Building Relational Trust in a BC Context Between Administrative Leaders and Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore different ways administrators can generate relational trust with teachers. The research question was: How can administrators build relational trust between themselves and teachers within their schools? Five semi-formal interviews were conducted with the participants of this study. Each participant was selected from Vancouver Island and each participant held an official administrative role in his or her district. Three themes emerged from the findings: to develop trust with teachers, administrators should: demonstrate competence as a leader, show respect towards teachers, and be open in their communication and in their collaboration with teachers. It was found that the benefits of having strong relational trust between administrators and teachers led to increased collaboration, effective schools, greater teachers participation and increased student achievement.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose of the Study

Public schooling began in British Columbia (BC) during the early 1870s. Over the last century the education sector in BC has undergone dramatic changes to form into what is now BC’s modern education system (Fleming, 2011). Throughout the years these changes have lead to conflict between administrators and teachers in schools, which in turn has caused schools to have low levels of relational trust (Slinn, 2011). Low trust school environments become less effective: “Without trust, people divert their energy into self-protection and away from learning. Where trust is lacking, people will not take the risks necessary to move the school forward” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000, p. 49).

Due to the evidence of some low level trust between teachers and administrators in BC, the researcher wanted to look at how administrators can develop trust with teachers within their schools. The goal of this study was to find actions an administrator could do that would help to develop relational trust with teachers in a school setting. The results of the study could provide administrators with direction that they could follow to create or maintain a culture of relational trust.

Justification of the Study

Relational trust has only been comprehensively analyzed within the field of education in the last two decades (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001; Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001; Van Houtte, 2006; Van Houtte & Van Maele, 2009). In the context of this paper, relational trust is
related to the effective functioning and operation of a school, and is, therefore, an important research focus (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kochanek, 2005; Louis, 2007; Louis, 2006; Troman, 2000; Uline, Miller, & Tschannen-Moran, 1998). Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted some of the first research that studied relational trust in schools. Their research found that the most successful school in Chicago had strong relational trust between administrators, teachers, parents and students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Research indicates that relational trust is needed in order for school reform to occur. Additionally, relational trust increases organizational effectiveness, school collaboration and helps create effective professional learning communities (Gamoran, Gunter, & Williams, 2005; Hargreaves, 2007; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Kochanek, 2005; Mulford, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Relational trust has been shown to positively affect the functioning and effectiveness of schools, creating a positive school culture (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kochanek, 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998).

Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003) viewed respect, personal regard, competence and integrity as the four aspects needed to generate relational trust. Respect occurs when people feel that they are being deeply listened to and understood (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kaser & Halbert, 2009). Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that personal regard is the belief that individuals are willing to do things outside of their job descriptions and usual parameters of work, in order to help others. Personal integrity was defined as an individual’s words and actions corresponding with one another. These actions are guided by a moral belief that
directs an individual’s actions and work (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Kochanek, 2005). Competence is a person’s core role responsibilities and how well they are capable of carrying out said responsibilities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) defined trust as “an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (p. 189).

Contemporary researchers probe into the complexity and multidimensionality of a trusting relationship and although disagreements occur, they agree that relational trust is a multifaceted concept (e.g., Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 1990; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Mayer & Davis, 2007; Rousseau et al., 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

BC’s education began in the 1870s and has gone through numerous changes and transformations. These changes have lead to some upset and strained relationships between administrators and teachers (Fleming, 2011; Slinn, 2011; Wright, 2003). In 1987 teachers and administrators were separated and became two unique entities. It was at this time that the BCTF (British Columbia Teachers Federation) was created as a union. This effectively put a wedge between the two groups, and has alienated and isolated teaches and administrators (Fleming, 2011; Slinn, 2011). Fleming (2011) argued that BC’s current state of affairs in the educational sector is based on six different factors: the post-1946 consolidation of school districts; the shift from local to provincial funding for schools; education’s emergence as a political issue; the disappearance of strong leadership in the
education ministry and elsewhere; the rise of special interest lobbies; and the
BCTF’s ambitions to control school policy. He explained:

Each of these factors has contributed appreciably to the system’s currently
divisive state and to the turbulent character of educational labour relations
over the past four decades. From any angle, the system now appears at odds
with itself, [a] jumble of adversarial organizations and interests marked by
discontinuity and discord. As it now stands, the system is fractured at its core
and is directionless (p. 104).

Mistrust and discord holds true for teachers and administrative leaders (Fleming,
2011; Slinn, 2011). In addition to this struggle, the collective bargaining situation in
the last two decades has caused greater gaps in relational trust between all parties
involved in education (Wright, 2003).

There is a need to create and strengthen the working relationships between
teachers and administrators. In order for this to occur, schools must shift from
adversarial organizations to organizations that are founded on trust. Covey (2008)
described what a high-trust organization looks and feels like as:

Information [is] shared openly [and] mistakes [are] tolerated and
encouraged as a way of learning. The culture is innovative and creative.
People talk straight and confront real issues. There is real communication
and real collaboration. Transparency is a practiced value. People are candid
and authentic. There is a high degree of accountability. There is a palpable
vitality and energy—people can feel the positive momentum (p. 237).
In addition to this, relational trust creates academic optimism, which fosters student success and teacher satisfaction (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Tarter & Hoy, 2004). When teachers trust the administration that they work with, it creates healthy work environments that not only benefits educational professionals, but also benefits students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Wilkoskie, 1992; Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001). When healthy school culture and climates are created, high morale becomes present in schools (Black, 2001; Louis, 2007; Parrish & DiPaola, 2006; Tarter & Hoy 2004). In their work, Kaser and Halbert (2009) advanced that “work of building trusting relationships is critical to developing a civic and democratic school life” (p.46). Ultimately administrators and teachers must begin to replace mistrust with trust, in order to forge ahead in creating positive and progressive school environments. If not, the education sector will continue to struggle and not live up to its full potential (Fleming, 2011).

**Research Question and Hypothesis**

Tschannen-Moran (2007) explained, “trust pays dividends in helping schools succeed in fulfilling their mission, to be productive, professional learning communities” (p. 110). Given the current educational climate in BC, with its changing and turbulent nature: *How can administrators build relational trust between themselves and teachers within their schools?*

It was believed that the results of this study would shed light on different strategies that an administrator could exercise in order to strengthen relational trust with teachers. It was hypothesized that these results would be practical and applicable in the context of BC schools.
Definition of Terms

In the context of this research *teachers* were defined as a person who holds, has held, or is an applicant for a certificate of qualification from the BC College of Teachers. *Administrators* referred to principals and/or vice principals that are members of the British Columbia Principals and Vice Principals association.

*Relational trust* was defined as the interpersonal social exchanges that take place in a school community, which is shown through communication, participation and positive interactions between trusting parties (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 20). Relational trust is generated through a combination of behavioral traits and specific actions (Baier, 1986; Bromley, 1996; Myer, & Davis, 2007; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Brief Overview of Study

The intent of the research was to investigate what administrators on Vancouver Island and what they do in their schools to contribute and foster the development of relational trust. The research design was based on semi-formal interviews designed to obtain qualitative data. Five interviews were conducted.

The participants of this study were administrators (principals and vice-principals) employed in a public school on Vancouver Island. One of the reasons Vancouver Island administration was chosen was because the researcher works on Vancouver Island as a teacher and it was thus convenient to conduct research there.

The participation in this study was voluntary and the results were written and displayed anonymously. Data analysis was conducted based on the responses of
the semi-formal interviews that were conducted. Qualitative interpretations were made after being coded and analyzed and patterns and themes were found in the data.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Public Education in BC has been around for over one hundred-forty years. Today the system is made up of three governing bodies, which are: the Ministry of Education, the BCTF (British Columbia Teacher Federation) and the BCSTA (British Columbia School Trustee Association). Fleming described these organizations in his recent work: “although rarely acting in concert, each of these organizations exhibits certain common characteristics. All are bureaucratic in nature, anti-visionary and unimaginative in outlook, prescriptive in behaviour, non-co-operative in manner, anti technological in practice, and committed to the status quo” (p. 103). One of the challenges that administrators and teachers face in their schools is a constant political and power struggle between these organizations. Fleming further stated:

Today, public education appears to be a stagnant institution, badly in need of both organizational and pedagogical rejuvenation. Even on its best days—and they are seemingly few—the public school seems to be without ideas or energy, and institution mostly preoccupied with maintaining the status quo and itself... the bitter struggle between the provincial government and the teachers’ federation over the control of public education for 40 years has proven costly. The disastrous state of labor relations likely constitutes the single most serious impediment to educational progress in the province... decades of conflict have created deep fissure in a province already historically polarized in its political and economic outlook have eroded the school system’s energies (p. 128-129).
Because of the current state of affairs in BC, administrators and teachers are faced with numerous challenges coming from many directions. Wide spread system and curriculum change is often met with resistance from teachers. Moreover political leaders often change, making any long term system changes difficult. The future of BC’s education system is uncertain: “public schooling appears to be at a crossroads. Its institutional prominence in terms of population demands is declining, its political importance is receding, and its model of pedagogical delivery is under review” (Fleming, p. 134). Because of this, there is a very real need for administrators to make a serious effort to create and maintain relational trust with teachers in these challenging times. This will help teachers and administrators as they try to solve the dilemmas that arise in their schools.

The definition of relational trust has evolved over time. Today there are two definitions of relational trust that appear throughout the educational field. The first and older definition of relational trust focuses on the inner traits of a leader, while taking into account situational characteristics (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). An example of this is an administrator who garners trust by his bold and task orientated personality.

The second definition focuses on the more multifaceted and dynamic nature of trust (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2009; Kaser & Halbert, 2009). According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), multifaceted relational trust is: openness between people that is shown through communication, participation and positive interactions. Trust is “an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that
the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest and open” (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 189). Contemporary research has acknowledged the complexity and multidimensionality of a trusting relationship, and it has recognized that trust is not just a behavioral concept as early definitions implied (Baier, 1986; Bromiley, 1996; Cummings & Schoorman, Myer, & Davis, 2007).

Although the subject of relational trust in systems has only recently been studied to any great depth, a number of trends have resulted in these studies (Adams & Forsyth, 2007; Hadford & Keithwood, 2012; Noonan, Walker, & Kutsyuruba, 2008). It is widely recognized that “trust is a critical concept for leaders to understand and develop” (Hadford & Keithwood, 2012, p. 196), because it is as a lubricant for most interactions in school organizations (Fukuyama, 1995; Luhmann, 1979). In addition to this, Tschannen-Moran (2004) suggests that trust also acts like ‘glue’ that “binds organizational participants to one another” (p. 16). In other words, relational trust plays a significant role in helping administrators and teachers in their roles of educating students.

When Trust is Missing

When trust is missing between teachers and administrators, negative consequences occur. In their recent work MacMillian, Meyer and Northfield (2005) studied the impacts of administrative turnovers in schools, and the impact that it had on teachers and support staff. They also studied the impacts of constant change in schools and how professional relationships were impacted with this change. 100 teachers and principals in 12 schools were interviewed over two years in Nova
Scotia, Canada. Part of their findings included the challenges that arose when teachers did not trust administrators:

“[a] variety of undesirable outcomes [surface, such as]: dependent and apathetic followers, low quality policies coupled with inefficient implementation and constituent support, the mystification of the decision-making process, and in some cases, social strife and aggression” (p. 22).

Blasé and Blasé (2001) conducted a study on what administrators can do to empower teachers. They led their research in California and looked into shared governance between administrators and teachers. They conducted surveys of 285 teachers working in 11 different schools. From this data, 367 personal characteristics and strategies were found that principles used in order to support and empower teachers. In their discussion they addressed when relational trust is absent in a school:

Without trust, people are likely to close up, keep to themselves, even close ranks in cliques or special interest groups. Without trust, issues are seldom discussed and never resolved. Without trust, a school cannot improve and grow into the rich nurturing micro-society needed by children and adults alike (p. 140).

**Benefits of Relational Trust**

In 2006 Louis published a three-year longitudinal study that focused on the implementation of quality management practices and culture in educational settings. Her work examined how trust affects teachers' willingness to work with
district initiative efforts. The sample consisted of nine districts with over 6,000 schools. The researcher used a combination of individual interviews and focus groups of teachers and administrators to gather qualitative data. In her summary and implications, Louis (2006) proposed that when relational trust is present between administrators and teaches, district initiatives and school wide change is possible.

A study conducted by Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom (2010) used the results of a national US survey funded by the Wallace Foundation. The research was based around the question: how does leadership affect student achievement? Surveys were used to collect quantitative data from over 157 teachers. The study examined the development of trusting relationships, the behaviors of administrators regarding student achievement, the sharing of leadership with teachers and the impacts of trust on teachers. From their analysis of the data, the researchers surmised the benefits of teacher-administration trust as follows: increased student learning, the strengthening of a professional community, greater shared responsibility, greater morale, and a greater willingness to take risks (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010).

**How to Build Trust**

The field of research surrounding relational trust can be convoluted and contradictory at times. There seems to be a “lack of clarity and agreed-upon terminology [that] is a pervasive characteristic of trust research” (Handford & Leithwood, 2012, p.197). In perhaps the most widely known relational trust study in the education sector, Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted a seven-year survey of
400 elementary schools in Chicago. They also studied three elementary schools in detail and analyzed the relational trust that existed between different relationships within the school. They studied the impact relational trust had on student learning and the implications relational trust had on school governance. In their findings, Bryk and Schneider (2002) submitted that there were four dimensions that were needed to develop relational trust in a school: respect, personal regard, integrity, and competence in core responsibilities. Studies conducted after this have come up with similar dimensions or themes that make up relational trust in the education sector.

Tschannen-Moran (2004) conducted a study of three principals in high-poverty urban elementary schools. Interviews were used to collect qualitative data. Her focus was to determine how administrative leaders generate relational trust with teachers in difficult situations. Out of her findings she suggested that there are five components of teacher and administrator trust: benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence.

**How to Build Trust: Respect**

Bryk and Schneider (2003) suggest that one of the pillars needed to develop relational trust is respect. They stated: “relational trust is grounded in the social respect that comes from the kinds of social discourse that takes place across the school community” (p. 23). While conducting in depth research on three elementary schools, Bryk and Schneider (2002) suggested that respect is:
A long-term process of social exchange among students, teachers, parents, and school administrators. Marinating a modicum of respect in these exchanges is a base condition for sustaining civil social interaction within a community. Such respect needs to be reciprocated by parties in each role set... a genuine sense of listening to what each person has to say marks the basis for meaningful social interaction” (p. 23).

They maintained that respect could help strengthen schools and strengthen professional relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

In her work, Tschannen-Moran (2004) suggested: “respect involves recognition of the important role that each person plays in a child’s education and the mutual dependencies that exist among various parties involved in this activity” (p. 23). Expressing honest and sincere appreciation for the work teachers do, instead of criticizing and condemning their actions will foster trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Reducing teachers’ sense of vulnerability by showing them that they are valued and trusted by administrators is critical to generating respect: “teachers need to know that their principal values their efforts and senses their good intentions” (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, p. 129).

Tschannen-Moran (2001) conducted a detailed study on the link between collaboration and trust within a school context. This included collaboration between teachers, administration, and parents. Principals from 45 schools were asked to complete a survey on the degree to which they allow teacher input into decision making at the school level. In addition to this, teachers from 91 elementary schools completed 898 surveys. The conclusions from this study explained, “schools where
there was a high level of trust could be predicted to be schools where there would be a high level of collaboration” (Tschannen-Moran, 2001, p. 327). It was also noted that if there was greater confidence in the "benevolence, competence, reliability, and honesty" (p. 327) of the administrative leaders, teachers felt more at ease in participating in decision-making process. Teachers appreciated administration’s respect and willingness to share authority.

**How to Build Trust: Competency**

The criterion for competency in a school setting varies widely; although, two things are agreed upon. One that competence in an administrator is critical for trust, and the other is that incompetence is exceptionally destructive and counterproductive to building and maintaining relational trust (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Hoy, & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Kaser & Halbert, 2009).

Tschannen-Moran (2004) determined that “setting an example, working hard, pressing for results, setting standards and, buffering teachers” (p. 34) is the functional part of competence. In addition to this, “engaging in problem solving, fostering conflict resolution (rather than avoidance), handling difficult situations and being flexible” (p. 34) is the interpersonal component of competency.

In their study Hadford and Leithwood (2012) found that a principals functional work related skills were the most important aspect for demonstrating competency. These work related skills included: "being visible in a school and inside classrooms, principals’ formal and informal engagement in classroom observations,
participating in activities within classrooms, providing teachers with feedback for their instruction and being involved with professional development and school initiatives” (p. 202).

Robinson (2007) conducted research that involved looking at 26 studies that provided evidence about the links between leadership and student achievement. The study included studying what school leaders could do in order to create high trust schools. Out of the 26 empirical studies, Robinson noted that in order to build relational trust in schools, administrators must have strong role competence. Leaders must be competent in their abilities to establish goals and expectations, strategically plan and utilize resources, plan coordinate and evaluate teaching and curriculum, promote and participate in teacher learning and development and ensure an orderly and supportive environment. If an administrator is able to preform these duties a school will become a high relational trust school.

It has also been argued that administrators can demonstrate competence through: problem solving, working hard, pressing for results, settings standards for schools, setting a good example, being flexible, buffering teachers from harm, handling difficult situations and resolving conflicts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hadford & Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

**How to Build Trust: Personal Integrity**

Personal integrity is the connection of a person’s words and their actions. If an administrator says that he or she values students, and then acts accordingly, that administrator will have personal integrity. Bryk and Schneider (2003) noted that
personal integrity is one of the core ways to build relational trust: “perceptions about personal integrity also shape individuals’ discernment that trust exists... although conflicts frequently arise among competing individual interest within a school community, a commitment to the education and welfare of children must remain the primary concern” (p. 42).

In 2011, Meyer et al, completed a three year study of schools that had principal turnover (principals moving schools) and they looked at the impact it had on the staff that worked at the school. The study focused on what administrators could do within their school to help mitigate challenges that arise from their entrance into a new school. The study also looked at how administrators can generate trust with employees in order to help eliminate some of the challenges. Two schools were studied as case studies and interviews and surveys were used to collect data. Amongst their list of findings, Meyer et al. (2011), state that personal integrity goes a long way to develop trust and confidence with teachers. They stated that administrators should “demonstrate a sense of responsibility... have strong values and morals... demonstrate being accountable... be dedicated to the belief that all actions are prepared and executed for the students... [and] be consistent in actions and communications” (p. 84).

**How to Build Trust: Openness**

Tschannen-Moran (2004) explained that openness is “sharing important information, delegating, sharing decision making and sharing power” (p. 34). When teachers and administrators are open to each other, the exchange of important
information becomes rapid and direct, and this in turn forms relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

In their study Hadford and Leithwood (2012) broke openness down into a smaller subsets. One of these subsets was openness to influence, which “allows others to initiate change in plans, goals, concepts, criteria and resources” (p. 205). An example of this is having teachers involved in the decision making process of selecting professional development. They found that shared decision-making and shared power along with openness in control were powerful trust developers. This implied that teachers had a voice that was influential in determining school goals and priorities and that their administrators acknowledged their voices (Hadford & Leithwood, 2004).

Furthering the idea of openness, Hadford and Leithwood (2012) determined that openness towards information was essential to teachers as the disclosure of facts, alternatives, judgments, intentions and feelings all make teachers feel recognized and valued (p. 204). Part of being open is being available and accessible to teachers, which improves the openness and sharing of information and decision making (Blasé & Blasé, 2001).

**How to Build Trust: Consistency and reliability**

Both of the terms consistency and reliability are often used interchangeably to describe one of the aspects that makes up relational trust. Tschannen-Moran (2001) defined consistency and reliability as: “[being] dependable, demonstrating commitment, having dedication and being diligent” (p. 34).
In their recent work, Hadford and Leithwood (2012) conducted a study to determine why teachers trust school leaders. The purpose of the study was to identify leadership practices, which teachers interpret as signs of trustworthiness on the part of the principals. 24 interviews were conducted in six schools. Three of these schools were considered to be ‘high trust’ schools and three with were considered ‘low trust’ schools. The ‘high’ and ‘low’ schools were determined by 3,900 surveys being completed in 134 schools, residing in 40 school districts. In their findings they concluded that consistency and reliability were key components for developing relational trust:

Teachers associate consistency with predictable patterns of actions by principals, timely feedback about classroom and instructional activities, availability of classroom materials and supplies, to assist in implementing agreed upon instructional practices, routines related to discipline, and regular demonstrations of involvement with children and/or their families unrelated to discipline (p. 204)

In addition to this, they go on to state that consistency and reliability are demonstrated through working hard, pressing for results, setting standards and being diligent (Hadford and Leithwood, 2012).

When trust between teachers and an administrator is present; change in schools becomes possible, student achievement increases and teachers are more empowered to share responsibility in schools. However, when trust does not exist between teachers and administrators, problems and challenges are not solved and schools become less productive. Generating relational trust is complicated and
requires a number of actions and behaviors. Administrators need to respect teachers, maintain their personal integrity, remain open to ideas, share with teachers, demonstrate consistency and reliability and match their actions with their words. These actions must be repeated over time in order to deepen relational trust with teachers.
Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Research Design

The intent of this research was to investigate how administrators build relational trust with teachers in schools. The research design for this research was a semi-structured interview format (Appendix A) conducted for the purposes of collecting qualitative data. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured and the questions were crafted to be open ended in order to gather large amounts of relevant information about administrators’ experiences regarding trust with teachers. The participants in this study were selected from administrators working in public schools in BC. The researcher ensured that participation was voluntary and confidential. Consent information and the purpose of the study was provided to the participants at the beginning of each semi-structured interview process (Appendix B). The interview questions included thirteen open-ended questions, focusing on the four aspects of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Responses from the interview questions were coded and analyzed to determine patterns and themes within the data.

Sample

Vancouver Island has 11 districts with 173 schools educating over 50,000 students (BCTF EdFacts, 2012). There are 180 principals and vice-principals currently working on Vancouver Island. This number was extrapolated from the number of schools on Vancouver Island. Emails (Appendix C) were sent out to the administrators on Vancouver Island requesting participants for this study. The
researcher had initially wanted to conduct ten interviews, five of which were to be administrators with less than five years of experience and the other five interviews were to be greater than ten years of experience. The reason for this was to collect data from both administrators new to the position of administration and from experienced administrators. Research indicates that people new to leadership roles in education view their responsibilities differently than experienced senior leaders in education (Kochanek, 2005; Mulford, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2000). Five administrators agreed to participate in the study, and they became the sample.

Of the five participants, three of them had less than ten years of experience and the remaining two had over ten years of experience. The first participant of this study was Castle. He had two years of experience as an administrator working in the Northern Vancouver Island area. He worked in a high school that had a dual track language program. Castle was in charge of overseeing the French component of the High school, and oversaw 50 teachers. Watson was an administrator of a small elementary school and had been working as an administrator in Elementary schools for eight years in three different districts. Murdoch was a Principal of a large high school with over seventy staff. Although he was new to the school, he had been an administrator for eight years in three different districts. With twelve years of experience, Beckett, was working in a small rural Elementary school with twenty teachers. In her career she had been a Principal of a high school, a middle school and three elementary schools. Reynolds was a principal of an alternative school that worked with students that struggled in standard public schools. He had been an administrator for fourteen years.
Instruments Used

A semi-structured interview (Appendix A) with an attached consent form (Appendix B) was used to acquire information about the perspectives and actions of administrative leaders on Vancouver Island. The researcher chose this approach due to the belief that this was the most effective way to obtain meaningful information from school leaders about their approach towards trust and how they fostered it in schools. If a survey were used, it would have been hard to design a survey that would access different administrators’ experiences. The interviews also allowed the researcher the opportunity to ensure that the participants understood the questions. Bryk and Schneider (2002) were the pioneers of relational trust in education, and much of their research was done through semi-structured interviews. Because Bryk and Schneider are leading researchers in educational trust, the researcher believed that it would enhance the validity of the study if this study followed a similar interview style. The researcher’s hope was to get deep meaningful responses from the participants in order to further the researcher’s understanding of relational trust.

The interview questions incorporated Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) four leadership qualities needed to develop relational trust: personal integrity, role competence, interpersonal respect and personal regard. With this in mind, the interview questions began with specific task and action related questions; for example, the second question was how can an administrator involve staff in decision making? By asking what an administrator could do, the onus and attention was not directly focused at the participant, which was to help put the participants at ease.
Questions 2-9 were specifically focused on the different aspects of relational trust (respect, personal regard, integrity, and competence) and questions 10-13 were more general: *In general what can an administrator do to foster trust between themselves and teachers? What are the challenges that administrators face regarding relational trust with teachers? What programs and professional development models can be established to foster relational trust?*

Bryk and Schneider (2002), Robinson (2007) and Blase and Blase (2001), all substantiate that the actions of leaders can have a profound impact on the quality of the school environment, which is why the researcher focused on what administrators do and can do within their own schools. All interview questions were formulated to ensure that administrators were given a maximum opportunity to fully respond due to the open-ended questions asked (Stringer, 1996). This allowed participants to answer as thoroughly as they liked.

**Procedures**

During the month of September the researcher emailed principals and vice-principals across the eleven districts on Vancouver Island in an attempt to find ten to be interviewed. The five that responded were called for a follow up interview, and a convenient time to meet was set in October and November. It was made clear to the administrative participants that the interview would range from 30-50 minutes so as to minimize inconveniences in their working schedule. Interviews were not conducted in September because most administrators were very busy during this month, due to the start up of school. Consequently, during October and November five interviews were conducted in each of the participant’s school offices, as this was
the most convenient and private location available. The participants consented to being audio recorded. Pseudonyms were given to all participants when the data was transcribed in order to maintain confidentiality.

The names and codes were kept in a separate location in a locked drawer at the researcher’s home and will be shredded after five years. All of the interview data was kept in the researcher’s supervisor’s office at VIU in a locked filing cabinet. All paper-based data will be shredded after five years and all data on a password protected flash drive will be deleted after five years.

**Validity**

The design of the semi-structured interview questions was based on current research regarding relational trust and was therefore, relevant and up-to-date with contemporary views on relational trust. By using this approach, the internal validity of the study is increased and the questions are more likely to be assessing the information that was proposed in the research.

All interviews were recorded on paper and through an audio recorder, which was used to later transcribe the interviews onto Microsoft Word. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher sent a copy of the interview to the participant for them to check over and confirm or change anything that may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted. The interviews were transcribed in as much detail as possible to ensure accuracy of the responses (Guba, 1981).

There were some challenges that threatened to compromise the integrity of the research however. One of the challenges the researcher faced was a lack of
experience in interviewing participants. This coupled with the fact that administrators were very busy, may have led to administrator’s responses being shorter and less detailed than they could have been. This may have lead to a weakness in the reliability of the responses, leading to a weakness in the reliability of the study. Interviews were conducted before and after school, which meant that not all interviews were conducted at the same time or in the same location. In addition to this, the amount of time they had available and the amount of stress may have affected how reliably they answered the questions. This may have led to the internal validity of the semi-structured interviews being threatened. Because only one interview was conducted with each participant and it was the sole source of data for the study, the study was further weakened (Mills, 2011).

Another challenge with this research was the Heisenberg Effect or the Researcher Effect, in which the presence of the researcher at the interviews could have potentially changed the behaviour or responses of the participants (Denscomb, 2007). It is also uncertain if the participants were being honest during the interviews, or if their answers may have been different if they were interviewed at a different time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

**Analysis Techniques**

All five interviews were transcribed into Microsoft Word using iTunes to play back the recorded interviews. NVivo 9, was a software program used to help interpret and understand the thematic patters of the interview data. The responses for all of the interview questions were analyzed by using frequency distribution
strategies. Patterns were sought in the data in order to help tabulate and understand the interview data.
Chapter 4: Findings and Results

This research study set out to answer the question: *How can administrators build relational trust between themselves and teachers in their schools?* Data was gathered from five semi-formal interviews, inclusive of three administrators with less than ten years of experience and two administrators with greater than ten years of experience. Thirteen open-ended questions were asked of participants. Themes began to emerge from the data as patterning of ideas and like phrases were categorized and organized into key concepts. Three major themes emerged from the data. The first theme was competence, with the subthemes of: problem solving, supporting, working hard, being visible in the school, and setting standards. The second theme was respect and the third theme was openness. Under openness there were two sub themes that appeared as well. The first was open communication and the second was open collaboration. The following sections will describe in detail the three major themes that emerged from the interviews.

**Competence: Problem Solving**

Problem solving is a large part of an administrator’s role as he or she leads a school. Four of the five participants discussed the importance of an administrator being able to solve problems, regardless of the size and scope of the problem. One of the participants, Reynolds, discussed how he solves problems outside of classrooms so that teachers can focus on their work inside classrooms: “I get rid of the barriers in front of teachers so that they can guide their projects and ideas to fruition. I allow teachers to be innovators while I protect them from the challenges of politics.” One
of the challenges that administrators face is the problem of staying at the forefront of educational pedagogy and trying to change school structure and teaching practices to reflect current research, as Beckett stated: “I’ve been working on lots of ideas about school schedules and in order to change school structure so that we can free students and staff up to different ways of learning.” Another challenge that administrators often face is dissention. However, part of being a competent administrator, Watson argued, is problem solving with teachers in a way that builds trust: “trust is fragile so dissenting views must be listened to with respect and dignity. That person must be allowed to express himself or herself or it will be the last time that trust happens.” Castle also held this belief: “it is ok for people to say ‘no.’ There will always be one or two people who say no. And as an admin that is ok, you have to respect their autonomy.”

**Competence: Supporting**

The theme of administrators needing to support and encourage teachers in order to develop relational trust emerged from the data. In his school, Reynolds worked hard to make sure that teachers know they were supported:

I need the perception and the reality for teachers to be, that my single most important purpose in life, in professional life [sic] is supporting those folks that are front line in making a difference for our kids. So all the bullshit and the administration gets shifted to the side when teachers have legitimate concerns that need to be addressed in a time sensitive fashion.
In her school, Beckett encouraged teachers to take risks and try new things with students:

I want them to try stuff like getting rid of the provincial exams, supporting the cross-curricular inquiry people, supporting not being so heavy on assessments. I’m trying to create a culture where they feel free of the curricular assessment piece and wanting to try stuff [sic]. So supporting the teachers who want to do that for sure and [I] encourage those who aren’t.

Castle also encouraged his staff to take risks and try new things: “those teachers that are perusing those risks, you follow up and provide support for them [sic]. Make a point to go out of your way to check in. Show that you are interested in their work.”

Reinforcing the notion of supporting teachers, Murdoch argued: “administrators have to encourage teachers to [take risks], and then to acknowledge [those risks]. I engage with teachers and work with them to take risks.”

Three of the participants argued that part of the process of supporting teachers is being flexible and willing to work alongside teachers. Murdoch discussed this in his interview: “we are there as a team of teachers and my department heads we are open and honest [sic]. We need to allow some people to do things differently.” Reynolds explained, when teachers take risks it is critical to “give the credit where it is due [and to] support teachers that are committed. Find out everyone’s strengths and always play to their strengths.” Part of being supportive to teachers is having the faith that they will do the right thing, as Beckett stated: “you’ve got to believe in your staff.” One of the ways Castle helped empower teachers was by working with them to form committees, whereby they could make
decisions for themselves: “where there is a need I get them to form a committee, like
the Christmas Committee, in which they can make all their decisions on their own,
and if teachers really want a say, they can go talk to that committee.”

**Competence: Working hard**

After analyzing the data, it was noted that each of the participants mentioned
the need to work hard and put in effort towards running a school. When teachers
see and know how hard an administrative leader is working for them, respect is
strengthened. Watson discussed the need to be there when teachers arrive in the
morning and when teachers leave at night: “[put in the] hard work—being here
when people get here in the morning and still being here when they leave at night.”
Castle maintained the need for an administrator to work hard to “give people the
impression that you are open hardworking and are willing to listen to and are
willing to change for them and are willing to work with teachers than they will trust
us.” Watson furthered this idea by adding how hard she worked to know everyone
in her school: “trust takes time and you don’t walk into a building and have it. You
have to earn it, credibility with teachers, families and kids is something that takes a
long time to earn and you have a short period of time to earn it. I know who is who
and what peoples’ values are.” She also cautioned; however, that there is a
distinction between working hard and micromanaging. In her interview, Beckett
also stressed: “you don’t want to micromanage, people start to mistrust this. But
people need to see that you are working hard.” By avoiding micromanaging and
working hard to build relations with her staff, Beckett said: “I have to work hard to
develop good relations with the staff reps and the union so that there is trust. You have to work together not against [each] other.”

**Competence: Being Visible in the School**

Another theme that emerged from the data is the need for an administrator to be visible in a school and to be present and in touch with what is happening with teachers and students. Murdoch stressed the importance of visiting classrooms and checking in with teachers on a daily basis: “I try to get into every classroom everyday, using any excuse I can. This is an informal way to work with teachers as a team.” Castle offered that he too visited classrooms frequently: “[I] visit classrooms, not to disrupt, not to supervise or observe, but to stay in tune with what is going on in the school. Keep the pulse on the school.” In his school, Reynolds constantly checked in with teachers to see what was going on. He argued: “you have to always be at the front lines with teachers and have a close perception of the reality of teachers and their classrooms.” One of the ways that Watson remained visible in her school was by sharing with teachers what other teachers were doing in their classrooms: “I take intimate field trips to each teacher’s room to see what they are doing and I bring other teachers with me like ‘lets go look at that!’ I am like the conduit because I get to go everywhere and see great things all the time.”

**Competence: Setting Standards**

Setting standards also emerged as a theme from the interviews. One of the ways that administrators work with teachers is setting standards for staff meetings,
school goals, and expectations for teachers and administrators. Beckett illustrated her work in setting standards: “a lot of people are working on establishing norms by asking and answering questions with staff: What is a good staff-meeting look like? What do we want to focus on in out staff meeting? What do we want to communicate as an administrative team to staff and what that means sometimes?”

In addition to this, Reynolds emphasized the importance of working with teachers to set standards with them, which in turn helped to generate trust:

- Part of being accessible to teachers is working with school goals and allowing those that are involved to contribute and to have a voice. We also work with anyone who is part of the caring of our students. So that is anyone who cares for the wellbeing of that student. That is the circle of support that has a say and are involved in the direction of our school.

By establishing expectations of people during staff meetings, Castle reasoned that it makes meetings more efficient and productive: “one thing that I did was going over what was expected in staff meetings and how people were expected to behave.”

Murdoch highlighted the importance of always having a standard, of students being at the core of all decisions: “keep kids at the center of your actions and focus on them. It gives everyone a goal to work towards, and in the end it builds trust with teacher because they know you want the best for the students”. Reynolds also stated this: “kids must be at the center of everything! Ego must go out.”

**Respect**
Every participant discussed the importance of being respectful towards teachers. Although busy, the participants stressed the importance of making time for teachers. Reynolds illustrates how he always makes teachers a priority “if a teacher comes into my office I put all of my paper work aside, regardless of how busy I am or how simple the problems of a teacher is [sic].” He goes on to bluntly stress how important it is to be authentic with teachers and respect their intelligence when working with them: “be present! Don’t bull shit people. They know.” Murdoch specified how administrators communicate is a huge aspect of respect and ultimately leads to trust: “how we communicate is critical, and if we do it right it strengthens trust, you have to have meaningful conversations with people.” In his school, Murdoch indicated that by being present and authentic, teachers were more willing to work with him: “if people feel that they are being heard [than] they will follow you, they will work with you.”

In her interview, Beckett cautioned how a lack of respect can grind projects to a halt and can cause mistrust: “if people do not feel that you are authentic, then it does not work.” Murdoch avowed, “I don’t like having an unauthentic relationship. I need to respect people as teachers.” This respect is furthered by allowing for disagreements, and working through difficult conversations, as Reynolds added: “you have to establish an atmosphere that makes it ok if there is conflict, and makes it ok to problem solve and work together to resolve issues.”

Watson said being pleasant and encouraging teachers will help build respect, “noticing [them], saying thank you, making a point of giving frequent and specific compliments—teachers need that too... people do their best work when they feel
appreciated and trusted. They will try new things and take on new things if they can make mistakes and if they know you know how hard it is.” As Murdoch put, it is part of human nature to want to be respected and cared for, “it is a humanity piece, people want to know they are cared for. Make sure people get what they deserve.” Castle articulated, part of caring for teachers is a willingness to listen and collaborate with them: “[if we] are willing to listen and are willing to change for [teachers] and are willing to work with teachers then they will trust us.” Murdoch paralleled this when he said: “people want to be heard and taken seriously. Create a space for them to do that.” Through her work, Beckett formed this space for teachers by having an open door policy, “anybody can walk into my office and I think most of my staff feels fairly comfortable doing that.” In his interview, Castle addressed the need to be open to working with teachers and the need to listen to teachers: “[the] reality is you foster good relations, if the staff feels that they have a say in decision-making.”

**Openness: Communication**

A major theme that arose from the data was openness in communication and an openness to collaborate and work with teachers. In terms of being open in communication, the data revealed the importance of administrators sharing information, accepting disagreeing views and being open about their beliefs.

In his interview, Murdoch addressed the importance of having open communication with his staff: “I think it’s open honest communication, putting out
there what your beliefs are and people will understand and trust you even though they might not agree with you.”

Remaining open and accepting dissenting views is also critical in maintaining relational trust. As Watson articulated: “trust is so fragile, so dissenting views must be listened to with respect and dignity.” Reynolds addressed this as well: “there’s always going to be disagreement and conflict in one shape or another. You treat that as normal and okay. When elephants turn up in a staff meeting, you deal with them in a transparent and honest way.” He further added: “

Conflict is ok, it happens and you have to be comfortable with it. You have to establish an atmosphere that makes it ok if there is conflict, and makes it ok to problem solve and work together to resolve issues. You have to keep you emotions out of the conflict and get to the heart of the conflict, really listen. Clarify their perceptions first before attempting to resolve it.

As a principal, Watson explained the importance of teachers expressing their feelings to her:

There is a trust now in this school that has developed where it is okay to say things like: ‘this is not going well for me,’ it is a culture of collaborative problem solving that has grown out of a shared commitment to a project. That culture is kind of being ingrained. We have a fair staff turnover but we have reached a sort of critical mass and new teachers see it or more feel it.

When speaking about teacher disagreements with administrators, Beckett commented: “well I think you need to welcome them…. follow up challenges with people privately. Respectfully of course and use I statements. I feel, I feel, I feel. It is
ok to agree to disagree while keeping the students in mind. When you are authentic it builds up trust.” According to Murdoch staff meetings were not the place to deal with dissenting views: “what I think is don’t have dissenting conversations in a staff meetings. That’s not the place for it... people want to be heard and taken seriously... create a space for them to do that, and sometimes that is privately in an office or as a group.” Castle also contended that in his experience “there will always be one or two people who say no. And as an admin that is ok, you have to respect their autonomy. I think an admin is best to not take ‘no’ people on in public. Point it out and deal with it in private.”

Part of having efficient communication between teachers and administrative leaders explained Murdoch is “being authentic and honest.” He went on to argue that when administrators are not honest, trust is eroded and relationships are “burned.” Being authentic and honest, especially when there are dissenting views helps build trust, as Murdoch reasoned: “I don’t like having an unauthentic relationship. I need to respect people as teachers.” By being authentic and being open to teachers’ ideas, Castle posited that relational trust would develop: “giving teachers a say builds trust.”

Interestingly three of the participants discussed how important it is to communicate any mistakes that they make to teachers. As Beckett explained: “there is power in saying that you made a mistake, and people respect you for it. It builds trust.” Reynolds supported teachers to be open in their mistakes by describing what he did when he made mistake: “when I screw up, I apologize. I have no problem making a genuine apology to a teacher or a CYCW and trying to fix it... be honest and
admit mistakes that you may have made.” Although not always easy to accept, Watson suggested that mistakes are not necessarily negative, especially when these mistakes are shared with teachers: “we learn so much from what goes badly. Be honest. I have made a point of telling staff things because it is powerful. I’m not afraid to say that not all we do is exemplary teaching every day.”

**Openness: Collaborating**

Each of the participants in the study spoke about the importance of collaborating with teachers. Part of this process is consulting and working with teachers on a variety of different levels. Reynolds strongly avowed: “consult, consult, consult! You have to constantly be talking to teacher and asking them for help or advice or clarity. How else can you run a school if you do not consult teachers!” Castle spoke to the importance of sharing and collaborating with teachers it simply: “involve teachers in the planning and decision-making and that trust will build.” Reynolds expressed the importance of working with all teachers, regardless of where they stand on issues: “there are people that you like that you get along with that are heading in the same direction you want to go. But there are others that are trying their best and you need to deal with the in a totally up front manner as well.”

From the data collected, a number of different ways were found in which an administrator could collaborate with teachers. One of these ways of doing this Watson argues, is by working with teachers around school mission statements and school goals: “part of being accessible to teachers is working with school goals and allowing those that are involved to contribute and have a voice.” Castle shared his
experience in developing school goals with teachers: "We started working with all of the teachers on the school goals. What are they and what should we be doing? And what are our school goals? Now all of our Pro days are around the school goals. It has build relational trust. Giving teachers a say builds trust." Watson described how she collaborated and worked alongside teachers to help become better teachers: “I learn with my teachers a lot... we learn together, there’s a huge effect size in what changes teachers’ practice. Number one: admin that learn alongside teachers.” Part of being open to collaboration is encouraging different clubs and groups when the need arises, as Watson explained: “first we shared out all our learning and its really cool because we went from two staff meetings on assessment to two book clubs, and an assessment group and a technology group and in the end they all shared out in May what their learning is.”

Another way an administrator can collaborate with teachers, Beckett posited, is through the development of growth plans: “in our staff meetings we are working on our growth plan.” Watson shared a story about involving and collaborating with staff during a difficult time for teacher and administration relations in her district:

What I proposed is that instead of ten staff meetings lets do five teaching and learning hours and they will be one hour of learning and teaching and we will decided with the Pro-D committee what we are doing. And we formed a committee and we did that... so we just figured it out, so in the end we decided and came to an agreement. With system change the school does need to be involved and I think it is important to have conversation and opportunity (p. 2).
In his alternative school, Reynolds addressed how he encouraged his staff to provide input and take leadership roles in meetings and professional development days: “we have a lot of meetings here they are short, but they are really effective; make sure people have input on the agendas, and as I said, let them own those issues at those meetings and take leadership... take time to exhaust the opinions that are out there, people need to be heard.”

Sharing the decision making process with teachers helps to foster and develop relational trust. However, not all decisions that need to be made in a school need to involve teachers. Watson, Beckett and Reynolds cautioned that an administrator has to be clear with staff about whether or not staff gets a say in the decision making process, whether they get to decide as a group or whether the decision is going to be made by the administrator. Watson said that:

Staff needs to know what is going to be a decision they are going to be a part of and they need to be told that up front. We will decide and we will go with the will of the group, sometimes it's a decision you are going to be making but you want their input and they need to be told that too. You need to be really upfront.

Beckett considered that there are times when involving teachers in the decision making process is not possible: “you need to have decisions that you just make and do like you can’t always have the whole staff on board. But we’re not going to make system change or structural change without all the staff at least having input.”
The five participants of this study had over 40 years of combined experience in running a school and working with teachers. From their interviews the importance of being a competent administrator became apparent. Each participant in turn discussed the components of competency and how it helped develop relational trust. They discussed the need to problem solve, to support teachers as they work with students, to work hard at their job, to be present and visible in the school and to set standards for themselves and teachers. All five participants stressed the importance of giving respect to teachers. Moreover remaining open to collaborate with teachers and being open in their communication also led to increased relational trust.

Overall, there was a consensus from the five participants that building relational trust with teachers is not an easy task. Additionally once relational trust is present, it can be lost in a moment. Beckett surmises the process of establishing relational trust: “relational trust is the hardest work, it’s relentless; it is something that you have to do everyday, and every minute of the day. It is a long-term deal. It affects the nature of student learning and the future of education… trust is so fragile, you work so hard and it can be gone like that.” Although difficult and complex, by combining the above-mentioned strategies as an administrator, relational trust will be developed and strengthened with teachers.
Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion and Conclusions

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to investigate what relational trust is and how administrators can develop and maintain trust with teachers in their schools. The research question that was proposed was: How can administrators build relational trust between themselves and teachers within their schools? The researcher conducted five semi-formal interviews with administrators from the Vancouver Island school districts. Each interview ranged from 40 minutes to 60 minutes and was recorded and later transcribed into Microsoft Word using pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The five semi-formal interviews resulted in a rich data set being collected. The data was analyzed for common themes.

180 administrators from Vancouver Island were contacted in October 2013, using a scripted email (Appendix C). It was hoped that ten administrators would respond to the emails; however, only five administrators agreed to partake in the study. Those administrators that responded were called on the phone with the purpose of establishing a convenient time to participate in an interview. All participants were interviewed in their schools in late November 2013. Each participant was asked the same thirteen open-ended questions (Appendix A). Three of the participants had been an administrator less than ten years and two had been an administrator for over ten years. Four of the participants were principals of their own schools and one of the participants was a vice-principal.
Out of the data three overarching themes emerged, regarding what administrators do to establish trust: demonstrate competence, show respect and remain open towards teachers. Competence was proven through the ability of an administrator to problem solve and work through difficult situations. It was the ability to work hard and put in the hours needed in order to run a school. Competence was also established through setting standards and expectations for behaviour and actions for everyone within the school. Supporting teachers and being visible in the school and in classrooms further verified the competence of an administrator. Respect was discussed by all of the participants and it was stressed that in order to build any sort of trust, respect must be present. All of the participants discussed being open towards teachers. This was a willingness to collaborate with teachers on all levels for the betterment of the students. It also included an openness to communicate with staff about issues and thought processes.

**Implication / Discussion:**

The results of this study were anticipated; however, it was not anticipated that the results would so closely match the literature on relational trust in education. Based on the literature surrounding relational trust, it was expected that the participants would have discussed competence, respect, collaboration and communication. However; it was also anticipated that personal integrity would have been a common theme in this data but it was not. Moreover, consistency and reliability were also not addressed in detail in the interviews.
Literature suggests that in order to develop relational trust with teachers, administrators must be competent in their actions (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Hadford & Leighwood, 2012). This study likewise found that administrators felt that it was important to be competent. This was demonstrated through: problem solving, hard work, setting standards, being present in the school and supporting teachers. Tschannen-Moran’s (2000) work also parallels these findings, which is reflected in her statement: “setting an example, working hard, pressing for results, setting standards and, buffering teachers” (p. 34).

All of the participants in this study addressed the need to be respectful towards teachers. By doing so, administrators garnered the support and trust of teachers. It was additionally found that administrators should be authentic and caring for teachers to demonstrate respect. Both Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003) and Tschannen-Moran (2004), stress the importance of respect having to be present to develop relational trust.

Finally the study found that administrators should remain open in their communication with teachers and open to collaborating and working alongside teachers. By doing so, trust will be strengthened. In other studies, being open to shared-decision making process, sharing information openly, learning with teachers, and being available and willing to discuss important matters, have all been found to generate relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2004; Hadford & Leithwood, 2004).

Creating and focusing on building relational trust with teachers, results in many benefits. When there is trust, teachers increase their participation in
collaborative exercises, which in turn increases teacher efficacy (Mitchell, Ripley, Adams and Raju 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). When trust is present with teachers, district and school wide initiatives are more likely to succeed (Louis, 2006). Student learning and achievement is better when relational trust is present, professional communities and morale are strengthened, teachers are willing to take greater responsibilities and risks if they trust administrators (Louis, Dretzke & Wahlstrom, 2010). Because relational trust with teachers leads to positive results, it is important for administrators to focus on developing relational trust.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was its small sample size. Only five out of 180 administrators were interviewed from Vancouver Island, which accounts for 2.7% of the entire population. In addition to a small sample size, it was not determined if the five participants were considered by teachers to have strong relational trust or if they were competent at their jobs. Due to the size of the sample, the study is limited in its generalizability to all administrators and teachers. Interviews were conducted at different times and different locations in the autumn of 2013. Because of the inconsistency in time and location, it potentially caused the participants to answer differently than they may have at a different time or location. Only one interview was conducted with each participant, which made it difficult to determine the reliability of the responses in the interviews. Furthermore, it was unknown if the participants were telling the truth in the interviews. The researcher conducted the interviews, which may have caused the Researcher Effect,
whereby participants may have answered differently to a different researcher (Mills, 2011). Finally the researcher lacked experience in interviewing participants, which impacted the reliability and validity of the study.

Further Research/Recommendations

This research study focused on what administration can do in order to develop relational trust with teachers. However, it did not access if teachers considered the participants as trust worthy. Because of this, it is suggested that a future study could determine which administrative leaders are considered trustworthy, and to then interview them. Additionally it would be worthwhile to interview teachers to determine what they consider builds trust, and what teachers can do to develop relational trust with administrators. Finding schools with high relational trust and interviewing teachers and administrators could prove to be insightful and beneficial.

In terms of the researcher’s own practice, the findings of this study, as well as the literature reviewed could be shared and communicated during a professional development day or at a staff meeting. An inquiry or focus group could be created within the researcher’s school, in order to share the learning the researcher has gathered throughout this study. It would also be beneficial to present to the administrators of the researcher’s district the learning the researcher has done. Because relational trust can benefit schools, students, teachers and administrators it is suggested that the findings from this study are incorporated into Masters in
Education programs in BC Universities or into the Teacher Education Programs in BC.

Developing relational trust is a complex process, and requires a combination of actions and efforts. These actions must be maintained over time, as relational trust is fragile and can quickly be lost if teachers perceive administrators as being untrustworthy. It has been shown that with specific actions and behaviors, relational trust can be generated with teachers. However, creating trust can be difficult as relational trust is hard to quantify, and can be subjective depending on the teacher and the situation. Regardless of these challenges, there is a need in BC to have stronger ties between teachers and administrators. Thus as formal leaders, administrators must work hard to maintain and cultivate relational trust in order to guide BC’s education system into the twenty first century.
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*BCTF EdFacts, 2012*
Appendix A

Scripted Introduction:

This is a voluntary interview and you may withdraw from the study at any point. If you are ever uncomfortable with a question, you may choose not to answer it without penalty. Feel free to skip, decline or stop at any question throughout the process. With your permission, the information will be audio-recorded and will be kept confidential. Your real name will never be used in the study; instead a pseudonym will be created for you and this pseudonym will be used to refer to you throughout the study. Please refrain from speaking or mentioning anything that could later identify you or someone else throughout this interview.

Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed. Your participation will help me to better understand some of the ways that administrators can create relational trust with teachers within their schools. For this study relational trust is defined as: openness between interpersonal relationships that is shown through communication, participation and positive interactions between trusting parties (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Interview Questions:

1. How many years of experience do you have in administration?
2. How can an administrator facilitate and model effective communication?
3. How can an administrator involve staff in decision-making?
4. How can an administrator ensure that he/she is accessible to teachers?
5. How can an administrator celebrate experimentation in a classroom and support risk among staff?
6. How can an administrator address communication to staff members?
7. What are some of the sources or causes of mistrust in a school?
8. How can an administrator address these causes or sources of mistrust in a school?
9. How can an administrator respond to dissenting views?
10. In general, what can an administrator do to foster trust between themselves and teachers?
11. What are the challenges that administrators face regarding relational trust with teachers?
12. What programs and professional development models can be established to foster relational trust?
13. Anything else that you would like to add about building relational trust within a school?

Scripted Post-Interview Information

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions. I will be transcribing your answers and using them as part of the study. You can still choose to opt out of the study at any point before publication of the material in my thesis. The results of the study will be made available to you upon completion. Again, thank you for your time.
Appendix B: Participant consent form

“What can administrators do to build relational trust between themselves and teachers?”

Jared Anaka  
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Vancouver Island University  
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Rachel Moll, PhD, Supervisor  
Faculty of Education  
Vancouver Island University  
Rachel.Moll@viu.ca

Research Information
In addition to being a teacher at Dover Bay Secondary, I am a student in a masters program at VIU. This program requires us to gain applied experiences in designing and conducting research. I have designed a research project to study how administrators in schools develop relational trust between themselves and teaches. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are an administrator in SD 68.

Your Role
During this study you will be asked to participate in a confidential semi-structured interview with 13 questions. Your participation will require 20-30 minutes of your time. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time for any reason without explanation and without penalty. You may also skip, decline or stop at any question throughout the interview process.

Potential Risk
There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
All records of your participation will be kept strictly confidential, and will only be accessible to my supervisor or myself. All data will be stored and locked within my supervisor’s office. Data will be shredded at the end of the project and all digital data will be deleted three years after the study is completed which will be in April 2017. The results of this research will be written in a research report and will be submitted at Vancouver Island University in April 2014. The results will also be presented at Vancouver Island University in April 2014 to peers and teachers who
are involved with the MEDL. Information about the study will not be made public in any way that identifies participants. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants to maintain confidentiality.

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your reference.

Concerns about your treatment in the research
If you have any concern about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Contact Information
If you have any questions about the research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the email address below:

Jared Anaka
Masters of Education Student
Vancouver Island University
Jared.anaka@sd68.bc.ca

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<th>Participants Name</th>
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Appendix C: Recruitment Email

**Subject Line:** Seeking participants for a research study on trust

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Jared Anaka and I am a teacher at Dover Bay Secondary in School District 68. I am taking my Masters in Educational Leadership from VIU. I am currently looking for participants for my research study. You are receiving this email because you are an administrator on Vancouver Island.

My study is about trust between administrators and teachers. I am studying how administrators can develop relational trust between themselves and teachers within their schools.

If you volunteer to take part in this study, you would be participating in a short interview (35-45min) with myself as the researcher.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please contact me at the following:

Jared Anaka  
Masters of Education Student  
Vancouver Island University  
jared.anaka@sd68.bc.ca