued the role of the peer coaches in two key ways. First, they considered the collaboration with the coaches useful. Second, they learned from the coaches.
The principals reported that as peer coaches became part of the school landscape, collaboration with them increased. Chapter Four referred to this model as the consultant model. Although a firewall remained in most of those school districts, over time, the principals reported a shift toward more collaborative relationships with the coaches causing the distinct line of the firewall to blur.

Many of the principals reported they enjoyed their relationships with the coaches and were happy to have them in their schools. Four principals, Don, Penny, Sid, and Jeff appreciated the collaboration with the coach and recognized peer coaches helped them learn strategies for coaching teachers. The principals increased their own expertise about instructional coaching and conducting reflection meetings with teachers based on their interactions with the coach. The coach’s expertise and on-the-job experience in the same school, with the same teachers, helped fulfill the school’s vision, an additional bonus.

Principals relied on coaches because they had become so familiar with their work. Don said, “I enjoy working with our instructional coaches who have gone through all of the formal training, and they live and breathe it. . . . I learn a lot from them in terms of how to coach.” He added the coaches had developed their coaching skills over the years. These skills enabled the coaches to ask meaningful questions, leading to teacher reflection. In the long term, educators assumed these reflective practices would lead to improved instruction and increased student achievement.

Penny remembered at the beginning of her career principals were the only individuals with an opportunity to interact or engage with staff members regarding their performance. In the current model, the coach conducts those conversations. Penny recognized her present role as a more collaborative process with peer observers, peer coaches, and mentors. Principals felt this
new relationship was beneficial to the coach and the principal. Sid concluded principals and coaches both appreciated the collaboration. “In my experience [the initiative to collaborate] is driven by principals because they're coming from some kind of administrative structure where there are some top-down expectations.” Jeff also appreciated the peer coach as a colleague with whom he collaborated even more than he did with his administrative colleagues.

Surprisingly, some principals thought the coaches not only helped the teachers grow professionally, but that they also influenced principal growth. The coaches challenged principals to reflect on their instructional supervision practices. Two of the principals, Don and Jeff felt working with instructional coaches helped them grow professionally. Don said the coaches are important because they help him stay out in front, and make sure he knows about changes going on. He said coaches helped him develop support for teachers. Don thought the additional training with the coach on quality classroom instruction, and the chance to apply that knowledge to classroom instruction, was a benefit. Jeff believed collaboration with coaches strengthened his understanding of instruction and professional development with respect to teachers. Paul said peer coaches helped the teachers help him develop.

[I have] more of a well-defined understanding of my thinking, and of my thought process because I meet regularly with the teacher instructional coaches, and we talk about goals, and we talk about vision and where we want to go, and what we feel are the big challenges.

Paul believed part of being an instructional leader is leading a group of coaches who fan out and have a greater impact in the school. The principal sets the goals and vision for the school, but the coach has more contact with teachers. Paul said the coach has a personalized communication method, which allows Paul to have a liaison who reaches each teacher individually.
Two principals, Paul and Sid felt classroom teachers started to view the role of principals differently. Paul said the principal’s role went from simply maintaining management skills to also being an instructional leader. Sid concurred, “It's not the old model of a principal running a staff meeting and setting the expectations for how the month is going to be laid out, what activities exist, and trying to work in building goals into that.” Sid’s statement gives merit to the idea that principals are not only managers; they are also instructional leaders. Carol believed the Q-Comp changes brought more accountability into the system by involving more people in the leadership process. She recognized the responsibilities no longer lie solely on her shoulders.

**Model Benefits and Liabilities**

As school districts developed Q-Comp plans, they established structures for communication between school principals and peer coaches. The consultant model was one end of the continuum. This model limited the communication between the principal and the peer coach. On the other end of the continuum, as I described in Chapter Four, the team model allowed free communication and collaboration between principals and peer coaches. The majority of schools continued to lean toward the consultant model, but principals felt they could still collaborate with coaches. The principals defined the benefits and liabilities of the model based on their experiences.

Principals working with the consultant model believed establishing trust between coaches and teachers was foundational. Six principals, Don, Sid, Karen, Carl, Jeff, and Paul maintained the consultation model. These principals believed establishing trust between coaches and teachers was crucial. Don believed having a firewall allowed coaches to establish and maintain a level of trust with teachers. He said the consultant model established a clear line: the coach observer was not in the classroom to perform the kinds of evaluative duties a principal would
perform. Sid also felt the firewall model helped teachers trust coaches. It allowed teachers and coaches to converse without fear of negative ramifications. Using the model helped teachers take risks and cultivate their practice. Karen regarded the consulting approach as beneficial in that coaches could share or distribute advice to teachers upon request.

Carl said he and the coach have aligned their work, despite the limits on their communication. He believed he and the peer coach share a common language and practices. Sid believed the additional collaboration between peer coaches and principals established consistency, although they do not talk about specific classrooms. He said principals and coaches spend time working on inter-rater reliability and discussing classroom instruction via videos or articles.

Jeff said maintaining the firewall has been very deliberate. He found one benefit of the consultant model was teachers could hone their skills while being supported; the classroom teachers knew they were working to be the best instructors they could be. He believed in turn that could positively affect student achievement.

Paul agreed, and noted he wants the conversations between instructional coaches and teachers to be authentic, meaningful conversations; therefore, trust is important. Paul explained his district specifically developed a plan with which the teacher's union, the building administration, and district administration were all comfortable.

Three principals, Carl, Jeff, and Penny said the coaches assisted them in monitoring teachers. Carl appreciated more people observing and addressing classroom instruction. He said the coach was always present when he held administrative meetings. He explained a coach could relate the specifics of a topic to classroom procedures. Carl stated the coaches know what
happens in the classrooms “based on the fact that they’re in them.” Jeff thought getting more input from those involved in the teacher improvement process was beneficial.

Penny believed Q-Comp procedures helped teachers move toward the same goals, but they also added accountability. She found the district conducted more surveys about practice. Jeff believed utilizing the coach model develops teacher leaders who have the potential to step into administrative roles as they become available. He said, “You're building that capacity leadership-wise across the district, and growing leaders from within, which is also a real benefit to the district.”

Principals in school districts using the consultant model admitted there were limitations to the model. Four principals, Jeff, Don, Sid, and Karen felt the firewall in the consultant model limited instructional improvement. Jeff felt he could not support teachers if the coaches could not share their concerns about teachers. Jeff believed that if he could speak frankly with the coach, the coach might be able to better support struggling teachers. Don was concerned because the principal and the coach could not freely exchange information. He felt it delayed opportunities for him to correct teacher behavior. He worried that sometimes the principal and coach might be giving mixed messages or advice to teachers and contradicting one another.

Sid thought one of the pitfalls was principals and coaches were not really focusing on the tough messages and conversations needed with some individuals. Karen recognized a similar loss of focus, which she thought might be a slippery slope. She felt the model might make the teacher feel the answer “lies within someone else.” She went on to explain she felt a principal could give a teacher a more direct answer. She thought teachers felt talking to the peer coach was an intermediary step to communicating with the principal. Don believed in order to
establish inter-rater reliability between coaches and principals they should be conducting observations in classrooms together and discussing the outcomes.

Two principals, Paul and Carl initially thought the model would support them as principals by eliminating work. They thought the Q-Comp model would eliminate specific responsibilities they had. Although Paul thought adopting the model would lighten his workload as principal, it did not. He felt it added to his list of responsibilities. Carl thought the coaches would shift a greater percentage of his time, as a principal, to things that he said, “fall more directly under the umbrella of instructional leader.” Carl found day-to-day management work had increased and sometimes trumped the instructional leadership role.

Paul explained the collaboration between teachers had changed the dynamics of how teachers operate. He believed there was a loss of teacher autonomy. According to Paul, teachers were unable to pick the professional development topics they felt were most relevant. He thought Q-Comp might be holding them back because the plan has so many requirements.

Karen expressed concern that peer coaches may not actually be expert coaches. She was concerned the conversations between coaches and teachers might be judgmental and cause a classroom teacher to feel defeated by the feedback. For example, if a coach was dispensing ideas, rather than asking questions and leading teachers to ideas on their own through thoughtful reflection, the teachers might reject the process.

Q-Comp generated additional duties and changed principals’ roles. However, the principals recognized many benefits resulted from the introduction of the peer coach role. The principals reported that the culture of the school improved because of the relationship between coach and principal.
School Culture

Principals felt the addition of peer coaches positively affected the school environment in several ways. Peer coaches collaborated with teachers and supported the school vision. They also enhanced the school culture by promoting professional practice, including an emphasis on effective instruction, student learning, and faculty collaboration regarding school improvement.

The coaches influenced the vision and professional culture of the school. Four principals, Penny, Paul, Rena, and Carl felt the general environment in their schools had improved. Although student achievement is paramount, the culture and climate of a school have an impact on both staff and student performance. The culture of a school is evident in the way individuals interact with one another in alignment with the mission of the school.

Penny thought the addition of peer coaches developed the culture of the school. Paul felt the changes led to a collaborative culture in which people spoke freely and shared ideas. Rena believed she and the peer coach had a unified focus. She felt the role of the coach helped unite the classroom teachers attempting to fulfill the vision of the school. Rena revealed the coach helped her teachers create an authentic learning and caring environment for students. Carl said he felt peer coaches enriched the school environment because of the high level of trust and relationships established with staff.

Principals recognized the contributions coaches made to the leadership process in their schools. Principals found peer coaches offered a unique opportunity to make important changes through dialogue with individual teachers. Two principals, Paul and Karen thought the role of the coach helped foster a culture that could meet the mission and vision of the school. Paul believed coaches helped focus teachers working toward common goals. He added coaches built deeper understandings of how to implement the vision of the school.
Peer coaches helped schools develop a tighter focus on instruction and student achievement. Two principals, Don and Carl felt peer coaches had increased expertise in coaching since the implementation of Q-Comp. Don believed his peer coaches went through intensive training to ensure their assessment of classroom performance was reliable. He recognized the advancement of the peer coaches through the questions they asked teachers in efforts to deepen reflection. He added teachers respond to the coach, leading individuals to self-reflect and improve their practice. Carl agreed; he thought coaches increased ways to challenge teachers cognitively and gain a deeper understanding of effective instruction.

Peer coaches became role models in facilitating collaborative and reflective practice. They were regularly in classrooms and in conversations with teachers. Their routines allowed them to meet with teachers on a regular basis and conference with a teacher twice, once before and once after a teacher’s observation. Principals reported that coaches affected instructional practices. They also felt the impact of peer coaches contributed to increased learning and student achievement.

Don, Carl, and Karen felt individual teacher growth had improved. Don said teachers increased their focus on instruction because the peer coach added more elements of teaching to the conversations. He thought engaging teachers in learning was better for professional growth and student learning. Carl found the connections made by the peer coach through conversations with classroom teachers benefitted the teachers, their practice, and ultimately their students’ learning. Karen thought the Q-Comp plan inspired teachers by increasing their involvement in instruction. She hoped the conversations between coaches and classroom teachers encouraged the teachers to keep believing in themselves and believing in their students. She felt such a mindset would increase student achievement.
Sid believed Q-Comp created a more participatory model of leadership. He thought coaches had encouraged professional and reflective discussions about student learning and teachers and administrators were trying to solve problems collaboratively. Similarly, Karen noted that she felt happy to be in a culture where everybody agreed that they are effective and the level of trust continues to rise.

Penny noted coaches’ roles had expanded, involving them in more peer engagement. They had become a part of larger conversations about common expectations of effective teaching. Paul’s district intentionally designed a system in which instructional coaches could collaborate with teacher colleagues. He said the district wanted to ensure peer coaches did not appear to be an extension of the principal.

Rena initially thought coaches replicated what the principals did when they went into a classroom. She said that model has changed. Coaches now focus their attention on specific goals generated by the teachers with the coach early in the school year.

Carl and Jeff felt the coaches’ position created a track for teacher leadership. Jeff recognized the value of building leadership and thought a leadership position outside of the classroom gave teachers something to work for that encouraged teacher professionalism within the teaching community.

Generally, participants thought their school environments were more professional because teachers focused on student learning and reflective practice. They identified collective advancements of individual teachers as a reason why school culture improved. They also noticed an increase in the distribution of leadership and an overall increase in collaborative culture.
Five of the principals felt coaches shared the responsibility of propelling the vision of the school. Rena, Paul, Jeff, Carol, and Sid found coaches took on a great deal of responsibility by conveying the vision of school leaders. One principal even included the coach when she was planning the direction and vision for the school. She believed the coach was her partner. Rena stated in her school they work together to identify the vision for instruction and what strategies are most effective. Then, they share the work among coaches, principals, and other administrators to ensure all parties are supporting teachers in the acquisition and use of those strategies.

Paul tells coaches, “I'm expecting that you're going to be holding [the teachers] accountable outside of those peer observations. This is a professional learning community.” Jeff believed coaches provide leadership to their teaching colleagues and support the principal. The peer coach, a teacher leader among teachers, can influence work and keep teachers on the path to fulfilling the school vision. Jeff believed this builds trust between him and the teachers. Jeff stated, “I gain credibility within the teacher groups because of that.” Peer coaches do not have the power to evaluate, but they hold the ability to be trusted influences on other teachers. Paul believed they know his expectation is to provide leadership to their colleagues. Carol thought the coaches were respected and responsible for the vision, as well.

Jeff, Rena, Paul, and Carl have come to rely on the leadership of instructional coaches. Coaches have become part of the structure of the school, and as a result, principals felt coaches helped carry out the vision of the school. Jeff felt coaches contributed to a higher level of teacher professionalism, which included a focus on the vision of the school and increased reflection about instruction in the school. The relationship between peer coaches and principals is much closer than it used to be.
Carol, Penny, Jeff, and Carl reported improvements in student achievement since the onset of Q-Comp. Improving student performance and learning through improved teacher instruction is a primary goal for schools. A few schools had data to show strong correlations between the changes in roles and student achievement. Although most principals did not have any numbers to define an increase, they generally felt students had made academic gains. Carol explained everything pointed to increased student achievement and a narrowing achievement gap between White and non-White students. Penny also believed there had been an increase in student achievement. Karen revealed her students have done really well in the past few years and some subgroups have made significant gains. “I think overall we have been somewhat of a high-performing district,” she said. Jeff declared his students have seen gains in achievement. He said teachers use specific strategies to increase student engagement and he believes that has improved student achievement. Carl believed since Q-Comp has been in place and all these other things have been going on, every success marker has gone up for them, but he could not isolate the variable responsible for the change.

Although some principals were positive about the change in school culture, they did not feel they had any evidence to support growth in student achievement. Paul and Don did not find any gains in student achievement. Paul found the impact to be neutral and said that surprised him. He declared, “So far it seems to not have had a negative impact.” Rena had not found any gains to date. Don revealed his data indicated there “has not been any impact on his student data. The advantages to students would only be anecdotal information about individual student stories or perceptions of individual classrooms.”

Principals reported that they have seen effects on instruction and learning in their schools. Don, Sid, Rena, Carol, and Jeff believed Q-Comp and TDE have improved instructional
leadership. Don believed Q-Comp added a focus on instructional leadership or instructional coaching. Sid explained he found discussions happening around many instructionally related topics. As a result of the conversations, the topics became a common focus for collaborative work.

Sid believed the collaboration of reading, learning, and sharing ideas with others, and then working with teachers, helped broaden their perspectives. Rena noted having a staff member work on goals and help teachers confers a real instructional benefit. Carl believed he has an increasingly clear picture of classroom instruction. Carol felt a benefit is Q-Comp has helped instruction become more purposeful and intentional. She appreciated increased consistency and higher levels of accountability in terms of alignment. She reported she is intentional about collecting evidence. Jeff believed his coach has helped build a foundation of quality instruction. He said coaches have focused on specific skills, giving classroom teachers the greatest advantage with his students, as well as helping teachers grow professionally.

According to the principals, peer coaches affected the school environment positively. They collaborated with teachers and supported the school vision. The role of the coach stimulated the culture of the school by fostering professional practice. Coaches engaged teachers in conversations about instruction and student learning, and enriched the collaboration among school staff.

**Summary**

Principals recognized changes in their roles resulting from the implementation of Q-Comp. Overall, Q-Comp has endured with most of the key elements intact. Two themes emerged regarding the impact Q-Comp has had over time. First, changes in the roles of principals occurred and principals developed highly favorable perceptions regarding the
contributions of peer coaches. Second, the addition of peer coaches positively affected school culture by furthering the vision of the school. The next chapter contains an analysis of the changes that took place during this period with respect to principals’ roles and the effects of the peer coach.
CHAPTER SEVEN - ANALYSIS

Initially, this study concerned the perceived changes in principals’ roles due to the Q-Comp reform initiative centered on school improvement and merit pay. However, my study of a decade of change revealed the initial purpose of the legislation, namely, to improve teacher performance through a new compensation system (pay-for-performance) additionally resulted in the formation of a substantial professional developmental program. The reform caused changes in principals’ roles and responsibilities due to the emergence of a new teacher leader: the peer coach.

I analyzed my data collected about nearly a decade of change from the perspective of Fullan’s (2007) theory of school change. After analyzing Q-Comp as a change effort, I next analyzed my findings using Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four-frame theory of organizations. This included using different mental models to evaluate the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic effects of change on principals’ and peer coaches’ roles and school culture. I begin with Fullan’s (2007) theory of educational change, showing how a decade of change resulted in the institutionalization of a change effort.

Stages in Educational Change

Fullan (2007) studied educational change over four decades, establishing a reputation as one of the most respected and well-known researchers of educational change. Fullan's (2007) book, The New Meaning of Educational Change, summarized his research on the stages of the change process, and the effects of school reform and change on practice. According to Fullan (2007), more change in the field of education occurred in 2001–2007 than occurred in the preceding 20 years. His findings revealed a melding of theory and practice. He concluded educational leaders must possess a strong command of theory and practice because change
efforts are often ambitious, and demand considerable work because they typically involve whole-school reform. Fullan’s (2007) work provided a framework to use as a tool to examine change.

The major changes created by Q-Comp included increased expectations regarding routine evaluations of tenured teachers and the addition of peer coaches. The addition of peer coaches changed principals’ roles, and principals took advantage of this change to restructure their roles from primarily infrequent evaluators of tenured teachers to mentors and coaches of tenured teachers, with some exceptions (e.g., oversight with regard to poor teacher performance). In the Q-Comp era, principals concentrated their efforts on (a) supporting and evaluating non-tenured teachers, (b) addressing concerns regarding poorly performing tenured teachers, (c) maintaining oversight of school culture, and (d) improving the quality of learning and teaching through collaborative efforts with teachers and peer coaches.

Fullan’s (2007) change process serves as a way to help educators make sense of planning and implementing change. Fullan did not focus on specific innovations, rather he looked at how educators develop systems to build capacity and support continuous improvement. Fullan’s process is applicable to my study because the changes related to Q-Comp stood the test of time. Q-Comp became more than simply an innovation; it became an initiative focused on capacity (Fullan, 2007).

Fullan (2009) found educational change occurs by creating structure to support skills and competence, thereby allowing people to gain capacity and insight. Change involves a focus on developing skills. In this case, the combined work of principals and peer coaches led to an increased emphasis on building capacity and supporting new skills for teachers. Fullan (2009) noted the acquisition of skills leads to increased clarity about purpose, resulting in ownership of change and improvement. The principals who participated in my study reported increased
Fullan (2007) identified three stages of change. The first stage, *initiation*, includes the process leading up to change and the decision to adopt a change. The second stage, *implementation*, concerns the first experiences of attempting to put an idea or reform into practice. The final phase of a fully adopted change is *institutionalization*, which begins when a change becomes part of a system (Fullan, 2007).

Sometimes, a system discards changes (Fullan, 2007). Whether a change is continued or eliminated may vary due to a number of factors. Fullan believed change takes time, and the three phases described do not progress linearly. Large-scale efforts may take five–ten years, and efforts to work out problems and make improvements may continue to occur (Fullan, 2007). I began my analysis examining the impetus for change related to the Q-Comp program, and the meaning assigned to the change.

**Initiation Phase**

Initiation is the first phase of the change process, leading up to the time when a decision to make a change takes place (Fullan, 2007). The state of Minnesota attracted school district applications for Q-Comp using a financial incentive. District Q-Comp plans included five specific elements. Among the requirements were expectations for teacher merit pay and the establishment of teacher leadership roles. On the surface, Q-Comp appeared to be a teacher performance and accountability measure. However, closer examination revealed Q-Comp also emphasized professional development for teachers and routine performance reviews of tenured teachers.
Dynamic change requires working with individuals to form a cohesive group to achieve a common goal (Fullan, 2007). Teachers, administrators, and district personnel worked together to identify and agree on the plans submitted to the state for approval. The effort involved what Fullan (2007) described as “mutual adaptation or evolutionary change” (p. 31).

The state offered school districts an opportunity to create their own plans. The school districts in my study all organized committees comprised of people with varied roles, including district administrators, principals, and teachers. They participated in the design of a plan unique to their district that specifically fit their needs. The funds districts received were an incentive for districts to take action, but the program was voluntary. Districts adopting the program worked with teacher unions to establish boundaries regarding how the plan would work. The legislation required districts to seek approval from teachers’ unions to participate in the program. Although the districts applied for Q-Comp on a voluntary basis, the state maintained some accountability by approving or rejecting plans and releasing the allocated funds.

Most principals spoke favorably about the work committees did to initiate Q-Comp. However, Rob felt duped by the committee. In his 2013 interview, Rob said the committee told him that operating under the Q-Comp plan would not entail additional work for him as a principal. However, Rob determined the specifics of Q-Comp increased his responsibilities.

Many people aligned Q-Comp with merit pay for teachers in the early years. Individuals outside of education mistook the program for a plan with stringent teacher accountability. The merit pay reform effort actually created significant changes in practice, but perhaps not in the ways the legislature intended. The impetus for change did not appear to come from the pay for improvement, but rather from the changes in professional development occurring at the school level due to the addition of peer coaches. During the initiation and later implementation phases,
peer coaches became part of the landscape, causing the roles of principals to change with the addition of another person performing some of the work previously reserved for principals.

The “mutual adaptation design” (Fullan, 2007, p. 31) used by school districts meant many individuals or representatives of groups had an opportunity to voice their ideas about the design from the onset. As a result, two important elements resulted from the change effort: shared meaning and access to information. The people involved in the process developed higher levels of trust in one another.

Q-Comp started with administrators, central office staff, and teachers on the design committees investing in the new reform. Fullan (2007) stated individuals within the organization must have shared meaning to develop program coherence. Working together to align a system with the vision of the district was a first step to developing a Q-Comp plan with shared meaning. Effective and sustained change requires the development of individual teachers and administrators working toward a common goal as a group, but also making meaning of the reform individually (Fullan, 2007). Over the course of 10 years, all those involved in the change, including teachers, peer coaches, and principals, developed deeper meaning regarding the change and improved their practice.

The initial development structure also increased communication, another factor necessary in a successful reform effort (Fullan, 2007). Representatives of bargaining groups ensured the interests of the represented employee groups would be included in the plan. The groups developed formal communication through the committee or their union group. More importantly, they also continued to represent their group during the implementation process by informally sharing thoughts and opinions with teaching staff.
Fullan (2007) noted all successful changes are “socially based and action oriented” (p. 52). This means those involved in a successful change “develop collaboration where collaboration previously did not exist” (Fullan, 2007, p. 52). Q-Comp resulted in change at two important levels. First, collaboration between peer coaches and classroom teachers developed as coaches met with teachers and facilitated professional development. Second, collaboration between building principals and peer coaches occurred. Although I will explore these relationships further in the implementation section, it is important to acknowledge the importance of relationships and the development of trust in successful change efforts.

The principals interviewed felt the addition of peer coaches increased the capacity of the coaches to grow through practice over time. Principals believed peer coaches enhanced teacher professionalism and developed the instructional capacity of teachers and principals. Fullan (2007) addressed two elements pertinent to this situation. First, Fullan wrote that those invested in effective change should assume a lack of capacity is the fundamental problem to address in a change effort, and then work continuously to build capacity (Fullan, 2007). An assumption regarding Q-Comp may be that the legislature ultimately designed the program to improve student achievement through improved instruction. This assumption also might include the idea that teachers want to do good work. If these assumptions are true, the Q-Comp model is continuing to improve the capacity of teachers through knowledge sharing and increasing motivation to improve through dialogue with a trusted source.

The second element in the change process discussed by Fullan (2007) concerns tapping into people’s dignity and respect to support employee feelings and increase motivation. In general, principals believed teachers developed trusting relationships with peer coaches. The basis of the peer-coaching model is the use of questioning to facilitate inner reflection with
teachers. A model that does not include dignity might highlight deficiencies, establish harsh directives, or treat colleagues as if they had no prior knowledge. An effective coaching model should maintain the dignity of teachers.

The initiation phase (Fullan, 2007) of Q-Comp set the stage for ownership of the plan and, later, the successful implementation of the plan. Success in Stage 2, the implementation phase, might lead to increased capacity and long-term institutionalization of the reform effort. District plans created a role for peer coaches in teacher performance evaluations. A description of this phase follows.

**Implementation**

Fullan (2007) portrayed implementation as the process of putting an idea or structure into practice. Implementation means the people in the organization attempt to carry out the established goals or changes in the organization. Fullan (2007) acknowledged that organizations are usually learning about implementation as the implementation is taking place. To determine whether implementation is effective involves determining whether the desired changes happen in practice. The implementation stage is important because during this time it may be determined whether the changes meet the desired objectives. Fullan (2007) described the influences of implementation as a system of important interwoven variables that must remain intertwined and never unraveled. There are four factors related to the characteristics of innovation: need, clarity, complexity, and quality (Fullan, 2007).

Q-Comp fulfilled a need for funding in many schools. Although the schools already had overloaded improvement agendas, they were in need of funding. Many times, school districts were unable to provide a comprehensive teacher professional development model because they simply could not afford to do so. Adopting a Q-Comp plan contributed additional funding for
school districts, which, in turn, created funding for additional teacher professional development and planning time. Although it is unknown how schools viewed the need for teacher professional development at the onset, schools in Minnesota were struggling to maintain the level of service with the funding given to public schools.

Fullan (2007) felt complexity was the amount of change required of individuals responsible for implementation. On the surface, Q-Comp (MDE, 2009) had five basic requirements for school districts wishing to participate. However, each of those requirements was complex within itself. An interesting facet was the teacher leadership position, which on the surface did not sound complicated. However, peer coaches have taken on complicated roles among their peers. They observe other teachers, provide professional development, coach teachers for improvement, and collaborate with (and sometime provide support to) administrators.

The elements of Q-Comp were complex. According to principals, the systems established for Q-Comp were sturdy enough to maintain its structure while allowing for changes. A change effort requires guidelines but also flexibility (Fullan, 2007). The parameters of Q-Comp established in the legislation were what Fullan (2007) would consider tight, or those elements to which leadership should hold firm. However, schools created their own plans, allowing for flexibility and possible revision (Fullan, 2007). School districts appeared to have favorable sentiments about their plans because none of the districts made significant changes after implementation.

Fullan (2007) described the “quality and practicality of the program” as a measurable variable, which is revealing in light of the previous three variables: need, clarity, and complexity (p. 91). The principals spoke highly of Q-Comp and peer coaches. Although the roles of
principals had changed, they seemed agreeable to the changes. The only complaint was they were engaged in more work. They found the work valuable, but many of them stated they were pressed for time.

One inherent complexity of Q-Comp developed when the legislature designed it. School districts have to renew and have their Q-Comp plans approved every few years. The result is a system that can be refined to meet the needs of the organization. For example, districts that had a consultant model with a firewall between coaches and principals were able to make adjustments to allow for increased collaboration between parties. The same principle applies to clarity. Principals started to be more involved in classrooms via walk-throughs to maintain a focus on instruction. In response, some districts required principals to conduct walk-throughs.

Fullan (2007) noted that the business of principals managing change at the school level is a complicated endeavor for which they are likely unprepared. He revealed the actions of individuals in the organization are important and the quality of working relationships, communication, trust, and support will align with results. The collaboration between coaches and principals in Q-Comp motivated change.

As school staff developed Q-Comp systems, they added peer coaches, which allowed for teacher representation and coaching for peer teachers. Peer coaches worked with teachers to develop a shared experience, which lent itself to the professional growth of both teachers and administrators. Peer coaches were recognized and validated as teacher leaders. The collaboration between coaches and principals required ongoing adjustment in order to find an ideal balance between the pressure of achieving effective outcomes and supporting and recognizing teachers. The result was professional development in which faculty found personal and professional meaning applied to their instruction. Consider Little’s (1981) case for
collaboration that led to reform (as cited in Fullan, 2007, p. 97). School improvement is likely when teachers engage in concrete, precise conversations about teaching. These conversations have to move beyond just theory and shared language. Teachers have to be able to work together to affirm their development of the work and standards of performance (Little, 1981). The shared leadership of coaches and principals gave them both a view into classrooms. They also added discussions with teachers; this added a layer of collaboration, a powerful tool for educational improvement. In some districts, such as Penny’s, principals and coaches fulfilled their roles in a parallel manner during the initial implementation. Although they assumed similar roles, they did not worry about collaboration with one another. Over time, principals such as Penny began to value the relationship with coaches and the similarities in their roles. As a result, the collaboration between principals and coaches grew.

The longevity of Q-Comp indicates school districts and the MDE must agree with the participants in this study regarding the value of teacher professional development and staff collaboration. Although initiation and implementation appear to be the biggest hurdles for a change effort, many factors affect the continuation of a change effort. The principals interviewed had all reached the advanced implementation phases of Q-Comp. The third phase of a change effort is institutionalization (Fullan, 2007, p. 101).

**Continuation, Elimination, or Institutionalization**

The continuation phase of a program is an important time for decision making. Many of the same factors affecting implementation affect continuation. A primary factor in eliminating a program centers on funding. Although it may be unfair to predict whether Q-Comp systems would continue if no longer attached to financial benefits, the expense of peer coaches and district level personnel to run Q-Comp would seem cost-prohibitive.
If schools had plentiful funding, I believe schools could fully institutionalize Q-Comp. Huberman and Miles (as cited in Fullan, 2007) noted institutionalization has three components. First, the structure embeds the change through policy and budget. Second, a significant number of administrators and teachers are committed to the change. Third, procedures are in place for continuation, especially with new staff. The principals participating in this study stated they supported Q-Comp efforts. They noted the positive attitudes of teachers and peer coaches toward the program, and recognized the changes in their roles as effective. Generally, the changes in practices and the longevity of the Q-Comp process led to “re-culturalizing” rather than simply restructuring (Fullan, 2007, p. 25). The status of Q-Comp appeared to fluctuate between implementation and institutionalization, but continuation may be at risk without continued support from the state.

**Role of the Principal in the Q-Comp Change Effort**

Analyzing how principals experienced changes in their roles and responsibilities requires examination of the interactions between the roles of principals and those of peer coaches. My phenomenological study focused on the changes in the roles of the principals and the rise of the peer coach. First, I examined how the role of the principal has been under-represented in the process of educational change. One of the many duties of a principal involves assuming the role of an effective change agent. Second, I reflected on how Fullan (2007) defined the processes necessary to effect change. Lastly, I considered how the coaches shared leadership responsibilities previously reserved for principals.

Early research into education indicated principals play an important role in promoting or inhibiting educational change (Fullan, 2007). Fullan noted early research on school improvement led to the identification of the principal as key to promoting or holding back
change. However, Fullan faulted early researchers for failing to understand the principals’ roles with any depth. My study of principals’ roles before and after the introduction of Q-Comp supports Fullan’s view of principals’ roles and the ways in which those roles have become dramatically more complicated during the past two decades (Fullan, 2014). This view draws attention to the value of recent research regarding the duties of principals (Marzano & Toth, 2013), their relationship to the stability of the school and quality of instruction, and the importance of change in facilitating continuous school improvement. Change efforts typically require the support of principals, and may cause the expectations of principals to exceed the resources they have available to them. Fullan (2007) noted, “The irony is that as the change expectations heighten, the principalship itself has become overloaded in a way that makes it impossible to fulfill the promise of widespread, sustained reform” (p. 156).

Fullan (2007) explained the idea that a principal will run a school smoothly and be responsive to all still holds true. He added principals also face competing interests while trying to meet demands, expecting the school to achieve better test results consistently, and to improve the quality of the learning organization (p. 157).

The principals who participated in this study expressed concerns about the number of duties they had to perform. For example, Rob, Carl, Don, and Peg all expressed concern about the increased number of tasks. Rob initially believed Q-Comp would not create additional work for him, but he noticed an increase in his workload. Carl spoke about the number of meetings with teachers and the challenge of fitting all of them into his schedule. Don talked about having to manage the amount of time needed for each task. Peg reflected on how her duties as a principal had increased since she started in the position 20 years ago.
In more recent literature, Fullan (2014) explained that repositioning the role of the principal is a fundamental part of change efforts. The principal becomes a learner and models learning for others (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). The principal is not the direct instructional leader, but the overall facilitator of learning. The principal also creates conditions in which others can experience continuous learning (Eady & Zepeda, 2007). The result of the principals’ new roles is a school system that builds capacity for teachers and increases the professionalism of the culture.

Principals gain additional training alongside coaches while facilitating change. The principals who participated in this study indicated they learned from the experience of having a peer coach with whom they could collaborate. Principals, peer coaches, and teachers aligned their discussions about teaching, which in turn enhanced their professional practice. In this model, principals use the peer coach to help them facilitate learning. The principals interviewed felt having these elements in place resulted in an increase in professional practice and alignment of the vision of the school. Fullan (2009) regarded this type of professional learning and the development of people as the best type of professional development because individuals are more precise about putting their learning into practice. He acknowledged additional growth was possible with the support to be innovative and creative in the execution of their roles (Fullan, 2009).

Peer coaches build the trust and capacity of other teachers by withholding judgment (Fullan, 2009), which is different from an evaluator’s role. In the Q-Comp model, coaches discuss classroom instruction with teachers intending to promote growth in a non-threatening way. Coaches start with the teachers’ present levels of performance and encourage them to think more deeply about their practice. On the other hand, principals maintain an evaluative role,
inherently involving some feedback teachers may perceive as negative. The role of the principal involves making decisions not all teachers will appreciate, and that position sometimes requires following district mandates. The large scope of the principals’ roles cannot offer them the same protection from conflict afforded peer coaches.

For teachers, an implied effect of relationships with trusted peer coaches allows teachers to take risks and gain honest feedback in a supportive environment extending beyond the relationships they have with principals. Fullan (2009) stated to connect instruction to practice teachers must be innovative risk-takers. Fullan (2009) recognized the importance of relationships, and noted effective collegial relationships lead to increases in teacher capacity. Effective principals share and develop leadership among teachers (Fullan, 2007).

The introduction of the role of peer coach resulted in a shared version of leadership responsibilities previously reserved for principals. In 2007, Fullan identified why the principal is crucial for success, noting successful principals have (a) “an inclusive, facilitative orientation”; (b) an “instructional focus on student learning”; (c) “efficient management”; and (d) “combined pressure and support” (p. 160). The changing roles of principals and peer coaches seem to have split the elements of pressure and support. Principals hold the hierarchical position to maintain necessary pressure, while peer coaches provide support for other teachers.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) found principals were central to establishing trust in schools. However, several of the participating principals mentioned in their interviews teachers trusted coaches more because of their unique, facilitative position in the classroom. The underlying assumption is principals do not command the same degree of trust because they evaluate tenured teachers.
Q-Comp Reframes School Organizations

Mental models affect how people see and make sense of the world, and involve “deeply held internal images of how the world works images which limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 7). People interpret what they see based on the model they already have in their minds. Changing old mindsets is difficult because people develop filters, blocking them from recognizing the whole picture and seeing mistakes. People naturally revert to a comfortable frame, and often fight to keep their existing assumptions or mental models in place during a period of chaos and change (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Over the course of 10 years, the implementation of Q-Comp changed as adjustments to the system of teacher evaluations occurred, and principal and peer coaches adapted their roles and responsibilities to the changes. An analysis of these changes requires a detailed evaluation of the forces affecting the system, principal and teachers’ roles, and the addition of peer coaches. Bolman and Deal (2013) established four frames to examine factors affecting organizations: structural, political, human resource, and symbolic. These frames serve as a way to gain varied perspectives about organizational situations and strategies for leadership. Utilizing the frames encourages leaders to challenge their typical perspectives and look at situations in different ways to gain insights about the factors affecting people and organizations. I adopted Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four frames as the theory with which to interpret my findings concerning the implementation of Q-Comp.

In the next section, I provide an overview of each of the four frames defined by Bolman and Deal (2013). I show how using different frames or mental models shed light on the factors affecting the implementation of Q-Comp over time. I begin with the structural frame, and
describe how a structural change created by the legislature resulted in the implementation of a new reform program: Q-Comp.

**Q-Comp and Bolman and Deal’s (2013) Four Frames**

**Structural Frame**

The structural frame focuses on clear organizational goals and the roles and relationships of individuals within an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the structural frame, the priority is to provide policies and procedures that divide work among individuals. The structural frame tries to minimize personal distractions in favor of focusing on the work with the goal of increasing productivity by getting the right people in the right roles.

Applying the structural frame is important because that ensures maximizing resources, such as time and money, is a priority (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This frame reflects a hope that by defining formal roles and responsibilities, individuals will focus on their work and minimize distractions. The organization reaches goals and increases efficiency and performance through specialization in labor. The structural frame suggests the best work results when individuals are rational, focus on results, and work for the good of the organization rather than themselves (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

By adhering to the structural frame, organizations may resolve deficits through restructuring roles or methods of production (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The structural frame encourages organizations to maintain control by ensuring the effective coordination of organizational goals, strategies, technology, and people (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The structural frame establishes expectations for people and the design of the work, which may enhance or limit what the organization accomplishes.
Applying the structural frame to Q-Comp reveals how an action by the legislature created a structural change in teacher performance reviews. The legislature presented Q-Comp as a merit pay plan for teachers and used added money to entice school districts and teachers to participate in the reform effort. The legislature wanted districts to establish measurable goals to improve teacher performance and increase focus on the routine evaluations of tenured teachers. School districts needed and received additional funds to raise the pay available to teachers and support professional development efforts. In this negotiation, both sides got something they needed. The legislature emphasized progress and gained greater involvement in teacher performance reviews, while teachers gained status. They also received performance pay for meeting goals, and recognition of teacher contributions to improving instruction.

The Q-Comp initiative focused on performance pay to acknowledge hard-working teachers but also to punish under-performing teachers by withholding pay from those failing to meet performance goals. The idea was merit pay would act as an incentive to raise teacher performance, which would in turn improve student achievement. School districts designed and submitted plans to the MDE for approval. The MDE approved Q-Comp plans based on whether they satisfied the requirements established by the legislature.

Q-Comp contained new regulations regarding how administrators conducted teacher performance reviews; these regulations changed principals’ roles and created a new position, establishing teacher leaders as peer coaches. Only two participants reported they conducted annual reviews of tenured teachers before Q-Comp, and for some several years passed with no requirement to observe at all. Adopting Q-Comp caused principals to follow a predictable schedule regarding observations of tenured teachers and added peer coach reviews of teacher performance.
Peer coaches regularly conducted observations of, and held meetings with, tenured teachers. As peer coaches became instructional leaders in schools, principals experienced a structural dilemma (Bolman & Deal, 2013); peer coaches spent more time with tenured teachers than the principals who had previously served as the instructional leaders in their schools.

Q-Comp created new roles and duties for principals. Its implementation required the principal, in most cases, to observe tenured teachers at least once every three years. Peer coaches entered classrooms regularly and formed relationships with teachers. To stay relevant and continue to serve as the instructional leaders of schools, principals changed their roles and routines. They emphasized classroom walk-throughs as a way to gain information about teacher performance in ways similar to those used by peer coaches. This allowed principals to maintain power and authority within the organization.

**Political Frame**

Bolman and Deal’s (2013) political frame recognizes that entities within organizations have competing interests for limited resources. The political frame involves negotiating, coercing, and bargaining with others to get wants or needs met. In some organizations, coalitions form and promote change even when they may have the wrong practices in mind. Power is a central concept in the political frame. Power is at the center of making decisions. In the structural frame, power is earned and lost via the decisions made or in the allocation of scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013)

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), in organizations authorities have positions of power, but they must vie with others who have their own means of leveraging power. Contenders seeking power bring their own beliefs and values. Further complicating the political frame is the interplay of divergent interests, the priorities of each party, and their overall
agendas. Achieving effective organizational change may depend on perceptive managers with political skills.

The political frame can be destructive or messy, but use of political means and power through coalitions can be a way to achieve a purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Politicians know the political landscape; they create networks to support those who agree with them and to negotiate with allies. Individuals using their political frame typically have their own agendas and bond their own resources to other people or groups to leverage additional power (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The political frame involves various parties negotiating and bargaining to achieve desired outcomes. A search for additional power is often at the core of decision-making in this frame.

Applying the political frame to Q-Comp reveals how politics influenced the design of the new law and its implementation in local school districts. The legislature, a political entity, represented Q-Comp to schools as a system intended to reward the best teachers for their performance. To the public, Q-Comp appeared to be about teacher accountability and improving schools. The assumption was teachers who worked harder earned monetary rewards. The legislature maintained the power to steer Q-Comp at the school district level because each plan required approval from the MDE.

In retrospect, the initial implementation of Q-Comp might have misled the public. Q-Comp required schools to restructure pay scales. In reality, most schools simply added a small financial reward above the existing contract pay. Across the state, most teachers earn performance pay annually, which means the standard for performance was set at a level easily attainable for most teachers. The concepts of restructuring teacher pay scales and providing
teacher leadership positions appeared to create greater teacher accountability more than professional development.

Q-Comp offered a new way for school districts to generate funding and incentivized school districts to apply. School districts applying for Q-Comp funds were able to put professional development funds in place. In school districts with tight budgets, professional development was probably one of the first budget items cut when financial difficulties began.

Teacher professional development became paramount to the design of Q-Comp. Two elements—professional learning communities and setting teacher goals—drew a clear alignment to teacher goals and student outcomes. Although it is unknown how the legislature anticipated districts would fulfill the requirement for teacher leadership, the districts represented in this study all created the new position of peer coach.

As the Q-Comp initiation phase moved to implementation (Fullan, 2007), a new political situation arose. The approved Q-Comp plans included observations by both principals and peer coaches, who seemingly had divergent priorities. Many districts anticipated issues with the structure, and designed special grievance policies to manage Q-Comp complaints.

While peer coaches conducted observations, principals maintained authority to make decisions about tenured teacher performance. As the coaches developed expertise and learned more about school functioning, the principals needed to find a way to maintain their authority and roles. Most principals conducted classroom walk-throughs so they would know what was happening in the school and could monitor teacher performance.

Peer coaches knew they were not in a position of authority. However, their leadership role outside the classroom gave them other ways to gain power. Coaches had the power to influence teachers in their meetings throughout the school year. Over time, peer coaches also
increased their collaboration with principals, giving them power due to their expertise (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

The teachers’ union became a political player in Q-Comp. During the initiation phase (Fullan, 2007), the teachers mistrusted the new system and were concerned the peer coaches would become quasi-administrators. Perhaps their encounters with poor or mediocre teacher performance would lead to disciplinary action. To complicate the matter, the school districts pursuing Q-Comp required approval from the teachers’ union upon application to the state. As a result, the initiation and the ongoing renewal of Q-Comp became a negotiation of extended elements of the teachers’ contracts.

The need for the union to protect their teachers created an interesting dynamic. Some districts adopted the consultant model for communication. The consultant model included a verbal communication firewall, forbidding communication about teacher performance between building principals and peer coaches. The firewall was in place to protect teachers by limiting exchanges between the two parties; teachers knew peer coaches would not add to principals’ existing power and authority. Over time, principals and coaches found ways to collaborate to some degree while working within the constraints of the system.

Some districts that adopted the consultant model made paperwork available to principals by request. The assumption may have been that principals would not request paperwork in a timely manner. That assumption appears to be true, because accessing the paperwork was a gesture few principals reported using productively.

As instructional leaders, peer coaches began to play an important role in tenured teacher development beyond the role of the principal. In districts where the teacher and coach could
exchange information freely, the collaboration between principals and coaches was strong from
the beginning.

Over time, principals and peer coaches negotiated their own relationships regardless of
the structure in place. The relationship helped them align their work to achieve building goals.
They worked together in their individual roles to promote the vision of the school, to develop
quality instruction and to establish a professional culture.

Districts implementing Q-Comp learned how politics affected the structure and
outcomes. Principals, teachers, and peer coaches each established boundaries and negotiated for
power within the organization. As Q-Comp moved into the implementation stage, the human
resources frame, supporting teacher development, moved to the forefront.

**Human Resources Frame**

Conceptually, organizational practices in the human resources frame focus on
relationships between people and the organization. In fact, talented people aligning their
organizational strategies and practices with the organization meet organization needs (Bolman &
Deal, 2013). The organization can influence the employees with factors such as internal and
external motivation.

A successful human resources frame creates energy and motivation to achieve goals. The
hoped for result is organizational needs will align with the energy and efforts of talented people
(Bolman & Deal, 2013). To achieve this outcome, leadership must understand the need to
develop an approach aligned with the organization’s strategy and personnel needs. In other
words, when individuals find satisfaction and meaning in their work, organizational proficiency
increases based on employees’ talents and levels of energy. When individuals lack satisfaction
or meaning in their work, they withdraw, resist, or rebel against the organization. Success requires a long-term commitment with an aligned strategy (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Applying the human resource frame, I determined principals perceived that the implementation of Q-Comp over a 10-year period increased teacher learning and the sense of professionalism. They said the Q-Comp program brought together a number of elements targeted to promote teacher development. Peer coaches created new energy within schools and empowered teachers to take ownership of classroom practices. The coaches developed expertise and gained the respect of teachers. This allowed them to conduct sensitive conversations with teachers about personal performance, and critical reflection on practice promoted individual growth.

Q-Comp is about teacher development. The development of principals also plays a role, although it seems to be more of an unintended consequence than a goal. Principals reported satisfaction with the work of coaches and the collaboration they shared. They also reported they felt supported by having coaches in the school.

The peer coach role fulfilled the Q-Comp requirement to include teacher leadership positions in a district’s plan. School districts trained teachers to be peer coaches. The coaches developed relationships with teachers and administrators; however, the development of a firewall prevented verbal communication between peer coaches and principals in some districts that adopted a consultant model. Nonetheless, over time collaboration between peer coaches and principals increased. The coaches earned respect among their colleagues by immersing themselves in instructional practices.

Q-Comp addressed personal and professional needs of teachers in the organization. The trust between teachers and coaches provided safety for teachers, allowing them to have deep,
meaningful conversations about their instruction. The trust among teachers and coaches allowed classroom teachers to try instructional methods new for them without concern a failure could lead to discipline. The result was teachers felt encouraged, motivating them to make instructional changes.

The coaches developed interpersonal relationships with teachers and principals. The principals appreciated the promotion of shared goals and the collegial relationships they shared with coaches. The principals and the coaches shared effective practices and worked with the same faculty. Principals gained a supportive teacher leader to help carry forward the vision of the school at the ground level by working with teachers in classrooms.

The benefits from Q-Comp represent an investment in people. The human resource frame recognizes a skilled workforce leads to success (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The development of the peer-coaching model served the needs and talents of teachers for many years. The individualization of the observations and meetings with peer coaches gave teachers a significant role in moving the vision of the school forward.

Principals experienced growth by conducting classroom walk-throughs, a new way to monitor classroom instruction and now a part of their routine. Principals reported they also learned about instruction from peer coaches. Additionally, principals found support from having a new way to move the mission and vision of the school.

By encouraging the talents of the teachers, school organizations benefited from Q-Comp. Coaches helped faculty align their work by emphasizing effective practices, which in turn supported the school vision. Teachers found opportunities for growth and motivation to invest in their work. The peer coach, a teacher leadership position, appears to have also motivated coaches to become energetic and skilled people within the organization.
The human resources frame gives merit to the idea that investing in people improves organizations. Q-Comp guides the development and fulfillment of individuals who have the greatest effect on student learning. Another lens, the symbolic frame, provides a new way to look at Q-Comp in schools with an emphasis on meaning.

**Symbolic Frame**

The symbolic frame represents the search people have to renew faith in organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In this frame, people focus on handed-down stories and organizational cultures. These stories bind the organization together. Within the organization there are individuals regarded as heroes who represent values and serve as powerful icons or myths. These values bring direction and cohesiveness, especially in confusing times. The practice of rituals and ceremonies reinforces values and creates a path for others to follow (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In the symbolic frame, people allow their emotions to be at the surface. In the workplace, metaphors and humor offer an escape or a way to lighten up routines by acting as creative alternatives (Bolman & Deal, 2013). An example would be the way team building acts as a spiritual and symbolic event providing a way for employees to cope with situations (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In the symbolic frame, managers need to build team spirit, a difficult task when budgetary constraints leave no funds to support building morale (Bolman & Deal, 2013). When change comes about, questions arise about what actions earn merit in the organization. In the symbolic frame, when things go well, the heroes and rituals gain momentum. However, as people and the organization feel the strain of change, a revision of the stories and symbols might be necessary (Bolman & Deal, 2013).
People develop new strengths and sustain their commitment to organizations by using symbols, rituals, and stories (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The symbolic frame involves the way people make meaning of their experiences. Images and stories handed down through the organization provide the glue that holds people in the organization together. The symbolic frame represents emotional meaning, and in tough times, the use of stories, images, and rituals provides a way for employees to escape mental stress created from experiencing chaos (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Applying the symbolic frame to the implementation of Q-Comp reveals how change occurred. Coaches developed expertise by conducting classroom observations and facilitating reflective conferences about improving instruction. They became symbols of trust, represented the ideal teacher, and elevated the status of teachers in the school.

Peer coaches conducted annual performance reviews, creating a ritual regarding routine reflection on practice. The structure included setting goals, observing teachers, and making improvements in practice. The routine reflection on teaching using data from classroom observations and teacher reflection changed the school culture.

In some cases, coaches and principals worked well together and developed a sense of cohesiveness. This partnership shifted the emphasis from checking on instruction to improving practice. In some districts, at the onset of Q-Comp the coaches worked independently of the principals. Sid was the only principal who believed the new coach immediately carried the vision of Q-Comp forward. Several years later, many of the principals noted that the collaboration with peer coaches and their value in carrying the mission of the school forward were evident. Principals recognized coaches played an important role in changing instruction,
which resulted in improved student achievement. The coaches and principals worked toward common goals and aligned their goals with the practices in the school.

As Q-Comp developed, it changed from a pay-for-performance to a professional development initiative. Peer coaches became a typical feature in Q-Comp districts, representing the change and emphasis on improvement. Over time, peer coaches became respected leaders, enhancing the professional and instructional roles of teachers.

The changes in the roles of principals and the rise of peer coaches created several positive shifts away from the initial intentions of Q-Comp. Q-Comp became a symbol of professional development rather than a way to reward or punish teachers based on performance goals. Q-Comp represented a state investment in teacher development rather than an accountability plan.

Returning to the idea of mental models, I next examine changes in principal perspective over time due to the implementation of Q-Comp.

**Changes in Mental Models: From Cluelessness to Real Change**

My analysis of Q-Comp begins with Bolman and Deal’s (2013) concept of cluelessness (p. 169). In the years before Q-Comp, principals experienced cluelessness, a state in which individuals have an incomplete picture of what is going on and are not achieving desired results. The legislature, dissatisfied with the oversight of tenured teachers and student achievement results, placed some of the blame on tenured teachers and ineffective principals. The practices of evaluating tenured teachers varied. Although principals served as instructional leaders in their buildings, only two of the participants in this study reported observing tenured teachers annually. The remaining principals reported they lacked time to observe tenured teachers, even though some of them said their districts had a policy in place.
Q-Comp created opportunities for teacher leadership with the establishment of the peer coach position. Peer coaches, although trained in conducting observations, gained considerable expertise through observing teachers daily. Principals have many responsibilities besides teacher observation, and eventually peer coaches generally became the experts with regard to conducting classroom observations in the school.

The addition of the coaches meant the principals had to find new ways to be relevant. The principals, even though no longer solely responsible for instructional change, maintained their authority by conducting classroom walk-throughs so they would know what was happening in classrooms. The walk-through format allowed principals to check up on what was happening in classrooms without adding more responsibilities related to observations.

During the implementation stages of Q-Comp, principals all maintained a high-cycle observation once every three years for tenured teachers. Although principal observations remain sparse, the majority of principals were in classrooms more than prior to Q-Comp. Principals appreciated the important roles played by peer coaches and found a way to share power with coaches to raise the level of professionalism and practice in their schools.

Fullan (2007) noted the change process does not have clearly delineated rules, rather suggestions and implications influencing change. In order for educational change to achieve its goal, practice must change in three ways (Fullan, 2007): First, adoption of new or revised materials; second, acceptance of new approaches to teaching; and finally, the alignment of beliefs of those in the organization (Fullan, 2007).

Real change develops through collective and personal experiences (Fullan, 2007). Ambivalence and uncertainty are usually at the core of change, but success can bring about a feeling of personal accomplishment and professional growth (Fullan, 2007).
Summary

The introduction of Q-Comp brought about changes for principals who participated in this study. They changed their underlying beliefs about how to include others in performance reviews and expand professional development opportunities for teachers. The participants included peer coaches in the process, but they still used basic methods to gather data in their performance reviews. The participants also found they experienced both personal and professional growth due to the structural changes put in place as part of Q-Comp. The Q-Comp structure served the professional development needs of both teachers and principals. The participants found Q-Comp was more of a professional development plan for teachers than an accountability measure enabling the highest-performing teachers to earn additional income.

After analyzing Q-Comp as a change effort, I considered Fullan’s (2007) change theory through the phases of initiation, implementation, institutionalization, and continuation. I also considered how Bolman and Deal’s (2013) four-frame theory of organizations applied to Q-Comp by considering different mental models such as the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic models to assess the changes in principals’ and peer coaches’ roles. Q-Comp held uncertainty and concerns for principals when the legislature passed the bill. Over time, Q-Comp demonstrated benefits, which promoted professional growth. In the final chapter, I summarize my findings, discuss implications, and recommend ideas for further study.
CHAPTER EIGHT - SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A major change occurred in Minnesota schools with the introduction of Q-Comp in 2005. Q-Comp was a voluntary program sponsored by the state legislature to improve teacher performance and raise student achievement. Under the terms of the legislation, school districts chose to apply for the program and corresponding funding, and created a plan addressing five key areas: (a) career ladder advancement options, (b) job-embedded professional development, (c) teacher evaluation, (d) performance pay, and (e) an alternative salary schedule.

During the initiation phase of the change effort, Q-Comp appeared to be an accountability plan for teachers. The title of the legislation, “Quality Compensation,” and the fourth requirement in the plan, performance pay, made offering teachers monetary rewards based on their performance seem to be the priority. The state offered school districts a financial incentive if they developed and received approval for their Q-Comp plans. Over the course of the past 10 years, Q-Comp has changed and currently looks more like a professional development plan than a performance pay plan.

To access funding, many metropolitan districts became early adopters of Q-Comp. To meet the requirements of career ladder advancement, districts created a position called instructional or peer coach. The new position allowed teachers to advance their careers by becoming teacher leaders. The addition of the peer coach role influenced and changed principals' roles and responsibilities.

Prior to Q-Comp, only two of the principals who participated in this study reported they observed tenured teachers on an annual basis. The majority of principals did not conduct formal clinical observations of tenured teachers at all, regardless of whether there was a policy in place
requiring them to observe teachers formally. As school districts designed structures for Q-Comp implementation, the roles and responsibilities of peer coaches and principals evolved.

Upon implementation of Q-Comp, principals started routine, formal observations of teachers in high-cycle years. Peer coaches observed teachers annually, but principals only observed tenured teachers once every three–five years. Although the observations were sparse compared to annual peer coach observations in low cycle, the change resulted in a greater number of formal observations than had been previously conducted.

Peer coaches became the central figures in classroom observations and conducting corresponding conferences with teachers. Their jobs entailed spending a significant amount of time with classroom teachers talking about instructional practices. Coaches also observed teachers and gave them feedback at least once per year. The coaches became influential in schools.

As a result of the addition of peer coaches, principals changed practices to continue their roles as instructional leaders in schools and to complement the leadership offered by peer coaches. Principals felt they still maintained authority over teachers, but initially they struggled to maintain their expertise about instruction in the classroom. Consequently, principals started to conduct classroom walk-throughs. As time went on, some districts started to require principals to conduct walk-through visits.

The implementation phase of Q-Comp entailed revisions to the original plan, especially given the new teacher evaluation model introduced by the legislature in 2013 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013). The structural elements of Q-Comp, however, endured over time. Peer coaches facilitated teacher growth under trusting and supportive conditions. The
coaches and Q-Comp have come to represent instructional professional development in these schools.

I examined the various phases of implementing Q-Comp using Bolman and Deal’s (2013) frames, including the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic lenses. Viewing changes in principals’ and peer coaches’ roles through the four lenses revealed how the new program initially changed the process of conducting teacher performance reviews (structural) but emphasized professional development over merit pay (human resource).

**Summary of Findings**

I identified four central findings based on principal interviews in this study. First, Q-Comp required a significant amount of time to establish roles and structures as it moved through the initiation, implementation, and institutionalization phases to produce real change (Fullan, 2007). Second, Q-Comp created opportunities for teachers to become instructional leaders in the role of peer coach, and the coaches now share leadership responsibilities previously reserved only for principals. Third, principals adapted to the change by maximizing their roles as instructional leaders, and concentrating their efforts on non-tenured teachers, underperforming teachers, and teachers on high cycle. Fourth, the addition of peer coaches and their collaboration with principals affected the professional culture of the school positively, increasing the focus on effective teaching and student learning.

My findings reveal changes in principal roles occurred due to the addition of peer coaches and resulted in a renewed emphasis on teacher performance. The principals also perceived an increase in student learning. Based on the four key findings, I now turn to a discussion of the implications of a change on school leaders and practices.
Implications

Making Real Change

The Q-Comp reform effort, as perceived by principals, accomplished many of the characteristics of a significant reform. Q-Comp needed almost 10 years to become an established part of school culture. A reform effort typically occurs in three phases: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization (Fullan, 2007). Based on this model, legislators and state department of education officials should consider the time needed to implement a real change, and the characteristics of an effective plan.

For example, the Q-Comp plan defined clear structures and the MDE required districts to address five key areas. However, the state also allowed for flexibility in roles over the course of 10 years. Successful incorporation of Q-Comp benefitted from a structure that adhered to key components, a tight structure combined with a loose structure allowing for flexibility (Bolman & Deal, 2013) during the initiation and implementation stages of the change effort. The tight structure concerned the expected criteria for reform. However, a loose structure allowed for the development of individual plans based on collaborations with board members and administrators, and teacher association involvement and approval.

The reform effort required districts to address criteria specified in the legislation, but the legislation did not provide exact methods to accomplish change. Once the established plans won local approval, the state provided local districts opportunities to revise the plans. After structures were in place, the next step involved assessing the political landscape, and negotiating to resolve conflicting interests. During the initial phases of Q-Comp, many principals were absent from the classrooms of tenured teachers much of the time. As principals recognized the need to stay attuned to what was happening in classrooms, many of them began conducting classroom walk-
throughs. Eventually, some school districts developed requirements for principals to conduct walk-throughs. The revisions to Q-Comp protocols for principals were the result of a change in the culture of the school, yet a need to be sure principals maintained the power and authority to be the instructional leaders.

The state required Q-Comp districts to renew their plans and get re-approval from MDE. As a result, school districts were required to get local approval from all parties. This required school boards, teachers’ unions, principals, and district administrators (including the superintendent) to engage politically. All parties in the system had to negotiate and gain endorsement from the largest coalition, the teachers’ union (political frame; Bolman & Deal, 2013). Q-Comp required all involved parties to participate in negotiations. It is plausible prior to Q-Comp some districts may not have engaged in meaningful negotiations about professional development or an accountability plan for teachers due to the difficulty of addressing those issues in contract negotiations. Q-Comp united parties based on the recognition no one party could afford to turn down the potential funds. Additionally, Q-Comp required creation of a teacher leadership position, ensuring teachers would have some power during negotiations.

Q-Comp prompted negotiations to take place at the initiation phase, but it also required recurring negotiations. Regularly scheduled discussions between school district personnel and teachers were necessary to adapt to changes and maximize achievement. The same type of loose-tight structure (Bolman & Deal, 2013) also describes the evolving roles of principals, peer coaches, and teachers.

Implementing a change requires time to work through shifts in roles and responsibilities, and to determine new structures for implementing change. If change involves only redefining roles and responsibilities, and negotiating new contracts, then the effects of the change on
teacher performance and student learning may be negligible. Real change involves learning and respecting the importance of the people within the organization (human resource) and their need to create meaning (symbolic frame; Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Principals must be flexible and adapt to change. The job of the principal involves a lot of daily routines and many interruptions. The scope of the principal position has grown beyond managing a school or serving as an instructional leader. Many outside and competing interests take time away from supporting instruction. Principals who serve in schools over many years are not able to rely solely on expertise they had when they began their jobs. They should prepare to change their roles continually in accordance with educational reforms and changes in the community. Many elements affect the role of the principal. States will likely pass new laws and educational research will encourage new practices. Effective principals must find ways to adapt to change.

This study revealed one of the ways Q-Comp changed the roles of principals regarding principal leadership. Principals should determine how they can facilitate instructional leadership through others rather than try to manage instruction themselves. The need to share leadership with capable individuals within the organization creates ownership and power among teachers. The result is increased momentum toward meeting building goals and improving student achievement.

Investing in teachers and developing their skills through more frequent performance reviews may increase the efficacy of teachers’ performances. One way to get teachers to appreciate the benefits of regular performance reviews is to involve a skilled, reassuring, and trusted person in the process. In the case of Q-Comp, peer coaches modeled professionalism and established trust. The peer coach was a teacher colleague who moved into a teacher leader
position. Many districts took intentional steps to establish and maintain trust between peer coaches and teachers. Q-Comp appeared to be a teacher accountability plan at the onset; however, the role of the peer coach focused on instruction rather than merely teacher performance. Principals thought Q-Comp served teachers by providing new leadership positions, improving classroom instruction, and rewarding teachers monetarily.

Additionally, organizations require more time to develop new symbols. The initial proposal for Q-Comp 10 years ago started a process for change. Ten years later, full institutionalization of the process remains unrealized, and the changes are still evolving. Q-Comp relies on state funding, which leaves the future of the program uncertain. The continuation of Q-Comp and the changes that have occurred reinforce the idea that fundamental change takes time. Over time, teachers began to make meaning out of Q-Comp. Each time teachers had a conversation with a peer coach or principal, they developed more personal meaning about the vision of the school because their level of involvement increased. Peer coaches represented ideal teachers, and increased trust and personal improvement for classroom teachers. Principals thought teachers embraced their work with peer coaches because principals supported the idea of professional growth around instruction.

**Peer Coaches as Instructional Leaders**

Principals thought peer coaches played a meaningful role in instructional change. Principals contributed to a successful change by supporting the role of the peer coach as a teacher leader and emphasizing teacher learning. The coaches’ contributions occurred chiefly through the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). They created conditions for change by emphasizing instructional practices and helping teachers and principals learn. Coaches established unique social and professional relationships, and empowered teachers to take risks
and make changes in their practice by emphasizing learning over performance. School leaders should recognize teachers require trusting relationships for professional growth. Trust is important because it allows teachers to take risks and make mistakes. Risks and mistakes are natural components of the growth process.

Peer coaches established the importance of teacher leadership and its influence on effective practice once an environment of trust existed between and among principals, teachers, and peer coaches. Investing in teacher leadership provided growth opportunities for teachers and enabled them to challenge themselves to achieve new levels of professionalism. The environment of trust, combined with a coaching model, improved classroom instruction through mutual learning. Coaches developed expertise because instructional leadership became their primary responsibility and, in turn, they gained the respect of their colleagues and principals. This type of job-embedded learning (Fullan, 2007) proved beneficial to teachers and principals, and contributed to a successful change, maximizing the principal’s role as instructional leader.

Principals in different school districts shared a similar standard of practice regarding teacher observations since the implementation of Q-Comp, but their roles have changed over time. Principals played an important role in instructional leadership due to their successful adaptation to change. For example, prior to Q-Comp, few principals were involved in tenured-teacher observations, but that is no longer the case. Principals conduct regular classroom observations of tenured teachers and use the practice of walk-throughs to develop their expertise and oversight of instruction in their schools. Principals changed their roles as the context required, and took advantage of ways to restructure their time to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
Principals may still need support to optimize their roles as instructional leaders. Like teachers and peer coaches, principals must continue to learn about effective classroom instruction to promote positive school change. The participating principals acknowledged they acquired new information about instructional practice from peer coaches. The principal’s role as an instructional leader will continue to evolve over time through professional engagement and learning.

Collaboration between principals and coaches is essential and supports a shared leadership model. Professional relationships characterized by mutual respect lead to shared facilitation of instructional leadership in the school. When principals and coaches participated in professional development and engaged in collaboration to improve practice, the effort produced changes in the professional culture.

Professional Culture

Q-Comp serves as a model to instill increased professionalism and a positive and productive school culture. Peer coaches collaborated with principals in support of the school vision and goals. The culture of the school changed because peer coaches spent time observing teachers, conducting conferences, and emphasizing the importance of improving instruction to promote student learning.

The culture of a school comprises all the elements of a school. Faculty meetings or parent presentations represent some elements of school culture; they are an opportunity to display what is valued in the organization. More importantly, teachers represent school culture via conversations in the hall or staff lounge. School leaders should recognize that changing the culture of a school is challenging work. Q-Comp encouraged teachers to have formal conversations with principals and coaches, but also affected informal conversations taking place
in the hallways and lunchrooms. Principals, peer coaches, and large numbers of individual teacher interactions started a progressively positive change in the culture of the school.

**Summary of Implications**

The findings suggest several applications for practice. The first involves the time and flexibility required to establish enduring change, as well as the processes needed to initiate and support change. Another implication involves the need to recognize and support the evolving role of the principal as an instructional leader. Perhaps the most important implication involves how teacher leadership serves as a powerful tool to improve instruction and potentially affect student achievement.

Reform efforts need a loose-tight structure (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Leaders should recognize the importance of well-defined roles and responsibilities; however, reform efforts require flexibility with respect to making changes over time. A change in structure and roles takes time, even as long as 10 years.

School leaders should determine how to maximize principals’ roles as instructional leaders in their schools. Given the demands made on principal time, the use of walk-throughs contributes to principal expertise without taking excessive time or requiring extensive written evaluations. School leaders should examine the most effective use of walk-throughs to maximize the leadership role of the principal, while preserving time for duties reserved for principals only. This includes making employment recommendations, and addressing concerns related to under-performing teachers.

Finally, districts should determine how they might maintain the positive qualities of Q-Comp if funding ends. The participants in this study felt Q-Comp has had an impact on instruction and their roles, supported teacher learning and student achievement, and aligned with
the school vision and goals. They also felt the coaches helped support them in their roles as instructional leaders. However, legislative funding for specific programming may change in the future. School districts may need to prioritize the financial commitments invested in the peer coach model to ensure successful institutionalization of the change effort.

The responsibilities of a school principal are broad in scope. It makes sense to support teacher leaders with a focus solely on instructional improvement to encourage continuous improvements in practices. School leaders should explore more ways to use teacher leaders to support organizational change.

**Limitations**

This study concerned the views of principals about a new state-developed change called Q-Comp. The study included several limitations, including sample size, location of the participants involved in the study, and conducting interviews solely with principals but not others involved in the change effort.

The small sample size of principals interviewed occurred because one requirement for participation involved the terms and experiences of practicing administrators and the change effort. I required principals who had served in their roles at least one year before Q-Comp (with one exception). The initial round of interviews included nine principals. Two years later, I interviewed seven of the nine principals again. The other two principals moved to new positions and were unavailable for follow-up interviews. Essentially, the participants experienced nearly 10 years of continuous service in the same role, school, and location.

A second limitation of this study involved the geographic boundaries. The interviewees for this study worked in suburban districts in the same metropolitan area. In some cases, more than one principal from the same district participated in the study. All schools in Minnesota had
the opportunity to apply for Q-Comp, and some schools in rural or urban areas may have
developed very different plans based on the needs of their school districts or negotiations with
teachers’ unions. The participant sample may also limit this study because they were all from
school districts that decided to become early adopters in the change effort.

Finally, the third limitation of this phenomenological study involves the data representing
only the perspectives of principals. I did not consider interviewing classroom teachers and peer
coaches in this study. Individuals working in these roles would bring a unique perspective to the
topic of changes resulting from Q-Comp.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

I investigated how principals made meaning of the changes occurring with the
implementation of Q-Comp. I recommend conducting further studies to generate a more
comprehensive view of the changes resulting from Q-Comp from the perspective of other
participants, such as teachers and peer coaches. The principals in this study found Q-Comp was
a positive change. My study took into consideration the perspectives of the principals. In the
future, researchers might conduct a relevant study to compare and analyze the roles of teachers
and peer coaches during this period of change.

The findings in my study might offer a platform on which to learn more about how the
changes in principal roles and the creation of peer coaches offer a new model for continuous
improvement. A comprehensive study of Q-Comp addressing the effectiveness of all five
required elements of Q-Comp may provide a greater depth of understanding regarding a systemic
change. Research of this nature may reveal how all five elements of Q-Comp affected people
engaged in a major reform effort. Research into the various components of Q-Comp may help
determine if Q-Comp’s success requires incorporation of all five elements, or if one or two elements play a more important role.

A new study to compare a school district with Q-Comp to a non-Q-Comp school district might reveal more information about the effectiveness of Q-Comp. Comparing experiences of two districts over the same period may also reveal whether Q-Comp was the effective element in school improvement, or if other changes in education during this time deserve credit. A model might specifically address the impact related to classroom instruction, school culture, and student achievement.

A study regarding the evaluation process for peer coaches may give insight into the ways in which school districts measure the value and work of peer coaches. Undoubtedly, the value of the peer coaches would vary based on their preparation and experience. Research of this nature may help educators understand how to maximize the effectiveness of peer coaches.

Another area for exploration might involve comparing Q-Comp to other pay-for-performance programs. Also, a study concerning how various factors, including funding, the size of pay increases, training, and the support of all stakeholders potentially affect student achievement may provide valuable insight regarding school improvement efforts. Is it possible to accomplish the same work with more funding without pay-for-performance incentives? Further research may inform legislators, school leaders, and teachers regarding how the results from these studies may guide the direction or implementation of programs in their schools.

Closing Statement

I set out to examine how principals experienced and made meaning of changes in their supervisory roles and authority after the implementation of Q-Comp, a merit pay program. Surprisingly, principals found new ways to serve as instructional leaders after an initial
period of uncertainty. They adjusted to changes in the evaluation of tenured teachers and collaborated with peer coaches in a newly shared leadership role. Taking advantage of a change in roles and responsibilities, principals found new ways to support and evaluate non-tenured teachers and address concerns regarding poorly performing teachers. Changes in principals’ roles resulted in a greater appreciation and oversight of school culture, and a renewed emphasis on learning and teaching. Principals learned from increased collaboration with teachers and peer coaches, revealing the importance of professional development for everyone, including principals. I hope the findings from this study serve as a guide for school leaders in facilitating positive change through professional development and learning.
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doi:10.3102/0013189X033008016


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APPENDIX A. APPROVAL FROM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

IRB PROTOCOL #B11-360-02

IRB Protocol #B11-360-02 - Changes in Principal Decision Making Regarding Teacher Performance Reviews and Evaluation - Expedited

Researcher: Renee Brandner

Advisor: Dr. Sarah Noonan

Full Status Approval

Your application for your proposed research involving human subjects has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board of the University of St. Thomas and been given Full Approval Status. Your application has satisfied all of the criteria necessary for full status. This means that you may proceed with your research immediately. This is your official letter of approval.

Please place the IRB log number on all of your future correspondence regarding this protocol.

Please note that under IRB Policy principal investigators are required to report to the IRB for further review when changes in the research protocol increase the risks to the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in the study and/or in the event of any adverse episode (e.g. actual harm, breach of confidentiality) involving human subjects.
APPENDIX B. INITIAL ELECTRONIC MAIL MESSAGE TO PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal,

My name is Renee and I am a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas, in Minneapolis, MN. I have recently contacted you by phone to get a short description of your work history as an administrator working in a school district with performance pay. Your experience meets the criteria for my study.

I am writing to obtain your permission to interview you and include your thoughts in a qualitative research study I am conducting. In this study, I will seek the attitudes, views and perceptions of administrators about teacher remediation and dismissal in school districts who use a performance pay system. My intent is to determine what, if any, impact documentation related to performance pay or peer evaluations has on the dismissal process. The results should facilitate further understanding of how performance pay initiatives impact administrative duties and teacher performance.

If you agree to be part of the study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Sign and return the enclosed “Consent Form.”

2. I will contact you to schedule an interview which will take approximately 45 minutes. During the interview I will ask you questions about your experience working with
underperforming or incompetent teachers. We will correspond via email to arrange an interview time that would be convenient for you.

Your personal identity and privacy will be protected as will the identity of your school district. Although I will know your identity, no one other than my college supervisor will be privy to the information. Your name and the name of your district will not be identified during the study or as part of my dissertation.

Please contact me at rmbrandner@stthomas.edu with your questions or concerns. If you have questions for my college supervisor, Dr. Sarah Noonan, you may contact her at sjnoonan@stthomas.edu. I am hopeful that you will participate in my research study. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Renee Brandner
University of St. Thomas Doctoral Student
APPENDIX C. CHANGES IN PRINCIPAL ROLES

Interview #1 Script and Questions

Thank you for taking time to meet with me so I can interview you about your experience supervising classroom teachers. You should have received a copy of the confidentiality agreement and if you have it signed, please ask any question you have before giving it to me.

I have a set of planned interview questions, however I may ask follow up questions which also relate to my research question. You may ask for clarification on any question I present. Please answer all questions as frankly as you can, but you may also pass on any question you are uncomfortable answering.

I estimate that this interview will take 45 minutes. I will be making an audio recording of this interview and will later transcribe the interview.

Participant Code for Label_______ Date ________ Male/ Female _________

Grade levels in the school _______ Interviewer: Brandner_____

1. Are you aware that I am recording interview? If so, please say, “Yes. I know this interview is being recorded.”

2. Before the start of the interview, have explained the research? If so, please say, “Yes. The research has been explained to me.”

3. Are you aware that you may skip questions or stop this interview at any time? If so, please say, “Yes. I know I may skip any question or stop this interview at any time.

4. What is your current position (district)?

5. How long have you been in the position?

6. Have you held other positions in the district prior to this one?
7. Have you been an administrator in another district before this?
8. What is your total number of years supervising teachers?
9. How often are tenured teachers required to be formally observed in the classroom?
10. Does this reflect your practice?
11. What type of informal data do you gather about an instructor as an administrator?
12. How does insufficient teaching practice come to your attention?

Incompetent Teaching: Lexington public schools defined

Incompetent teaching as lacking the requisite or adequate abilities, capacities, or qualities needed to reach a reasonable set of standards (Bruce Fraser as cited in Platt, Trip, Ogden, & Fraser, 2001).

1. Do any current or past teachers come to mind when I define mediocre teaching (please do not share their names)?
2. What kind of behaviors did/ do you see from these teachers?
3. Do you choose to address these behaviors? (if not go to question 18)
4. If so, Why?
5. If so, how?
6. What is the process you use to address them?
7. Has this lead to teacher dismissal?
8. How did you document the performance deficiency?
9. Did you have enough documentation to effectively move through the process?
10. Is there anything you would do differently if you were confronted with a similar situation in the future?
11. If not, why?
12. Does your district have a performance pay system?
13. How long has it been in place?
14. What are the key elements to the plan?
15. Can you tell me about them- describe?
16. Can you tell me how effective you thought they were in enhancing teacher performance?
17. What do you do differently because of performance pay?
18. Aside from your experience at this school, do you have other experiences with teacher performance pay models?
19. When you think of performance pay for teachers, what is your overall opinion of the concept?
20. Do you believe performance pay can impact teacher performance?
21. What might be different about performance pay to make this happen?
22. Do you believe performance pay impacts student achievement/learning?
23. What might be different about performance pay to make this happen?
24. Any final thoughts related to mediocre teacher performance or performance pay?
25. Does the plan involved teachers observing one another? Describe.
26. What type of paperwork is generated by these observations?
27. Are they intended to be evaluative?
28. Have you reviewed the teacher-teacher observation paperwork?
29. How do you believe these teacher-teacher observations influence teacher performance?
30. How do you believe these teacher-teacher observations influence student learning?
31. Do teacher-teacher observations ever create documents that establish teacher performance other than that which is your opinion?
32. Do you do anything to address conflicts in such observations?
33. Did your past practice of addressing incompetent teachers change once performance pay was put into place?

34. How did it change?

35. Who did the change to performance pay impact the most

36. Is there anything else you want to tell me to help me capture the essence of the exchange student’s experience in the United States?

Thank you for meeting with me today. Please do not hesitate to contact at the email address on your consent form if you have questions.
Good Morning,

You allowed me the opportunity to interview you in December of 2013 for my dissertation study. I am updating my data as I am in the final phases of my dissertation and I have just a few follow up questions I would like to ask you. Could we set up a time (20 minutes) for a recorded phone interview?

I appreciate your consideration.

Renee Brandner
APPENDIX E. PHONE INTERVIEW #2

Changes in Principal Decision Making Regarding Changes in Principals’ Role

1. Are you aware that I am recording interview that you may skip questions or stop this interview at any time? Yes. I know this interview is being recorded.

2. The purpose of this follow-up interview is to gain your perspective about the changes in your role and practice as a principal and instructional leader over the last decade. I refer to changes occurring as a result Q-Comp, the implementation of peer coaches and coaching, and a new teacher evaluation model in the state. As someone with considerable knowledge and experience in education, how would you describe the changes occurring with regard to you role, teacher performance, the rise of peer coaches, and professional development? In every change effort, some things are gained and other things lost. What would you describe as a gain and also a loss in the new system?

3. The peer-instructional coach role became part of practice during this time period. After several years of practice, what can you tell me about your work and relationship with peer coaches? How do you think peer coaches have matured into this new role? What adjustments did you make to ensure their role provided value to your school?

4. I have defined a continuum of 2 ways districts work with peer coaches. On one side of the continuum is a team approach in which the coach and the principals share information and data freely about teachers’ performance. On the other end is a consultant approach in which there are contractual limits about how and when information can be exchanged. I identified your district as a _________ model because ________________ and ________________ were true.
Is this designation still true? Have policies regarding roles and relationships between the principal, coaches and teachers changed? Based on the model more representative of your district, what do you see are the benefits and liabilities of the team or consultant model?

5. How has the implementation of Q-Comp, the adoption of peer coaching and the new teacher evaluation system affected the professional culture of your school? How about student achievement?

6. Finally, I would like to gain insight regarding how you use discretion in your role as an instructional leader in the school or district. Do you ever decide to observe one or more teachers in "low cycle?" If yes, what prompted you to conduct these observations? Please describe.

What role do you think the principal plays with tenured faculty during the "low-cycle" review period.

During high cycle, what practices, if any, have changed over the years?

7. My study concerns the role of principals during the implementation of a change effort. Do you have any general comments to offer about this change before we end this interview?

Thanks for your time.