ART-INFORMED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SELF-STUDY TO BUILD

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL CAPACITY

by

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My first teacher was my mother, Betty Chilcutt, who taught me more about life and learning than anyone. She didn't complete her formal education but she had more wisdom than anyone I have ever known. She made me believe that I could do anything that I put my mind to and she often said, "If you really learn it you will never forget it."

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Abstract

ART-INFORMED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP SELF-STUDY TO BUILD

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The purpose of this inquiry was to complete a self-study of my school-leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff, through three recursive art-informed action/reflection cycles. The initial phase entailed the development of my personal living education theory (LET) to define my ontological, epistemological, and ethical orientations, followed by the interrogation of my leadership actions relative to the LET to answer the question: How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff?

Herr and Anderson, referring to self-study as insider action research, emphasized the self-study researcher's interrogation of self, resulting in change in practice. Data accrued from structured reflection of artifacts of my leadership actions.

Eisner wrote that art inquiry is better suited to asking questions that lead to deeper understanding and knowing. Art and artistic thinking were employed as a way of critically reflecting on my practice, engaging others in critical reflection of my practice, and transparently communicating data and findings discovered in the process. This work was conceptualized around Samaras' three "whys" of self-study research: (a) personal professional accountability, (b) applicability, and (c) reforming in the first person with critical friends.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I face complex challenges as an educational leader, charged with guiding a high school on a daily basis. On any given day, I address situations that concurrently entwine several Professional Standards for Education Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) including (a) mission focus, (b) ethics, (c) equity and cultural responsiveness, (d) curriculum, (e) community relations, (f) professional-school community building, (g) family engagement, and (h) operations and management of the school. Building the instructional capacity of the staff and school improvement are the most complex and rewarding of my responsibilities as an educational leader; they require a high level of personal reflection.

Art is central to my way of knowing and it is imperative that art is central to my self-study research, as it was my goal to conduct an honest inquiry of my practice aligned with my personal epistemology. I see and reflect on my daily experiences as an educational leader through an artistic lens and the development of my living education theory (LET; Whitehead, 1989) reflects the centrality of art as my way of knowing.

This inquiry was grounded in data collected through my daily practice. Grounded theory is by its nature cyclical and evolutionary (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This inquiry evolved critical reflection of the collected data. This study developed through the stages of preinquiry, proposal development, identification of my LET (Whitehead,1989), three cycles of action/reflection, overall reflection of the inquiry process, and the communication of findings.

Self-study is an empowering research methodology for teachers that holds great significance for educational reform (Samaras, 2011). The changes in individual practice that occur through self-study can affect the greater educational community and lead to reform. I aimed to add to the conversation by applying the self-study model used by teachers and teacher educators to my practice as an educational leader and reframe the role of the principal as a teacher educator. This work was conceptualized around three "whys" of self-study research: personal professional accountability, applicability, and reforming in the first person with critical friends (Samaras, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

The current state of education is defined by disruption and paradigm change (Schwahn & Spady, 2010). The pace and magnitude of change that characterizes education today demands new methods of building knowledge for and about school leaders that reflect the nonlinear and nontraditional complex realities of the U.S. public

school system. Realities (Schwahn & Spady, 2010) about the current state of U.S. education constitute a contradiction between what the U.S. as a nation need from our schools and what people live in daily practice. This contradiction, as it exists inside my daily practice as a high school principal, was addressed, explored, and ultimately reconciled through a study of my work revolving around the building of the instructional capacity of the educators under my leadership.

My overarching question—How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff?—reflect the problems posed in this inquiry related to my personal growth and improved practice as an educational leader. This self-study facilitated the interrogation of my practice and extended beyond the traditional-inquiry approach while adhering to a self-study framework, to build my knowledge and skills as a principal while contributing to the greater body of knowledge related to building teacher capacity.

This self-study inquiry breaks from traditional dissertations that employ a positivist and propositional epistemology and are convergent in nature. Traditional dissertations tend to prove or disprove a single possible hypothesis. The current state of education requires a different way of generating knowledge. The central problem with traditional inquiries tends to be "convergent" in nature whereas current realities are "divergent" (Schön, 1983) requiring a reflection-in-action, divergent approach to building knowledge (Schön, 1983). The knowledge gained from positivist, propositional inquiry is likely to reinforce the existing theoretical perspective and maintain the status quo (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

I considered my sphere of influence and worked to improve those aspects that I have the power to improve. Samaras (2011) offered three "whys" for self-study. Through

the process, I held myself accountable by continuously interrogating my leadership actions against my LET (Whitehead, 1989) leading to the development of knowledge and skills that are immediately applicable to my daily work. I began to improve my school by conducting the situated inquiry while the study occurred. My findings at the conclusion of the study, along with the ongoing processes developed during the inquiry, will aid in reforming my school in the future. The collaborative nature of the study situated in my school has the potential to reform the practice of others in the building. The systematic transparency of the research and the generation and dissemination of knowledge through presentation (Samaras, 2002) has the potential to generate reforms beyond my direct sphere of influence and lead to improving educational practice on a wider basis by providing a model for critical self-reflection.

The call for education reform has been present in my consciousness since the beginning of my time as a teacher and has carried through my entire career as an educational leader. In response to growing pressures to reform the quality of U.S. schools and their leaders, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSS, 2007) commissioned the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) to define the expectations of school leaders around a set of principles and practices. The ISLLC Standards for School Leaders became the standard states now use to shape K–12 credentialing requirements and performance criteria. In 2015, ISLLC Standards were updated and renamed Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). The standards included two components that directly relate to the building of teachers; instructional capacity.

Standard 6: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and

practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and

well-being.

Standard 10: Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous

improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

As I conducted this a self-study of my leadership practice as it pertains to the

responsibility of building the instructional capacity of my staff, Standards 6 and 10 of the

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders are of particular interest because

building staff capacity is at the core of both standards. Others have worked to bring focus

to this same responsibility (Deering, Dilts, & Russell, 2003; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006;

Marzano, 2013; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Wahlstrom, Seashore Louis,

Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010) as it relates to building the instructional capacity of staff.

Based on my experience as a school leader, I view facilitation as key to capacity

building in a culture defined by democratic distributive leadership. In education, it is

specific to building instructional capacity of teachers through professional learning

activities. The following table summarizes the literature listed.

Table 1

Instructional Capacity-Building Concepts

Concept	Source	Characteristic
ISLLC Standard 2 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2007)	Council of Chief State School Officers	Staff Professional Growth
Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2 & 3 (2015)	National Policy Board for Educational Administration	Instructional Capacity

School Leadership that Works	Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2005	Professional Development Resources
Leadership Evaluation Model	Marzano, 2013	Continuous Improvement of Instruction
Learning Culture	Deering, Dilts, & Russell, 2003	Facilitated Professional Learning
Lateral capacity-building	Fullan, 2006	Peer to Peer Professional Development

Statement of Purpose

Reflective practice grounds epistemology in the experience of "I" (Whitehead (1989). This self-study is, by its nature, autobiographically built on my lived experience through the professional practice of a school leader; thus, I wrote in the first person throughout the document. The suppression of the authorial *I* in academic writing is ultimately a rhetorical ploy to give the appearance of objectivity (Raymond, 1993). Writing in first person offers additional transparency by acknowledging and reinforcing my centrality to the situated self-study. The use of first person supports my goal of disciplined subjectivity (Herr & Anderson, 2015) by making my centrality clear. I studied the educator (myself) in the context of daily work. Self-study has three types of purpose: (a) personal renewal, (b) professional renewal, and (c) program renewal (Kosnik, Beck, Freese, & Samaras, 2006). The question of what actions will be initiated to build the instructional capacity of my staff is situated in the action/reflection at the center of my work and study.

Referring to self-study as insider action research, the self-study researcher's interrogation of self results in change in practice (Herr & Anderson, 2015). True words cannot be separated from action (Freire, 1970). When one disconnects a word from action, it becomes "idle chatter" (p. 87). Action and reflection together create a praxis that is liberating.

I believe self-study has the ability to liberate me and my practice from practices or misapplied skills that may limit my effectiveness as an educational leader. Through the process of this leadership self-study, I confronted my dominant modes of thinking and preconceived paradigms while using my personal ways of knowing to critically reflect on my practice as a leader. This cycle of action and reflection leads to more effective actions that are central to the inquiry and situated in my daily work as a principal. This work has the potential to change my process, increase my leadership efficacy, improve my practice as a leader, and ultimately increase the instructional capacity of my staff.

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) promoted the development of practitioner research as they highlighted the showing of how and why a person makes judgments on their work, and justifies their reasons, at the heart of scholarship. Whitehead (1989) developed the idea of LETs, writing,

> Practice is a form of real-life theorizing. As we practice, we observe what we do and reflect on it. We make sense of what we are doing through researching it. We gather data and generate evidence to support our claims that we know what we are doing and why we are doing it (our theories of practice), and we test these knowledge claims for their validity through the critical feedback of others. These theories are our living theories (p. 32).

Improving learning is an improvement for social justice as the efforts are to improve learning for all children (LaBoskey, 2004, as cited in Samaras, 2011). This idea resonates with me and I see clear connections to my study of literature related to critical thinking and critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) called for a more democratic system of education, compared to what Freire referenced as the "banking

system" of education, defined by educators making deposits of knowledge in students. Freire saw liberation as a praxis of action and reflection on a person's world to transform it. Freire defined the mission of educators as acting to liberate ourselves, our students, and our society:

> Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness-intentionality-rejects communiqués and embodies communication. (Freire, 1970, p. 79)

I see gaps between the skills and knowledge I have now and the skills and knowledge I need to further develop as an opportunity to continue to grow as an educational leader. My experiences as an educational leader have taught me the importance of understanding my role as a facilitator of teacher capacity building to improve school and increase student achievement. The purpose of this inquiry was to complete a self-study of my school-leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff through an art-informed action/reflection cycle.

Research Questions

This research assisted me in answering the overarching question: How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff? I asked several initial subquestions as part of this inquiry:

- How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data relative to my

  LET that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my

  teachers' instructional capacity?

- How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to

  improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional

  capacity?

- How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building

  instructional capacity?

- How do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how does

  my LET evolve relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions?

Statement of Potential Significance

My art-informed self-study inquiry contributes to the education community by

providing research about how I can improve leadership actions to increase the

instructional capacity of my staff. The use of art to inform the inquiry takes advantage of

one of my strengths by aligning to my specific epistemology and has the potential to

communicate the findings of the study to a broader audience. The identification of the

dissertation committee as a "vested" group and their ongoing participation during the

LET (Whitehead, 1989) development and the action/reflection cycles contributes to the

research by reframing the dissertation committee's role in the inquiry. The committee was

situated in the work of the inquiry rather than sitting outside, providing oversight on the process in which they were an integral part of the action/reflection cycle.

Methodology

This self-study is grounded in data collected and critically reflected on through art-informed processes. As a former art teacher, current principal, and practicing artist, arts-informed self-study is the most appropriate method for understanding and improving my practice as an educational leader. I employed art and artistic thinking as a way of critically reflecting on my practice, engaging others in critical reflection of my practice, and transparently communicating data and findings discovered in the process.

Art inquiry is well suited to asking questions that lead to deeper understanding and knowing (Eisner, 2008). Problem posing is a key part of building knowledge (Freire, 1970). Applying problem posing in this self-study inquiry rejects the goal of "deposit-making" and replaces it with the posing of problems of human beings in relation to their world. The problem-posing approach served as basis for this self-study while providing a model for personal professional growth. By posing reflective questions in this self-study of my leadership, I identified my dominant modes of thinking and used these modes of thinking to critically reflect on my practice as a leader. This cycle of action and reflection, leading to more effective leadership actions, was not separate from my work as an educational leader; the cycles of action and reflection became my work as a leader.

Role of the Researcher

This inquiry is situated in my daily practice. I critically reflected on the leadership actions I intended to increase the instructional capacity of my staff and "critical friends." The reflection on action led to adjustments to my actions related to the building of instructional capacity of staff. Situated self-study is key to improving practice (Samaras

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& Freese, 2006). Scrutiny from critical friends is an integral part of self-study (LaBoskey, 2004b) and self-study allows for a high level of self-accountability, immediately applicable improvements to practice, and the generation of educational reforms at the personal, school, and greater educational community levels (Samaras, 2011).

Data Sources and Feedback Procedures

Data accrued from structured reflection of artifacts of my leadership actions. Artifacts included written work; video documentation of actions; video or transcribed documentation of dialogues with the vested group; presentations and artwork created during the inquiry; and sketchbook/journal entries completed throughout the inquiry.

Table 2

Data-Collection Sources

Method	Description	Artifacts
Vested-group dialogues	This group, comprised of the dissertation committee and me, engaged in dialogues around questions essential to deep reflection on instructional leadership actions.	Video, audio, and transcript of the dialogues
Critical-friends' feedback	This group provided feedback on my leadership actions, relative to the living education theory, used to critically reflect on the action and determine the next leadership action.	Written feedback
Person sketchbook/journal	I used a sketchbook/journal to reflect on my leadership actions.	Sketchbook/journal
Exhibit of artwork produced during inquiry	Art work created during the time of inquiry was made available in a gallery exhibit for 2 weeks	Collected during the public exhibit of the artwork created during the inquiry

Critical reflection on my actions in the inquiry included dialogues with vested members of the dissertation committee, feedback from critical friends, artwork produced

during the inquiry, and reflections from the general public from an online and physical exhibit of artifacts produced in the inquiry. Personal critical reflection occurred using sketchbooks/journals that included graphics and text to record my reflections on the action. Art journaling created data by producing pieces of art in sketchbooks on a particular topic or theme (as in Leavy, 2015). Critical friends provided feedback on my leadership actions, relative to the LET, used to critically reflect on the action and determine the next leadership action. The vested and unvested critical-friends groups provided feedback during the development of the LET (Whitehead, 1989) and during each of the three cycles of action reflection in the study.

Samaras (2011) stated, "The role of the critical friend is to provoke new ideas and interpretation, question the researcher's assumptions, and participate in open, honest, and constructive feedback" (p. 75). A critical friend provides data to be examined through another lens and offers a critique of a person's work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). In the context of this self-study, critical friends provided feedback on the development of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and my actions relative to it. J. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) wrote about the critical friends' relationship to the LET (Whitehead, 1989):

> You need to be systematic in questioning both your motives for action and your evaluation of its outcomes. To get a reasonably unprejudiced view you need to involve other people who will act as critical friends to critique your interpretations. (p. 25)

Vested critical reflection was achieved by engaging the three members of my dissertation committee in a dialogue that included my input. This group was described as vested because all members of the group had a stake in the outcome and validity of the study. A

critical-friends group facilitated critical reflection on my leadership action relative to the LET (Whitehead, 1989) during each phase of the inquiry by providing anonymous feedback.

Critical-Friend Network Selection

Each member of the vested group holds a terminal degree and brings knowledge and skills related to educational leadership. The members included the dissertation committee chair, who is a teacher educator and expert on the self-study methodology, a member of senior leadership from an adjacent school district, and a member of the institution's art faculty who is familiar with art and aesthetic modes of expression.

The critical-friends group consisted of professional associates who do not work under my professional supervision. This group included members of my doctoral cohort, administrators with whom I have worked, and educators with whom I have not worked but who have some expertise in education, art, or leadership. I sent a formal invitation to potential members of the group that included an abstract of the inquiry proposal, details about the process and procedures, and details of their responsibilities as critical friends.

Description of the Data-Analysis Procedures

I recorded sketchbooks, artifacts of dialogues, and critical friends' reflections. First- and second-cycle coding facilitated building assertions and theories based on the data collected during each cycle of critical reflection. Each successive cycle of critical reflection was grounded in the data collected from the previous cycle. Data from the gallery exhibit was coded in a similar manner and included in the findings.

Delimitations

This inquiry produced a great deal of data in a variety of forms. The delimitations put in place helped make this divergent grounded-theory inquiry more manageable and

more likely to be completed by limiting the study to a relatively short period of time in one school location with a few key leadership actions studied. The formal research phase, including three cycles of action/reflection, was conducted over a period 4 months. The inquiry was situated in my school location and I limited the actions considered for reflection to those directly related to building the instructional capacity of the school staff.

Limitations

I conducted the inquiry in one setting over 12 weeks with me as the researcher and the subject. Those outside the study may see minimal value in the study of one person's inquiry into professional practice; however, the procedures and use of a cyclical reflection model can apply to a variety of settings. Although limited in scope and number of participants, the inquiry had the potential to reform education (Samaras, 2011) by critically reflecting on and changing actions; then communicating findings in a transparent manner. The use of dialogue, literally and figuratively through the viewing and response to artwork, is a response to the banking model of education and professional learning defined by transparent communication. The bottom-up approach to self-renewal and system reform opposes the top-down nature of most leadership development. Initially, not many may find interest in this approach.

Definitions of Key Terms

Art-informed research: The systematic use of artistic process as a primary way of understanding and examining experience (S. McNiff, 2008).

Critical friends: A group who provoke new ideas and interpretations, question the researcher's assumptions, and participate in open, honest, and constructive feedback (Samaras, 2011).

Grounded theory: A process involving meticulous analytical attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that lead to the development of a theory grounded in the data (Saldaña, 2013).

Living education theory (LET): A real-life form of theorizing practice. Making sense of our practice through research, gathering data to generate evidence to support our claims about our practice, and testing our knowledge claims (Whitehead, 1989).

Self-study inquiry: A research method with three major characteristics including strong personal reference, situated practice, and renewal of practice (Kosnik et al., 2006).

Summary

This art-informed self-study was situated in my practice, aiming to improve my ability to increase the instructional capacity of my staff. The inquiry facilitated the discovery of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and provided a process to interrogate my leadership actions to ensure they align with the LET (Whitehead, 1989). This inquiry yielded one overarching finding: Understanding my personal epistemology and ontology as an educational leader, self-study researcher, and artist has given me a greater sense of my self-efficacy and has made me more confident in my actions designed to build instructional capacity in my staff. The inquiry also generated several major findings to answer the research questions:

- A visual representation of ideas facilitated understanding and resolution of a

  core leadership dilemma revealed during the inquiry.

- Art work created after formal research cycles aided in my overall

  understanding of the inquiry.

- Dialogue with the vested committee (VC) and critical-friends network (CFN; Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided an additional reflective lenses to critically assess my leadership actions.

- Dialogues with the vested committee revealed the need for additional development of my emotional intelligence when participating in the critical dialogues related to my leadership actions.

- Critical reflection on leadership-action transcripts through dialogues with other groups helped me to gain a more accurate understanding of the needs of my staff.

- Principles and values in the LET evolved over the three cycles of inquiry through critical reflection. Most notable was the change in the language: "Democratic collaboration through broad based engagement and accountability to the larger school community".

The current state of educational leadership in public schools demands a system of accountability aligned with standards across several domains of educational leadership. The complexity and divergent nature of educational leadership mandates a system of leadership improvement that can facilitate growth in such an environment. This art-informed self-study offers a method of professional growth and renewal aligned to my personal epistemology that ensures personal accountability, application of new leadership skills, and reform and renewal of practice.

The next chapter expands on the current literature for art-informed self-study inquiry and educational leadership including self-study methodology, LET, the current state of educational leadership, the principal's role in instructional capacity building, practitioner self-reflection, experiential learning, and leadership self-efficacy, and delineated these as a research method.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This review of literature for an art-informed self-study of my instructional leadership includes the topics (a) educational leadership, (b) the principal's role as strategic planning leader, (c) organizational learning, (d) the principal's role as capacity builder, (e) emotional intelligence and leadership, (f) practitioner self-reflection, (g) experience-based learning, (h) leadership self-efficacy, (i) self-study research, (j) grounded theory and self-study, and (k) art as research. The purpose of this inquiry was to complete a self-study of my school-leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff through an art-informed action/reflection cycle. The grounded-theory self-study was developed using Kolb's (1984) cyclical model of experiential learning. Reflection on practice occurred through art-informed methods that were personal and collaborative. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued explicitly against the use of a literature review in grounded research because the unpredictable nature of the grounded-theory method runs the risk of creating preconceptions prior to conducting research or wasting time researching areas ultimately unrelated to the topic. I concluded that it is important for me to deepen my prior knowledge of art, education, and leadership prior to seeking additional knowledge about self-study and art-informed inquiry before embarking on this self-study.

The self-study process must include additional research to understand and support knowledge gained through reflection in practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). The preliminary literature review was conducted with the knowledge that new strands of literature will need to be reviewed as I move through this self-study and additions were made to literature review throughout the inquiry. This review of literature included educational leadership, the principal's role in strategic planning, the principal as capacity

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builder, emotional intelligence and leadership, practitioner self-reflection, and leadership self-efficacy. The review also includes literature pertaining to self-study as a research method and art as a research method.

This self-study was, by its nature, autobiographical, and built on my lived experience through the professional practice of a school leader; thus, I wrote in the first person throughout. The suppression of the authorial *I* in academic writing is ultimately a rhetorical ploy to give the appearance of objectivity (Raymond, 1993). My goal was disciplined subjectivity (Herr & Anderson, 2015) and I earned the right to use a first-person perspective on my practice throughout the study.

Educational Leadership

Leadership is the process an individual undertakes to induce others to pursue objectives held by the leader (Grogan & Jossey-Bass, 2007). Leadership is vital to the effectiveness of schools and for centuries people have assumed that leadership is critical to the success of any institution (Marzano et al., 2005). Researchers supported the premise that leadership is important to the success of the school. "Research findings from diverse countries and different school contexts have revealed the powerful impact of leadership on processes related to school effectiveness and improvement" (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000, p. 160). Marzano et al. (2005) presented data from a metastudy that analyzed 69 studies that included 2,802 schools in total, analyzing the correlation between general leadership and student achievement and supporting a clear correlation between principal leadership and student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

Barnet (2004) asked if today's administrators are prepared to be instructional leaders who promote improved student achievement. Only 25% of today's principals are prepared to be effective leaders (Policy Forum on Education Leadership, 1999, as cited in

Barnet, 2004). An obvious gap exists between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability the school administrator faces. The education leader must face problems in practice to permit growth and sound preparation for being a school leader (Barnet, 2004).

In the current state of education, defined by disruption and paradigm change, leadership must be distinguished from management while adapting to new realities. Leadership is about vision and direction-setting, and management is about organizing and coordinating; leadership is about meaning and motivation, and management is about supervision and accountability (Schwahn & Spady, 2010).

A paradigm of understanding usually starts with a hypothesis about a pattern (Kuhn, 1986).. Improving understanding almost always involves an anomaly. A discovery of something that falls outside the original pattern cannot be understood with the prior paradigm. The shift in the paradigm occurs when the anomalies are confronted and resolved. Through this process, a body of understanding evolves to explain more issues and build knowledge. Using an art-informed self-study approach to improving practice is an anomaly in my school district. This approach is a shift from the paradigm of educator development in this district and is an exercise of leadership situated in my daily practice.

Educational-Leadership Theory

The new body of understanding is the paradigm shift often mentioned in discussions of leadership. It is the leader's primary responsibility to facilitate the confrontation and resolution of anomalies to create new understanding and knowledge. Anomalies are often simply ignored because they do not fit in the prior framework. As

the leader of learning in the organization, it is also important to perceive, and sometimes create these anomalies to progress toward a shared vision.

Senge (2006) presented the concept of "mental models" to define deeply engrained assumptions, generalizations, or images that influence how people understand the world. Working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward:

> Learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny. It also includes the ability to carry on "learningful" conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others. (Senge, 2006, p. 8)

Principal's Role as Strategic-Planning Leader

A major key to successfully taking the step into senior leadership as the principal of a school is to make the move from an operational perspective to a strategic perspective. Strategic leadership links the strategic function with the leadership function. This is a key shift in the mind-set of the leader who takes on a strategic role as the leader and moves away from the operational detailed view to develop a holistic and broad organizational perspective (Davies & Davies, 2010).

Strategic planning is a process for organizational renewal and transformation (McCune, 1986). Strategic planning provides a framework for the improvement and restructuring of programs, management, collaboration, and evaluation of an organization's progress. Modern education theory on student and school success builds on the fundamentals of strategic leadership and planning. Strategic leaders must first have a clear vision of where the organization should be going and must be able to express the

vision to others in the organization (Williams & Johnson, 2013). The leader must become skilled at assessing current realities through focused reflection that leads to taking the most effective actions at the most effective time. Reflective practice, grounded in an understanding of my values and understanding of the mission, can lead to the organizational renewal and transformation (McCune, 1986) needed to lead in this time of change.

Senge (2006) advocated real-world growth in a learning organization described as having the "Fifth Discipline," which included the vital development of five disciplines as an ensemble over time in real time: system thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning are vital disciplines for learning organizations. System thinking describes the underlying interconnectedness of an organization. Senge called this the "invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other."

Personal mastery refers to an individual's ability to consistently realize results that matter most deeply to them (Senge, 2006). Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or pictures or images that influence how people understand the world and how they take action. Building a shared vision is the capacity of an organization to hold a shared vision of the future they intend to create. Team learning is the state when the team is not only achieving results but learning, as part of a team, at a rate greater than would be possible as individuals (Senge, 2006).

Organizational Learning

The model of facilitated organizational learning has four fundamental components: (a) situating learning in real work, (b) defining a less central role for experts, (c) spaced rather than compressed time frames, and (d) learning in a community

rather than individually (Dixon, 2001). A cyclical process includes the organization

learning to act and acting to learn. The act to learn/learn to act cycle must accompany

reflection on the actions and outcomes of the actions. Reflection is more effective when

done with others in the community of learners. The leader must be situated in the learner

to act/act to learn cycle to facilitate the growth of others in the organization (Dixon,

2001).

Fulmer (1997), Senge (2006), and Dixon (2001) largely focused on business and

government communities but their work is quite applicable to education. Interstate

School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, widely used across the

United States, reflect Fulmer (1997) and Senge's (2006) work. A shared vision,

development of a learning culture, effectiveness, collaboration, and understanding the

bigger system in which the school operates are all common and important. Leaders of

learning organizations should be leaders of learning (Dixon, 2001). The concepts of

situating learning in real work and learning in a community are applicable to my inquiry.

Principal as Capacity Builder: Defining Principal Effectiveness

The concept of teacher development as school reform and improvement connects

to concepts of staff capacity, building on priorities set forth previously in this review of

literature. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSS) commissioned the ISLLC

to define the expectations of school leaders around a set of principles and practices.

ISLLC Standards for School Leaders became the standard by which states now shape

K–12 credentialing requirements and performance criteria. In 2008, the ISLLC revised

the standards to strengthen their alignment with the current realities of 21st-century

schools (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013). In 2015 ISLLC Standards were updated and

renamed Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for
Educational Administration, 2015).

Table 3

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

Standard	Description
1	Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being
2	Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
3	Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and cultural responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
4	Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
5	Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.
6	Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
7	Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
8	Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
9	Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being.
10	Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

ISLLC standards served as the cornerstone of my educational-leadership graduate

training completed in 2004. Coursework throughout the program centered on the

standards and the capstone practicum incorporated the standards into practice in a real

school environment while working with a school-based mentor. When I became a school

leader, the standards brought structure to my new position. I was particularly drawn to the

concepts of building the capacity of teachers.

Standards 6 and 10 of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders center on building the capacity of staff. As I conducted a self-study of my school-leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of the staff through an art-informed action/reflection cycle, I focused on these standards. Others have worked to bring focus on building instructional capacity (Deering et al., 2003; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Marzano, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). The review of literature for principal and general leadership reveals several sources that stressed the importance of building the capacity of organizational members.

Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) determined what leadership actions result in enhanced student achievement. In conjunction with the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, the authors identified resources that they defined as providing teachers with the materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs. Seventeen studies demonstrated a significant correlation between the ability of the principal to provide the appropriate resources, including professional development, and student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005).

Marzano (2013) developed the school-leadership-evaluation model to evaluate school principals. Organized into the following five domains, this model outlines 34 categories of principal actions and behaviors: (a) a data-driven focus on student achievement, (b) continuous improvement on instruction, (c) a guaranteed and viable curriculum, (d) cooperation and collaboration, and (e) school climate. Domain 2: Continuous Improvement of Instruction most closely aligns with the purpose of this inquiry. Domain 2 includes the category of action such that the school leader effectively supports and retains teachers who continually enhance their pedagogical skills through reflection and professional growth plans (Marzano, 2013). Waters et al. (2003) and

Marzano (2013) establish capacity building as a key responsibility of the instructional leader, reinforced by the work of other organizations.

The Wallace Foundation's investigation (Wahlstrom et al., 2010) of the Links to Improved Student Learning included the category Developing People in the section of the report defining leadership practices considered instructionally helpful by high-performing principals. The category included practices providing individualized support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling appropriate values and practices:

> The primary aim of these practices is capacity building, understood to include not only of the knowledge and skills staff members need to accomplish organizational goals but also the disposition staff members need to persist in applying those knowledge and skills. (Wahlstrom et al., 2010, p. 68)

Heavy investments in highly targeted professional development for teachers and principals in the fundamentals of strong classroom instruction are critical to the success of a school (Elmore, 2005). Further research revealed other aspects of Elmore's work on school improvement. The basic tenets of the accountability model include (a) development of internal accountability, (b) individual and collective agency, (c) technical and social/emotional dimensions of improvement, and (d) distributive leadership. Although all four of Elmore's tenets relate to building teacher capacity, the technical and social/emotional dimensions of improvement most closely align to building instructional capacity. Improvement, as a practice, begins with instruction that addresses the problems of student learning and entails acquiring external knowledge and mobilizing internal knowledge to address those problems. Increased performance of teachers, improving

instructional capacity, begins with organizational structures and processes that nurture and require new practices by the teachers. Teachers require motivation, encouragement, and support while moving through phases of instructional capacity building (Elmore, 2005).

Deering et al. (2003) advocate the development of a learning culture rather than, what they referenced as a cult of the leader. The leader must build a culture that improves capacity while becoming dispensable. The leader does this by fostering a self-sustaining culture of improvement with members of the organization working collaboratively to build their own capacity while the leaders facilitate the growth. The successful leader aligns several levels of resources necessary to analyze, plan, and initiate action in response to opportunities and to mitigate future threats (Deering et al., 2003).

Lateral-capacity building is an occurrence between common peers rather than originating from external sources or vertical-capacity building (Fullan, 2006). People learn best from peers if they have sufficient opportunity for ongoing, purposeful exchanges in a system designed to foster, develop, and disseminate innovative practices that work. Fullan's model places the leader in the role of facilitator of professional learning and capacity-building.

Emotional Intelligence and Leadership

A primary job of a leader is to drive the collective emotions of the organization in a positive direction (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). When leaders drive emotions in a positive direction, they bring out the best in others. The term "resonance" defines this concept (Goleman et al., 2013), denoting a resounding or reinforcing of the emotions of the leader. Emotional intelligence includes personal competence, self-awareness and self-management, social competency, social awareness, and relationship management. A

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highly effective leader exhibits strength in at least six emotional competencies in these areas (Goleman et al., 2013).

A positive correlation exists between emotional intelligent behaviors and transformational leadership (Barbuto & Burbach, 2006; Gardner & Stough, 2001). Also, a positive correlation exists between high school principals' research-based leadership practices and emotional intelligence (Hanlin, 2014). A high level of emotional intelligence enhances the areas of self-management and relationship to 21 responsibilities of the leader (Marzano et al., 2005). Communication, flexibility, focus, ideals/beliefs, intellectual stimulation, monitoring/evaluating, outreach, and situational awareness are closely related of the 21 responsibilities of a leader (Hanlin, 2014; Marzano et al., 2005).

Salovey and Mayer (1990) presented a framework for emotional intelligence as a set of skills to accurately appraise and express emotions in oneself and others. Emotional-intelligence abilities and skills can partition into four areas: the ability to (a) perceive emotion, (b) use emotion to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotion (Mayer et al., 2004).

Emotions guide people through tasks that are too important to be guided by intellect alone (Goleman, 1996). Self-awareness is key to emotional intelligence. It is the awareness of emotions and the ability to control emotions in a state of heightened emotion that defines high emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996).

The educational leader continually works with a wide range of stakeholders on a daily basis who bring a variety of emotional perspectives that the leader must understand. The concept of using emotions for guidance when intellect alone will not do (Goleman, 1996) is crucial to my practice. Although I have developed my emotional intelligence over time, the action/reflection cycle method employed in this self-study aligned with my

personal epistemology, helping to further develop my emotional intelligence and improve my practice through self-reflection.

Practitioner Self-Reflection

The self-reflective leader must move beyond more established processes and ways of thinking. My daily experience in practice is extremely varied and real situations seldom fit into neatly preconceived parameters. The nature of a principal's practice is divergent and a critical self-study of my practice must accordingly reflect its divergent nature.

Schön (1983) considered the role self-reflection plays in professional growth and described the roots and fallacies of technical rationality and its positivist epistemology of practice.

1. The conviction that empirical science was not just a form of knowledge but the only source of positive knowledge of the world. …

2. There was the intention to cleanse men's minds of mysticism, superstition, and other forms of pseudo-knowledge. …

3. There was a program of extending scientific knowledge and technical control to human society and make technology no longer exclusively geometrical, mechanical, or chemical, but also and primarily political and moral. (Schön, 1983, p.32)

Technical rationality has its limitations. In a study, Schön arranged situations to be more easily analyzed, eliminating subjects that did not fit a standard protocol to be purely quantifiably measured. Schön (1983) referred to this as a "crisis of rigor and relevance" (p.240). To Schön, the problem was that technical rationality and its positivist

epistemology is "convergent" in nature, whereas actual practice is "divergent." The importance of actual practice has become increasingly important and with it the concept of learning from experience (Schön, 1983). Schön asserted the importance of reflection-in-action:

> The dilemma of rigor or relevance may be dissolved if we can develop an epistemology of practice which place technical problem solving with a broader context of reflective inquiry, show how reflection-in-action may be rigorous in its own right, and links the art of practice in uncertainty and uniqueness to the scientist's art of research. (p. 69).

Schön (1983) viewed reflection-in-action as a way to encourage broader, deeper, and more rigorous thinking, central to the art of practitioners addressing uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict when engaging in their practice. Reflection-in-action leads to knowing-in-action, demonstrated through the application of knowledge in the moment. The experience in action is, in a sense, an experiment to see where the action will lead. Taking an action without predictions or expectations are exploratory experiments. The practitioner, through reflection-in-action, builds new knowledge (Schön, 1983).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) maintained a similar opinion of the positivist approach to knowledge creation: "Positivism, by accepting 'neutral observation' as the secure basis form which 'objective' knowledge can be derived, thereby commits itself to a confinement within whatever pre-existent theoretical framework these observations presuppose" (p. 73). The knowledge gained from a positivist, propositional, approach to

inquiry is likely to reinforce the existing theoretical perspective and maintain the status quo (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

Experiential Learning

Carlsson, Keane, and Martin (1976) described Kolb's (1981) model of experiential based learning and contrasted it with the linear learning process in the context of research and development. Kolb's model progresses through four stages: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Kolb's (1981) learning process includes four distinct orientations that contrast with one another: active and reflective, and concrete and abstract. The shifting orientations lead to four types of activities that occur throughout the process, shown in Table 4.

The emphasis on reflection in the experimental cycle tends to attempt to make sense of experience (Moon, 2000). Reflection on action focuses on change in quality of the outcomes of the action. Few situations of learning from experience constitute pure activity. The concept of most experiential learning theory includes the idea that learning leads to action that is, in effect, experimentation, which lead to more experience and reflection (Moon, 2000).

Table 4

Kolb's Four Distinct Orientations of Learning Process

Orientation	Description
Divergence (concrete & reflective)	Activity is required to seek background knowledge, sense opportunities, investigate new patterns, recognize discrepancies and problems, and generate alternatives.
Assimilation (abstract & reflective)	Activity is required to develop theory, compare alternative, establish criteria, formulate plans and hypotheses, and define problems.

Convergence (abstract & reflective)	Activity is required to select among alternatives, focus efforts, evaluate plans and programs, test hypotheses, and make decisions.
Execution (concrete & active)	Activity is required to advocate positions or ideas, set objectives, commit to schedules, commit resources, and implement decisions.

Moon (2000) pointed to Kolb's (1986) model of experiential learning as an explicit model for experience-based learning that includes reflection. The model perpetuates itself so that the learner changes "from actor to observer" from "specific involvement to general analytic detachment," creating a new form of experience on which to reflect and conceptualize each cycle (Moon, 2000, p. 25).

Turesky and Gallager (2011) emphasized the importance of the leader's awareness of their own learning preferences as they work with others. These authors cited Kolb (1981) in contending that experiential learning-style preferences will vary, based on the situation. The leader may engage the four modes of learning theory at different times, given the experience. A potential challenge associated with the use of Kolb's model is the overreliance on a person's dominant mode of decision making (Turesky & Gallagher, 2001). Leaders who coach or train others need an understanding of their own dominant mode so they leader can understand themselves and use the strengths of those around them effectively (Turesky & Gallagher, 2001).

Eickmann, Kolb, and Kolb (2002) compared different approaches to training in management schools and art schools, contending that management education focuses on telling, by emphasizing theory, whereas art education emphasizes experience, by integrating theory and practice. Kolb's model aligns with art-school practice (Eickmann et al., 2002). This self-study inquiry was situated in my daily practice as a school principal and Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning, conducted over three cycles

of critical reflection. This study offered great promise for integrating leadership theory and practice to enhance my ability to improve the instructional capacity of the staff. Using my artistic way of knowing has benefits and liabilities. Understanding my dominant epistemology helped me realize bias while giving me the confidence to act boldly in my practice.

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1986) developed the theory of self-efficacy as the belief in the ability to successfully face specific tasks or situations. Bandura (1997) asserted that people develop their sense of efficacy in four ways. First, mastery provides the most authentic evidence that one is effective. By facing and meeting challenges, people develop a resilient sense of efficacy. Second, people develop efficacy vicariously through social models. Seeing others similar to oneself increases the belief that they are effective, fostering increased feelings of efficacy in others. Social persuasion is a third way to increase self-efficacy. Finally, people's physiological and emotional states influence judgment of self-efficacy. A general sense of optimism is also a key component of personal efficacy. People must have a strong sense of self-efficacy to address challenges, based on an optimistic outlook to sustain the tasks at hand. Educational environments that are conducive to learning rely on the talents and self-efficacy of teachers and staff (Bandura, 1997).

Given Bandura's (1997) assertion about the importance of the perception of efficacy and the four ways listed to develop efficacy, it is important for an administrator to consider self-efficacy in a reflective self-study for its potential to build the capacity of the staff under leadership. By working to answer the question, How do I improve what I am doing?, the leader has the opportunity to improve the knowledge and skills needed to develop other educators. Self-efficacy plays a role in how the leader takes on challenges

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and it has the potential to increase the leader's ability to improve by working through the critical-reflection process.

Self-Study

Bullough and Baughman (1997) concluded that teacher development is the essence of school reform. The ISLLC Standards of School Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) makes teacher development a core standard of school leadership and other researchers have worked to bring focus to this same responsibility (Deering et al., 2003; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Marzano, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005 Wahlstrom et al., 2010), suggesting ways to build the instructional capacity of my staff.

Samaras and Freese (2006) defined self-study as a research method with three major characteristics. Self-study is defined by a strong personal reference, as is involves the study of oneself and the actions taken by oneself as an educator. Situated practice is another key characteristic of self-study. Educators study themselves in the context of their work. Finally, self-study is defined by the three types of purpose: (a) personal renewal, (b) professional renewal, and (c) program renewal (Kosnik et al., 2006).

The way educators and teacher educators improve is through the investigation of their own practice (Bullough & Pinneger, 2001; Dixon, 2001; LaBoskey, 2004b; Pinneger, 1998a; Samaras, 2006; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006;). Self-study researchers have concern with their own learning and transforming practice as a teacher educator. Educator capacity growth is most effective when educators intentionally employ Dixon's (2001) "learn to act/act to learn" cycle (p. 244). The gap between an educator's rhetoric and actions, what Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p. 26) referenced as "living contradictions," often serve as the impetus for self-study research-guided improvement

(LaBoskey, 2004). Self-study encourages a researcher to examine practice in the actual place where the teaching and learning occur, like a classroom or general school setting. Samaras and Freese (2006) referred to the particular setting as the "situated context" (p. 13). Pinneger (1998) described self-study as "a methodology for studying professional practice settings" (p. 33).

Ham and Kane (2004) described the "swampland" between infertile deserts of positivist detachment and the impenetrable jungles of postmodern deconstructivist self-inspection (p. 103), defining research and the situated self as key to moving forward and defining self-study in research. Educators must pass epistemological tests to justify a claim to knowledge. Self-study should not be seen as an alternative to research but a means of alternative research with research defined as any conscious and rigorous way of knowing. Self-study becomes research when educators meet or more of the following criteria: (a) grounding their study in empirical evidence, (b) ensuring the study has actual or potential generalized or theoretical import, and, (c) an enacted intention to make the research public (Ham & Kane, 2004).

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) described the contrast between propositional and dialectical theories of research and offered the concept of "living educational theory" as a third and more effective way to structure educator produced research (p. 32).

Propositional theories contain a proposition, or statement, to explain how things are. These statements tend to be prescriptive and definitive in nature. Those who believe in the particular statement typically hold a clear position of what is correct and what is incorrect. Propositional thinking is a closed, binary, way of thinking. Dialectical thinking is fluid and open because it is grounded in contradiction. A

statement answers a previous question and it is acceptable to respond with another

question rather than a definitive statement. In this form of thinking every idea or

statement is open to modification, and all events and experiences contain

contradictory elements. (pp. 30–31)

Whitehead (1989) developed the idea of living education theories as a way to

reconcile propositional and dialectical theories to create a form of real-life theorizing.

Whitehead (2006) believed educators and education researchers can position themselves

as living contradictions by holding values that are not reflected in their actions as

educators. These contradictions can be at the center of living education-theory research

that can define and enrich educator practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) cited Habermas (1987) as a source for validity in

transformational inquiry. Habermas's main way of transforming society is by disrupting

normative social orders through interpretation and transformation of public discourse. To

do this, the researcher must establish some basic principles. Habermas, in the theory of

communicative action, wrote,

I shall develop the thesis that anyone acting communicatively must, in performing

any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be

vindicated (or redeemed). Insofar as he wants to participate in a process of

reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following – indeed precisely

the following validity claims. …

The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression so that speaker and hearer

can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of

communicating a true proposition (or a propositional content, the existential

presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge

of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully so that

the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust him). Finally, the

speaker must choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the

utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with

respect to a recognized normative background. (1987, pp. 2–3)

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) asserted that, to align with Habermas (1987), all

participants and practitioners must speak in ways that are

· comprehensible, in that a form of language is used that is commonly understood

by all;

· truthful, in that all recognize these as true accounts and not fabrications;

· sincere, so that all parties can trust what the other says;

· appropriate for the context, while recognizing the unspoken cultural norms in

which their discourses are embedded. (p102).

These criteria provide a framework for self-study research that can add validity to the

process.

Three concepts are common to Habermas (1987) and Freire (1970). Both asserted

that a person can achieve human autonomy and higher levels of cognitive and moral

reasoning through interactive learning processes. Being self-conscious of educational activities marks a decisive phase in human evolution because it unleashes higher levels of critical reflexivity. Finally, Freire and Habermas emphasize the role of language in the transformation of human consciousness (as cited in Morrow & Torres, 2002).

A clear connection exists between Freire's (1970) action/reflection praxis and Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning and this grounded-theory self-study reflects both. Although most researchers seek to verify existing theories, the aim of grounded theory is the development of new theories using systematic generation from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). LaBoskey (2004b) quoted Korthagen (1995):

> Change cannot be effected from outside a person [to assert] learning is processed through previous experience so personal history and culture must be considered; and learning is enhanced by challenging previously held assumptions through practical experience and multiple perspective of present and text-based colleagues. (p. 819).

Grounded Theory and Self-Study

Grounded theory means moving beyond description to generate or discover theory or a "unified theoretical explanation" for a process or an action (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Grounded theory does not use an "off the shelf" approach. It is "grounded" by data generated from participants during the inquiry (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, p. 107). The defining features of grounded theory that might be incorporated into a research study are a focus on a process or an action that has distinct steps, development of a theory of the process or action, memoing as the researcher writes down ideas as the data accrue,

primary data is constantly compared to emerging theory, and data analysis can be structured and follow a pattern of development (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher must be comfortable with not knowing, with the idiosyncratic nature of inquiry in the hypercontextualized space and the possible disorientating sensation of taking the intellectual risks inherent in being the researcher and the researched. Self-study researchers must also become comfortable exposing themselves, in detail, to the general public (Galman, 2009).

Self-study defines the focus of the study but not how one conducts the study. A thorough understanding of the context in which a study is conducted is important in shaping how the researcher constructs the study and shapes the perceived relevance and application of the study to others (Ham & Kane, 2004). Samaras (2002) writes about situating research in the context of daily practice, similar to Whitehead's (1989) living-education theory.

> Through the use of autobiographical self-study, I was able to reconstruct the
> critical incidents in my education-related life history that led me to profess and
> practice a Vygotskian approach in preparing teachers. As I sorted out the sources
> of my teaching theory and practice, I moved toward an interpretation of the lived
> relationship between my education-related life experiences and my efforts to learn
> to teach pre-service teachers from a sociocultural perspective. (Samaras, 2002,
> p. 5)

Practitioner inquiry, used by teacher educators, means conducting self-study of practice with biographical, autobiographical, and narrative forms of data collection and

analysis (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Self-study acknowledges and honors the postmodern assumption that the "self" cannot be separated from the research process.

Samaras (2011) developed five foci to evaluate personal self-studies:

1. Personal situated inquiry—Self-study teachers initiate their own inquiries and study them in a teaching context.

2. Critical collaborative community—Self-study teachers work in an intellectually safe, collaborative, and supportive professional-learning community to improve their practices by making it explicit to themselves and to others.

3. Improve learning—Self-study teachers question the status quo of their own teaching to improve and impact learning for themselves and their students.

4. Transparent and systematic research process—Self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the research process through dialogue and critique.

5. Knowledge, generation, and dissemination—Self-study research generates knowledge, made through presentation and publication.

I used Samaras's five foci (2011), elements of Habermas's theory of communicative action (1987), and key concepts from Freire (1970) as trustworthy checks of my study.

Related to what Fullan (2006) called lateral capacity building, peer-to-peer growth is key to a facilitative professional-learning model. This type of capacity building often occurs through the use of dialogue. Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, and Placier (2004) considered the dimensions and dynamics of professional dialogue from an epistemological perspective. They contended that research does not have to start with a

question. It can start with a statement followed by a professional dialogue. Guilfoyle et al. (2004) wrote,

> Once an idea is put forward in this method of inquiry, it is met with reflection, critique, supportive anecdote or explanation and analysis which interrogates and thus establishes its power as a basis for meaning making, understanding, or practical action. (p. 1111).

Senge (2006) advocated for team learning through the use of professional dialogue. Team members enter into a process of thinking together through dialogue that is free-flowing, allowing the group to discover insights and construct knowledge that would not be possible as an individual.

Herr and Anderson (2015), who saw self-study as a type of "insider action research," wrote about the process as, "an interrogation of themselves resulting in change" (p. 92). The authors continued, "Any process of turning the lens back onto oneself is perhaps painful, but it is also probably a necessary condition of coming to understand the other's point of view" (p. 92). Whitehead's (2006) concept of the "living contradiction" of acting against one's own values can be addressed by defining one's values through the development of a living educational theory and consistently interrogating one's actions relative to those values (p. 32).

Art as Research

During my early exploration of the self-study methodology, I made a connection between self-study and artistic practice. Art-based education research foster empathy and a deep understanding in a way that may not be possible with traditional representations such as writing (Samaras, 2011). Eisner (2008) wrote that art inquiry is better suited to

asking questions that lead to deeper understanding and knowing. Problem posing is a key part of self-study inquiry, rejecting the goal of "deposit-making" and replacing it with the posing of problems of human beings in relation to their world (Freire, 1970). S. McNiff (2008) defined art-based research as "involving the researcher in some form of direct art-making as a primary mode of systematic inquiry" (p. 30). Knowles and Cole (2008) wrote arts-informed, rather than art-based inquiry means using art and artistic thinking to enhance inquiry. Arts-based and arts-informed self-study researchers use a wide range of art forms to represent and interpret, construct and deconstruct meaning, and communicate their study to the public (Samaras, 2002).

Eisner (2003) pointed to the positivist tradition of the early 20th century that defined art largely as being emotive rather than primarily informative. Theorists separated art and artistic thinking from epistemology because it has traditionally been thought of as emotional or sensory. Knowledge and knowing are conceptualized as the ability to provide warranted assertions and art has not traditionally been viewed as having this function.

More recently, Eisner (2008) asserted that knowledge has become more contextual and specific to the circumstances of the inquiry:

> What the term knowledge means depends on how inquiry is undertaken and the kind of problem one pursues. Even the term knowledge may be regarded as problematic. Knowledge as a term is a noun. Knowing is a verb. And knowing may be a much more appropriate descriptor of the processes of inquiry made in pursuit of a problem that will not yield to a set of rigidified procedures. Inquiry

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always yields tentative conclusions rather than permanently nailed down facts. The quest for certainty, as Dewey pointed out, is hopeless. (p. 4)

The "de-literalization of knowledge" is significant because it opens the door for multiple forms of knowing (Eisner, 2008). Eisner (2008) listed the possible benefits of art-informed inquiry:

1. The arts address the qualitative nuances of situations by learning how to read the images that art makes to become aware of the nuances.

2. The arts create the sense of empathy that make action possible.

3. The arts allow us to see things with a fresh perspective rather than a habitual response to previously viewed data.

4. The arts tell us something about our own capacities to experience the affective response to life. (p. 11)

Each of these benefits helps people more fully engage in inquiry that leads to deeper knowing and understanding of our humanity. Eisner (2003) stated that "the aim of education should be the development of artists" (p. 831).

An effective way to understand creative practice is to research it in a direct way (S. McNiff, 2008). S. McNiff's research shifted from human subjects to a direct examination of the artistic process, emphasizing that, even though these artistic expressions came from within, the researcher attempted to study the objects and the process of making art with as much objectivity as possible. S. McNiff's work as an art researcher and teacher incorporated the exploration of several types of artwork including painting, dance, and sculpture with reflection and interpretation that cannot easily be accessed by words alone. S. McNiff (2008) defined art-based research:

The systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29)

S. McNiff saw art-based researcher slightly differently from others who advocated the use of the method. Art should be the center of the research, not merely playing a significant role. Art should be used as data for investigations that occur in academic disciplines and use more traditional scientific and verbal methods of analysis.

S. McNiff (2008) addressed the question of using art-based research outside of art. Individuals and organizations can improve interactions by limiting negative attitudes and the excessive need for control through the use of artistic expression and artistic thinking. Individuals and groups can learn to access more open and original ways of perceiving situations and problems by growing insights and empathy. Art-based research can be so open ended that it is important to establish simple and consistent methods of research, similar to scientific researchers' emphasis on controlling variables. When using self-study research, through the arts one can deepen understanding of one's own teacher education practices and improve student learning. In arts-based research, the arts occupy a central space in the work of inquiry, analysis, and representation of the findings (Galman, 2009).

Galman (2009) listed key features of arts-based research that align with goals of self-study in education: a) its "inherent, complex reflexivity"; b) its capacity to communicate beyond historically dominant research prose; c) its natural emphasis on the always complex, often intricately "nested" personal, social, political, and other contexts

of self-study; 4) its generous construction of and emphasis on the importance of depth of the ordinary; and 5) its capacity to transform the goings-on of the private domain into a public conversation.

Galman (2009) quoted Pinneger to illustrate the difference between arts-based research in general and arts-based self-study research:

> While the methods and methodologies of self-study are not much different from the other research methods, self-study is methodologically unique … although participant observations, ethnographic, grounded theory or statistical methods might be used in any single study, self-study involves a different philosophical and political stance… researchers who embrace self-study through the simple act of choosing to study their own practice, present an alternative relationship to the researcher and the research. (p. 31).

Art-based self-study can be most effective when it entails new ways to demonstrate knowing (Galman, 2009). Arts-based research connects with modeling diverse teaching and learning modalities that represent depth and rigor (Galman, 2009). Art-based self-study can also engage participants in meaningful reflection, leading toward transformation of oneself and one's practice. The power of arts-based self-study inquiry is in what the researcher can learn from practice and alternative perspectives through the use of art (Galman, 2009).

Galman (2009) listed and defined the characteristics of an exemplary art-based self-study offering the following: (a) Procedures, although not uniform, should adhere to systematic and rigorous aesthetic standards while keeping in mind that the understandings that someone might construct closely relate to the methodological and

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artistic decisions made in the course of the work. (b) Data collection and analysis should emphasize multiplicity by allowing for multiple voices and interpretations that can be divergent yet simultaneous. (c) Standards of quality, authenticity, and truthfulness must be enforced by a systemic procedure and evidence must support what a person has learned. (d) Representation of research findings must be faithful to oneself, with honesty and transparency, and an essential measure of quality and integrity faithful to the multifaceted research context.

Visual arts are particularly important to self-study in teacher education because of their ability to hold up a mirror to facilitate self-reflection, and force critical consideration of the social and cultural dimensions of personal experience (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). Personal experience is a key component of self-study inquiry (Samaras, 2002). Visual culture, in its many forms, is a large part of people's lives. Because visual culture is everywhere, including classrooms, it provides a lens to examine personal histories of how a person became an educator, explores the experiences of teachers, and analyzes how a person might change their professional practice. In the past 4 decades, researchers have begun to use images and art in research, as it is such an important part of culture (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). The empathy created by presenting research in the form of art increases and allows the viewer to better understand the researcher's perspective. Through visual detail and context, art-based self-study can resonate with many more people than traditional research communication.

The use of metaphor in art-based self-study research can carry theory elegantly and effectively (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). Visual art can use cultural codes to invoke effective and economical statements. Art also has the ability to make the personal social and the private public in a way that models the self-study staple of self-reflection.

Springgay, Irwin, and Kind (2008) suggested using an a/r/tography methodological framework. A/r/tography rests on three parts: artists, researchers, and teachers. As an arts-related methodology, a/r/tography interfaces the arts and scholarly writing through living inquiry (Springgay et al., 2008). Identities, roles, and understandings of the artist/researcher/teacher intertwine in an approach to social science research dedicated to perceiving the world artistically and educationally (Irwin, 1999).

The participatory nature of contemporary art, compared with the passivity of old master painters, lends itself to interaction, self-reflection, and collaborative inquiry (Springgay et al., 2008). Postmodern art includes interventions that require viewers to participate in the specific context of the artwork while bringing all a person's prior knowledge and experience with them. Art today is both accessible and confrontational. Old ideas and beliefs can be confronted using materials and methods that pull the viewer into what could be a productive conversation (Springgay et al., 2008).

This inquiry used three levels of participation and collaboration with others that meets the criteria of Habermas (1987), Samaras (2011), and Freire (1970). Art journal/sketchbooks served as personal tools for critical reflection. Various levels of additional collaborative critical reflection were used throughout the study, culminating in an exhibit of artifacts from the study.

Art has the ability to become socially useful, beyond its traditional purposes, through relational aesthetics. "Relational aesthetics turns the apparatus of viewing and meaning making from something that is done to an art work (deconstructive critique) into a situation where subject (art) and subject (viewer) are confronted and mutually interrogated" (Springgay et al., 2008, p. 86). Relational aesthetics suggest that meaning is not external to action (Springgay et al., 2008).

The a/r/tography approach to inquiry can have what Irwin et al. (2006) called a rhizomatic effect, referencing the process of growing from the middle and sprouting new knowledge from the centralized "root" in the middle. This denotes a living inquiry that is always becoming. This connected thinking relates to Eisner's (2003) concept of qualitative relationships, integrating ideas to satisfy some purpose. By its nature of "always becoming," through a living inquiry, art and artistic thinking can inform deeper knowing through their application as a research method (Eisner, 2003).

The central purposes of art-informed research are the enhancement of understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Arts-informed methodology can use language, processes, and forms of literary, visual, and performing arts in scholarly research. Knowles and Cole described arts-informed research:

> Arts-informed research is a way of redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry. This redefinition reflects an explicit challenge to logical positivism and technical rationality as the only acceptable guides to explaining human behavior and understanding. Bringing together the systematic and rigorous qualities of conventional qualitative methodologies with the artistic, disciplined, and imaginative qualities of the arts acknowledges the power of art forms to reach diverse audiences and the importance of diverse languages for gaining insights into the complexities of the human condition. (2008, p. 59)

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The dominant forms of inquiry, based on a positivist and propositional

orientation, have defined how society has defined knowledge (Knowles & Cole, 2008).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) critiqued the positivist dominance of Western thought and

research. Positivist knowledge, according to Carr and Kemmis, has been seen as "a way

of growing new knowledge on old knowledge but it is more realistically seen as a

succession of 'revolutions' in which successive 'dominate paradigms' are overthrown

and replaces" (p. 71). Whitehead (2006) cited Carr and Kemmis's work as a strong

rationale for self-study.

Knowles and Cole (2008) stated, "As a framework for inquiry, arts-informed

research is sufficiently fluid and flexible to serve either as a methodological enhancement

to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology" (p. 60).

Arts-informed research has several defining elements including the implicit challenge to

established methods of research, by arts-informed research, grounded in these defining

methods (Cole & Knowles, 2008).

· Commitment to a particular art form or forms: One or a combination of

artistic methods should be reflected in the creative research process and the

research "text."

· Methodological integrity: The rationale for the method should be reflected in

the research "text."

- Creative inquiry: The arts-informed process should be defined by openness to

  the expansive possibilities of the human imagination rather than rigid

  guidelines for research.

- Presence of the research is evident: Subjective and reflexive presence of the

  researcher is considered a strength.

- Focus can include context and others: Although arts-informed research is

  often autobiographical, it may include others and the context in which the

  inquiry has taken place.

- Audience: The research must have an explicit intent to reach communities and

  audiences including and beyond the institution.

- Audience engagement: Centrality of the audience's engagement with the

  research is key.

Self-study's use of critical friends relates to Knowles and Cole's (2008) concept of the centrality of audience engagement. Art forms communicate to share research with the public but can also be shared with critical friends to stimulate discussion and analysis (Samaras, 2011).

Samaras (2011) built on Eisner's (1993, 1995) assertion that arts-based research leads to empathy and deeper understanding in a way that is not possible with traditional writing and research. Samaras (2011) also cited Eisner's (1993) work, writing on epistemic seeing as "the kind of knowledge secured by sight," which includes working to

see what people know before making claims to knowledge (p. 68). Traditional, propositional forms of research create understanding through a rigid process, whereas arts-based research fosters understanding by allowing the researcher to consider many different possibilities, sketch out solutions, describe situations, and include others in the process.

Samaras (2011), supported by Weber and Mitchell (2004) and Galman (2009), pointed out the connection between arts-based inquiry and self-study's ability to use self-reflection to improve practice. "Arts-based self-study encourages connections of the self to practice, individualizes meaning-making, provokes critical analysis and interpretation, and encourages dialogue about improving one's practice through the arts" (p. 73).

Samaras (2006) pointed to the importance of personal history in self-study research, cited in this review, and the previous quotation illustrates a natural connection between art-based research and self-study inquiry.

Summary

Art-informed self-study uses a ground theory approach aligned with Kolb's (1986) theory of experiential learning cycles. This process revolves around the action/reflection cycle. The education leader induces others to pursue his or her objectives (Grogan & Jossey-Bass, 2007) and builds staff's instructional capacity at the center of the school leader's work (Deering et al., 2003; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Marzano, 2013; Marzano et al., 2005; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Building instructional capacity of staff is a key factor in school renewal and transformation (McCune, 1986). Leadership self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) and emotional intelligence (Hanlin, 2014) play major roles in the leader's ability to improve schools.

Self-study has a strong personal reference as it involves the study of oneself situated in the practice as an educator and has three types of purposes: (a) personal renewal, (b) professional renewal, and (c) program renewal. Art-informed research involves the specific use of the artistic process as a way to understand practice (S. McNiff, 2008) and leads to deeper understanding (Eisner, 2008).

In Chapter 3, I arranged the concepts presented in the literature review to create a cyclical reflective process for gathering and analyzing data generated in my art-informed self-study of my instructional-leadership practice. Data accrued by interrogating my leadership actions, relative to my LET, and making adjustments to build the instructional capacity of my staff.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter details a self-study methodology grounded in data collected and critically reflected on through art-informed processes. As an artist, educator, and self-study researcher, this method aligns with my epistemological and ontological orientations and makes the arts-informed self-study the most appropriate method for understanding and improving my practice as an educational leader. Art and artistic thinking was employed to critically reflect on my practice, engaging others in critical reflection of my practice, and as a way to transparently communicate data and findings discovered in the process. The specific methods employed to provide critical reflection on my actions included my sketchbook/journal reflections, dialogues with vested members of the dissertation committee, feedback from critical friends, and reflections from the general public from an online and physical exhibit of artifacts produced in the inquiry.

The purpose of this inquiry was to complete a self-study of my school-leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff through an art-informed action/reflection cycle. Marzano et al. (2005) found a correlation between principal leadership and student achievement. Bullough and Baughman (1997) concluded that the essence of school reform is teacher development. The Council of Chief State School Officers (2014), Marzano (2013), The Wallace Foundation (Wahlstrom et al., 2010), Elmore (2005), and Fullan (2006) cited instructional capacity building as a key responsibility of the principal. Primary responsibility of the school principal is to build the instructional capacity of the staff under the principal's leadership. The principal, for the purpose of this study, is defined as a teacher educator.

For this study, I wrote in the first person where doing so was appropriate (Raymond, 1993). The use of the first-person point of view was advocated by the authors of the *Sixth Edition of the American Psychological Association Publication Manual* (2010), and not precluded by this institution's *Dissertation Style Guide* (2015). As I am conducting a self-study of my "personal praxis" (Raymond, 1993), the use of the first-person point of view makes my personal investment in the study transparent.

I see and reflect on my daily experiences in the world in general, and my practice as an educational leader in particular through an artistic lens; therefore, I employed my art-based epistemology in this study of my practice because it is a major part of who I am. Art is my primary way of knowing and must be central to my self-study research if I hope to present an honest inquiry of my practice. In this study, I critically reflect on and interrogate the centrality of art as my way of knowing as I develop my living-education theory (LET; Whitehead, 1989) and discover the true ontological basis of my work.

Rational for the Research Approach

The current state of education is defined by disruption and paradigm change (Schwahn & Spady, 2010). The pace and magnitude of change that characterizes education today demands new methods of building knowledge for and about school leaders that reflect the nonlinear and nontraditional complex realities of the U.S. public school system. Traditional quantitative inquiries are convergent in nature and prove or disprove a single possible hypothesis. The current state of education requires a different way of generating knowledge in a divergent reality. The central problem with traditional inquiries, defined by technical rationality and positivist epistemology, is their tendency to be convergent in nature whereas current realities are divergent (Schön, 1983). The literature review, preceding this chapter, cited Schön's (1983) call for a

reflection-in-action divergent approach to building knowledge. The knowledge gained

from positivist, propositional inquiry is likely to reinforce the existing theoretical

perspective and maintain the status quo (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This self-study extended

beyond the traditional inquiry approach to build my knowledge and skills as an

educational leader. The complexity of education today prompts me to focus on that

which is in my sphere of influence and what will most likely yield the greatest

improvement in my school.

Research Questions

This research assisted me as I answered the overarching question: How do I use

art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff? I

asked several initial sub-questions in this inquiry:

- How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data, relative to my

  LET, that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my

  teachers' instructional capacity?

- How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to

  improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional

  capacity?

- How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building

  instructional capacity?

- How is do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how

  does my LET evolve relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions?
Additional questions developed based on the data collected during each cycle.

Setting

I conducted this self-study inquiry of my daily practice situated in my current school. The school is a small- to medium-sized comprehensive high school in western Maryland. The school has approximately 805 students in attendance with 54 teachers and two assistant principals on staff. I was serving in my 4th year at the school when the inquiry was completed. Although the school has performed at a high level for several years, based on state assessments, the staff is working collaboratively to continue to develop and employ innovative programs without losing the small-town feel of the community orientation. The school was awarded a National Blue Ribbon for School Excellence in the fall of 2015.

The school's success presented the potential risk of creating a school climate that could cause the staff and community to become satisfied with the progress. It is a challenge to continue to grow the instructional capacity of the staff in the face of this success. I needed reflective self-study, as the educational leader of the school, to continue to strengthen my ability to build the capacity of my staff and continue a high level of student achievement.

Participants

As this is self-study research, I was the primary participant. I critically reflected on my leadership actions intended to increase the instructional capacity of my staff. Critical friends, who included the critical-friends network (CFN) and vested committee

(VC), provided critical reflection on my leadership actions from their perspectives. The reflection on action led to adjustments to my actions related to the building of instructional capacity of staff.

Members of the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) consisted of professional associates who do not work under my professional supervision including administrators who have some expertise in education, art, or leadership. This was a unique group because the number of administrators with a background in the arts is limited. I had a prior relationship with each of the members of the group. CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) interactions were anonymous and used a Google community for all interactions. I uploaded the artifacts from each leadership action and critical friends responded to reflective questions to provide feedback.

The VC comprised the three members of my dissertation committee and me. They were the dissertation committee chair, a member of senior leadership from an adjacent school district, and a member of the institution's art faculty who is familiar with art and aesthetic modes of expression. The use of the VC is unique to this inquiry and challenged the traditional roles of dissertation committee members.

The CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided feedback using a Google community in each of the three cycles of critical reflection. The VC provided critical reflection with written responses to questions in the first cycle and through a dialogue in the second cycle. During the third cycle of critical reflection, one member, who was unable to attend the meeting, provided critical reflection in writing, whereas the remainder of the team met to conduct a dialogue.

Self-Study Process Steps

     I developed a self-study inquiry that included preliminary conceptualization and theoretical work with my dissertation chair and dissertation VC. The inquiry originated with the development of my initial LET (Whitehead, 1989) that was then interrogated through a series of critically reflective cycles that included art-informed and dialogue-based critical reflection. The inquiry is presented as a traditional dissertation as well as through art-informed methods developed during the inquiry (see Table 5).

Table 5

Self-Study Process Steps

Order	Step	Objective
1	Preliminary meetings with my dissertation chair	Developed a plan for inquiry.
2	Held a vested dissertation committee initial meeting	Shared the proposal for inquiry.
3	Submitted to the institutional review board	Gained permission to conduct inquiry.
4	Formed the critical-friends group (CFG)	Established the group and defined roles and responsibilities.
5	Developed the initial living-education theory (LET)	Developed my LET considering ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives. Used a sketchbook to list prior knowledge and experiences related to the inquiry. Created the initial LET (iLET) prior to starting formal inquiry cycles.
6	Communicated the initial LET to the vested committee (VC) and CFG for consideration	Groups reviewed and had an opportunity to discuss the LET.
7	Inquiry Cycle 1	Completed Leadership Action 1 and reflected on the action using coding of data on my LET. Made adjustments to my LET and determined Leadership Action 2.
8	Inquiry Cycle 2	Completed Leadership Action 2 and reflected on the action using coding of data on my LET. Made adjustments to my LET and determined Leadership Action 3.
9	Inquiry Cycle 3	Completed Leadership Action 3 and reflected on the action using coding of data on my LET. Made adjustments to my LET and determined Leadership Action 4.

Order	Step	Objective
10	Coded three inquiry cycles and produced all art-informed data during inquiries	Reflected on all data from the inquiry using coding of data to determine findings from the inquiry.
11	Completed the formal-dissertation product	Communicated to a wider academic audience.
12	Exhibited art work used for critical reflection during the inquiry	Communicated to a wider general audience through an exhibition of art.

Figure 1 illustrates the overview of the process I employed for this art-informed leadership self-study. The inquiry began with the development of my iLET (Whitehead, 1989) followed by three cycles of action/reflection based on Kolb's (1983) model of experiential learning. During the action/reflection cycles, I reflected on specific leadership actions. My dissertation committee, acted as a vested critical-friends group, and an unvested CFG consisted of educators. Data collected in each of the cycles grounded the leadership action reflected on in the next cycle. The iLET (Whitehead, 1989) served as criteria for my actions. I used the iLET (Whitehead, 1989) to develop a rubric and essential questions to facilitate critical reflection. I reflected on and adjusted the iLET (Whitehead, 1989), corresponding rubric, and essential questions, tested against daily realities of school leadership.

Whitehead (1989) developed the idea of living theories, writing that practice was a form of real-life theorizing. In the realm of education, these are referred to as LET (Whitehead, 1989). These theories serve as the descriptions and explanations for practice. When practitioners act against the values embodied in the LET, the practitioner becomes a living contradiction (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). The LET (Whitehead, 1989) can be viewed from an ontological and epistemological perspective. Practitioners can consider ontology as the perception of themselves and epistemology as the way of knowing

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(Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). I considered ontology and epistemology in the discovery of my LET as principal.
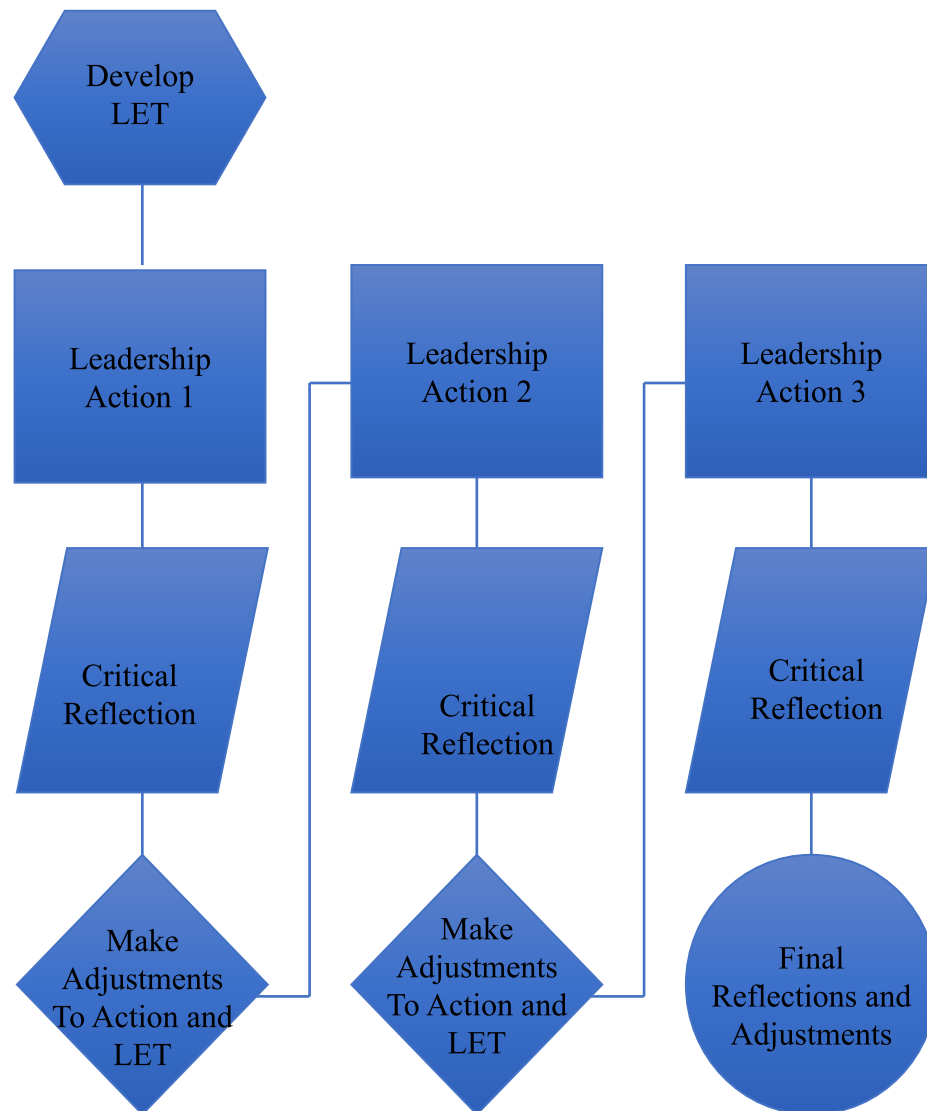

Figure 1. Art-informed self-study flowchart.

The first phase to this self-study was to develop my iLET (Whitehead, 1989) as a school principal and teacher educator. This process included considerations of my self-perception and way of knowing, personal history, professional experience, self-efficacy beliefs, education, and education-related values. Literature reviewed for this

self-study influenced my LET (Whitehead, 1989). Due to the centrality of my role as an

educational leader, frameworks and philosophies related to educational leadership

informed my LET. My experience as an art educator and practicing artist also informed

my LET (Whitehead, 1989).

Action/Reflection cycles

Reflection on specific leadership actions occurred in three cycles over the course

of the inquiry. Each action/reflection cycle lasted 4 weeks. My initial LET (Whitehead,

1989) served as a basis for reflection on specific leadership actions situated in my daily

work. I created rubrics and essential questions to facilitate reflection. The leadership

action for Cycle 2 was grounded in data collected in Cycle 1. Likewise the leadership

action in Cycle 3 was grounded in the data collected in Cycle 2. The iLET (Whitehead,

1989) was considered and adjusted based on data from each cycle (see Figure 2).

Concrete
Experience
(Leadership
Action)

Active
Experiementation
(New Leadership
Action)

Reflective
Observation (Data
collection &
dialogue)

Abstract
Concetualization
(Coding of Data&
Deciison Makiing)
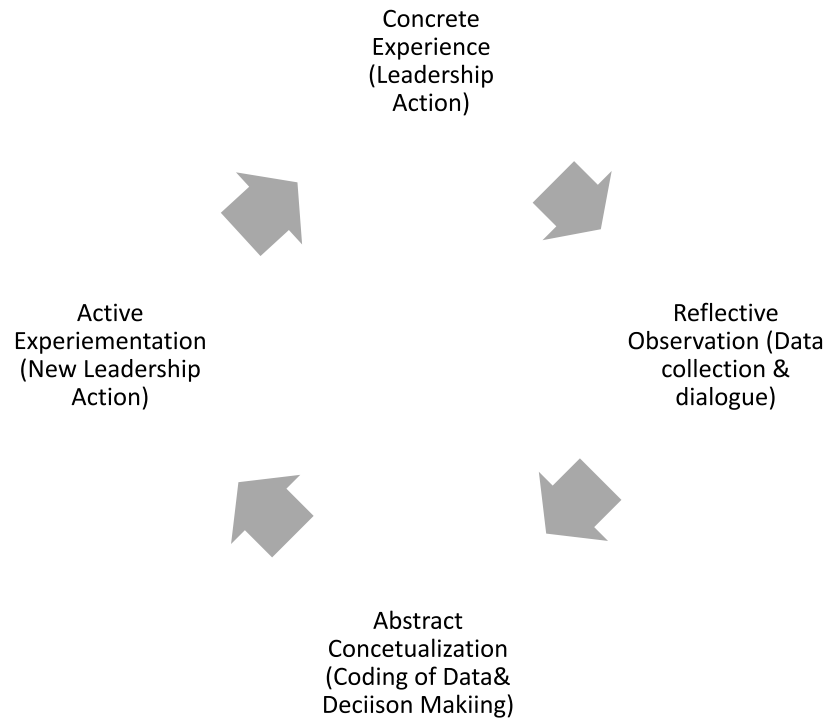
Figure 2. Art-Informed leadership self-study model.

With each cycle of action and reflection, new data emerged and was used to

ground the next cycle of critical reflective practice.

1. I designed leadership action to increase the instructional capacity of staff.

2. I applied critical reflection to descriptions and artifacts of actions to produce

   data.

3. I conceptualized data and made decisions about the next leadership action.

4. Active experimentation proceeded in the form of a new leadership action.

Continuous Improvement of Leadership Practice

The final phase of the inquiry included results, findings, and next steps for

improvement. I considered all data from the inquiry during this phase. I determined a

more fully developed LET (Whitehead, 1989), a personal leadership-improvement process, and applicable skills, and shared results in a traditional dissertation format and through artistic methods.

Data-Collection Procedures

At the beginning of Phase 2, I completed and documented a leadership action developed to build the instructional capacity of my staff. Documentation took the form of written description and transcript of the action. Phase 2 of the inquiry included three cycles of action/reflection that used the same tools for documentation. Data emerged through personal and collaborative reflection.

Personal critical reflection took place by using sketchbook/journals that included graphics and text to record my reflections on the action. Art journaling created data by creating pieces of art in sketchbooks on a particular topic or theme (Leavy, 2015). For this study, I created open-ended expressive pieces related to the leadership action of the specific cycle. Most of the sketchbook work took the form of text.

I achieved vested critical reflection by engaging the three members of my dissertation committee in a dialogue that included my input. I describe this group as vested because all members of the group had a stake in the outcome and validity of the study. Each member of the group holds a terminal degree and has knowledge and skills related to education, teacher education, leadership, or art. The members included the dissertation committee chair who is a teacher educator and expert on the self-study methodology, a district-level leader from an adjacent school system, and a member of the institution's art faculty who is familiar with art and aesthetic modes of expression.

During each cycle of critical reflection, the group engaged in a dialogue using essential questions related to my LET (Whitehead, 1989). As I was a member of this

group, I was able to respond and clarify aspects of the leadership action as needed. I recorded the dialogue and produced transcripts.

The CFG consisted of professional associates who have no vested interest in the study and who do not work under my professional supervision. This group included members of my doctoral cohort, administrators with whom I have worked, and educators with whom I have not worked but who have some expertise in education, art, or leadership. I sent a formal invitation to the potential members of the group that included an abstract of the inquiry proposal, details about the process and procedures, and details of their responsibilities as a critical friend.

Artifacts of the leadership actions were posted in a Google environment specific to this inquiry, so members of the group had convenient and anonymous access to written descriptions and videotape of the actions. The feedback from the critical friends was coded for data themes and used to create text-based art. The sketchbook, vested dialogues, and critical friends' reflections was repeated through three cycles. The method employed a model similar to Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning based on Dewey's (1934) concept of experiential learning. Kolb's (1984) model includes four cyclical steps: (a) concrete experience, (b) reflective observation, (c) abstract conceptualization, and (d) active experimentation.

The third phase of the process consisted of the final collection and assessment of all data produced during the study. This took the forms of the traditional findings chapter of the dissertation and an exhibit of all art-related data produced in the study. The added value of the exhibit is in the transparency and accessibility of data and findings. Visitors to the gallery were encouraged to offer additional critical reflection of artwork, individual aspects of the study, or the study as a whole.

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Art work on display included relevant work completed prior to starting the study, used in the creation of the LET, work created in the development of the LET, sketchbook/journals completed during the study, and work and artifacts created throughout the study process. The exhibit also included a series of paintings created over the time spanning the entire study. These paintings, using a layering technique, were worked on throughout the study and updated with every cycle of data collection.

The Use of Dialogue in the Inquiry

Dialogue was important to this inquiry. Though not always comfortable with the notion of an art informed self-study, dialogue with my chair, other doctoral students, and critical friends were instrumental in providing a trustworthy data set that was not solely my reflection but juxtaposed with the critiques of others. During the research phase, over three cycles of critical reflection, dialogue was the primary mechanism for collaboratively reflecting on experience and building knowledge, and dialogue added trustworthiness by triangulating my personal reflection. The dialogue with and among critical friends achieved what Whitehead and McNiff (2006) called "intersubjective agreement" (p. 33). Dialogue was the principal means of providing collaborative feedback. This critical collaborative inquiry used collaboration to produce feedback from others' personal and interpersonal learning, thinking, and knowing (as in Samaras, 2011).

The CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided feedback using the questions for this study about my leadership actions and my LET. CFN feedback entailed a flow of ideas limited by tight barriers of time and concept. VC dialogues explored ideas and these interactions. Starting with framing questions, the dialogue moved toward the topics that the members of the committee chose to include. The reflective artwork created throughout the inquiry constituted a dialogue with me as the artist.

During VC dialogues, ideas were challenged. One challenged topic became a major point of consideration for my leadership approach and was a core my understanding of my leadership actions. The concept of giving teachers a great deal of autonomy through democratic collaboration was challenged by members of the committee as they stated it lacked a structure for accountability to the larger community. The contrasting concepts of democratic freedom and structures for accountability were explored and the values in my LET evolved to reflect greater emphasis on accountability and structure. The contrasting concepts were also represented and reconciled visually in the reflective paintings through the use of materials that represented freedom and structure.

Structure of the Inquiry

This self-study was grounded in data collected and critically reflected on through art-informed processes with the formal development of the iLET completed prior to the start of formal inquiry. The three cycles of reflective inquiry started with leadership actions that took the form of various dialogues among other administrators, teachers, and me. Critical reflection on my actions was triangulated between the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011), the VC, and artwork created during the cycles. The creation of artwork became the tool for conceptualization of the data collected during the three cycles of critical reflections. Working through the major themes of balancing freedom and structure, the use of dialogue to understand, and my evolving understanding of myself as an educational leader, artist, and researcher, came from the data by creating paintings that helped me make sense of the most relevant data and prune data that were not central to the inquiry. Eisner (2008) wrote that art inquiry is better suited to asking questions that lead to deeper understanding and knowing. S. McNiff (2013) defined

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art-based research as "involving the researcher in some form of direct art-making as a primary mode of systematic inquiry" (p. 30).

Artistic thinking served as creative problem solving for the major dilemma revealed in the cycles of critical reflection. Art helped me conceptualize a balance between the autonomy of democratic collaboration and the structure needed for accountability to the larger community, which has the potential to increase the instructional capacity of my staff.

Art Created for the Inquiry

Personal art-informed critical reflection occurred in the form of sketchbook/journal reflections during the study, as well as artwork created during and after the reflective cycles of the study. The sketchbook/journal work facilitated reflection, allowing me to reflect on the process in an immediate manner soon after the leadership action.

The artwork consisted of four series of mixed-media paintings completed during and after the three reflective cycles. The three series included the following:

· Reflective paintings—medium sized (16 x 20 inch) paintings completed in

    phases aligned to the three cycles of critical reflection in the inquiry. I completed these paintings in several layers of contrasting structure in three phases during the research phase of the study during the three corresponding cycles. Texture was the primary art element employed in these paintings, emphasized by washes of white and neutral color. I used the artistic principle of contrast, with contrasting color and texture.

- Lit review—small (9.25 x 9.25 inch) paintings that illustrated key concepts

  from the review of literature for this inquiry. These paintings rested on an

  ongoing series of my work called Prior Knowledge that included collaged

  elements from encyclopedias and old books. I titled the series using the term

  "Lit" rather than "literature" as a nod to fellow dissertation candidates and our

  use of the short-hand term. Texture was the primary element used in these

  paintings, with limited color washes applied to the surface. I made these

  paintings during the summer, after the conclusion of the critical-reflection

  cycles.

- Dialogue—20-inch circular mixed-medium paintings comprised of wood,

  canvas, and other materials that capture "chunks" of dialogue from the

  leadership actions and the critical-reflection phases of the inquiry. I

  emphasized the element of texture with washes of color layered on contrasting

  textures.

- Living theory—medium sized (16 x 20 inch) mixed-medium paintings with

  text from the development of the LET (Whitehead, 1989). The 12 paintings in

  the series have increasing, then decreasing text and texture, to emulate the

  thinking process that went into the development of the LET. Several layers of

  color washes emphasized the texture on the surface of the work.

The use of art to inform my research has injected my artistic work with energy

and purpose beyond aesthetics. Although I have used text over the years, often

appropriated from other sources, I have rarely used my own text. Reflective work has given me ample meaningful text to use. The production of art directly related to this inquiry included text generated from sketchbooks and directly applied to the surface of the Reflection paintings, the layering of text from the LET in mixed-medium paintings, text from the review of the literature, and the text of transcripts of leadership actions in the Dialogue paintings. I also infused work produced prior to starting this inquiry with new energy. I have several series of work that include language as an important theme such as a series on fables, work related to the biblical story of the *Tower of Babel*, and mixed-medium pieces that use portions of old encyclopedias called *Prior Knowledge*. This inquiry and the art directly and indirectly related to it has helped me to be a more productive artist while moving toward greater integration of myself as an educator, artist, and researcher. I plan to use or adapt some of the methods developed in this inquiry to produce art and art-informed projects in the future.

Method Schedule

Although the process of inquiry maintains the potential to extend indefinitely, it was limited to three reflective cycles over the time of the study. The iLET (Whitehead, 1989) developed over a 3-week period and each reflective cycle lasted 4 weeks. Postinquiry work transpired over a period of 30 weeks. Table 6 details the methods scheduled for this inquiry.

Table 6

Method Schedule

LET development	Inquiry Cycle 1	Inquiry Cycle 2	Inquiry Cycle 3	
4 Weeks	4 Weeks	4 Weeks	4 Weeks	Postinquiry cycles

Professional learning activities (leadership actions)	Mar29: Leadership teaming	May 11: Instructional leadership team meeting	Jan 5: School improvement team meeting	Code all reflections to discover themes (June 28–July 7)
Vested group meetings window	Apr 17–May 1	May 15–May 26	June 7–June 27	Use art to reflect on inquiry data (July 2017–Feb 2018)
Critical-friends group feedback window	Apr 17–May 1	May 15–May 26	June 7–June 27	
Art informed self-reflection window	Apr 17–May 1	May 15–May 26	June 7–June 27	
Ongoing reflection with sketchbook and other artwork	June 28–Dec 15			

Data Analysis

Sketchbooks, artifacts of dialogues, and critical-friends reflections were recorded and first- and second-cycle coding was used to build assertions and theories based on the data during each cycle of critical reflection. Herr and Anderson (2015), who view self-study as a type of "insider action research," wrote about the framework as, "an interrogation of themselves resulting in change" (p. 92). Repeating the cyclical model of action, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation provided multiple opportunities to interrogate my leadership actions against my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and discover data. Each successive cycle of critical reflection was grounded in the data collected from the previous cycle. Data from the gallery exhibit were coded in a similar manner at the conclusion of the inquiry. Saldaña (2013) wrote regarding grounded theory,

> The process usually involves meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately lead to the development of a theory—a theory "grounded" or rooted in the original data themselves. (p. 51)

First-cycle coding used the initial coding approach. Initial coding, also referenced as open coding, allows the researcher to remain open to whatever theoretical possibilities that can be discerned from the data (Charmaz, 2009). The coding should take place quickly to spark thinking and spawn a fresh view of the data. Initial coding took place as quickly as possible after the events that yielded data in each of the three action/reflection cycles (Charmaz, 2009)

Second-cycle coding used focused coding and theoretical coding at the conclusion of the three action/reflection cycles to categorize data. The goal of focused coding is to develop categories without distracted attention to their properties and dimensions (Saldaña, 2013). Focused coding means using the most significant or frequent codes discerned from the data through initial coding (Charmaz, 2009). Theoretical coding followed the codes selected during focused coding (Charmaz, 2009) and is appropriate as a culminating step toward achieving a grounded theory (Saldana, 2013; see Figure 3).
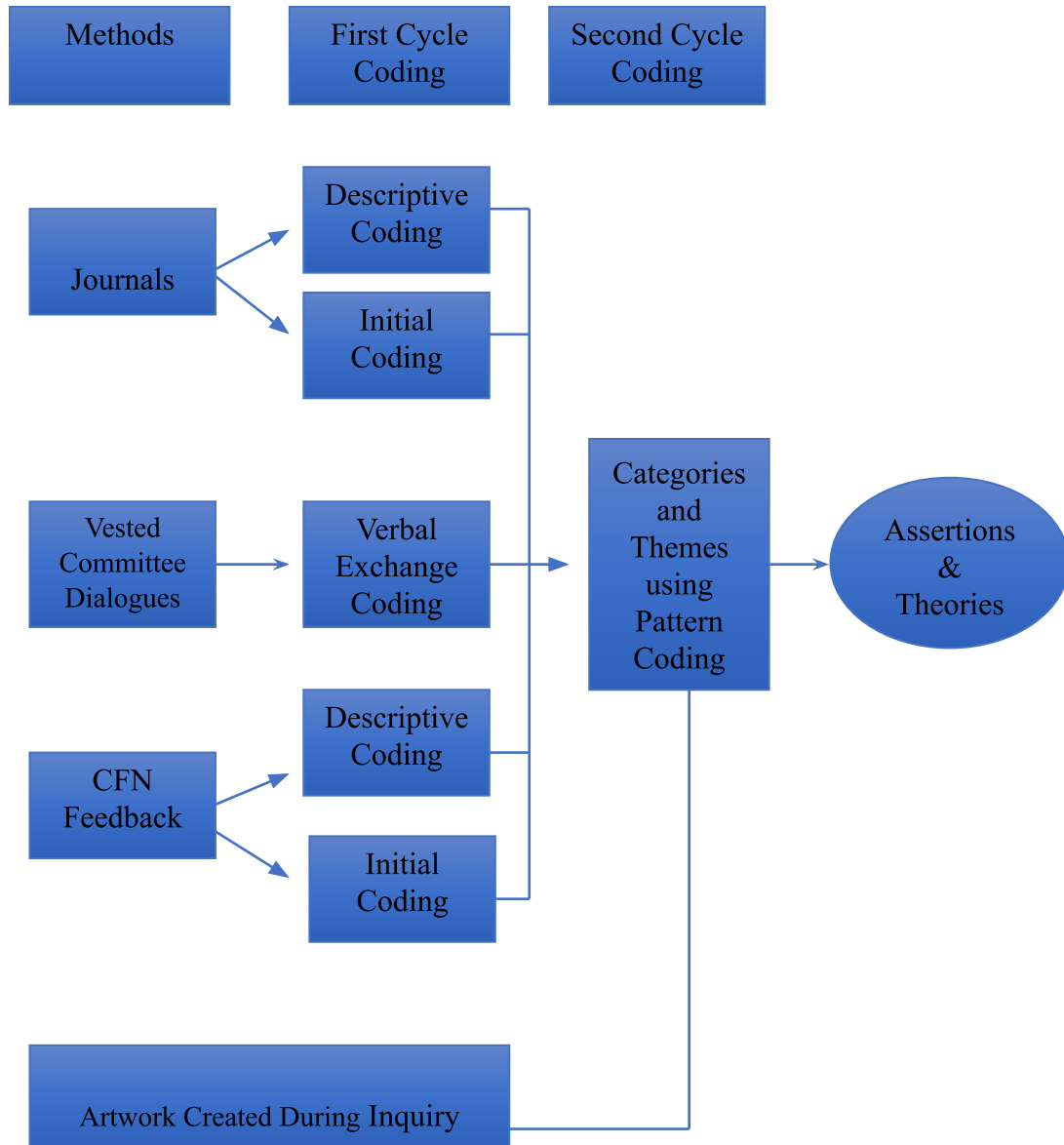
Figure 3. Coding process and data analysis.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The neutral or objective observer should not be a pretense (Herr & Anderson, 2015); instead, the self-study researcher lays claim to the reality of "setting in action" research to address local context and concerns (p. 88). The researcher is actively involved in problem solving while exercising disciplined subjectivity. The use of multiple modes of reflection and feedback from the researcher and others, vested and not vested in the

inquiry, builds trustworthiness. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) define validity and legitimacy:

> Validity is about establishing the truth value, or trustworthiness, of a claim to knowledge. Legitimacy is about establishing the authority of the person who is making the claim to knowledge, which also involves interrogating the authority of the regime of truth that can influence what is permitted to count as knowledge. (p. 97)

This inquiry included ongoing monitoring through the exercise of critically reflective feedback by peers, experts in the field of education, teacher educators, experts in educational leadership, an expert in the self-study methodology, and the general public. At each level of dialogic validity (Herr & Anderson, 2015) the CFG provided critical reflective feedback on the LET (Whitehead, 1989). This practice also reflected Heron's (1996) concept of cooperative inquiry, cycling over time through dialectic processes.

Legitimacy connected to the validity of the processes used in the study, but legitimacy also accrued through transparency. My willingness to open my practice to critical reflection for public scrutiny and my willingness to publicly interrogate my actions (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) on my LET was critical to the study's legitimacy.

Although bias and subjectivity are natural and acceptable in action research, as long as they are critically examined rather than ignored, other mechanisms were actualized to ensure they do not have a distorting effect on the outcome (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Objectivity was not a goal in this self-study; rather, critical subjectivity (Reason, 1994) was achieved through transparency of the process, the participation of

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others, and public scrutiny of the process and results of the inquiry. Reason (1994) defined critical subjectivity in this way:

> Critical subjectivity means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience that we accept our knowing from a perspective; it also means that we are aware of that perspective, and of its bias, and we articulate it in our communications. (p. or para ##)

Critical reflections were congruous with Habermas's theory of communicative action (1987), Samaras's five foci (2011), and Freire's (1970) action/reflection praxis.

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) cite Habermas's theory of communicative action (1987) added to the legitimacy of this work. According to Habermas (1987), inquiry should be

- comprehensible, in that a form of language is used that is commonly understood by all;

- truthful, in that all recognize these as true accounts and not fabrications;

- sincere, so that all parties can trust what the other says;

- appropriate for the context, while recognizing the unspoken cultural norms in which their discourses are embedded. (p. 102)

Comprehensibility was enhanced by the addition of art-based means to communication data throughout the study. Truthfulness and sincerity were achieved by

my critical reflection and that of others who were in the directly vested group and the unvested group. Appropriateness was achieved by situating the study in real practice.

Habermas (1987) provides process as much as validity. My situated practice was observed and critically reflected on in real time soon after the action occurred. I sought additional knowledge required by my new understanding of practice and myself in practice. I gathered additional data to support new understandings while testing knowledge claims through personal, vested, community, and universal levels of reflection. I looked to Freire's (1970) praxis of action and reflection as a model for deeper understanding and improvement of my leadership practice.

I view the process of self-study as cyclical and ongoing. As I began to reflect honestly on ideas I held and expressed, I had to confront my assertion that I am a life-long learner. This inquiry presented the opportunity to bring truth to this stated concept by using a cyclical model grounded in data discovered through critical reflection on my practice. My self-study methods aligned with Samaras's (2011) five foci, achieved through the transparent critical reflection carried out using multiple processes (see Table 7).

Finally, I achieved adherence to Freire's (1970) action/reflection praxis to heighten validity. Freire wrote,

> To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built for silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (p. 88)

"Naming the world," to Freire (1970, p. 88) was the essence dialogue. The critically reflective dialogue that occurred in this study "named" the leadership actions taken to build instructional capacity. Freire added that true words cannot be separated from action. This study, through transparent critical reflection and communication, linked words to action.

Table 7

Methods Relative to Samaras Five Foci

Samaras's five foci (2011)	Chilcutt's art-informed leadership self-study
Personal situated inquiry–Self-study teachers initiate their own inquiries and study them in a teaching context.	Leadership self-study, initiated by me, the researcher, is situated in daily practice of a high school principal as a teacher educator.
Critical collaborative community—Self-study teachers work in an intellectually safe, collaborative, and supportive professional-learning community to improve their practices by making it explicit to themselves and to others.	Collaborative inquiry through critical reflection occurs on several levels of the self-study. I engaged my dissertation committee as a vested critical-friend group, used an unvested critical-friend group, and gave the general public an opportunity to offer input on a gallery exhibit/website gallery.
Improve learning—Self-study teachers question the status quo of their own teaching to improve and impact learning for themselves and their students.	The self-study inquiry centered on the question: How do I improve my ability to increase the instructional capacity of my staff? At the conclusion of the formal study, I will continue to apply procedures for continuous improvement.
Transparent and systematic research process—Self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the research process through dialogue and critique.	The process depends on others openly collaborating to produce quality data in a transparent manner. My staff was made aware of the study and it's aims. The entire inquiry will be published as a dissertation and artifacts from the self-study are available for viewing in a physical and virtual gallery that anyone who is interested can view.
Knowledge, Generation, & Dissemination–Self-study research generates knowledge, which is made through presentation and publication.	Knowledge generated through the self-study will be applicable to my daily practice. My school has the potential to be directly reformed and others, through dissemination, can use the processes employed to begin reforming in other contexts.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limited scope of the self-study presented limitations and delimitations. The inquiry was conducted in one setting over a relatively short period of time with one participant. Those outside the study may see little value in the study of one person's

inquiry into professional practice; however the procedures and use of Kolb's model (1984) can be applied in a variety of settings.

The delimitations I put in place help make this divergent grounded-theory inquiry more manageable and enhanced my ability to complete it. Limiting the study to a relatively short period of time in one school location, studying a few key leadership actions produced significant data to be considered. It was not the goal of this study to be generalizable, but the goal of this study, to improve professional practice, is transferable to other leadership situations.

Summary

This self-study employed a methodology grounded in data collected and critically reflected through an art-informed process. The increased pace and disruption that characterizes education today calls for a system of improvement that is nonlinear and nontraditional in nature, thereby matching current realities (Schwahn & Spady, 2010). This study included three phases of research culminating in a revised LET (Whitehead, 1989) and the development of new leadership skills that can be applied to my daily practice. The self-study included three 4-week cycles of action/reflection aligned with Kolb's (1986) model of experiential learning. Data discovered through the study was discerned using first- and second-cycle coding to build assertions and theories related to improving my practice to increase the leadership capacity of my staff. The study aligned with Habermas's (1987) theory of communicative action and Samaras' (2011) five foci for self-study. The next chapter presents the findings for this inquiry including theories and assertions built on the data produced, adjustment to my LET (Whitehead, 1989), responses to the initial research questions, and responses to the questions produced during the inquiry.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this dissertation research was to complete a self-study of my instructional leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff, through art-informed action/reflection cycles. As an educational leader, it was important to me that this dissertation research be relevant to my own work; thus, I made the decision to complete a self-study of my educational-leadership practice. This self-study, by its nature, builds autobiographically on my lived experience through the professional practice of a school leader; therefore, I wrote in the first person throughout the document. Writing in first person offers additional transparency by acknowledging and reinforcing my centrality to the situated self-study (Raymond, 1993). Using Kolb's (1984) cyclical model of experiential learning, I completed a self-study of my educational leadership practice. This inquiry has helped me understand the relationship among my identity as an educational leader, self-study researcher, and artist. I built knowledge and communicated through an artistic process. I created art that uses metaphor to make meaning; Visual images, materials, and processes came together to create meaning in my work. I have come to understand, through this inquiry process, thinking through art is a unique and powerful means of building and communicating knowledge that can be put to use in my daily leadership practice.

I was not immediately comfortable with conducting an art-informed self-study of my leadership. I realized that the potential for self-study of my practice as a principal placed me in a position of modeling an approach of authentic reflection for my teachers. Self-study started to become clear during the literature review as I discovered the Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (Perry, 2015).

This inquiry used a grounded-theory approach that is, by its nature, cyclical and evolutionary (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To complete this self-study of my educational-leadership practice, I developed a series of action/reflection cycles that included the following: building instructional capacity of staff; gathering data from a critical-friends network (CFN; Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) and vested committee (VC); and using art-informed practice to reflect on the data from the leadership actions and critical feedback. I gained critical reflection on the data from leadership actions by triangulating my personal reflections aligned with my art-informed epistemology, with that of two groups of critical friends. This inquiry helped me understand and manifest my overlapping roles as an educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher. It was through the development of the living education theory (LET; Whitehead, 1989) that I defined, interrogated, and redefined my core principles and values related to these roles and my practice.

Demonstrated through the action cycles, Chapter 4 details the findings of the self-study research of my leadership practice. The findings will be discussed through the action/reflection cycles. The leadership actions that initiated each action/reflection cycle were completed to build the instructional capacity of my staff and improve the school. The first leadership action consisted of an administrative meeting to evaluate professional learning from the previous school year and plan the professional learning for the next school year. The second leadership action was a meeting of the Instructional-Leadership Team (ILT), comprised of department leaders and lead teachers, engaged in a discussion of the professional-learning plan for the following year. The third leadership action consisted of the Summer School Improvement Team (SIT) meeting to finalize professional-learning plans for the following school year. Each initiating leadership

action included a larger group of staff culminating with the Summer SIT meeting, open to all staff who chose to attend.

My understanding of the self-study methodology became clear to me when I read Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) LET. The concept of determining my LET through the interrogation of my actions as a leader relative to my stated values in the LET was central to the inquiry. The critical reflection required I establish the LET and continually assess my actions, which are, to me, at the core of my being. In addition, the inclusion of critical friends in the shared critical reflection was key to my willingness to conduct a self-study, as I had experienced the positive impact of working collaboratively as a critical friend in the past. Tobery-Nystrom's (2011) use of a CFN was instrumental in devising my plan to include critical friends in my work.

Including art as a means of reflecting on my practice as a leader became imperative when I started to consider my epistemological and ontological stance when developing my LET. Being an artist and thinking like an artist is key to who I am as a person, and, therefore, key to who I am as a leader. Eventually, when discussing my personal epistemology with my dissertation chairperson, I said, "Art is the way I see and know the world." In that moment, it became clear that artistic thinking is the way I reflect and was appropriate to the research.

Research Questions

Through this inquiry I discovered that my LET (Whitehead, 1989), being a collection of my values related to unbreakable principles (Covey, 1990), is foundational to me as an educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher. This conceptualization of myself as an artist, educator, leader, and researcher prompted this inquiry to answer the

question, How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff? This overarching question led to the following questions.

- How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data, relative to my LET, that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity?

- How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity?

- How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building instructional capacity?

- How do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how does my LET evolve relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions?

Findings

The overarching finding discovered in this inquiry is the following: understanding my personal epistemology and ontology as an educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher has given me a greater sense of my self-efficacy and has made me more confident in my actions, designed to build instructional capacity in my staff. The three interrelated aspects revealed the effect of creating wholeness and align with the unbreakable principles (Covey, 1990) of continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness. This finding works synergistically and can be

understood through the lens of the three roles of educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher for discussion in this dissertation.

As an educational leader, I have believed that my core responsibility is to build the capacity of those around me. I found the development and evolution of the LET to provide a moral base and confidence to operate more effectively. I have found that educational leadership needs to evolve to meet the needs of education today. Finally, I have found that the method developed in this inquiry can be employed to sustain improvement that aligns with the principles and values embodied in my LET.

As a self-study researcher, I have found that this study has had immediate impact on my practice and has the potential to lead toward continual improvement through ongoing critical reflection on my actions as a leader. I found the development and evolution of the LET focused and defined my actions and serves as an infrastructure for my practice moving forward. I found that emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) became far more important to the process than I originally anticipated.

Findings emerged in the inquiry to answer the research questions posed in relation to the core question, based on building the instructional capacity of my staff through art-informed self-study. Table 8 describes the study findings.

Table 8

Findings Relative to Research Subquestions

Research question	Findings
How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data, relative to my LET, that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity?	Visual representation of ideas facilitated understanding and resolution of core leadership dilemmas revealed during the inquiry. Art work created after formal research cycles aided in my overall understanding of the inquiry.

How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity?	Dialogue with the vested committee and critical-friends network provided additional reflective lenses to critically assess my leadership actions. Dialogues with the vested committee revealed my need for additional development of my emotional intelligence when participating in the critical dialogues related to my leadership actions
How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building instructional capacity?	Critical reflection on leadership-action transcripts through dialogues with other groups helped me gain a more accurate understanding of the needs of my staff.
How do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how does my LET evolve relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions?	Principles and values in the LET evolved over the three cycles of inquiry through critical reflection. Most notable was the change in "democratic collaboration" to "democratic collaboration through broad-based engagement and accountability to the larger school community."

The first subquestion was, How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data relative to my LET that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity? This question yielded two findings. First, the paintings used for reflection helped me visually represent and reconcile the major dilemma of leaders revealed in the inquiry related to the conflict between the freedom of democratic collaboration and the structure of accountability to the larger community. By visually representing the freedom of democratic collaboration on canvas, represented by loose gestural writing, then applying a grid material over the gestural writing, I could see the conflict. I represented the conflict on the canvas; then I used red thread during the third cycle of reflection, to combine the two conflicting layers. Later in the creation of the paintings, I made aesthetic choices to help communicate the contrast and reconciliation to viewers. The second major finding related to the first research question was discovery that creating paintings related to the inquiry provided me with an overall understanding of the research. After the three formal cycles of inquiry were complete, I struggled to make meaning of the work and discover the findings. As I worked through the Reflection

series of paintings and other works created for the inquiry, I started to understand the themes that built during the coding of interactions during the inquiry.

The second research question was, How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity? This question yielded two major findings. First, the dialogue in person with the VC and through the Google environment with the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided me with additional reflective lenses to critically assess my actions. The dialogue with these two groups provided data that provided a well-rounded picture of leadership action when it was considered with my personal art-informed reflections. The second major finding related to the dialogues was the discovery of my need for additional development of my emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) when participating in critical dialogues about my leadership actions. I found it difficult at times to maintain my stance as a member of the VC when challenged on some aspect of my leadership action.

The answer to the question, How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building instructional capacity? was revealed through dialogues with the VC and feedback from the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011). These helped me understand the input provided by staff during leadership actions. By engaging in collaborative critical reflection of the transcripts from the leadership actions, I was able to consider what my staff was saying in the leadership actions multiple times, with others providing additional points of view for their input. I was able to gain a more accurate understanding of the needs of my staff through this process.

The second finding was revealed through the final research subquestion: How do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how does my LET evolve

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relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions? The LET and my practice evolved

over the three cycles of inquiry. Most notable is the evolution of the concept of

democratic collaboration in my leadership. First, democratic collaboration was one of my

interrelated values. This concept evolved to be "democratic collaboration through

broad-based engagement and accountability to the larger school community." This

change to the LET represents the core dilemma revealed during the inquiry. The

evolution of the LET showed that my practice aligned with the principle of continuous

improvement.

      Living theory as infrastructure. The concept of infrastructure has been the basis

for a theory of action to create art over the past several years in which I am looking for

the underlying foundation of our collective lives. I have been thinking about language as

a key part of the underlying framework for our collective lives for some time and I think

of this as the "infrastructure" of our collective lives. My first "infrastructure" paintings

were done in the mid 1990s as an undergraduate art-education major. I started using

found text and alphabet stencils in my work at around the same time. As I approached the

age of 40 and I was removed from directly teaching art, I felt the need to create art, and

"be an artist." I felt the need for my art to have deeper meaning to ground the work and

give the work a reason to exist in the world. Each artist has a unique path and a unique set

of reasons for creating art, but I needed to create art for a more specific reason. I no

longer believed, as I once did, that my art should be created solely for art's sake. My art

should exist to help me and others gain a deeper, more truthful understanding of the

world. I saw a natural connection between this idea of infrastructure and the concept of

the LET (Whitehead, 1989) as the guide post for my work and life.

Evolution of the living education theory. At the outset of the inquiry, I viewed the LET as exclusive to my work as an educational leader, but over the time of this inquiry, I have come to view the LET as a foundation for all aspects of my life. The LET has the potential to serve as the infrastructure for my work as an educational leader, an artist, and a person. I expect the evolution to continue, as the processes for critical reflection, defined in this inquiry, have the potential to continue throughout my life in the practice of living my principles and values defined in the document.

The LET evolved over the time of the inquiry through my personal reflections and their interrogation of my actions through shared reflection. I used a process of action and reflection aligned to Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning and inspired by Freire's (1970) concept of praxis. I also relied on Whitehead and McNiff's (2006) idea of interrogation of the LET on my actions as a leader.

I developed the initial LET (iLET) prior to the first action/reflection cycle and it served as a starting point for the foundation of my practice as an educational leader. The iLET relied on my prior knowledge of leadership and my belief system. At its earliest stage, I used my sketchbook/journal to begin to define the iLET. I considered my principles, values, and prior experiences as a way to begin to define my living theory. In the first entry of my sketchbook/journal I wrote, "I believe that the defining of my LET is potentially on the most important and productive activities that I can do in my career and life." I started free writing with an open-minded free-flowing style that reads now like a stream of consciousness. I mentioned the political climate of the country and the public education's central role in shaping the United States for many years to come. I reflected on my training as a teacher and an educational leader. A primary theme of my undergraduate degree in art education revolved around the concept of "full engagement"

in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains. I also recalled the concepts of lesson planning from my undergraduate days and the use of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy for learning as a basis for instruction.

I reflected on my daily practice and noted an ILT meeting that caused me to think through the concept of "democratizing" the school's decision-making process as a key part of my LET. I also noted that the school could benefit from the use of protocols to help bring structure to the ongoing shared dialogues among staff in the school. I found it interesting to look at these two contrasting ideas, from the earliest stage of LET conceptualization, because the same concept rises as a dilemma of leadership that needed to be reconciled later in the inquiry.

The early sketchbook/journal work also included an inventory of my thoughts about myself and the art I have created over the years. The sketchbook included descriptions of artwork that I created over the years and I wrote about my earliest memories drawing the things around me as a way of knowing the world. I also included my early art work that addressed the concepts of infrastructure and language. My artistic thinking helped me value diverse ways of knowing.

The iLET described my values as a representation of my ontological stance and my epistemological process. I listed what I referenced as my "unbreakable principle," influenced by Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Peopl*e (1990), as continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness. In the initial version of the LET, I related this principle to biological, humanistic, spiritual, and cognitive domains. I also listed my values aligned to the principle as democratic collaboration, significant long-term contribution to society, truth finding through critical reflection and

critical thinking, equity of opportunity, multiple and diverse discovery, and construction and expressions of knowledge.

I interrogated the iLET against my actions during the first cycle of critical reflection. I made adjustments leading to the LET Version 2. Through shared inquiry and critical reflection, I discovered that the principles and values were evident in the action, but that the wording of the iLET seemed too academic in nature and questioned the emphasis on autonomy. Participants noted that the values were evident in the leadership action but wondered if the manner in which the meeting was conducted was the norm or staged for the study. One participant asked, "What is the epistemological proof that this is a natural construct?" The second version of the LET included a reduction in the academic language and contained more concise writing.

The third evolution of the LET saw the consolidation of interrelated values. I combined five separate values into three values that can be easily understood and operationalized. The values reflected the continued critique of the autonomy of my teachers. In the third version, I added the concept of accountability to the value of democratic collaboration. This addition reflects the resolution of the core dilemma in the inquiry. This balance between autonomy and accountability will be key to my practice moving forward. This version of the LET integrated the critical reflection with the concept of long-term significant contribution. Finally, I integrated the value of equity with the concept of multiple and diverse discovery, construction, and expression of knowledge.

Leadership Actions

Leadership actions that occurred during this inquiry had the goal of building instructional capacity of my staff through the development of a professional-learning plan

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for the 2017–2018 school year. Although the development of the plan included many additional actions, the three leadership actions reflected on for the study formed the bulk of the collaborative planning involved in forming the professional-learning plan.

The leadership actions included an Administration/Lead Teacher Planning Meeting, an Instructional Leadership Team Retreat, and a SIT Meeting. The leadership actions were situated in my daily practice as an educational leader and teacher educator. I chose to critically reflect on three actions that most closely addressed the research question. The three actions I chose were meetings that would have been conducted regardless of the study, but the second and third actions were influenced by the critical reflections on the previous leadership actions.

Action/Reflection

Reflections on the three specific actions occurred over the course of 3 months. The first cycle leadership action was a meeting among my administrative staff, lead teachers, and SIT facilitator to initiate planning of the 2017–2018 professional-learning plan. The second leadership action started with a meeting during our ILT retreat to discuss professional learning. The third cycle was initiated with the Summer SIT meeting to further develop professional learning activities for teachers.

With each cycle of action and reflection, new data emerged, used to ground the next cycle of critical reflective practice.

1. I designed leadership action to increase the instructional capacity of staff.
2. I applied critical reflection to descriptions and artifacts of actions to produce data.
3. I conceptualized data and made decisions about the next leadership action.
4. Active experimentation proceeded in the form of a new leadership action.

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The leadership action for Cycle 2 was grounded in data collected in Cycle 1.

Likewise, the leadership action in Cycle 3 was grounded in the data collected in Cycle 2.

I considered and adjusted the iLET (Whitehead, 1989) based on data from each cycle (see

Figure 2).

Transcripts. I recorded and transcribed each of the three leadership actions. I

shared the transcripts with the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) so the group could critically

reflect on the actions using the anonymous Google community. I also shared the

transcripts with the VC, then used them as the basis for shared reflection. The first VC

reflection was conducted through e-mail. The second and third leadership-action

reflections were performed in person.

Coding the data. I applied first-cycle initial descriptive coding to the second and

third transcripts of the VC and to all of the anonymous responses from the CFN

(Tobery-Nystrom, 2011). I applied descriptive coding to written responses from the VC

for the first cycle. This allowed me to remain open to participants' responses and begin to

build meaning in the critical reflection. I underlined key ideas from the reflective

responses and wrote in the margins. I used black ink for descriptive coding and red ink

for initial coding. Responses from the CFN were short and direct whereas responses from

the VC were much longer and more detailed, with one response building on another. The

CFN texts were responses to framing questions provided by me; the VC text was more a

free-flowing open dialogue.

Action/Reflection Cycles Conducted During the Inquiry

The following section is organized around the three action/reflection cycles that

included a description of the leadership action, descriptions and examples of the CFN

(Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) reflections, descriptions and examples of the VC reflections, and the art-informed reflections that occurred during the formal-inquiry cycles.

Cycle 1: Leadership action. The first leadership action occurred in the conference room adjacent to my office. It consisted of a dialogue among the lead teacher, SIT facilitator, two assistant principals, and me. The team's goal was to evaluate the 2016–2017 professional-learning activities and begin to develop a plan for the 2017–2018 school year. The objectives for the meeting were the following:

- Assess current realities for professional learning as it relates to teacher

  instructional-capacity building

- Discuss the relationship among the classroom-focused improvement process,

  professional learning, and instructional-capacity building

- Start to develop the 2017–2018 professional-learning framework.

The leadership action was recorded using QuickTime audio and transcribed using an online transcription service. I made minor corrections to the transcript to correct transcription errors and identified the participants as MC for Michael Chilcutt and P1–P4 for the other participants, based on the order in which they appear in the transcripts. The leadership-action participants were known to me during the inquiry but remained anonymous to the VC and the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011). The CFN feedback consisted of six members of the network responding to question prompts in a Google form that only they could access.

Cycle 1: Critical-friend reflections. The CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided short closed responses to the questions. The responses from the first cycle included the idea that they could see some of the values in the action but were not sure of the long-term goals. The responders stated they could pick out the concept of cognitive growth as relevant to the principle of continuous growth. The network was also able to see democratic collaboration demonstrated in the action.

Responding to the question: "How does this leadership action show alignment with the principles and values in the LET?" CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) members stated the following:

- "There are several components of the Living Education Their that are

  embedded as components of the leadership action. Clearly, cognitive human development played a strong role as this was a reflection on previous work."

- "The values line up very nicely using collaboration, reflection and equity of

  ideas and thinking."

- "There is a great deal of reflecting and constructive criticism by the team

  throughout he leadership action."

Cycle 1: Vested committee reflections. The VC feedback in the first cycle was gained through written responses to the question sent to the committee through e-mail. Descriptive coding applied to the written feedback from the VC responses yielded more data than the CFN. The committee saw structures in place to promote the interrelated values stated in the LET but identified a dilemma between the autonomy of democratic

collaboration and the structure needed for accountability. One member of the VC stated, "As a leader, you know the critical importance of striking a balance between autonomy and accountability for staff. The transcript would suggest you have weighed autonomy heavier than accountability with your staff."

This dilemma stated by the committee became a central theme of the entire study.

The committee saw some evidence of growth mindset but did not feel participants in the leadership actions seemed to believe teachers could grow. The committee posed the question, Have I cultivated a culture of professional inquiry by staff or have I created a bunch of organizational structures that attempt to force professional inquiry? This was another key question that informed the next two actions.

Finally one member of the VC introduced the use of creativity in my reflection and conceptualization of dilemmas revealed in the study. The member suggested replacing the words "art-informed" with "creativity-informed." This suggestion, along with the formerly mentioned contradiction between autonomy and accountability, prompted me to consider the solving of this dilemma as a central component to the inquiry.

Cycle 1: Art-informed reflections. Prior to starting the Reflective Painting series, I used my sketchbook to free write and process the first leadership action. My initial thought was that the leadership action was a purely cognitive exercise. Upon further reflection, I realized the affective domain was at play. I wrote in the sketchbook that "reflective paintings should embody psychomotor, affective, and cognitive domains." I also wrote that the affective or emotional domain would be addressed through the act of creating art as an object to exhibit as well as through the expressive approach used to create the art.

I also wrote about the dilemma of making the paintings an artifact of the reflective process rather than an illustration of the process. I was concerned about authentically using the art to reflect rather than making it visually represent the process of reflection. This approach was an important aspect to the process for me as I felt it was at the core of using art for honest reflection and truth finding.

I completed the Reflective Paintings over the three action/reflection cycles. The first phase of the creation of the Reflective Paintings consisted of applying text from the transcripts of the leadership actions in a gestural manner. I made the marks as quickly as I could. Some consisted of longer passages, some short, and some just one word. After applying text to each of the 12 canvases, I placed them out of sight in a corner of my workspace (see Figure 4).
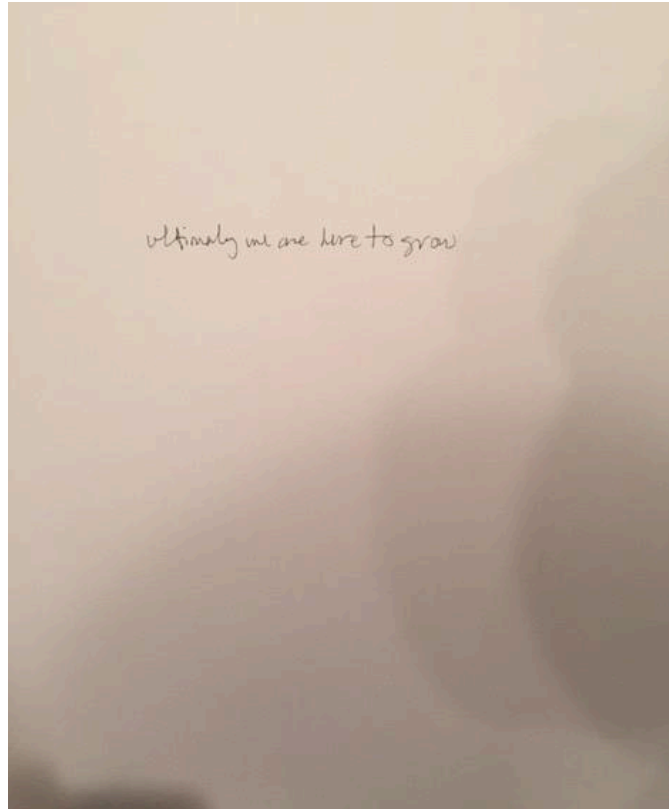
Figure 4. Photo of Reflection Painting first cycle.

The major theme revealed in the first cycle was the need to resolve the dilemma of autonomy through democratic collaboration and the need for structure to maintain accountability to the larger group. This manifested in the Reflective Paintings as I looked for a way to visually process the balance of loosely applied gestural text with another element that would indicate structure. The suggestion from one member of the VC to think of the study as a "creativity-informed" inquiry to solve this problem took hold in the process of creating these paintings. I thought about his dilemma over the next several weeks and would find a visual solution while working on the Reflective series in the second cycle.

Cycle 2: Leadership action. The second leadership action was a meeting of the ILT to further develop the professional-learning plan for the 2017–2018 school year.

Members of the ILT, comprised of department leaders and lead teachers, engaged in a discussion of the professional-learning plan for the 2017–2018 school year during an ILT retreat on May 11, 2017. All ILT members met briefly at school to discuss the day's agenda, review the 2016–2017 School Improvement Plan, and break into groups to discuss components of the plan. The groups included the following: Literacy Group, Curriculum Group, Technology Group, and Professional Learning Group. This transcript documents the Professional Learning Group, which I facilitated.

The stated objective for the day was to create a professional-learning plan that facilitates teacher instructional capacity building and reflects the following values:

- Democratic collaboration

- Significant long-term contribution to society

- Truth finding through critical reflection and critical thinking

- Equity of opportunity

- Multiple and diverse discovery, construction, and expression of knowledge

These were the values stated in my second LET. Their inclusion in the formal agenda and objective for the leadership action is significant, as I put my values at the center of the work of the school and this situates my work as a school leader and self-researcher together in one leadership action.

On the morning of the ILT Retreat meeting, I was called to attend to a medical issue with my father and address a pressing student-need issue at school. These

real-world responsibilities caused me to make some adjustments to the meeting planned for the morning. I had to reschedule the meeting to the afternoon and the agenda was covered as planned but it did serve as an illustration of the job and life-embedded nature of this self-study inquiry. I explore this lack of "dissertation vacuum" in the findings section.

The CFN feedback consisted of written responses to reflection from five members of the network. The questions for this cycle of reflection were the following:

· How does this leadership action show alignment with the principles and

values in the LET 2?

· What principle or values in my LET 2 are not manifested in Leadership

Action 2?

· Do you feel values manifested in this leadership action are not clearly

articulated in the second LET?

· What differences to you see between the first and second leadership actions?

These questions were intentionally similar to the first-cycle questions with the addition of a question designed to make the network consider the differences between the first and second leadership actions as they related to my LET (Whitehead, 1989).

Cycle 2: Critical-friend reflections. The CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) noted that the facilitator spoke much less and allowed others to give more input into the conversation, leading to more democratic collaboration. They also noted that they

observed more opportunity for truth finding but no direct evidence of long-term

contributions but that student outcomes could serve as a measure. Members of the CFN

responded to reflective questions with the following:

- "This leadership action was very strongly embedded with democratic

  collaboration. It appeared as though you stepped back often to allow the

  conversation to flow more between the participants than you, yourself."

- "There were more opportunities for truth finding to go in may directions

  which gave a more inclusive thought process."

- "This reader had a difficult time finding representation of significant long

  term contribution to society. An indirect measure of this would be found

  through the actualization of student learning as a result of the

  [professional-development] practices."

Cycle 2: Vested committee reflections. VC feedback in the second cycle was

gained through verbal-exchange coding. All members of the VC were present for the

dialogue. I sent the committee a copy of my updated LET, the transcript of the second

leadership action, and the four reflective questions used with the CFN reflections.

In addition to the verbal-exchange coding, I took notes during the dialogue that

informed my reflection on the meeting and the second leadership action. The

second-cycle meeting of the VC yielded a great deal of information through critical

reflection and was an important step toward my growth. The committee focused on three

broad themes. First, they again looked at the ongoing dilemma of autonomy through

democratic collaboration and accountability through structure. One member of the VC

stated, "One question that I'm sure philosophically you're sorting through is: Can

democratic collaboration coexist with accountability?" The committee saw this as my

dilemma to solve. As I stated before, reconciling this dilemma was central to answering

the question of growing the instructional capacity of my staff. Second, they questioned if

the values of the LET were being lived on a daily basis. Last, they talked about the need

to have specific outcomes to create a culture of professional inquiry and learning that can

enhance the instructional capacity of staff.

Cycle 2: Art-informed reflections. The dilemma of autonomy through democratic

leadership and accountability to the larger community was my focus for the second phase

of the Reflective Paintings. The idea of applying structure to the gestural text occupied

my thinking after working on the Reflective Paintings in the first cycle and seemed like a

logical next step to the paintings. The concept of structure led me to apply a grid over the

existing text. I found a small grid material that I applied to the canvas that would allow

for some coverage of the gestural text. I cut the material to cover parts of the text and

allowed other segments of text to remain open and easily readable. I also introduced a

semiclear gel medium to preserve and protect the first phase text from the next layer of

material and paint (see Figure 5). I again limited my activity on the paintings and placed

the canvases away from my immediate view until I would come back to them for the

third phase of reflection.

Figure 5. Photo of "Reflection Painting" second cycle.

Cycle 3: Leadership action. The third leadership action in my self-study was the opening hour of the Summer SIT meeting that focused on professional development. The meeting housed 11 staff members: classroom teachers, a lead teacher, and two assistant principals. Six participants, including me, contributed to the dialogue. The goal of the dialogue was to gain input from staff on the professional-learning plan for the 2017–2018 school year.

The stated goal of the meeting was to increase the instructional capacity of all staff. The values stated in the agenda matched those of my third LET:

- Democratic collaboration through broad-based engagement and accountability

  to the larger school community

- Significant long-term contribution to society in the form of truth finding

  though critical reflection

- Equity of opportunity by fostering multiple and diverse discovery,

  construction, and expressions of knowledge

The inclusion of these values, aligned with the principle of continuous improvement in the form of the objective of building of instructional capacity of all staff, situated my values as a leader in the planning and processes of the school community.

   Cycle 3: Critical-friend reflections. The CFN feedback consisted of written responses to reflective questions from four members of the network. The questions for this cycle of reflection were:

- How does this leadership action show alignment with the principles and

  values in the LET 3?

- What principle or values in my LET 3 are not manifested in Leadership

  Action 3?

- Do you feel values manifested in this leadership action are not clearly

  articulated in the second LET?

· What differences to you see between the first and second leadership actions?

CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) participants saw evidence of a narrower focus on building instructional capacity and that the concept of continuous learning was evident. They noted evidence of interrelated values but would like to see more about the concept of human wholeness. The leadership action also showed more evidence of long-term contribution and was more democratic as the facilitator stepped back. The CFN also noted that not all in attendance participated but that putting a protocol in place could inhibit the democratic nature of the dialogue. Members of the CFN responded to reflective questions with the following:

· "I felt in certain ways that the third leadership action narrowed the focus even

a bit more. Some of the ideas where a little deeper in trying to figure out how

to accomplish certain goals."

· "I would maybe want to hear a little more about how working towards human

wholeness with all staff members, which could help drive how some of the

goals can be accomplished."

Cycle 3: Vested committee reflections. VC feedback in the third cycle was gained through verbal-exchange coding. Three of four members of the VC were present for the dialogue. I sent the committee a copy of my updated LET, the transcript of the second leadership action, and the four reflective questions used with the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) reflections. The fourth member of the VC was not available at the time of the meeting.

The major themes that emerged from the third VC reflection related to the development of a culture of learning among the staff. This included the need for a system of continuous reflection that includes a growth mindset, a repeatable process, and data that can be discussed on a regular basis. Another theme was the need for my values to be as explicitly articulated as possible to the staff and the need for me to expect critical reflection while allowing for some choice in the manner they reflect. The committee also discussed the addition of Seek to Understand meetings with staff to reinforce the ongoing commitment to critically reflect on our actions and increase instructional capacity. The committee asked the question; "Do they want to grow?" This led to a conversation about "unfreezing" the idea held by some that they are good enough. This goes back to my expectations of the daily practice of teachers. In my mind, the idea of expectations goes back to the central dilemma in my practice: the balance between autonomy through democratic collaboration and accountability through structure. As I finalized plans for the 2017–2018 school year, resolving this dilemma remained at the forefront of my thinking.

During the VC dialogues it was difficult, at times, to maintain a stance toward critical reflection as others critiqued my practice. At times I wanted to push back on the group and justify my approach, but that would have been outside the spirit of the dialogue and would not have led to my growth. This is an area that will need more attention and I revisited the concept of emotional intelligence in the review of the literature of this self-study.

Cycle 3: Art-informed reflections. The third phase of the Reflective Paintings was, in my mind, the beginning of resolving the dilemma between democratic autonomy and accountability to the larger community. By thinking this through on a visual and aesthetic prism, using my artistic way of knowing, I started to understand one of the core

areas for my growth as a leader. Reconciling this dilemma meant "seeing" the

connections between the two concepts. Democratic autonomy, represented by gestural

text, and accountability, in the form of grid-patterned material applied to the canvas, were

bound together with red twine sewn through the canvas. The red twine was used as a

symbol of the metaphor of an ancient god who connected the red threads of all people

who would be connected together in life (Kaye, 2013). It has come to represent seeing the

connections in concepts to create new ideas and solve problems (see Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. Photo of "Reflection Painting" third cycle.

The artwork created for this inquiry was completed during the 3 months after the

three cycles of inquiry were completed. The exception was the reflective Paintings that

were started during the three phases corresponding to the three leadership-action cycles.

The paintings were brought to an aesthetic conclusion during the 3 months after the

inquiry by apply more paint and materials to the surface of the paintings. I continued to work on the reflective paintings and simultaneously moved forward with the other related artwork throughout the summer after of 2017. The work on the Reflective Paintings energized my art production throughout the summer and inspired other work.

Figure 7. Photo of "Reflection Painting" final stage.

The creation of the artwork helped me reflect, process, and communicate the meaning of the work. Working through the art over the 3 months after the formal inquiry helped me construct knowledge in my most natural manner and put the principle and values that define my LET into clearer view and practice. These paintings also helped me begin to discover the core findings from the inquiry.

To the viewer of the paintings, it is not important that they understand every aspect of meaning in the material because I have worked to make each painting

aesthetically pleasing. I did not want the work to function solely as a tool for my personal

reflection. My hope is that the work will serve as a tool for deep reflection for me, a way

for those familiar with the inquiry to understand my thinking and building of knowledge,

and for those who have little knowledge of the inquiry to enjoy the work for the aesthetic

experience.

The second series of mixed-medium paintings are what I reference as the

Dialogue paintings. These are 20-inch-diameter mixed-medium works comprised of

found wood, canvas, twine, and other miscellaneous materials. These works included

portions of dialogue from the leadership actions and the critical reflection work done

during the inquiry. The Dialogue paintings were inspired by the interactions between

participants. I made a diagram of the dialogues conducted by drawing lines across a circle

from the positions of the participants at the table. I broke the dialogues into small sections

and assigned each section a code for the leadership action and the section of the

leadership action. The dialogue sections are coded as LA1:1-LA3:19. The coding is

integrated into the composition of the work as a text feature (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Photo of "Dialogue" painting.

I first used the diagrams because I was concerned about the lack of participation from some participants and wanted a way to visually track the exchanges. I wanted to be sure I was using a democratic approach to the critical reflection and the diagraming of the dialogue helped me ensure I was conducting the inquiry in a manner aligned with my stated values. The first leadership action took place around a rectangular table, so verbal interactions were difficult to visually diagram when participants were seated beside one another. I took the liberty of transposing the dialogue diagrams onto a circle format to better visual record the exchanges.

Each participant brought their own prior knowledge and perspective to each dialogue and the mapping of participants' physical location in the dialogue illustrated their literal physical perspective. I created the diagrams on paper after each leadership action as a way to assess the use of democratic collaboration, but the dialogue map drawings inspired their own set of mixed-medium paintings. Using the various pieces of

found wood, canvas, and other materials was a physical metaphor for the joining of these various perspectives and was emblematic of larger themes of the work such as shared inquiry and disciplined subjectivity. I expressed the concept of dialogue with thick twine stretched across the plain of the work to designate the flow of the conversation. The Dialogue paintings helped me see and evaluate the degree to which democratic collaboration took place in each of the leadership actions. I chose the diagrams that were most aesthetically pleasing for the paintings and the paintings exist mostly to communicate the concept.

The third series of paintings created for this inquiry were the Living Theory paintings. These paintings relate to the creation, interrogation, and adjustments made to my LET. The Living Theory paintings comprised 12, 16 X 20-inch canvases with mixed media applied to the surface. I used a grid pattern of twine similar to one I had been using on paintings since the mid 1990s when I started working with the Infrastructure idea in my work. These paintings show, over the 12-painting series, more material added than removed from the canvas to emulate the building and pruning that took place during the creation and interrogation of my LET. Over the time I developed and tested my LET, I started with very broad ideas, added several other concepts, and then ended with more concise concepts for my principle and values (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Photo of the Living Theory painting.

The final series of artworks created for the inquiry was the Lit Review paintings. These are 9 ¼-inch-square assemblage paintings on wood. I collaged in visual representations of concepts, text from the literature view of this inquiry, and photographs related to concepts and authors in my literature review. Although the other three series associated with this inquiry are conceptual in nature, these works are more illustrative in nature (see Figure 10).
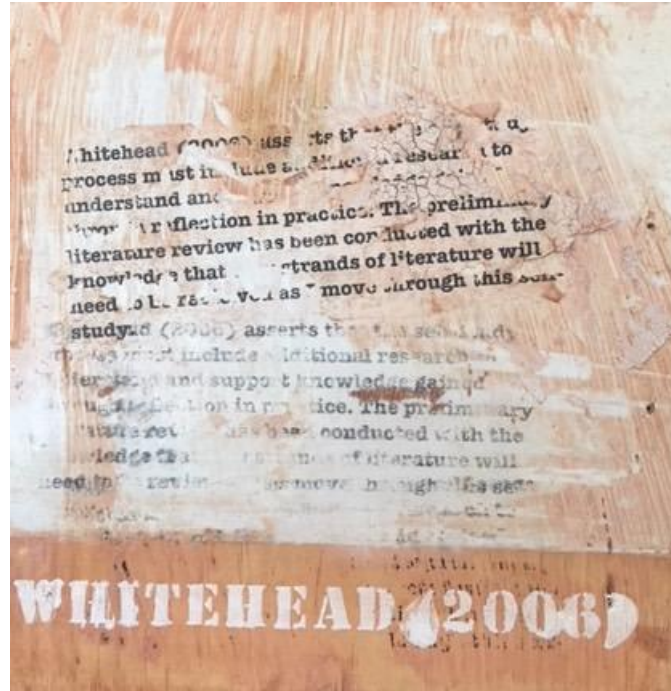
Figure 10. Photo of "Lit Review" Painting.

Summary

Conducting this art-informed self-study inquiry to increase the instructional capacity of my staff caused me to reimage myself and, my role as an educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher. The integration of these three aspects was the overarching finding of this inquiry and is helping me move toward my core principle of continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness. Through the use of critical reflection on my practice as an educator, I have grown as an instructional leader.

The method employed here enabled me to complete a self-study of my instructional leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff through art-informed action/reflection cycles. As an educational leader, it was important to me that this dissertation research be relevant to my own work; thus, I decided to complete a self-study of my educational-leadership practice.

The focus on critical reflection of my actions has changed my thinking about my practice; long before formally completing the study, the work changed my perspective, attitude, and decision making. Through the process of creating the proposal, especially in the review of literature, I started to see my role as a leader differently. This continued through the development of the LET (Whitehead, 1989), which defined the core principles and values of my practice and was central to the three leadership actions. LET development caused me to look critically at my theory of action to define my core values related to my role as an educational leader, artist, and researcher, and the cycles-of-action reflection forced me to interrogate that theory of action.

Several major findings, organized around the roles of educator, qualitative researcher, and practicing artist, emerged through the cyclical critical reflection employed in the research. As an educator, I reaffirmed my responsibility to build my capacity and develop the capacity of those around me. As a qualitative researcher, I found that this study has had an immediate impact on my practice. I realized that sustaining the stance toward constant inquiry could lead to continued improvement. As a practicing artist, the process allowed me to employ my true epistemology and ontology as an artist because it constitutes a full engagement as an artist.

In the following chapter, I discuss findings and implications for my daily practice as an educator, artist, and self-study researcher. I integrate the prior literature and the data collected during the inquiry. Also, I make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This art-informed inquiry has reaffirmed my identity as an artist and I have come to see art itself as a process of inquiry. S. McNiff (2008) defined art-based research as

> the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29)

Individuals and groups can learn to access more open and original ways of perceiving situations and problems while growing insights and empathy. Art-based research can be so open ended, it is important to establish simple and consistent methods of research, similar to scientific research's emphasis on controlling variables. S. McNiff (2008) suggested the guiding principal, "the simpler the deeper."

Art-based self-study can be most effective when it entails new ways to demonstrate knowing (Galman, 2009). Arts-based research connects with modeling diverse teaching and learning modalities that show depth and rigor. The power of arts-based self-study inquiry is in what the researcher can learn from practice and alternative perspectives through the use of art (Galman, 2009).

Galman (2009) listed key features of arts-based research that fit the goals of self-study in education including its a) "inherent, complex reflexivity"; b) its capacity to communicate beyond historically dominant research prose; c) its natural emphasis on the always complex, often intricately "nested" personal, social, political, and other contexts of self-study; 4) its generous construction of and emphasis on the importance of depth of

the ordinary; and 5) its capacity to transform the goings-on of the private domain into a public conversation.

The purpose of this dissertation research was to complete a self-study of my instructional leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff, through art-informed action/reflection cycles. As an educational leader, it was important to me that this dissertation research be relevant to my own work; thus, I made the decision to complete a self-study of my educational-leadership practice. This self-study is, by its nature, autobiographically built on my lived experience through the professional practice of a school leader; therefore, I wrote in the first person throughout the document. Writing in first person offers additional transparency by acknowledging and reinforcing my centrality to the situated self-study (Raymond, 1993). This inquiry, conducted in my daily practice as a high school principal, revealed three distinct aspects to my specific practice as an educational leader. Although conducting this inquiry as an educational leader, I learned to see myself as a self-study researcher while rejuvenating my work as an artist.

It was imperative that art was central to my self-study research as it was my goal to conduct trustworthy inquiry of my practice. I reflect on my daily experiences as an educational leader through an artistic lens and the centrality of art as my way of knowing was reflected in the development of my living education theory (LET; Whitehead, 1989). Completing this art-informed self-study of my leadership practice has changed my understanding of who I am. I face complex challenges as an educational leader, charged with guiding a high school on a daily basis. On any given day, I addressed situations that concurrently entwine several aspects of leadership including mission focus, ethics, equity and cultural responsiveness, curriculum, community relations, professional

school–community building, family engagement, and operations and management of the school. Building the instructional capacity of my staff and school improvement is the most complex and rewarding of my responsibilities as an educational leader and require a high level of personal reflection.

This dissertation has an arc to the story. The method developed and the findings discovered in the inquiry have influenced my work as a leader in real time and will positively impact my practice for years to come. I set out to complete a traditionally positivist dissertation but I soon found myself struggling to find a path forward that was, in fact, aligned with my own unique way of knowing. I came to realize that using artistic thinking in this inquiry to critically reflect on my work was crucial in answering the overarching question: "How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of my staff?" By answering this question through art-informed self-study, I have gained a clear picture of myself as an effective educational leader.

Discussions

Here, I discuss the implications of this study through the lens of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and my roles as an educational leader, artist, and self-study researcher. As an educational leader I believe my core responsibility is to build the capacity of those around me. I found the development and evolution of the LET has given me greater clarity of the principles and values related to my role as an educational leader and provided me with more confidence to lead. Although I previously held the belief that educational leadership needs to evolve to meet the needs of education today, this inquiry has galvanized my thinking on that point and made it pertinent to my own daily practice.

I have discovered that the method developed in this inquiry can be employed to sustain improvement that aligns with the principles and values embodied in my LET.

The overarching finding discovered in this inquiry is understanding my personal epistemology and ontology as an educational leader, self-study researcher, and artist. This study has given me a greater sense of my self-efficacy and has made me more confident in my actions designed to build instructional capacity in my staff. The three interrelated aspects revealed have the effect of creating wholeness and aligned with the unbreakable principles (Covey, 1990) of continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness. These principles lead toward the fulfillment and expansion of my potential.

As a self-study researcher, I found that this study had an immediate impact on my practice and on sustaining my stance toward constant inquiry, leading to continued improvement. I found the development and evolution of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) focused and defined my actions, serving as an infrastructure for my practice moving forward. I found that emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) became far more important to the process than I originally anticipated.

This process allowed me to fully engage the psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains often employed in my art, to reaffirm my identity. This art-informed inquiry has reaffirmed my identity as an artist and I have come to see art itself as a process of inquiry. Art is an effective way to inquire about my leadership identity. Here, I discuss major findings on the three aspects of myself that were reaffirmed in this inquiry: educator, self-study researcher, and practicing artist. I present the findings and the implications of these findings with appropriate literature and data from the inquiry.

Educational leader. As I conducted a self-study of my leadership practice as it

pertains to the responsibility of building the instructional capacity of my staff, Standards

6 and 10 of the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (National Policy Board

of Educational Administration, 2015) were especially pertinent because building the

capacity of staff is at the core of both standards.

· Standard 6: Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity

and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success

and well-being.

· Standard 10: Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous

improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

Other researchers have worked to bring focus to building teacher instructional

capacity (Deering et al., 2003; Elmore, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Marzano, 2013; Marzano et

al., 2005; Wahlstrom et al., 2010) in building the instructional capacity of teachers.

Principal leadership and student achievement correlate (Marzano, 2005; Marzano et al.,

2005).

The Wallace Foundation's investigation (Wahlstrom et al., 2010) of the Links to

Improved Student Learning included the category Developing People in the section of the

report defining leadership practices that high-performing principles considered

instructionally helpful. The category included the practices providing individualized

support and consideration, offering intellectual stimulation, and modeling appropriate

values and practices. Elmore (2005) pointed out the important of heavy investment in

teacher professional development. Teachers will require motivation, encouragement, and support while moving through phases of instructional capacity building (Elmore, 2005).

Clearly defining my unbreakable principle (Covey, 1990) to be continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness, and values through the development of, interrogation of, and evolution of the LET (Whitehead, 1989) made my responsibility to build the instructional capacity of my staff imperative. For this principle to truly guide me, I had to put it into action in my daily practice and build instructional capacity, helping teachers become better at teaching, central to my practice. Through the dialogues with staff during leadership actions and with critical friends, I discovered the need to increase accountability to the greater goals of the school. While maintaining a commitment to democratic collaboration, I have made accountability to improving student performance a priority.

LET as a moral base for practice. The development and evolution of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) has given me the moral base and confidence to operate more effectively as an educational leader, self-study researcher, and artist. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) promoted the development of practitioner research as they put the showing of how and why we make judgments on our work and justifying our reasons at the heart of scholarship. Improving learning is an improvement toward social justice as the efforts are to improve learning for all children (Samaras, 2011). Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) called for a more democratic system of education. Freire saw liberation as a praxis of action and reflection on the world to transform it.

I feel a deeper sense of confidence in my actions as an educational leader as I now conduct my daily work as a school principal. I now find myself looking to the unbreakable principle (Covey, 1990) and core values developed and tested in my LET

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(Whitehead, 1989) to directly guide my actions. This new understanding of my principles and values also provides a filter for initiatives that come from the school district.

Evolution of educational leadership. Educational leadership needs to evolve to meet the needs of education today. "Research findings from diverse countries and different school contexts have revealed the powerful impact of leadership on processes related to school effectiveness and improvement" (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000, p. 160). Barnet (2004) pointed to the obvious gap between the readiness of administrators to be instructional leaders and the demands for accountability the school administrator faces. The education leader must face real problems in practice to permit growth and sound preparation for being a school leader (Barnet, 2004).

In the current state of education, defined by disruption and paradigm change, leadership must be distinguished from management while adapting to new realities. Leadership is about vision and direction setting, and management is about organizing and coordinating; leadership is about meaning and motivation, and management is about supervision and accountability (Schwan & Spady, 2010).

I was able to process data in a manner that aligned to my personal epistemology. Using artistic thinking allowed me to fully engage in the data in a way that enriched other forms of critical reflection in the inquiry. The use of art to critically reflect, especially during the reflection phase after the three formal cycles, helped me see the connections between cycles. This differentiation constituted a paradigm shift at the personal level that has the potential to impact others.

This self-study research was completely situated in my practice as an educational leader and served as a method for critical reflection on my practice, leading to changes including setting daily goals, weekly and daily scheduling of priorities aligned to my LET

(Whitehead, 1989), and daily journaling. The critical reflection of my practice has led me to implement measures to increase the accountability for me and my staff.

   Sustained improvement using self-study. This method of self-study research can be employed to sustain improvement that aligns with the principles and values embodied in my LET (Whitehead, 1989). McCune (1986) defined strategic planning as a process of organizational renewal and transformation. Dixon (2001) put forth a model of facilitated organizational learning with four fundamental components: (a) situating learning in real work, (b) defining a less central role for experts, (c) spaced rather than compressed time-frames, and (d) learning in a community rather than individually. Schön (1983) looked at the role of self-reflection in professional growth and describes the roots and fallacies of technical rationality and its positivist epistemology of practice. The knowledge gained from a positivist, propositional approach to inquiry is likely to reinforce the existing theoretical perspective and maintain the status quo (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). According to Moon (1999), the emphasis on reflection in the experimental cycle attempts to make sense of experience. Reflection on action focuses on change in quality of the outcomes of the action. My approach to this inquiry was intentionally apposed to the propositional approach employed in the majority of dissertations. This art-informed self-study of my leadership exists in opposition to the status quo (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) and the method has the potential to provide critical reflection on my practice throughout the remainder of my life.

   The method of inquiry employed in the study can serve as my primary way of decision making and strategic planning in my daily practice. The critical reflection put me in a mindset to interrogate my actions outside of the formal inquiry process and embedded this thinking into my daily practice.

The critical reflection produced disciplined subjectivity in viewing my actions, and had an immediate impact on my practice. I now see my leadership actions through the lens of critical reflection. This inquiry shows me that it is my responsibility, knowing what I now know about the method, to develop an ongoing inquiry-oriented approach to my work, defined by the principles in my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and the methods employed in this inquiry. Through the process, I hold myself accountable by continuously interrogating my leadership actions against my LET, leading to the development of knowledge and skills that are immediately applicable to my daily work. I began to reform my school by conducting the situated inquiry while the study was taking place and my findings at the conclusion of the study, along with the ongoing processes developed during the inquiry, will aid in reforming my school in the future. The collaborative nature of the study situated in my school has the potential to reform the practice of others in the building. The systematic transparency of the research and the generation and dissemination of knowledge through presentation (Samaras, 2002) has the potential to generate reforms beyond my direct sphere of influence.

Self-study researcher. The self-study had immediate impacts on my practice and serves as a process for continued improvement. This inquiry has led me to make immediate changes to my practice. During the evolution of my LET (Whitehead, 1989) through a critical-reflection cycle, the dilemma arose of conflict between democratic collaboration and accountability to the larger community. The challenge of reconciling the two seemingly conflicting ideas was to maintain the autonomy of teachers while providing more structure leading to accountability. To do so I increased classroom

walkthroughs, added additional individual meetings with teachers, and reviewed professional learning goals for each teacher.

The critical reflection on my work as a leader and my teachers' work as the primary source for instruction has led to a simplification of teachers' daily practice. The school district is in the early stages of implementing a new and vast curriculum. We have chosen to focus our collective efforts to improve instruction on developing a common understanding of claim, evidence, and reasoning across all content areas. This action moves away from what is being done in other schools across the district and I believe we would not have done so without critically reflecting on our practice and the needs of our students.

Herr and Anderson (2015), referring to self-study as insider action research, pointed out that the self-study researcher's interrogation of self results in change in practice. Employing the methods developed in this inquiry to critically reflect on my daily practice is completely aligned with my unbreakable principle of continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness. Engaging in ongoing research of my practice will make it possible to truly adopt an inquiry-based approach to continuous learning.

LET as infrastructure for practice. The development and evolution of the LET (Whitehead, 1989) focused and defined my actions and can serve as an infrastructure for my practice moving forward. Whitehead (2006) believed educators and education researchers can position themselves as living contradictions by holding values that are not reflected in their actions as educators. These contradictions can be at the center of LET research, which can define and enrich educator practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). The development of my LET, through shared critical reflection, has given me a clear

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sense of my beliefs that can guide my practice as a leader and help reconcile contradictions in practice as they arise. The LET will allow me to embed a stance toward constant inquiry in my daily practice. As I face contradictions in my practice, I will work to reconcile them for continuous improvement.

Developing a LET (Whitehead, 1989) helped me make sense of my leadership actions by critically reflecting on my actions relative to the principles and values in the LET by interrogating my actions against the LET. This created disciplined subjectivity throughout the inquiry and continuing this process will allow me to continue to maintain disciplined subjectivity while reflecting on my daily practice.

Emotional intelligence in critical reflection. Emotional intelligence became far more important to the process than I originally anticipated. Barbuto and Burbach (2006) built on the work of Gardner and Stough (2001) to show a positive correlation between emotionally intelligent behaviors and transformational leadership. Hanlin (2014) found a positive correlation between high school principals' research-based leadership practices and emotional intelligence. Application of the responsibilities of the leader (Marzano et al., 2005) is enhanced by a high level of emotional intelligence. Prior to the inquiry, I believed I had a high level of emotional intelligence, but this part of the study forced me to detach myself from the actions to critically reflect and make appropriate adjustments to my actions.

The shared critical reflection that occurred during the VC meetings pushed my ability to look at my practice with disciplined subjectivity. I had to refrain from justifying my actions to the other committee members so we could step back and make contributions to the critical reflection. I had to remain aware of my role on the VC as a critical reflector rather than as the person presenting my actions for reflection.

The act of submitting my actions to the scrutiny of critical-friends network (CFN; Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) and the VC constitutes an emotionally intelligent action but showing the artwork produced during the inquiry to communicate the process and findings required a higher level of emotional intelligence than I have exhibited in the past. The act of exhibiting artwork attached to this inquiry for others to see can be emotionally taxing and injects the inquiry with an affective element common to the production of art.

Practicing artist. This process allowed me to employ my true epistemology and ontology as an artist because it constituted a full-engagement of my psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains of thinking. Eisner (2008) wrote that art inquiry is better suited to asking questions that lead to deeper understanding and knowing. Problem posing, as defined by Freire (1970), is a key part of self-study inquiry and rejects the goal of deposit-making, replacing it with the posing of problems of human beings in relation to their world. S. McNiff (2013) defined art-based research as "involving the researcher in some form of direct art-making as a primary mode of systematic inquiry" (p. 30).

This art-informed inquiry has reaffirmed my identity as an artist, and, I have come to see art itself as a process of inquiry. S. McNiff (2008) defined art-based research as

> the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29)

Individuals and groups can learn to access more open and original ways of perceiving situations and problems while growing insights and empathy. Art-based

research can be so open ended, it is important to establish simple and consistent methods of research, similar to scientific research's emphasis on controlling variables. S. McNiff (2008) suggested the guiding principal, "the simpler the deeper."

Galman (2009) listed key features of arts-based research that fit the goals of self-study in education including its

a) "inherent, complex reflexivity"; b) its capacity to communicate beyond historically dominant research prose; c) its natural emphasis on the always complex, often intricately "nested" personal, social, political, and other contexts of self-study; d) its generous construction of and emphasis on the importance of depth of the ordinary; and e) its capacity to transform the goings-on of the private domain into a public conversation.

Employing art as a way of critically reflecting on my actions is unique to me and allows me to fully engage in the process. The opening of my practice to critical reflection, the nontraditional nature of my inquiry, and the showing of artwork related to the inquiry are all measures of my affective domain. The triangulation of the critical reflection and my emotional intelligence has allowed me to use this unique aspect of myself to improve my practice through the art-informed process.

As a practicing artist, the process allowed me to employ my true epistemology and ontology as an artist because it constitutes a "full-engagement" of my psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains of thinking. This art-informed inquiry has reaffirmed my identity as an artist and I have come to see art itself as a process of inquiry. Finally, I can employ art as an effective way to communicate the inquiry process and findings by taking advantage of art's inherent ability to connect with the viewer. I engaged the cognitive domain through the research and building of knowledge related to the area of study.

Viewers need to cognitively engage with the artwork to gain a deeper understanding of the art-informed reflective process I used in this inquiry.

The psychomotor domain is reflected in the creation of the artwork related to the inquiry. The physical act of creating the art work, during the reflective cycles and after, was an important step in my conceptualization of the entire inquiry. It was not until I worked through my thoughts while creating the artwork related to the inquiry that I was able to fully conceptualize the reflection process. By completing the Reflective paintings during the research cycles, and other related artwork after the formal inquiry cycles, I formed meaning and communicated my findings.

Using art as a tool of critical reflection has caused me to look at prior artwork with a fresh and critical eye. I have continued to work in directions started before the inquiry, and have created work as a result of the critical reflection exercised in the self-study. The process of using art in self-reflection has reinforced my identity as an artist and has given me inspiration for future artistic work. My identity as an artist includes the concepts embodied in my LET (Whitehead, 1989) such as the principle of continuous learning, and the values related to truth finding and multiple ways of knowing.

I can employ art as an effective way to communicate the inquiry process and findings by taking advantage of art's inherent ability to connect with the viewer. Visual culture in its many forms is a large part of people's lives. In the past 4 decades, researchers have begun to use images and art in research, as it is such an important part of culture (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). The systematic transparency of the research and the generation and dissemination of knowledge through presentation (Samaras, 2002) has the potential to generate reforms beyond my direct sphere of influence. My hope is that the

viewer will be able to gain an understanding of the concepts that provided a foundation for my self-study. I also hope to create a gestalt for the viewer when all work is shown together.

I believe that the empathy created in the viewer by presenting research in the form of art increases and allows the viewer to better understand the researcher's perspective. Through visual detail and context, art-based self-study can resonate with many more people than traditional research communication. The participatory nature of contemporary art, rather than the passivity of old master painters, lends itself to interaction, self-reflection, and collaborative inquiry (Springgay et al., 2008). Postmodern art includes interventions that require viewers to participate in the specific context of the artwork while bringing all of their prior knowledge and experience with them. Art today is accessible and confrontational. Old ideas and beliefs can be confronted using materials and methods that pull the viewer into what could be a productive conversation (Springgay et al., 2008).

Implications

As an educational leader, I have found that my core responsibility is to build the capacity of those around me. I found the development and evolution of the LET (Whitehead, 1989) has given a moral base and confidence to operate more effectively. I have found that educational leadership needs to evolve to meet the needs of education today. Finally, I have found that the method developed in this inquiry can be employed to sustain improvement that aligns with the principles and values embodied in my LET.

As a self-study researcher, I found this study to have an immediate impact on my practice and the potential to lead toward continual improvement through ongoing critical reflection on my actions as a leader. I found the development and evolution of the LET

(Whitehead, 1989) focused and defined my actions to serve as an infrastructure for my practice moving forward. I found that emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) became far more important to the process than I originally anticipated.

As a practicing artist, the process allowed me to employ my true epistemology and ontology as an artist because it constitutes a "full-engagement" of my psychomotor, cognitive, and affective domains of thinking. This art-informed inquiry has reaffirmed my identity as an artist and I have come to see art itself as a process of inquiry. Finally, I can employ art as an effective way to communicate the inquiry process and findings by taking advantage of art's inherent ability to connect with the viewer. Findings emerged in the inquiry relative to the research questions posed in relation to the core question, based on building the instructional capacity of my staff through art-informed self-study.

Shifts in my instructional leadership practice. This job-embedded inquiry has led to shifts in my practice designed to increase the instructional capacity of my staff while the inquiry was still underway. I made adjustments to leadership actions based on the critical reflection generated at each step relative to the evolution of the LET (Whitehead, 1989). Planning for the next school year was heavily influenced by what I discovered in the process. Although I have worked for several years to build a democratically collaborative culture at my current school, the addition of shared accountability is manifesting in the planning for additional communication and shared reflection among teachers and between teachers and administrators.

Although I have conducted one-on-one Seek-to-Understand (Covey, 1990) meetings with my staff over the past 4 years, this inquiry has caused me to shift the nature and frequency of these meetings. In the future I will be conducting five meetings, one at the start of the school year and one after each marking period, to discuss student

progress and the teachers' progress toward their professional-learning goals developed in the first meeting. This work has led me to increase the quantity and quality of my teacher walk-throughs. I have made it a priority to give teacher better feedback during more frequent walk-throughs. I asked teachers to prepare a curriculum overview of their content area. Most teachers' schedules have been structured to reduce the variety of classes taught so they provided the curriculum map for that course. Some teachers are still teaching more than one class so they were asked to prepare one curriculum map of one course. These curriculum documents help the teachers plan, and holds them accountable for their long-term planning. The dialogues with teachers, in the form of leadership actions, and my critical reflection on the leadership actions gave me a deeper understanding of teachers' needs and wishes related to their professional growth.

Building capacity. The purpose of this inquiry was to complete a self-study of my instructional leadership practice as it relates to building the instructional capacity of my staff, through art-informed action/reflection cycles. The overarching question, "How do I use art-informed self-study to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of staff?" cannot be completely answered, as it is contingent on gathering further evidence of the effectiveness of the teachers over time. I have begun to make changes to my practice based on what I learned through the critical reflection in this inquiry. Becoming more in touch with my own epistemology and ontology as an education leader, artist, and self-study researcher made me more confident in my decisions and more effective at understanding and solving the contradictions and dilemmas that have risen in practice. This inquiry has helped me develop a process of continuous critical reflection. Reflecting on the data produced through the observation and collaborative reflection with my teachers is key to the ongoing effectiveness of the model. The increase in my ability

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to enhance teachers' instructional capacity occurred by answering the research question in the inquiry. At this time, I can answer the questions generated at the start of this inquiry that related to the overarching question.

How do I use art-informed critical reflection to provide data, relative to my LET, that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve my teachers' instructional capacity? The use of art to critically reflect on leadership action provided me with triangulation of the data generated through the CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) and the VC. I was able to use and process data in a manner that aligned with my personal epistemology. Using this process has allowed me to fully engage in the data in a way that contrasted with other forms of critical reflection in the inquiry. Using art also gave me increased confidence in my reflections on the data that led to a greater level of self-efficacy. The use of art to critically reflect on the data and see the connections between different cycles of reflection led to a deeper understanding of the research and a clear picture of how to improve my practice.

How does dialogue-based critical reflection provide data that can be used to improve my instructional leadership to improve teachers' instructional capacity? During the dialogues, the VC members pushed my thinking and made me see my actions from a different perspective; the VC dialogues helped me understand the central dilemma in my leadership so I could address it in my LET (Whitehead, 1989) and my practice. The modes of dialogue had three levels of critical reflection. The CFN (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) provided a closed and concise critical reflection as participants responded to the questions I posed without having interaction between one another that could divert the dialogue in directions beyond the original questions. The VC, as used in this inquiry, had much more latitude to reflect on my actions in a broader context and could bring their

prior knowledge into play. VC participants could also ask me questions, as I was a

member of the committee, that caused me to give additional information that informed

the dialogue. The art-informed reflection was a dialogue with myself. The artwork

evolved over time and felt like a constant conversation as I worked through my individual

reflections on the data. The three modes of dialogue worked together to triangulate my

thinking and give me a more accurate picture of leadership actions so I could make more

informed decisions about my practice.

How do I discover the specific needs of my staff related to building instructional

capacity? The dialogues with participants, especially in the VC, helped me appreciate

what teachers were saying in the leadership-action transcripts. As a participant in and

creator of the leadership actions, it was difficult, at times, to see the transcripts

objectively. As the leadership actions were largely dialogues among staff members, they

provided me with insights into what they were thinking and feeling that I used in

planning the next leadership actions. Critical reflection on the dialogues in the leadership

actions also caused me to shift practices to gain more information from teachers through

increased communication. The central dilemma in the study, the balance between

autonomy and accountability, emerged in the second leadership action, as these were both

needs of the staff.

How do my actions, as an educational leader, align to my LET and how does my

LET evolve relative to critical reflection on my leadership actions? Answering the first

part of this question is the basis for the interrogation of the LET (Whitehead, 1989).

Initially defining my beliefs about my role as an educational leader as they relate to the

principles and values in my LET provided a starting point for understanding and

improving my practice. I was aware that the initial LET (iLET) was just a starting point,

and, I was aware that it had the potential to change when it was interrogated against my actions in the daily practice as an administrator. The second part of the question was answered as my LET evolved under critical reflection.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this self-study, I provide the following recommendations:

1. Future educational leaders interested in critically reflecting on and improving their practice could replicate these procedures in their own self-study inquiry aligned with their personal epistemology and ontology. As an artist, it was important for me to use artistic thinking in the critical reflection required in this inquiry. Other leaders will have other ways of thinking and it would be productive for them to use their personal epistemological orientation to complete self-study research on their daily practice.

2. Future researchers may wish to replicate the procedures in this inquiry by using different modes of artistic expression. This inquiry primarily used two-dimensional mixed-medium painting as an artistic method. Other leaders sharing an artistic epistemological stance should use their own artistic methods for critical reflection. Any mode of artistic creation could be used to critically reflect on daily work.

3. Future researchers may wish to incorporate areas related to educational leadership other than building the instructional capacity of staff. I chose to improve my ability to build the instructional capacity of my staff because that goal was appropriate to my current reality as a leader. Others may wish to focus on other aspects of leadership to focus critical reflection and improve daily practice.

4. Future researchers may wish to incorporate areas outside of education. As this was a self-study inquiry and I focused on my role as an educational leader, the research rests on my daily work as a school principal. Others who wish to improve their daily practice could use aspects of or the entire method to do so.

5. Future researchers who use an artistic method for critical reflection may wish to incorporate viewer feedback as an additional level of critical reflection. Empathy for the artwork, and therefore the research, can be leveraged to communicate with the viewer. The viewers' perspective could also be helpful in providing even more critical feedback on the research while building more transparency.

6. Future researchers who use an artistic method for critical reflection may wish to explore the use of art terminology as a means for critical reflection. The elements and principles of art have inherent meaning and could be coded to discover meaning in works produced during an inquiry.

7. Future researchers conducting grounded-theory research should consider using a similar approach to gaining critical feedback during the inquiry through the use of a VC comprised of members of the dissertation committee. Critical reflection provided through the VC was very important to my understanding and improvement in practice. To my knowledge, the concept of the VC has not been previously used in self-study research and needs to have additional application and research.

8. Future researchers conducting self-study inquiries should consider additional alternative approaches to developing the LET (Whitehead, 1989) aligned to their epistemology and ontology. Additionally, using critical friends and other

outside resources in the initial phase of the LET (Whitehead, 1989) should be considered.

Summary

This inquiry, embedded in my daily work, has not been isolated from the rest of my life. I am a husband, father, son, friend, and, artist. These roles did not stop with the dissertation. No "dissertation vacuum" compartmentalized the work from the rest of my life. This inquiry has improved my practice and enriched my life.

Through a self-study of my ability to increase learning capacity as a leader, I have gained a deeper understanding of myself as a researcher, practicing artist, and educational leader. I have grounded my epistemology, ontology, and ethics, which has increased my confidence and effectiveness as an educational leader. This self-study inquiry has given me a process I can use for the rest of my life to discover, interrogate, and put into practice the core principles and values that define me.

As a self-study researcher, I have adopted a stance toward constant critical inquiry. This has made me an effective educational leader and artist with a greater sense of personal wholeness. Self-study has three types of purpose: (a) personal renewal, (b) professional renewal, and (c) program renewal (Kosnik et al., 2006).

This inquiry has an arc and I have grown as an educator, learned to be a self-study researcher, and reenergized my artistic practice. My understanding of myself and how I know the world has deepened. My understanding has changed from thinking of knowledge as a static set of facts to viewing it as a dynamic and ever-expanding collection of truths that can be tested in practice. Eisner's (2008) distinction between knowledge as a noun and knowing as a verb has caused me to see the world in much more open terms. Continued critical reflection, embodied in Freire's (1970) concept of

action/reflection praxis, will enable me to grow as an educator, self-study researcher, and artist.

The interconnectedness of these three aspects revealed during the inquiry have given me a new understand of my complete self and will likely inform my work for years to come. This integration of roles has helped me be a more fully actualized person and thus a better leader who understands my personal beliefs related to leadership. I set out to develop and conduct research that would improve my practice. I wanted to create the "ultimate practitioner's dissertation." Self-study provided me the best opportunity to capitalize on my personal epistemology and ontology to improve my practice. This method of self-study has allowed me to leverage my personal experience, prior to and in real time during the inquiry, to improve my practice as an educational leader. Additionally, the inquiry has taught me to be a self-study researcher while reinvigorating my role as an artist. This work has allowed me to make strides toward becoming a more whole person by continuous learning, continuous growth, and striving toward human wholeness, by helping me critically reflect on and live my core values of (a) democratic collaboration through broad-based engagement and accountability to the larger school community; (b) significant long-term contributions to society through critical reflection that leads to truth finding; and (c) equity of opportunity by fostering multiple and diverse discovery, construction, and expression of knowledge.

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