Chapter 11
Canada: Principal Leadership in Canada

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This chapter provides a preliminary summary of principals' work in Canada. It begins with a detailed description of how public education is organized in Canada. Next, we include a brief summary of overall challenges in Canadian public education followed by a synopsis of the principal's role throughout Canada's provinces and territories. Following this, an explanation is provided of the meta-synthesis employed to generate meaningful themes from the 285 empirical studies included in this investigation. Findings point to two overarching meta-themes: organizational support for the principal's workforce and the nature of principals' work. Each of these meta-themes is then further divided into multiple subthemes. Organizational support for the principal's workforce is separated into principal preparation, recruitment, retention, and succession planning. The nature of principals' work is further split into two subthemes: managerial/functionalist approaches and addressing issues of difference. The chapter concludes with recommendations on where researchers and policy-makers might want to concentrate their attention and resources in further supporting school leadership in the twenty-first century.

The Canadian Education System

Formal, publicly funded education systems in Canada consist of primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. These systems are mainly the responsibility of provinces and territories; there is no national education strategy. Each of the ten provinces

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(Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia) and three territories (Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories) have their own public school system, each slightly different from the others. For the most part this means that provincial and territorial jurisdictions govern their primary education systems through provincial and territorial *Education Acts* or *School Acts* and legislation. For example, each province and territory creates their own provincial or territorial school curriculum. They also administer their public education systems through either provincial or territorial government departments such as the Department of Education or ministries such as the Ministry of Education. The only exception is the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, which is responsible, through the *Indian Act*, for providing primary and secondary education for students living on First Nation reserves (Indian Act, R.S.C. 1985) across all of Canada.

Operationally, all provinces and territories except for the Yukon Territory have some kind of school board system (also known in some regions as District Education Authorities [Nunavut] and Divisional Education Councils [the Northwest Territories]) that is responsible for administering publicly funded schools. These systems vary somewhat across Canada. For example, in Ontario (2011–2012) there were 4,899 schools, each governed by one of 72 district school boards (Ontario Ministry of Education 2013). The province of Newfoundland and Labrador, in 2013, amalgamated four large, English language school boards into one massive board for the entire province (Newfoundland Department of Education 2013). The province of Alberta is the only province with *public* charter schools. Charter schools in Alberta are independent of any school district, have their own governance board, and report directly to the province (Alberta Education 2009). Primary education is compulsory in Canada, but the compulsory age varies depending on province and territory, with the age at which students no longer have to attend school generally ranging from 14 to 18 years of age (Oreopoulos 2007).

Each province and territory is responsible for teacher certification. Overall, the basic requirement for teacher certification in Canada is the successful completion of grade 12, a bachelor's degree (usually a 4-year program) and successful completion of a professional teacher education degree (usually a 2-year program) (Center for International Education Benchmarking 2013; Schleicher 2012). Some provinces also allow for the employment of individuals who do not possess all of the requirements for certification; "emergency teachers" are hired each year to fill vacant posts in isolated communities and in subject areas such as French, where there may be a dearth of qualified teachers (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2013; *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2; Manitoba Education 2013). In an effort to increase mobility of teachers within the Canadian workforce across provincial and territorial jurisdictions, the Canadian federal government has signed the *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT) with the provincial and territorial governments (Grimmett et al. 2012). The implementation of the AIT means that it is now easier for teachers

certified in one jurisdiction to have their credentials recognized in another jurisdiction, increasing teacher mobility for work within Canadian borders.

The Canadian teacher workforce is highly unionized. All teachers employed by a Canadian school board automatically become members of a teacher union; they cannot opt out. All teacher unions and associations are provincially and territorially designated. Negotiation processes are not standardized across the country; some unions and associations collectively bargain at the "local level, some at the provincial level, and some are mixed" (OECD 2011, p. 6). Most provinces have one teacher union or association such as the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU), while larger jurisdictions such as Ontario have four teacher unions. Teacher unions are quite powerful in Canada (Levin 2010; OECD 2011). Principals are included as members of teacher unions and associations in all provinces and territories except Ontario and British Columbia where principals have been removed from local unions and associations and are considered management (Fleming 2012).

Because of the way in which Canada developed into a sovereign country, Canada's *Constitution Act* (1867) and Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* provide protection for some types of publicly funded religious-based and language-based school systems. The constitutional provision for publicly funded religious-based schools applies to the provinces of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees minority language rights for French-speaking people outside of the province of Québec and English-speaking people inside Québec, ensuring that each can attend publicly funded schools in their own language.

Challenges in Canadian Education

Including inland water bodies such as lakes, Canada is the second largest country by total area (United Nations Statistics Division 2013). Canada has an estimated population of just over 33,000,000, but with only 3.7 people per square kilometer, it is not densely populated (Statistics Canada 2013). Four-fifths of the population lives within 150 km of the US border, while the rest live across a substantial landmass (Custred 2008).

Canada is also a country of immigrants. With slightly more than 20 % of Canada's current population born outside of the country (Statistics Canada 2013), it is home to a number of different ethnic groups and has one of the highest per capita immigration rates in the world (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). Immigration is a key driver of population growth and economic prosperity in Canada. Despite having an estimated fertility rate (live births per woman) of 1.7 between 2010 and 2015 (United Nations Statistics Division 2013), Canada's population grew by 5.6 % between 2006 and 2011 due to immigration (Statistics Canada 2013). While Canada is not experiencing a decline in population, the United Nations Statistics Division (2013)

estimates that Canada's population will grow by only 0.9 % annually between 2010 and 2015.

Similar to most developed countries (OECD 2013), Canada is experiencing a demographic shift towards an aging general population. This phenomenon is the product of several years of low and declining fertility rates, a rise in life expectancy, and the impact of the "baby boom," a spike in the number of children born between 1946 and 1965 (Statistics Canada 2013). These combined factors have led to a situation in Canada where it is predicted that between 2015 and 2021, the number of senior citizens (those aged 65 or older) will outpace the number of children (those aged 14 or younger) (Statistics Canada 2013). The demographic shift is best expressed by the latest national estimates (Statistics Canada 2013), which indicate that senior citizens are Canada's fastest growing population group and comprise 14.9 % of the total population, up from only 9.7 % 30 years ago. This number is expected to continue to increase as the "baby boom" generation grows into old age and retirement. The effects of these demographic trends can be seen in the principal workforce. Large regions of Canada (Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan to name a few) have experienced principal shortages partially due to mass numbers of people retiring (Fink and Brayman 2006; Normore 2006).

Formal public education in Canada faces a number of challenges. Some of these challenges are unique to Canada, while others are challenges with which all nation states struggle. One of Canada's unique challenges is its composition (governance structure, geography, and population dynamics). Combinations of provincial and territorial public education systems with (generally speaking) a relatively small but frequently diverse population spread out over an extremely large landmass have created many different school system contexts throughout Canada. Combinations of Canada's composition with reported principal shortages in various regions of Canada and many parts of Canada find themselves faced with challenges concerning appropriate principal preparation, recruitment, retention, and succession planning (Alberta Teachers' Association 2010a, b; Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario 2004; Fink and Brayman 2006).

In addition to the Canadian composition, school system contexts are not immune to external global pressures influencing public education worldwide. Public education systems in Canada are subject to the same neoliberal pressures that have led to the implementation of elaborate performance-based accountability mechanisms (e.g., large-scale student testing) in other education systems (Leithwood et al., 2002; Pyrtula et al. 2013). These accountability mechanisms are used to determine whether schools are improving student achievement in certain narrowly defined subject and skill areas that some consider essential for students to make a meaningful contribution to the Canadian economy (Ben Jaafar and Earl 2008).

In 2009, Canada spent 3.9 % of its gross domestic product (GDP) on primary, secondary, and non-tertiary postsecondary education (OECD 2013). As the OECD average expenditures in this area also represent 3.9 % of GDP, Canadian education spending is consistent with that of other developed nations (OECD 2013). In terms of quality, Canada owns one of the world's strongest and top-performing education systems. In reading, Canadian students outperformed their peers in all but four

countries according to data from the latest OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted in 2009 (Knighton et al. 2010). The performance of Canadian students in mathematics and science on the 2009 PISA study clearly exceeded the OECD average, as they ranked eighth and seventh, respectively. Overall, the average 15-year-old Canadian student received a score of 527 in literacy, science, and mathematics; this is substantially higher than the average score of 497 across all participating nations (Knighton et al. 2010).

Canadian students have experienced similar success in other international measures of student skill and achievement, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). On the former, last conducted in 2011, Canadian grade 4 students ranked 12th out of the 45 participating countries. With 13 % of students hitting the advanced benchmark, Canada was among the countries with the greatest percentage of students reaching the highest level (Labreque et al. 2012). TIMSS is an international study that measures the mathematics and science achievement of students in grades 4 and 8. The provinces of Alberta, Ontario, and Québec participated in the most recent TIMSS study, conducted in 2011 (Education Quality and Accountability Office [EQAO] 2011). Students in grades 4 and 8 in each of the participating provinces ranked within the top half of all participants for the mathematics portion of the study. The results for Canadian students in the science portion of the TIMSS assessment paint a similar picture (EQAO 2011). Canada continues to work towards increasing student success so that it can effectively compete on the world stage.

Principal's Role in Canadian Public School Systems

Because public education in Canada is a provincial and territorial responsibility, the principal's role has little connection to national policy per se, but rather is largely connected to provincial and territorial policy and their public school systems. Document analysis (e.g., *Alberta Education Act [Part 7, Section 19]; Prince Edward Island School Act [Part 7, Section 99]; Québec Education Act [Chapter 3, Division 5, Section 96, Subsection 12])*[1] indicates that principals across Canada are responsible for similar duties/tasks and roles. These duties can be broadly grouped into four overlapping areas: leadership and management, and to a lesser degree, cultural identity/language, health/wellness, and mental health. All legislation from the

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[1] A comprehensive list of Education Acts and School Acts analyzed included *Alberta Education Act (Part 7, Section 19); British Columbia School Act (Regulation 265/89, Section 5); Manitoba, The Public Schools Act (Section 55.1, subsection 1); New Brunswick Education Act (Regulation 97–150, Part 6, Section 28); Newfoundland and Labrador Schools Act (Part 3, Section 24); Northwest Territories Education Act (Part 2, Section 63); Nova Scotia Education Act (Chapter 1, Section 38); Nunavut Education Act (duties and role located throughout the act); Ontario Education Act (Part 10, Section 265); Prince Edward Island School Act (Part 7, Section 99); Quebec Education Act (Chapter 3, Division 5, Section 96, Subsection 12); and Saskatchewan Education Act (Chapter 4, Section 175).*

provinces and territories include, to a degree, components of leadership and management. A majority of the legislation includes leadership responsibilities first and management second. Across the country, terms such as "educational leaders" (Nova Scotia), "instructional leaders" (e.g., New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, and Prince Edward Island), and "leaders of instructional programs" (Nunavut) are used to describe the leadership positions occupied by principals. Tasks attached to the principal's role include developing, supervising, evaluating, and being accountable for instructional programs; hiring, supervising, evaluating, and providing professional development opportunities for school staff; supporting student advancement; and evaluating student performance and progress. Principals are also expected to create a positive school climate and to create and maintain connections with the students, parents, and the local communities.

In terms of management, principals implement decisions made by the school district and/or provincial or territorial government. They are expected to maintain order and student discipline, maintain student records, timetables, and schedules, and provide various reports to the school board. Principals are accountable for funds provided to, or raised by, the school. Principals are often responsible for prescribing the duties and functions of support staff. Principals are also responsible for expenditures, student attendance, development and delivery of extracurricular programs and services for students, reporting student progress to parents and guardians, and establishing school plans. Finally, principals are also responsible for the requisition of supplies and for the upkeep of the school and school property.

In addition to traditional leadership and management responsibilities, some *School Acts* and *Education Acts* include other explicit tasks and duties for principals that focus on health and wellness and cultural identity and language. For example, eight provinces and territories emphasize responsibilities connected to student's well-being, health, and safety. These responsibilities and tasks vary between provinces and territories, but generally include items such as being legally responsible for the health and safety of all students within the school and an obligation to implement a school-wide anti-bullying or anti-violence plan. Other jurisdictions expect principals to connect with representatives from other government agencies in an effort to better meet student needs or provide student support services. Some principals are also explicitly expected to report any child welfare concerns to their superintendent and appropriate government officials and to notify the appropriate authorities of any outbreaks of infectious or contagious diseases.

Lastly, principals in 8 out of the 13 provinces and territories are also assigned roles and responsibilities for preserving/developing cultural identity and language. However, these responsibilities vary between provincial and territorial jurisdictions. For example, the *British Columbia School Act* states that principals are expected to promote "loyalty to the Crown, respect for Canadian traditions, laws, institutions and human values, and shall include observation of occasions of historic or current importance to Canada and the Commonwealth…" (p. D-61). In New Brunswick, principals are expected to establish school policies for ensuring and promoting the language and culture of the official linguistic community served by the school. Principals in French language schools in Newfoundland and Labrador are

responsible for promoting cultural identity and the French language throughout the school. In the territory of Nunavut, principals are charged with protecting the cultural, moral, and spiritual heritage of the local community, which includes consulting with community elders and other local stakeholders. Planning the delivery of culture-based school programs is also a mandated responsibility of principals in the Northwest Territories.

Methodology

A meta-synthesis approach was used to conduct the study described in this chapter. "Meta-synthesis" is a term used to "encompass a variety of approaches to synthesize a number of qualitative research studies within a particular field of study" (Paterson et al. 2009, p. 23). As will be discussed later, the vast majority of references included in this review are qualitative in nature, so we determined that a meta-synthesis would provide the best framework with which to move forward.

As the purpose of this review is to synthesize and present all Canadian research on school principals conducted in the twenty-first century, the selected studies cover the period 2000–2013. The following eight databases were searched for potential studies for inclusion in this meta-synthesis:

- ProQuest
- ProQuest Dissertations and Theses
- JSTOR
- EBSCOHost
- Education Research Complete
- Thesis Canada Portal
- Google Scholar
- Microsoft Academic Search

Different combinations of keywords were used to search the databases. Search terms used to collect and identify potential sources included *principal*, *Canada principal*, *school principal*, *Canadian school principal*, *school principal Canada*, *principalship*, *Canadian principalship*, *school leadership*, *school leadership Canada*, and *educational leadership Canada*. References were initially selected if they involved the study of principalship in Canada. Studies published in a variety of sources, including peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, doctoral dissertations, master's theses, and research reports produced by government and professional organizations, were all sought out for inclusion in this review. The initial search as described above produced 395 unique references.

After the initial search, references were further reduced by hand. The final selection criteria were that all research included in this project had to be empirical work published between 2000 and 2013 and had to involve conducting research with or about school principals in Canada. This step in the search process resulted in the exclusion of 45 peer-reviewed journal articles, 39 book chapters, and 7 professional

reports because they were conceptual in nature. Also excluded were a further 13 peer-reviewed journal articles, 5 doctoral dissertations, and 2 master's theses. Analysis of these references revealed that either the research did not focus on principalship or the studies were conducted outside of Canada.

Ultimately, the search process yielded a total of 285 references that fit our criteria. Both critical and more traditional voices are included among the selected references. The final selection is comprised of 102 peer-reviewed journal articles, 12 book chapters, 77 doctoral dissertations, 74 master's theses, and 20 reports from government or professional organizations. Only 8 of the selected studies were in French, the other 277 being written in English.

The vast majority of empirical studies conducted on Canadian principals since 2000 are qualitative in nature. Solely qualitative studies account for 63 of the 102 selected journal articles, 11 of the 12 book chapters, 60 of the 77 doctoral dissertations, 53 of the 74 master's theses, and 8 of the government and professional reports. Sixteen journal articles, 28 of the doctoral dissertations and master's theses, and 7 of the reports employed a mixed methods approach. Of the selected references, only 17 journal articles, 4 doctoral dissertations, 3 master's theses, and 5 reports used solely quantitative methods. Fifteen of the 63 qualitative journal articles selected for this study were presented as inquiries based in grounded theory, critical feminist, narrative, naturalistic, phenomenological, or ethnographic approaches. The type of methodological orientation to data collection or analysis was either not specified or the authors simply stated their methods and seemingly took a neutral approach to their inquiry in 47 of the qualitative journal articles. All but 1 of the 29 quantitative references in this study primarily relied on survey methodologies. The remaining reference analyzed student achievement data using a correlational design.

The meta-synthesis approach we used for this review is called a meta-study. This meta-study involved four phases of analysis and a synthesis phase (Paterson et al. 2001; Sandelowski and Barraso 2003). Each phase of analysis involved coding the selected documents (Merriam 2009). Initial categories were developed to group the documents based on methodological approach, findings, and any theoretical lenses that informed the studies (Paterson et al. 2001, 2009; Sandelowski and Barraso 2003). The fourth phase of analysis involved using an inductive approach to coding and categorizing the data within each of the initial three large categories. The fourth phase was conducted in an effort to allow themes to emerge from multiple readings and interpretations of the data (Merriam 2009). The findings of these phases were then synthesized as we attended to the theoretical foundations and underpinnings of the educational administration field as well as the contexts in which the research was conducted.

An interactive, web-based, qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software application called *Dedoose* was used to code and analyze the documents in this study. The web-based nature of the program enables users to access their project from any device that connects to the Internet, including computers running Windows or Apple operating systems, tablets, and mobile phones, all of which were used to

analyze data on this project. Increased accessibility is possible because all project documents are kept in "cloud" storage once uploaded to the *Dedoose* online database. In addition to allowing ease of access to the project regardless of computer hardware, use of *Dedoose* allowed researchers located in different cities to simultaneously log into the project and upload documents, code data, and conduct analysis in real time.

Funding for Educational Research in Canada

In Canada, funding for educational research originates from a number of different sources: national granting agencies, federal ministries, not-for-profit agencies, and school site action research initiatives. For example, at a national level, researchers can obtain federal government support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). SSHRC is a "federal research funding agency that promotes and supports postsecondary-based research and training in the humanities and social sciences" (SSHRC 2014). Since 2000, 14 grants worth upwards of 1.1 million Canadian dollars have been awarded to researchers who have studied principals' work, successful leadership practices, or principal succession (SSHRC 2013). Research on principals' roles and work is generated at the provincial and territorial level as well (see, e.g., The Learning Partnership 2008). Some of this research was conducted or commissioned by the provincial and territorial governments and in some cases remained internal with little to no public access to findings, generated for internal policy-making purposes. For obvious reasons, this chapter is not able to report on such research or findings. Other provincial organizations also commission and conduct research around principals and their work; these tend to be professional associations such as the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) and the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO) or labor groups such as the Alberta Teachers' Association and the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan. To a lesser degree, a few not-for-profit groups, such as The Learning Partnership, People for Education, The Fraser Institute, and The Manitoba Education Research Network, have completed research in the past 10 years on principals' work.

Many of the findings reported in this chapter were supported through the above-mentioned funding opportunities. To a lesser degree, a few large school districts have conducted their own research around principals' roles and work, but findings from these studies tend to be limited to public access (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board 2012; Saskatoon Public Schools 2008). In some regions of Canada, teachers and principals themselves engage in action inquiry where they research their own practice. In these particular cases, research findings are mainly shared among a local group of practitioners (Prendergast 2002; Williams et al. 2008).

Canadian Research on School Principals in Relation to the Rest of the World

The research reported in this chapter adds to the international knowledge of leadership in a number of ways. First, it advances knowledge on what principals do in their rapidly changing work environment. Second, it supports a number of growing trends found in other nations around organizational support for the principal workforce, including principal shortages, the decreasing desirability of the position, and the need for strategic succession planning. Lastly, Canadian research on the principalship illustrates well how context matters. The research included in this study demonstrates that Canada's large landmass, small population, and substantial kinds of diversity mean that the context in which public education occurs in Canada operates within various extremes and therefore can differ significantly from region to region.

It is difficult to determine to what degree research from outside Canada has influenced the diverse research on principals within Canada. National boundaries are becoming increasingly transparent in a globalized and technology-driven world characterized by vast transfers of knowledge, from individual, real-time, face-to-face consultations, to Twitter feeds updating new research findings, to cross-border and collaborative research ventures. However, a brief analysis of a random sample of 20 published articles gathered from the 285 references is included in this study. A total of 660 references were cited in these 20 randomly sampled articles, and they provide some general indication that research and information from other nation states may have influenced research in the Canadian context. It is outside the scope of this chapter to conduct further analyses with respect to how Canadian scholarship on principals is influenced by international research.

However, as the pie chart in Fig. 11.1 (*Potential Influences on Canadian Scholarship investigating the Principalship*) indicates, Canadian scholars studying the principalship seem to be heavily influenced by research conducted in the
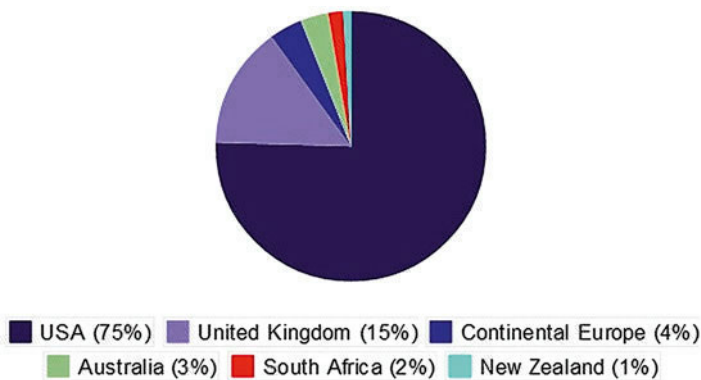

Fig. 11.1 Potential influences on Canadian scholarship investigating the principalship

United States. A total of 75 % (424 of 660) of the random sample of references was from research conducted in the United States. Research conducted in the United Kingdom or by British researchers accounted for 15 % (82 of 660) of the references, with perceived smaller levels of influence emanating from Continental Europe and other English-speaking nations. Authors of articles included in this sample cited their Canadian colleagues only 173 times (not included in the chart above), which makes the influence of American work on the Canadian context seem even more pronounced.

While this chapter is not a comparison between research on principals' work in Canada and other countries, it could be argued that since a substantial amount of Canadian research is drawn from the United States, Canada probably faces similar school leadership issues as the United States and other Western countries. However, how these issues play out in Canada may be somewhat different from other contexts. For example, Canada, like other Western countries, subscribes to a performance-based accountability system; however, the consequences of implementing such a system in Canada differ from those observed in other nation states. For instance, unlike Canada, many American states have attached high-stakes, punitive measures to their accountability systems, which have a direct impact on principals and their teachers. While principals in each nation work in somewhat similar systems, how they perform their work differs because of the structure of the performance-based accountability system within their context.

What Research Says about Principals' Roles, Work, and Leadership in Canada

Recent research inquiries and findings connected to the school principal's role, work, and leadership in Canada are driven by the Canadian context and can be broadly categorized into two general areas: organizational support for the principal workforce and the work of principals. Organizational support for the principal workforce can be subdivided into principal preparation, recruitment, retention, and succession planning, all of which are interrelated. The work of principals focuses on what it is that principals are doing, how they do their work, and why they engage in the work that they do. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to presenting our analysis and synthesis of the research in relation to the work, role, and leadership of Canadian principals in the twenty-first century.

Organizational Support for the Principal Workforce

As mentioned earlier, Canada's changing demographic means an overall high attrition rate of experienced principals (CPCO 2001; Fink and Brayman 2006). This shortage is more extreme in rural and remote regions of the country. In addition to

fewer principals in the hiring pool and geographic challenges, the changing nature of the principal position has led to fewer teachers choosing to become principals, and it has also changed the kinds of qualities required in candidates for the principalship (Winton and Pollock 2013). Further, the expansion of principals' roles has left many feeling dissatisfied with their professional lives (Wright 2008). For these reasons, research and policy attention has turned to principal preparation, recruitment, retention, and succession planning. Fifty-three of the 285 documents included in this meta-study fit in this category. The four subcategories mentioned above center on supporting the formal role of the principal. Within each subcategory there are a number of studies that attempt to understand issues connected to principal preparation, recruitment, retention, and succession planning, while others attempt to examine solutions and strategies to overcome the challenges in each of these areas.

Principal Preparation

Individual provinces and territories are responsible for preparing aspiring and beginning principals for the position as well as for providing opportunities for ongoing professional development (see, e.g., ATA 2013; Yukon Education 2011). Presently, the types of preparation programs and professional development opportunities available to Canadian principals vary by the province or territory in which the principals work. Professional associations and teacher unions appear to be quite active in providing learning opportunities for their members in 10 of the 13 provinces and territories. Similarly, in 10 of the 13 provinces and territories, the Ministry or Department of Education is involved in the delivery of workshops and other types of preparation and ongoing learning opportunities for their principals. District school boards are involved in mentoring beginning principals and providing professional development for experienced principals in most jurisdictions (Dick 2005; Keanie 2007; McGregor 2011; Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport 2006; Webber and Scott 2010). Though the requirements for the position of school principal are quite similar across the different provinces and territories, only five have mandated qualification or certification programs for aspiring principals (Nunavut Professional Improvement Committee 2010; Ontario College of Teachers 2005; Yukon Education 2011). Applicants for these programs will have usually already obtained many of the requirements needed to become a school principal, such as a master's degree and teaching or supervisory experience. Completion of a principal certification program is viewed as an additional qualification in each of the five provinces and territories in which they are offered. Canadian faculties of education and many American border colleges offer master's degree programs. The Yukon Territory provides teachers with an opportunity to take an educational leave to pursue graduate studies (Yukon Education 2013). This is important to point out because, as mentioned earlier, a master's degree is becoming a mandatory qualification for aspiring principals in several jurisdictions across Canada.

Some of the research around principal preparation focuses on determining the limitations to formal professional learning, such as a limited focus on the emotional and value-laden aspects of principals' work (Harris 2008; Wallace 2010). These findings have led some to express concern about whether graduate programs and prior leadership experience adequately prepare principals for the rigors of the demanding role (ATA 2009; Harris 2008; Mentz et al. 2010). Other research focuses on how to improve principal preparation programs or provide alternative kinds of programs and contents. This includes a diverse range of approaches to professional development, including principal retreats, visualizing success, theatrical improvisation, or participation in formal leadership coaching programming (ATA 2013; MacKinnon 2007; McGregor 2011; Meyer 2001; Sherman 2008). There is a growing consensus that effective principal training needs to include some form of interaction with peers and direct connection to typical principals' work, as opposed to strict segregation in a formal learning program away from the school environment. As mentioned earlier, mentoring – whether formal, informal, and/or virtual – appears to be a major strategy in preparing principals in Canada (Dick 2005; Keanie 2007; McGregor 2011; Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport 2006; Scott 2010). Some models are formal, school district-wide mentoring programs such as the Mentoring and Coaching Pilot Project delivered in 20 different Ontario district school boards in 2007–2008 (Ontario Ministry of Education 2008), while others include things such as online chat and training sessions among principals (Dunn 2005; Isabelle and Lapointe 2003; Scott 2010; Webber 2003; Webber and Scott 2010). Issues identified with principal preparation include supporting opportunities that are connected to the principals' local contexts and making the programs relevant to the changing nature of the position (CPCO 2005; Grodski 2011; Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport 2006; Scott and Weber 2008).

Recruitment

Connected to principal preparation is principal recruitment. Interest in increasing the number of principal candidates and the quality of these candidates has been spurred on by increased attrition rates and the changing role of principals' work throughout Canada (Fink and Brayman 2006; Normore 2004, 2006). A recent OECD report indicates that nations like Canada, which rely on candidates self-selecting into principal preparation, take an inefficient approach to recruitment; self-selection does not ensure that the most qualified candidates are being groomed for leadership positions and allow for teachers to pursue the principalship solely for the pay raise (Schleicher 2012). The same report argues that self-selection may not meet jurisdictional school leadership needs and could be the culprit for the principal shortages experienced across Canada and in most of the developed world.

A growing body of research has focused on the diversification of the principal workforce so that it reflects the increasingly diverse student population. A lack of diversity in the current Canadian educator pool has been traced to discriminatory

hiring practices and inequities in schooling (Ryan et al. 2009). Unique challenges in recruiting principals to isolated and remote communities have been identified, such as a lack of networking opportunities and the erosion of vice-principalships and support staff (Thompson 2009).

Retention

Retention can be understood both broadly (keeping principals employed in principal roles) and narrowly (keeping a principal employed at a particular school). In other words, principal turnover is not merely principals leaving the role but also principals changing schools (Mascall and Leithwood 2010; Reynolds et al. 2008). The overall shortage of qualified personnel to fill school principal roles has created a rather unique phenomenon where those recruited find themselves engaging in multiple lateral moves between a number of different schools. Lateral mobility can be attributed to a domino effect where one position becomes available and a principal is moved to fill it, and/or principals are encouraged, as a form of professional learning, to work in more than one kind of school context. For example, few principals in Ontario stay in a school more than 4 years before moving to another school or to more senior administration (Reynolds et al. 2008; Volante et al. 2008). There is consensus among the Canadian literature that rapid and frequent principal turnover has a negative effect on schools and staff (Mascall and Leithwood 2010).

Succession Planning

Even though there has been an ongoing principal shortage in Canada, less attention has been paid to succession planning than preparation, recruitment, and retention. A larger, long-term, visionary process, succession planning involves the identification and development of internal employees to fill existing or impending vacancies in leadership. Most of the research around succession planning contemplates the consequences of principals' departures and arrivals on teacher morale, school community, leadership styles, and school culture (Hardie 2011; Hengel 2007; Jones 2001; Meyer et al. 2011; The Learning Partnership 2008; Mascall and Leithwood 2010). A lack of adequate succession planning strategies by school districts was found to have negative outcomes in all of the areas mentioned above. However, findings indicate that these negative outcomes can be tempered through the use of distributive and participatory leadership strategies by the incoming administrator (MacMillan et al. 2004; Northfield et al. 2006). Some of the only critical work in this area used data collected from district administrators to explore the experiences and challenges faced by female administrators during succession planning and

principal rotation (Reynolds et al. 2008); the key finding was that organizational rules and human resources processes can unwittingly diminish opportunities for females to occupy roles like the principal of a secondary school.

Fink and Brayman's (2006) work investigating principal succession over 25 years in nine schools in Ontario and the United States is one of the only longitudinal studies of principals and their work to come out of Canada since 2000. During the course of the study, the authors found that the principalship is no longer perceived as an attractive occupation by either youth or by many teachers in the respective education systems studied. Based on these findings, the authors assert that succession planning is futile as long as education authorities continue to erode the authority and autonomy of the school principal. One of the researchers' major conclusions is that qualified candidates will emerge to fill vacant opportunities, and the principal shortage will end only if school administration is viewed as an attractive position with real influence in the community.

The Nature of Principals' Work

Because there is no centralized national education program in Canada, research around principals' work and roles appears to be driven in response to local contexts rather than a specific set of priorities driving research and funding; collectively, current empirical studies appear to cover a vast set of interests. The second major category into which Canadian research on principals in the twenty-first century falls can be further divided into two subcategories: managerial/functionalist perspectives that explore the principals' role and work and critical approaches that study issues of difference. Both categories focus generally on what principals actually do and why they do what they do, but each from a different epistemological/political perspective. While there is overlap between the two subcategories, the managerial/functionalist approach appears to concentrate on practices or work of principals from an organizational change approach, and the critical approach emphasizes challenges to the status quo and is connected to addressing some form of inequity.

Managerial/Functionalist Approaches

This subcategory focuses on the work that principals do in relation to their official roles as administrators in an effort to improve schools. In most cases, the concern is about organizational change or school improvement. Research that falls into this subcategory can be further divided into three general areas: the individual principal, principal interactions, and program implementation.

The Principal as a Person

In this subcategory, empirical studies focus on something about the individual who assumes the principal role. This subcategory takes almost every aspect of the principal as an individual human being into account, including personality traits, beliefs, identity, and emotions and emotional intelligence. Findings indicate that principals often take on the role of "mediator" when communicating with staff regarding inclusion (Ryan 2007). Principals also have little opportunity to discuss their emotions with staff, apart from formalized posturing and measured ways of communication (Lake 2004). It is also worth mentioning that these studies found that female principals displayed better interpersonal skills than their male counterparts (Beatty 2000; Stone et al. 2005).

Also included in this subcategory are empirical studies of the principalship in a Canadian context that explore how principals are socialized into the role, as well as different forms of knowledge and how principals utilize that knowledge. Principal perceptions on various topics are also included in this subcategory. Principals have been found to have little knowledge of education law and may be marked with uncertainties when making decisions that could result in police involvement (Findlay 2007). Principals' perceptions of self-efficacy were influenced by gender (male principals typically feel more confident in their skills and abilities than their female counterparts), level of education, qualifications, and whether they had any teaching responsibilities (Bouchamma 2006). Studies in this subcategory also focused on how interacting with the larger education system influences principals, their work, and their identity. Findings reveal that principals believe that accountability influences their work both positively and negatively. For example, some principals mentioned practicing more instructional leadership, the practice and success of which has been found to be heavily influenced by systemic coherence within districts and jurisdictions (Lessard et al. 2008; Mitchell and Castle 2005; Prytula et al. 2013). There is also an emerging body of research exploring personal journeys individuals have taken to the principalship, as well as the mental health and wellness of Canadian principals (Sackney et al. 2000). One such study looked at whether a principals' (or other educators') gender influenced their perceptions of personal wellness. Findings indicate that principals need to pay attention to relations with employees in order to develop an understanding of their mental and physical wellness, as well as any other concerns of which they should be aware, regardless of an individuals' gender. The authors also point to a need for principals and other school employees to be involved in district decision-making processes, especially when these decisions influence workload and, potentially, wellness (Sackney et al. 2000).

It is difficult to provide any sort of meaningful "global" findings or policy recommendations in this area because much of the research and findings generated for this category come from doctoral dissertations, localized studies, and/or small qualitative studies. Further, the respective foci of these works are quite divergent. However, it is important to point out that these divergent explorations may indicate future research priorities and be laying the foundation for further major research emphasis and findings to come.

Interacting with People

As the *Education Acts* and *School Acts* across Canada indicate, a significant part of the principal's role centers around interacting with people. These interactions may be fleeting or develop into ongoing relationships. The studies included in this subcategory focus on the ways in which principals work with people. This is a large and rather disparate subcategory, containing over 100 references included in this meta-synthesis. A number of studies in this subcategory have explored the impact of transformational and distributed leadership. The findings of these studies point towards the positive impact these forms of leadership can have on student outcomes, teacher attitudes, and the ways in which principals interact with community stakeholders (Anderson 2004; Coelli and Green 2012; Leithwood and Strauss 2008; Ross and Gray 2006).

Research studies exploring how principals build relationships and work with students, parents/guardians, their teaching staff, and the larger community are also well represented in this subcategory (Cranston 2009; Flessa 2012; Hands 2005; McClusky 2007; Mulongo 2011; People for Education 2011; Stelmach and Preston 2008; Walker 2007). Distributing leadership was identified as a key success strategy for building the emotional capacities of staff, working with teachers during policy and program implementation, and in developing and supporting effective professional learning communities (Cranston 2009; Flessa 2012; Sheppard and Dibbon 2011; Williams 2006).

The role of trust in principals' work and in principal succession events has been explored by scholars located in different parts of Canada. These scholars have found that principals serve a role in brokering trust throughout the school and are concerned with establishing and maintaining the trust of their staff, school district, students, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders. Findings indicate that the pace of development of stakeholder trust in their principal is contingent on administrator skill and competence, the types of interpersonal relationships developed, and staff (including principal) turnover (Kutsyuruba et al. 2011; Macmillan et al. 2004).

As the principalship in Canada is all about relationships and working with people, there are many directions for future research identified in the literature, including developing a better understanding of how principals delegate and distribute leadership at the school level (Leithwood et al. 2007; Leithwood and Strauss 2008). How distributed leadership impacts student learning – both directly, by leading instruction and delegating work in professional learning communities, and indirectly, through leadership styles and practices – are areas that could be explored further (Begley 2001; Cranston 2009; Mascall Leithwood et al. 2009; Slater 2005; Wright 2008).

Program Implementation

The final category of studies exploring the nature of principals and their work in Canada, and the one with the fewest entries, investigates principals' roles and participation in implementing a variety of educational programs and initiatives. As Canada's public education systems implement more performance-based

assessments, attention has focused on the practices in which principals engage in these accountability contexts (Newton et al. 2010; Volante and Cherubini 2011; Volante et al. 2008; Webber et al. 2013). Findings include the idea that leaders need to be viewed as credible to effectively work with their teaching staff and lead professional learning and that administrators may not feel comfortable being labeled "instructional leaders" when it comes to developing tools and giving advice on assessing student achievement (Volante and Cherubini 2011; Webber et al. 2013). Factors that influence how Canadian principals respond to large-scale assessment include teacher resistance, school improvement planning, initiative overload, and pressure to meet provincial targets (Volante et al. 2008). The implementation of large-scale assessments also appears to have redefined how principals practice instructional leadership, as they are increasingly tasked with managing data and assessing staff performance (Newton et al. 2010).

Some attention has been paid to principals' work and the use of information communication technology (ICT). There has been some concern surrounding the fact that increased use of ICT in schools has expanded principals' workload (Anderson and Christiansen 2006; Haughey 2006). Other studies have found promise for the use of ICT as a support mechanism for new school leaders and suggest that principals can play a central role in securing and promoting ICT-related resources at the school level (Isabelle and Lapointe 2003; Mroz 2004). While the "program implementation" subcategory includes a small number of studies, it appears to be an emerging area of inquiry. Many of the studies mentioned above have been produced rather recently, and it appears as though program implementation is an area poised for more research and scholarly activity in the near future.

Public expectations of the education system are at an all-time high (Levin 2008), and performance-based educational accountability initiatives are now a fundamental part of Canada's public education systems. These developments demonstrate a need for further research that addresses the success factors and challenges faced by principals working under new accountability systems (Volante and Cherubini 2011; Webber et al. 2013). That said, there is a need for further research that addresses the success factors and strategies employed to mitigate challenges faced by principals working under performance-based accountability systems. The influence of ICT on principals and their work should also prove to be a fruitful future direction for research as more sophisticated devices and wireless capabilities become increasingly available in many Canadian schools (Anderson and Christiansen 2006; Haughey 2006).

Addressing Issues of Difference

In Canada, another body of research, supported in part by federal SSHRC funding, considers how principals deal with issues of difference. This body of research tends to take a more critical approach to public schooling, in part by challenging the status

quo, and reflects much of Canada's national character in terms of geography/regionalism, organizational structure, and policies and history. This subcategory consists of roughly three themes: principals' work and religious education, principals' work and geography, and principals and inclusive education.

The Principalship and Religious Education

The *British North American (BNA) Act* and later the *Canadian Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantee the right to religious-based schools. However, religious education has not received the same degree of public support and funding as secular schools and school systems (Gidney 1999). Because there are a number of large Catholic school systems and districts located across Canada, much of the Canadian scholarship exploring religious education has centered on a Catholic context. Catholic schooling is understood as being different from secular schooling in Canada; it has always struggled for recognition. This is also the case for educational research into publicly funded Catholic education. Except for a few studies mainly localized in the Ontario context and concerned with Catholic school systems gaining and maintaining public funding and recognition, little is known about Catholic education in Canada (Pollock 2013; Zinga 2008). Some research on Catholic education has not found its way into mainstream research and academic publishing (Kostoff 2010; Mulligan 2005), while other studies include Catholic schools and systems in their research analysis but totally ignore the catholicity that is a part of some principals' work (Brackenreed 2008; De Wit et al. 2010; Killoran 2002). Even less attention has been given to the work of school principals in Catholic schools. Some exceptions include exploring how principals in Catholic schools conceptualize school success and exploring how principals working in faith-based contexts operationalize their leadership (Pollock 2013).

Others have investigated how spirituality and religion have influenced principals and their work. Findings revealed that principals face barriers (e.g., policies and initiatives surrounding curricular reform that do not align with principals' values and district leaders who may not have the best interests of students at heart when making decisions (MacNeil 2005)) that may prevent them from practicing spirituality as educational leaders. Other findings indicate that Canadian Catholic principals who practice servant leadership (which is rooted in Catholic beliefs) are better able to create a warm, positive, and caring climate in their schools (Black 2010; Nsiah 2009). The expectations of principals, initial interviews with students, and ongoing relationships with administration are key factors considered when admitting students who self-identify as another faith into a Catholic school (Donlevy 2009). Catholic principals engaged in action research projects found that, as a whole, they spent too much time on noninstructional tasks that have at best, an indirect, and at worst, tacit, detrimental influence on student achievement (CPCO 2004).

Geography/Regionalism

Because of Canada's large landmass and the uneven distribution of a relatively small population, Canada's research into principals' work is also attached to the local context. For example, there is a growing body of research in both urban education and rural education. The majority of Canada's population lives in two provinces (Québec and Ontario) and mostly in urban settings. Research around principals' work in urban settings tends to focus on inner city schools, with diverse student populations and English language learners (ELLs) (Archambault and Garon 2012; Digiorgio 2008; St. Pierre 2009). Unfortunately, in most of these situations, the urban schools studied fail to improve and underperform on provincial and territorial standardized tests. Some research asks why this underperformance continues compared to other urban schools in Canada and explores what is different about the principal's role in these contexts. For instance, the findings of some studies highlight the challenges and difficulties principals can face when working in urban contexts; despite attempts to foster an inclusive environment in a minority language school, isolating lower-achieving able students and placing greater expectations on "high-flying" students simply mirrored much of the exclusion one principal was trying to stamp out. The findings also indicate that urban Canadian principals spend two to three times more time on administrative tasks than on tasks involving instruction because they face a heavy administrative burden (Archambault and Garon 2012; Poirel et al. 2012. Principals in schools with high proportions of ELLs can be successful if they are knowledgeable about the challenges faced by ELL students and have the ability to engage the parents and the community (St. Pierre 2009).

Even though the majority (four-fifths) of Canada's population live around the Great Lakes, a not insignificant portion is spread across the remaining vast landmass, much of which is considered rural. Proponents of rural education claim that the principalship in rural schools is different from that in urban schools because of diverse roles and responsibilities, expectations to be involved in the local community, and professional isolation (Blakesley 2011; Foster and Goddard 2002, 2003; Wallin 2005). Presently, Canada's Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) have taken the lead in researching the principal's role in rural schools. As many rural schools in Canada are smaller operations, they rarely have the student enrolment necessary to be allocated a vice-principal. This lack of a vice-principalship can have negative unintended consequences for schools and principals, including a lack of administrative support, an onerous workload, and fewer leadership opportunities for aspiring principals. The rural principalship in Canada is further complicated by evidence suggesting that many in the role have limited position-specific training or transferable leadership experiences (McColl 2001; Skinner 2003; Zaretsky 2011). It should be noted that many of these studies not only focus on principals in rural settings but also consider issues of gender, particularly women in rural school administration (Wallin 2005; Wallin and Sackney 2003). This leads to the next category, which focuses on the principal workforce.

The Principal Workforce

Although earlier in the chapter issues of recruitment, principal preparation, retention, and succession planning were addressed, they also need to be considered in relation to issues of gender, race/ethnicity, and rural contexts (or a combination of these). For example, the career mobility patterns of female administrators in Canada have received increased attention since 2000 (Fennell 2005; Reynolds et al. 2008; Wallin 2005).

Canadian female administrators working in rural contexts found that their upward career mobility was fostered more quickly than would have been the case if they were employed in an urban school district (Wallin 2005; Wallin and Sackney 2003). Barriers to access in rural contexts were quite similar to those reported by researchers working in urban and suburban contexts. These include dealing with "the old boys club" and the perception that stereotypical notions of discipline, stature, and women's work against female administrators with respect to being appointed principals of secondary schools (Wallin 2005; Wallin and Sackney 2003). In Canada's far north, female principals indicate that a lack of time makes it difficult to establish vital connections with community elders and that great distances between towns make it difficult to plan and attend professional development opportunities (Thompson 2009).

There is a stream of research that explores the leadership styles of female administrators in Canada. Findings suggest that female school leaders in Canada establish strong connections with the school community, use a collaborative approach, have a tendency to highlight equity issues, and empower students (Donaldson 2000; Genge 2000; Toogood 2012). Female principals in Canada distribute and share power to lead change in decentralized, accountability-driven contexts (Fennell 2005). Findings indicate that participants in these studies viewed their power as an enabling force to collectively enact change, rather than as a relic of the hegemonic past. Female principals were more comfortable using shared or distributed leadership to drive change than were their male peers, even though both groups viewed their legal and moral authority as positive sources of change at the school level (Fennell 2005).

Research also identified barriers preventing qualified female candidates from pursuing administrative roles or being employed as administrators in different parts of Canada. The barriers included age, family obligations, and unfair district requirements and promotion practices (Donaldson 2000; Hyles 2008; Wallace 2007). Another barrier preventing increased female participation in the principalship was a phenomenon dubbed the "male escalator." This is a process whereby male educators are apt to stand out in a female-dominated profession and be groomed for leadership from an early stage in their careers (Hyles 2008). A continued need to challenge sexist and racist theory and practice in educational administration and increased attention to the experiences of female administrators were the key research recommendations (Hyles 2008).

Less attention has been paid to issues of race and ethnicity in terms of the Canadian principalship. In 2006, only 6.9 % of Canada's teaching faculty self-identified as visible minorities, despite the fact that visible minorities make up 16.2 % of the nation's total student population. Though no corresponding statistics exist with respect to the principal workforce, the lack of scholarly attention in this area is telling and suggesting that an even smaller percentage of Canadian principals would self-identify as a member of a visible minority group (Ryan et al. 2009). Mentorship and supports provided to female minority principals by the school district have been key success factors in helping them overcome personal barriers (looking after family members, lack of self-confidence), professional barriers (working long hours, lack of work/life balance, learning new methods), and organizational barriers (expectations, internal politics, and not understanding the inner workings of the school system) to accessing the principalship (Cui 2010).

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education as it concerns the principal's role and work can have two meanings. Inclusive education can be narrowly defined as special education programs or accommodations for students who have behavioral, communicational, intellectual, physical, or multiple exceptionalities that cannot be met in the ordinary daily school programming. Inclusive education can also mean social inclusion for all students regardless of ability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or gender. Research around principals' work and programming that accommodates students with exceptionalities has been limited to this point (see Edmunds et al. 2009; Schmidt and Venet 2012).

Inquiry into the principal's role in supporting broader notions of inclusive education appears to have grown over the past decade in Canada. Some of the empirical studies reported in this category could easily have been included in other themes mentioned earlier but were included here because of the critical lens used to study the educational phenomenon at issue. The majority of education researchers in this category focus on issues of power and equity; many frame their work around social justice issues, advocate for more equitable schooling for all students, and specifically focus on how principals work to either reinforce existing power dynamics or work against them (Ryan 2007, 2010a, b).

Until recently, few studies have considered how principals' work and workload is influenced by their social justice and equity approach to public education, and for the most part this research has been attached to schools serving areas of either ethnic/racial diversity or low socioeconomic status (Archambault and Harnois 2012; St. Pierre 2009). Researchers working in this area have mainly concentrated on principals as individuals: his or her perceptions, sensemaking, identity, and practices. For example, McMahon (2007) examined the interactions of whiteness, antiracism, and social justice in school leadership, while Ryan (2007) explored the identities that principals assumed as they engaged in dialogue in diverse school settings.

Other investigations into principals' perceptions explored how principals perceived recent educational reforms, including challenges faced in ethnoculturally diverse schools, practicing social justice in an accountability-driven context, and community building in urban school districts (Billiot et al. 2007; Flessa 2012; Stewart 2009; Wang 2012).

A number of interesting findings have emerged from Canadian inquiries of inclusive education in the past decade. Principals responded to the recent education reforms mentioned above in a variety of ways. In some cases, reforms restricted the principals' power and professional discretion as they were encouraged to perform tasks in the same manner as their peers across the jurisdiction being studied (Flessa 2012). Conversely, others engaged in creative insubordination in an effort to temper the perceived negative effects that reform was having on schools and principals' work (Stewart 2009). Principals also tended to view diversity as a key element in the formation of school identity and to make an effort to engage stakeholders by fostering a positive relationship with the school community and developing the social justice knowledge and capacities of their teaching staff (Billiot et al. 2007; Wang 2012).

Other studies concentrated on what principals do: the practices and strategies employed in working towards a more socially just schooling experience. Some of these practices included strategies used to initiate and facilitate change in aboriginal schools, such as making an effort to engage the community and being welcoming and respectful (Pearson 2007). Others have examined the principal's role and practices in linguistic minority contexts. Principals located in French schools were found to promote and bring awareness to their Franco-identity by modeling the use of the French language, identifying targeted language-based professional development opportunities for staff, as well as developing a shared vision for the school (Dalley et al. 2006; Langlois and Lapointe 2007). There has also been a surge in efforts to promote democratic practice in diverse school settings. Studies in this area have found that principals in Canada seek to establish relationships with community stakeholders by using a caring demeanor or taking advantage of student leadership or specific programming designed to enhance inclusion at their schools (Griffifths 2011; Ryan 2010a). Findings also illustrate that efforts have been ineffective in creating truly inclusive schools and that principals must be bold, courageous, and committed to inclusion and social justice in order to move their agenda forward (Ryan 2010a, b).

As more is understood about principals' practices in relation to addressing issues of difference, particularly as the Canadian population continues to diversify, it comes as no surprise that some researchers have explored how best to prepare principals for their challenging role. The inquiry into principal preparation has included determining principals' perception of their role and the importance of equity, diversity, and social justice in the new teacher induction program in Ontario (Pinto et al. 2012). Others have emphasized the development of political skill in principals (Ryan 2010b; Winton and Pollock 2013) as well as the use of a compacted modular approach to professional development on social justice (MacKinnon 2007).

Future Directions

It became clear early during the search process that the vast majority of studies on or about school principals originate from either Central or Western Canada. Ontario, Canada's most populous province, easily accounted for the greatest number of total references. In particular, there is a great deal of research activity investigating the principalship at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Researchers and graduate students located in the Western Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan accounted for the next greatest number of references selected for inclusion in this meta-synthesis. Though the perspectives of rural Canadian principals are relatively well represented in the selected literature, there is a dearth of literature investigating the nature of the principalship from Canada's Eastern coast and Northern regions.

While the sheer volume of references included in this review is an encouraging sign that Canadian researchers are interested in studying principals and school leadership, the vast majority of these studies are small in size. Many of the quantitative studies had small sample sizes or response rates that made it difficult to generalize their findings. Further, most of the qualitative journal articles and graduate work are based either on a small number of case studies or interviews with fewer than ten participants. Similarly, few longitudinal studies of the principalship in Canada have been conducted recently; only two are included in this review. Consequently, there is a need for more longitudinal and larger-scale studies.

A small number of studies used a comparative approach to examine how school leadership in Canada compares to that performed in other countries (Billiot et al. 2007; Fink and Brayman 2006; Geijsel et al. 2003; Goddard 2007; Hyles 2008; Wallin 2005). As this type of comparative and international research is gaining in popularity, it seems such work will be expanded upon and become an increasing area of focus for Canadian researchers interested in studying principals, their role, and their work.

As indicated at the beginning of the chapter, Canada is in a unique situation as it does not have a national education strategy that organizes priorities for higher education and other organizational research. Educational research into the principal's work appears to be driven by provincial and territorial mandates, local contexts, and personal interest. However, the actual motives for such inquiries are not dissimilar to those found elsewhere in the world. What may be considered distinctive is the combination of Canada's geography, aging principal workforce, increasingly diverse general population, and interconnectedness to the global economy. Some of these characteristics (population dynamics) will change over time, while others will remain fairly consistent (vast and diverse geography). In terms of supporting the principal workforce for a leading-edge twenty-first-century education system, policy-makers and researchers ought to consider orchestrating research efforts that consider existing research around principal preparation, recruitment, and retention and infuse this knowledge and understanding into a broader notion of succession planning that is based on research evidence.

It is clear that a substantial amount of Canadian research has concentrated on principals' practices from the managerial/functionalist approach. Yet, it is not enough to have a substantial research base if these research findings and new understandings are not translated into practice. If research is to have any meaningful influence on practice, then efforts need to be made to reduce the research-practice gap. Researchers and policy-makers are beginning to utilize knowledge mobilization initiatives to address this research-practice gap (see, e.g., KNAER-RECRAE).

Another emerging research inquiry explores how school district systems and school leaders can support principals and schools in improving student success. Specifically, this line of research considers that school principals do not work alone but that their work exists within a larger system that can either facilitate successful school principalships or act as an obstacle in improving schools (Anderson et al. 2010; Leithwood and Mascall 2008).

Too little research explores policy initiatives and programming in the area of diversity and principalship. This is unfortunate, given Canada's vast geography and increasingly diverse population. What research does exist is not always helpful to marginalized groups and territories and not necessarily taken up in provincial or territorial policy and practice. While there have been some concerted efforts at the provincial and territorial levels with mandates and policies to encourage changes in school culture and practices, it is too early to determine the impacts of these initiatives on students and the role that principals need to play. The real challenge for researchers in assisting Canada's principals in leading education systems into the twenty-first century is finding a way to synergize what is known about principals and their practices and applying this in a broad notion of success that includes all students who learn in very diverse contexts.

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