A National Study of the Association of Christian Schools International Schools
Head of School Leadership Characteristics

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the desired leadership characteristics of heads of schools as identified by school board chairs and heads of schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). This study is modeled after a Virginia Tech dissertation study of Virginia public school systems by Dr. Michael Thornton in 2009. Data were gathered from the heads of school and the board chairpersons to determine the similarities and differences between the two groups.

Quantitative methodology was used in this study. A national sample of school board chairmen and heads of school from K-12 schools with 500 students or more and who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) were identified.

Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived visionary leader, team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience as essential leadership characteristics. Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness and effective communication with board members, staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in head of school leadership. Heads of school and school board chairpersons believe that head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.
The purpose of this study was to identify the desired leadership characteristics of heads of schools as identified by school board chairs and heads of schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). This study is modeled after a Virginia Tech dissertation study of Virginia public school systems by Dr. Michael Thornton in 2009. Data was gathered from the heads of school and the board chairpersons to determine the similarities and differences between the two groups. The head of school position in a Christian school equates to the superintendent position in a public school division. Board chairpersons are in the position as the leader of the school board.

Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived visionary leader, team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience as essential leadership characteristics. Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness and effective communication with board members, staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in head of school leadership. Heads of school and school board chairpersons believe that head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.

This research will be important to those who desire to become a head of school and for school boards to recognize the characteristics needed for the position of head of school. It may be useful for graduate school programs in the training of persons seeking to become a head of school.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Clifton C. Williams, Sr. My dad encouraged me to get an education and helped insure that I was the first in the family to be able to go to college. He sacrificed much to make sure I succeeded, he saw my future much more than I did.

This is also dedicated to my wife, Suzanne, and our four children, Garrett, Lauren, Tyler and Marshall. I am thankful for their love and great encouragement. They listened to me talk about what I was doing for so long, thank you, I love you immensely.

Finally, I dedicate this to the wonderful schools, administrators, board members, faculty and staff members who gave me the opportunity to serve in positions of leadership with and for you.
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Chapter One
The Problem

“All leaders are in a network of relationships” (Kouzes & Posner, 1997, p. 331) and what they do with those relationships is a key for the school leader. Leadership, according to Ronald Edmonds, a reviewer of studies of effective schools, was the key factor in the effectiveness of the school (Smith & Piele, 1989, p. 4). Early research of effective educational leadership was focused on the characteristics that separated the leader from their followers whereas later research focused more on the qualities which made the leader effective (Smith & Piele, p. 26-27). A good school leader is someone who develops an understanding of the expectations within community relationships. If success for the head of school and his system is to be achieved, the school head must know and understand what the leadership expectations of the board are for the head of school (Selby, 2011, pg. 3).

The importance of a school board chairman in supporting the school leader is vital. Support comes in many forms and a strong positive relationship is foundational. There may be times of disagreement and celebration as in any relationship but the strength of this relationship impacts the entire school system (Coley, 2015, pg. 5). School administrators should not overlook board members when building support for their plans for the school (Smith & Piele, p. 287). The importance of board relationships was supported by Baldwin (2012), Coley (2015), Green (2017), Harrison and Allen (2012), Price (2005), and Thornton (2009) who all characterized the board relationship as essential for the effective school leader.

School leaders need to develop a relationship of trust with their board chairs. The school leader is like all other leaders as stated by Maxwell (1998), “Trust is the foundation of leadership” (p. 58). Trust is a key issue as Carver (1997) stated, “Board of directors often struggle with the issue of trust” (p. 39). When in the midst of a climate of mistrust the suggestion is to give time for change (Kouzes & Posner, 1997, p. 177).

The high turnover rate of school leaders is often cited as a problem for schools. Studies previously indicated a tenure rate between six and seven years (Natkin, Cooper, Fusarelli, Alborano, & Padilla, 2002). In a dissertation study, “Factors Related to Superintendent Retention and Turnover” (Ulrich, 2017), Ulrich cited a tenure rate of 5-6 years. Additionally, “if a school district hires a new superintendent who embarks on the process of creating systemic school reform, only to leave a few years later, that district is left with potentially unsuccessful
district reform.” (Ulrich, pg. 4). In a dissertation study of California superintendents, a tenure rate of 2.5-3 years was cited (Hubbard, 2018). Although there can be a danger in someone who serves in a position too long, more often it is the case of too short of an amount of time in a head of school position to be effective. “Strong schools are established only when the administrator and board work effectively together over a number of years.” (Lowrie, p. 37)

Struggles can develop over time with each side neglecting the importance of their relationship or a weak relationship exists and a singular issue can develop quickly into a major difficulty that cannot easily be resolved (Harrison & Allen, 2012). There have been school systems which have a revolving door when it comes to the office of the head administrator. The apparent decline in the quality of such schools does a disservice to the families, students, faculty and staff of the school. No one is well served by continual leadership changes (Houseman, 2006). Every time there is a new leader there will be changes of some nature. A certain amount of time is required for most changes to be effective. In order for schools to be effectively led the school board and the administrator must work together to achieve a positive relationship (Coley, 2015). Understanding the leadership characteristics needed to serve as a head of school can be an important factor in the stability of the relationship between the head of school and the school board (Williams, 2018). Understanding the leadership characteristics needed of the head of school by heads of school and school board chairpersons “is necessary in building a scholarly case for best practices in Christian schools” (Coley, 2015).

Background

In May, 2009, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University doctoral candidate, Michael Thornton, submitted and defended his dissertation, A Comparative Study of Superintendent Leadership Characteristics of Virginia School Superintendents, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Thornton, 2009). He was following a previous dissertation successfully defended in April, 2006 by Douglas Wilson, a Doctor of Education recipient from Arizona State University for his study entitled, Current Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics for Superintendents. Thornton surveyed school superintendents and school board chairs of Virginia’s 132 K-12 public school systems. Thornton received responses from 101 from Virginia school superintendents and 70 responses were
received from Virginia school board chairpersons. His conclusions were based on those respondents to his survey and those conclusions were as follows:

1. Overall the Virginia school superintendents and school board chairpersons were similar in ranking the most and the least important leadership characteristics for superintendents.

2. There was strong agreement between the superintendents and board chairpersons that professional integrity, honesty and fairness were essential characteristics for public school superintendents in Virginia.

3. Both superintendents and board chairpersons perceived visionary leader as the most important leadership characteristic of the ten provided for ranking.

4. In ranking the provided characteristics superintendents ranked instructional leader second, board chairpersons ranked it third. Superintendents ranked effective school board relations third, board chairpersons ranked this fourth. Board chairpersons ranked team builder second and superintendents ranked it fourth. Both groups ranked professional development experience and school law understanding as least necessary, superintendents ranking professional school law ninth and professional development experience tenth and board chairpersons ranked professional development ninth and school law tenth.

5. Superintendents ranked instructional leader, school finance experience, effective school board relations, school law experience and politically astute more important than the board chairpersons. Board chairpersons ranked visionary leader, team builder, school/community builder, intellect and professional development experience more important than the superintendents.

6. Finally, in 15 of the 17 statements concerning the level of agreement regarding the role and responsibility of the superintendent the composite mean scores of superintendents were higher than the board chairpersons. (Thornton, pages 69-77)

The Thornton study and accompanying results were limited to superintendents and board chairpersons of the 132 public school districts of Virginia. This study was modeled after and followed Thornton’s study with a modified survey to identify the leadership characteristics perceived to be essential for ACSI heads of school by surveying the heads of school and their board chairpersons.
Statement of the Problem

There are perceptions about the leadership characteristics of the ACSI heads of school. A recent study (Adams, 2018) found statistically significant differences in perceptions between ACSI heads of school and their board members in areas of governance. The need exists to collect and study responses from the ACSI heads of school and their school board chairpersons regarding the leadership characteristics required of the head of school. This study collected data from heads of school and school board chairpersons to determine their perceived leadership characteristics. The study provides the heads of school and school board chairpersons with comparisons of their responses for understanding the differences in perceptions of head of school leadership.

Research Questions

1. What leadership characteristics do heads of school identify as essential for the position of head of school?
2. What leadership characteristics do school board chairpersons identify as essential for the position of head of school?
3. How do the perceptions of head of school leadership characteristics compare between the school board chairperson and the head of school?

Significance of the Study

Although public school boards have been surveyed in this manner it is significant to note that schools that are members of the Association of Christian Schools International have not previously been surveyed in this manner. This study provided these ACSI schools with answers from heads of school and school board chairpersons about the leadership characteristics needed for a head of school. This may be of assistance to both school board members and those who lead their schools as head of school. It may be useful to potential school leaders and boards in determining the characteristics needed for the selection of a head of school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the desired leadership characteristics of heads of schools as identified by school board chairs and heads of schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). Further, the intent is to better understand
those characteristics needed by a head of school as perceived by the heads of school and the board chairpersons of schools having membership in the Association of Christian Schools International.

**Justification of the Study**

The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) includes nearly 5,000 schools worldwide which represents over one million students in grades PK-12. ACSI was founded in 1978 when the National Christian School Education Association, the Ohio Association of Christian Schools and the Western Association of Christian Schools merged. Other Christian school associations joined ACSI after this merger making it the largest Christian school association in the world (Swezey, 2006). The association was first headquartered in California before ACSI moved to Colorado Springs, CO in 1994. ACSI now has 11 regional offices in North America and 5 international offices. ACSI offers services to member schools that include school accreditation, teacher certification, student assessment tools (TerraNova/Iowa Basic Skills Achievement Tests), and professional development conferences for teachers, administrators and school board members. They have a number of local and regional student activities for academic competition, student leadership development and athletic training camps. (Swezey, pg. 14-15)

ACSI is a member association in the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), which includes many private school groups nationally. A former president of ACSI served as the Chairman of the CAPE board for a term with ACSI taking a role as a leading school association in matters pertaining to private school education. (http://capenet.org/member.html).

ACSI school leaders face many of the same challenges that other school leaders face whether they lead a public or private school. The need to survey the leadership of the schools and chairperson of the school boards regarding the leadership qualities of the head of school may be helpful to those school leaders and their school boards. School board chairpersons work more closely with the head of the school and their opinions are representative of the board members. This will add to the knowledge of Christian school leadership benefiting particularly those schools and to the general fields of education and leadership.

**Theoretical Framework**

The Theoretical Framework (see Figure 1) served as a guide for the study. The figure shows the perceptions be studied and if any statistical relationship exists between the responses
from school board chairpersons and the heads of school. The figure represents that there are specific leadership characteristics for a head of school as perceived by the school board chairpersons and heads of school. School heads and the school board chairpersons identified their perceptions of these characteristics for the head of school. These perceptions were compared by use of statistics to determine if significant differences exist between the heads of schools and the board chairpersons. There are differences, but few were significant as determined by the study. The results of the research provide additional insights to the position of the head of school for current and aspiring heads of ACSI schools.

Shared Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics

Figure 1. Shared perceptions of leadership characteristics.

Definitions of Terms

1. **Demographic characteristics**, for this study refers to relevant variables descriptive of an Association of Christian Schools International member school such as whether
it is church-sponsored or an independent school, region of the country and whether the school is ACSI accredited or not.

2. **Head of school**, for this study identifies the chief administrative officer of the school whether named as superintendent, headmaster, president, administrator, principal, executive director or other similar term.

3. **Large schools**, for this study identifies a school of five hundred students or more for their enrollment.

4. **Personal characteristics**, for this study refer to social variables such as age, gender, race, education and occupation as noted by the respondent.

5. **School board chairperson**, for this study identifies an individual who serves as the school board leader of an Association of Christian Schools International member school.

6. **School board**, for this study it identifies as Board of Trustees, Board of Directors, Governing Board or similar terms used by ACSI schools.

**Limitations/Delimitations**

The limitations of the study are:

1. The Association of Christian Schools International list of schools with five hundred or more students enrolled is based on the 2018-2019 school year and was 174 schools.

2. A follow-up study to improve the response rate was not conducted because the survey required anonymity.

3. The responses to the survey are assumed to be the true attitude of the respondent based on their personal observation, experience or perception.

4. The response rate was 8.6% of the heads of school and 3.4% of board chairpersons of the 174 schools identified as having five hundred or more students.

The delimitations of the study are:

1. The study is limited to only those Christian schools that are members of the Association of Christian Schools International.

2. Only those ACSI schools that have enrollments of five hundred or more students were chosen.
Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters that are described as follows:

Chapter 1 Contains the introduction, statement of need, purpose of the study, research questions, definitions, significance of the study, limitations of the study and the organization of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the review of literature relevant to factors involved in head of school leadership characteristics.

Chapter 3 contains the description of research methodology, selection of the sample, instrumentation, collection of data and method of analysis.

Chapter 4 contains a description of the data and the findings of the survey and provides an analysis of the data concerning the research questions.

Chapter 5 contains the conclusions and recommendations of the study.
Chapter Two
Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to review current literature that will help identify leadership characteristics of heads of school as perceived by heads of school and school board chairpersons of Christian schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International and have an enrollment of 500 or more students. This study is modeled after Dr. Michael Thornton’s study completed in 2009 that looked at the leadership characteristics of school superintendents as perceived by school superintendents and school board chairpersons in Virginia. Dr. Thornton’s study replicated, in part, a study completed in 2006 by Douglas Wilson at Arizona State University. Chapter 2 includes a review of current literature and research to develop a foundation for the dissertation.

Introduction

This chapter includes reviews of recent studies related to the topic of perceptions of leadership qualities for the head of school. The selection process of the head of school is a part of the study. Studies that include the perceptions of board members of the leadership characteristics of a head of school are also included to support the study. Other studies that are related to the board and head of school relations were reviewed to gain understanding of the unique relationship of a school board and their head of school. Studies related to the leadership impact on teacher empowerment, job satisfaction, and mission of the school were included along with the leadership of instructional practices by school leaders to gain an understanding of leadership qualities for the head of school. The chapter is divided into review sections based on these areas of study.

Selection of the Head of School/Historical Perspective of Head of School

The process of the selection of a head of school can vary from school to school while some similar characteristics exist for each school. First and foremost this is a board decision and in most settings the only employee hired directly by the board. (Carver, 1997) Since this is a study of Christian schools it is important to note that the board of an independent Christian school and the board of a church-sponsored Christian school function somewhat differently (Lowrie, 1984). An historical dissertation provided insight into the founding of the ACSI, which
grew out of a summer Christian school leadership conference started in 1971 (Swezey, 2006). The conference was attended by school leaders from fifteen different Christian school organizations and was called the Institute. The Institute was to help administrators and boards be more effective in their roles in Christian schools. During these summer institutes the conversations among the attendees led to how they could more effectively work together and ACSI was born in 1978. (Swezey, p.14-15). Christian schools tend to be either church-sponsored or independent schools. While independent schools tend to be led by a board, who selects the head of school, in the church schools the leadership, pastor or leadership board, will have some input into the function of the school board and the selection of the head of school. Individuality is the best descriptor of Christian schools in the United States (Coley, 2015).

Head of School and School Board Perceptions

Although there have been recent studies related to the head of school and the perceptions of school board members, not many include Christian schools. It has been noted that research based literature of Christian schools in this area is lacking (Coley, 2015, pg. 3). Another article stated the lack of research based literature of Christian schools this way, however, there was less research about an effective leader in private K-12 schools and that which was available focused on outcomes of the school setting as opposed to leadership perspectives of effective daily work (Harrison and Allen, 2012).

One study conducted of independent schools with particularly experienced heads of school found that school governance as practiced was more complex than the literature suggests (Price, 2005). It was noted that educating board members, giving them real work to do, helping develop a process of continual improvement through self-evaluation processes and developing a stronger relationship between the head of school and the board members are common traits of successful schools (Price, 2005). Conflicts can be raised between heads of schools and board members over numerous issues that are real or perceived. There was more research available focusing on outcomes of the school setting rather than leadership perspectives of an effective leader in private Christian schools (Harrison and Allen, 2012). Selby’s study of 2011 noted in its literature review found much related to non-profit governance but little research focused on Christian schools.

Practices of the school board which impact their relationship with the head of school was the main focus of a recent research based study on Christian school governance practices (Coley,
2015). Accordingly, “…the failure of many schools to develop a harmonious, productive working relationship between the governing board and the administrator is the most significant concern in the Christian school movement in this decade.” (Coley, 2015). The development of a stronger relationship between a board and a head of school would be assisted with a clearer understanding of the leadership characteristics for the head of school. As Coley stated, “data obtained from those currently serving as administrators is necessary to start building a scholarly case for best practices in Christian school governance” (Coley, pg. 7). Thornton (2009) found that the superintendent should be a visionary leader and able to have an effective relationship with the school board as two of the most essential leadership qualities. Green (2017) who replicated Thornton’s study also found that visionary leadership and effective school board relations were essential leadership characteristics.

When Wisconsin public school districts that have a single high school were studied the findings reported conflict over several issues including personnel, parental issues and finances (Monroe, 2005). The study cited a strategy to reduce conflict that included the development of a shared vision. Having a vision for the school was one of two key topics after a ranking of twenty-two leadership attributes by heads of school (Harrison, Allen, 2012). The importance of understanding one another’s roles and gaining consensus on vision appear to strengthen the relationship between the head of school and their board (Coley, 2015). A key to the head of school’s success is communication with their board. Creating a culture to develop a shared vision falls to the head of school and is dependent on their ability to communicate the need for and importance of what is real, not just what is perceived. In addition to establishing a vision for the school, the participants mentioned the importance in their role as the decision maker. The significance of a shared mission and vision is a part of almost all discussions of board leadership (Coley, 2015). The heads of Christian schools of one study more frequently mentioned it was up to the administrator “to create the vision for the school; however, an alternative perspective was shared that perhaps a more collaborative approach might be beneficial.” (Harrison, Allen, 2012).

In 2008 David Rough, in his dissertation at Indiana Wesleyan University wrote:

Because of the diversity and complexity of Christian schools, educational leaders (CEOs of the school) face a variety of situations and school cultures. One important tool for the school leader is the organization’s mission statement (Rough, pg. 3).
Unfortunately, this is not a normal focus in professional development and state licensing standards (Kowalski and Keedy, 2003). How then is the head of school to insure success through a shared vision? There is a need for a well-worded and concise mission statement (Rough, 2008). Strategic planning and planned retreats help to create a situation where perceptions are clear but the reality of issues is even greater. Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) ranked visionary leadership as an essential leadership characteristic in their studies.

Asking the research question, “Is there a difference in the perceptions of school board members’ and heads of schools’ regarding effective school board governance?” was the foundation of another recent study. (Adams, 2018). Seeking to answer this question a survey of ACSI member schools heads of schools and board members was conducted and the findings were that statistically significant differences in perceptions between heads of schools and their board members existed in particular areas of governance. (Adams, p. 90). The study also recommended further study be conducted in Christian schools to enhance effectiveness of the mission and vision of Christian schools. (Adams, p. 105) Another area of school governance studied was related to the tenure of heads of schools of ACSI Christian schools. Seeking to determine if there is any connection between the governance system of a school and tenure. Interviews were conducted with five Christian school administrators from church-sponsored and independent Christian schools. (Husemann, 2006). Although the findings indicated that tenure was more related to school size (larger schools had longer tenure) and the age of the school. Although no strong correlation was found with governance and tenure of the head of school the study recommends further study for boards to see what encourages longevity of heads of schools. (Husemann, p. 77). In Thornton’s (2009) study and again in Green’s (2017) study the lowest rated survey statement was that public school superintendent tenure in Virginia is related to superintendent turnover.

**Head of School and School Board Relations**

It is important to any successful head of school that there is a good relationship with the board, particularly the chair (Coley, 2015). He states, “This relationship is the most important one in the life of the school community.” (Coley, 2015, pg. 5).

One study included questions that looked at how board members and CEOs believed they should perform versus how they believed they performed their duties (Selby, 2011). In this study which surveyed board members and the CEO (Head of School) in ACSI Christian schools the
questions included, “To what extent do board members/CEO of schools believe they perform their duties?” “To what extent do board members/CEO believe they should perform their duties?” “Is there a gap between how they believe they should perform and how they do perform?” and “Is there a difference of opinion between boards and CEOs regarding the extent to which they believe they should and which they believe they should perform their tasks?” (Selby, 2011). These questions lead to perceptions that could be directly relate to leadership qualities of a school leader.

Whether studying the difference between perceptions of board members and heads of school related to governance (Adams, 2018) or surveying the board members/CEO as their how they perform versus how they believe they should perform (Selby, 2011) there are differences in the roles for the board and the head of school. To be effective they must each understand their role and work together to enhance the mission of their school. (Baldwin, 2012; Barlow, 2015; Coley, 2015; Giambri, 2003; Rough, 2008).

Articles and dissertations included the importance of focusing on the school’s vision and aligning leadership expectations and required qualities to the vision. “Nearly every discussion on board leadership begins with the significance of a shared mission and vision.” (Coley, 2015, pg. 3). Mission driven was identified as a necessary skill for school leaders in order to expand and enhance the leadership capacity and sustainability of future K-12 Christian schools (Baldwin, 2012). Another study related to teacher perception of a principal’s leadership in ACSI schools in the Southeast Region included a shared vision as a part of the questions surveyed (Barlow, 2015). One key comment made in a study after discussing the various duties and responsibilities of the head of school was, “the Christian school CEO faces other expectations, as well, being responsible to the board for all aspects of the school organization.” (Selby, 2011, pg. 50). In many of the studies there are references to the head of school answering to the school board and citing the importance of the relationship they have. Knowing the leadership expectations of the school board assists the head of school to clearly understand their role and the tasks they must be doing (Selby, 2011, pg. 3).

**Head of School Leadership Impact**

Kirika’s study in 2011 of leadership in Christian schools studied the impact on empowering teachers. He found there were leadership qualities necessary to helping develop
teachers’ expertise in the areas of curriculum development and pedagogy, which reflects leading in the area of professional development.

A study of leadership qualities from Kouzes and Posner’s five areas of leadership and related to teacher perceptions along with their job satisfaction was conducted in 2015. Those five leadership qualities are: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes and Posner). The study found that those participating reported their school leaders generally demonstrated these five leadership characteristics (Barlow, 2015). One of those leadership qualities, that of a shared vision has been included in of several of the studies related to the leadership qualities head of schools. The characteristic of sharing the vision or developing a shared vision has appeared to be an important quality in this review of literature studies. In addition, Coley stated that gaining consensus on vision strengthens the relationship between the head of school and the board (Coley, 2015).

Research questions from a quantitative study focused on the value of the school’s mission statement as placed on the statement by the head of school (Rough, 2008). Again, the mission or shared vision is a leadership quality which impacts a school and its head of school.

The belief system of a head of school has impact on their leadership actions. A study of ACSI heads of schools in the Midwestern states of Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio was conducted to determine how they developed their beliefs (ideology) and how this affected their organizational decisions. (Dolson, 2014). Dolson’s (2014) study was a qualitative study of nine participants who were interviewed through a series of survey questions. The findings indicated a correlation of the head of schools beliefs and how they impacted the school in many ways related to mission, resources, relationships with the staff and the school board.

When studying ACSI Christian schools in Texas for indicators of engaging leadership, nineteen indicators were identified through the interviews of heads of schools. (Williams, 2008). These indicators were: role model, builder of a community, influencer, visible, communicate, use of emotional intelligence with self and others, discernment, a life learner, a visionary, positive attitude, natural in the position, spiritually led, creative, compassionate, high expectations, counselor, flexibility and strong work ethic. (Williams, p. 69). The development of this list demonstrates the many areas of impact by a head of school and places a high demand on these qualities required to effectively lead a Christian school. A further study suggested by this researcher included researching which of the nineteen indicators are most significant for ACSI
school leaders in other parts of the country. (Williams, p. 110). The research done by Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) found that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are the highest ranked of their survey statements as ranked by superintendents and school board chairpersons in Virginia. My study found that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness were the leadership qualities required of a head of school and the most significant from the head of school and the board chairman’s perspectives.

Summary of Studies

Many of the studies used in this literature review referred to the lack of research in regard to the leadership qualities needed for Heads of Schools for Christian schools. This study was conducted to add to the research which is currently available for ACSI Christian heads of school and the school boards.

There were studies of ACSI schools that surveyed boards or Heads of Schools or both to discover what leadership qualities are need to serve as a Head of School. Ranking the leadership skills was a part of Baldwin’s (2012) survey linked to sustainability of future Christian school leaders (Baldwin, 2012). Baldwin’s study was also a national study of ACSI schools with an enrollment of 500 or more students as this study plans to do. A study of ACSI schools in the continental United States with 800 or more students surveyed board members and CEOs (Heads of School) of those schools to determine the relationship between perceptions of how they perform and how they believe they should perform (Shelby, 2011). Indicators of engaging leadership in Texas developed a list of nineteen indicators of leadership for head of schools (Williams, 2008) some of those indicators (communication, vision, management of various areas of school life, etc.) are included in my study of leadership qualities of the head of school. The perceptions of board members and heads of schools related to governance (Adams, 2018) relates well to my study as it surveyed both board members and heads of schools although the perception is related to governance and my study looked at leadership qualities of the head of school.

An area of change and growth for the future is the development of online schools and learning programs. In 2014 a study looked at the leadership characteristics of an online school leader. The leadership qualities studied were those needed to manage day to day operations and to the leadership qualities related to instructional leadership for an online school. A finding that was unique was the ability of the lead administrator to
have a working knowledge of technical troubleshooting which impacts academic progress and the budget of the online school (English, 2014).

A study that included a quantitative survey methodology, surveyed ACSI schools of the Southeast Region. Teachers were asked to identify leadership qualities of their principals, which in some cases the principal also serves as the head of school (Barlow, 2015). The findings which were related to teacher job satisfaction, indicated enabling others to act was a significant predictor. While another survey of ACSI K-12 schools looking at leadership qualities, surveyed teachers and found heads of schools did well in acknowledging teachers’ expertise and teachers’ impact (Kirika, 2011). These are all qualities of leadership for heads of schools.

The Delphi Technique was utilized in a 2012 study of leadership skills identified to expand the leadership capacity and future for Christian school administrators. This was a national study of ACSI leaders from schools of 500 or more students, the same group of schools I plan to survey for my study. There were 111 leadership skills identified by the school leaders, which were then ranked as to the greatest impact on future K-12 school leaders and their success with trustworthy rated the highest (Baldwin, 2012). Many of the leadership qualities from Baldwin’s list are included in the list I will be asking head of school and school board chairs to rank as well.

Summarizing the studies that were read and reviewed, the findings were related to leadership in one capacity or another. Many were selected because they studied ACSI Christian schools. The populations studied varied with five of the studies being national studies. One study each for California, Texas, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest, Southeast, one included just the states of Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia, one did not identify a region and one studied an online school. The findings varied of course as they were related to the topic/research questions. The studies were both quantitative (7) and qualitative (4), one used both qualitative and quantitative and one used the Delphi Technique. This study is quantitative; all methodology studies are beneficial in the review. One study specified ACSI schools of 500 or more students in their requirements and was also national in scope.
Chapter Three
Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology that was used in the study. An explanation of the sampling technique, description of the survey used to collect data, the administration of the survey, and provide an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data are contained in this chapter. The methodology used was the same used by Thornton (2009) which was used initially by Wilson (2006). This study gathered the perspectives of the leadership characteristics of the head of school from current heads of schools and school board chairpersons of ACSI member K-12 schools with an enrollment of 500 or more students to determine similarities and differences between these two groups.

The following research questions served as the basis for the study:

1. What leadership characteristics do heads of school identify as essential for the position of head of school?
2. What leadership characteristics do school board chairpersons identify as essential for the position of head of school?
3. How do the perceptions of head of school leadership characteristics compare between school board chairpersons and head of school?

This study partially replicated a study conducted by Thornton at Virginia Polytechnic and State University in 2009 where he partially replicated a study done by Wilson at Arizona State University in 2006. Thornton (2009) was identifying essential leadership characteristics as determined by superintendents and school board chairpersons of Virginia’s public school districts. The difference for the current study is that the researcher studied heads of school and school board chairpersons of ACSI K-12 schools of 500 or more students nationally.

Research Design

A survey was used to gather data (revised from Thornton’s 2009 survey) to produce statistics regarding the perceptions of the leadership characteristics of heads of schools by surveying heads of schools and school board chairpersons. This was a quantitative study. Insuring the correct sampling was critical to the validity of the survey. It is important to develop an effective survey. Surveys or questionnaires are utilized to collect information that is not observable and inquire about the attitudes, experiences and feelings of those responding (Gall,
Borg and Gall, 1996). The questions asked are the key in the development of the appropriate survey. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistics was used.

**Population**

A national list of Christian schools with 500 or more students that hold membership in the Association of Christian Schools International was identified and provided by ACSI. Since the schools are identified as those K-12 schools with enrollments of five hundred or more students this limited the involvement of the association’s more than three thousand member schools. The first step was to identify the number of schools to be surveyed. Once that number was determined, the 174 schools were contacted and asked to participate.

The study includes responses from heads of school and their school board chairperson during the 2018-2019 school year. The names and addresses of the participating schools was obtained from the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) office in Colorado Springs, CO.

**Instrumentation**

The survey (see Appendix A) used was modified from the version used by Thornton for his 2009 dissertation that Thornton modified from Wilson’s 2006 dissertation. Dr. Thornton has provided consent to use his dissertation. The modifications include questions related specifically to Virginia and to public education. This revised survey was reviewed by a current cohort of doctoral students in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program at Virginia Tech, a current public school superintendent and a current head of school for a private faith-based school. This assisted in the validation of this survey instrument and provided revisions that were implemented to the survey.

Each of these jurors were asked the following questions:

1. Are the written instructions clear and concise?
2. Is the content of the statements on the survey clear and understandable?
3. Did you have any difficulty in rating each of the ten characteristics?
4. Do you have any comments or suggestions for improving the survey?

The survey consisted of two parts with two response structures. The first section has 19 statements regarding different leadership characteristics. Responses were noted by using a four-point Likert scale for each statement. The second part was a list of ten characteristics which the
responder ranked in order of importance one through ten, with one ranked as most important and 10 as the least important characteristic.

When developing his survey Thornton noted that Wilson’s design followed Fowler’s (1998) five principles for developing effective survey instruments. These principles are:

1. The strength of survey research is asking people about their first-hand experiences. This study asked questions about leadership characteristics of head of school.
2. Questions should be asked one at a time. Thornton (pg. 37) noted Wilson contends that his survey was written so the responders would answer each question before proceeding to the next.
3. A survey question should be worded so all responders are answering the same question. My survey was the same for heads of schools and school board chairpersons as conducted by Thornton.
4. All responders should understand the kind of answer that constitutes an adequate answer to a question. Clear directions were provided.
5. Survey instruments should be designed so that the tasks of reading questions, following instructions and recording answers are as easy as possible for the responders and again clear directions were provided.

Data Collection

The schools chosen were done in accordance with the enrollment stipulation of five hundred or more students in K-12 grades and those holding membership with the Association of Christian Schools International. The study’s findings were collected through a two-part survey sent to heads of schools and school board chairpersons of the selected schools. The survey was conducted electronically using Qualtrics. After the successful defense of the prospectus examination and Institutional Review Board’s approval the survey was sent with cover letter via email (see Appendices B and C). A four-week time frame was used to collect the data. After that time period a follow-up email was sent with a second cover letter and second copy of the survey to each school. Heads of school and school board chairpersons were asked via email (see Appendices B and C) again for their assistance in reaching the desired response rate.
Data Analysis

The data analysis included gathering the response data from the electronic survey company. The Likert scale used rated from 1 to 4 with 1=Strongly Disagree and 4=Strongly Agree. Each response was assigned a numerical value between 1 and 4 that corresponded with the Likert scale response rate. Data from the 19 questions using the Likert scale were totaled, combined and averaged for each group. The data from the leadership characteristics ranked list were totaled, combined, averaged and converted to percentages. The data were analyzed using statistical software.

Summary

The research methodology was of a quantitative design by using numerical indices and statistics to summarize the relationship among the variables. The survey instrument was modeled after Thornton’s (2009) survey and administered to ACSI heads of school and school board chairpersons of schools of five hundred or more students. The findings of this study can serve as another source of research in assisting heads of school and school boards in being more informed about the perceived leadership characteristics of an ACSI head of school.
Chapter Four
Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to identify the desired leadership characteristics of heads of schools as identified by school board chairs and heads of schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). The guiding questions to this study are:

1. What leadership characteristics do heads of school identify as essential for the position of head of school?
2. What leadership characteristics do school board chairpersons identify as essential for the position of head of school?
3. How do the perceptions of head of school leadership characteristics compare between the school board chairperson and the head of school?

The organization of this chapter is as follows: response rates of the survey, results of data collection, and the data collection analysis.

Response Rates

The results of the analysis of the data is based on responses to a two-part survey that was emailed by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) to heads of schools and their board chairs. The population for this study were ACSI schools of 500 or more students in grades K-12. There are 174 schools nationally which were listed as meeting these criteria. A total of 15 heads of schools and 6 board chairs that replied to the survey. This is a response rate of 8.6% for heads of school and a response rate of 3.4% for board chairs. This is response rate after the survey was sent twice to the 174 schools of 500 or more students in grades K-12.

Results of Data Collection

Research Question 1: What leadership characteristics do heads of school identify as essential for the position of head of school? Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to identify the mean responses for each of the first 19 questions on the survey. The survey questions were related to different characteristics and other roles of the heads of schools. A four-point Likert scale ranging from: (1 = Strongly Disagree; and 4 = Strongly Agree). The means and standard deviations from each of the heads of school responses for each question are presented in Table 1.
Analysis of the results from Table 1 revealed that most items received mean scores of 3 or 4, which are agree and strongly agree. The means indicate a general agreement with the statements. The survey question #5, “Personal and professional integrity, honesty and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the head of school” ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.00$), and #4, “head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success” ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.00$), and #6, “Effective communication with the board members, school staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in Head of School leadership” ($M = 3.93, SD = 0.25$) received the highest mean responses from heads of school. The questions with the lowest composite mean scores were question #10, “Persuasion is the ultimate tool for a head of school in Christian education”, ($M = 2.33, SD = 0.47$), followed by #12, “school board turnover affects head of school turnover”, ($M = 2.80, SD = 0.65$), and #1, “In the current educational environment, a head of school must be an instructional leader”, ($M = 3.07, SD = 0.85$). Analysis of the standard deviation of each mean response shows the lowest degree of variability were the responses with the highest mean responses of the heads of school. There was no variance in the response to two of the survey questions which both had a mean score of four. Those were the question #4 related to personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness as essential leadership characteristics for the head of school and #5 head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success. The highest degree of variability was question #2 experience in Christian education is essential for the position of head of school which had one of the lower mean scores at 3.13.
Table 1

*Mean Responses of Heads of School to the Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership characteristics for the Head of School.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School-School Board relations can have an impact on achieving</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and sustaining school-wide success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students,</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the community is essential in Head of School leadership.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations,</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and vision are the areas of responsibility inherent in the Head of School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a clear vision for teaching and learning is critical to Head</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of School leadership.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School must be comfortable with managing media relations,</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public meetings and other pressures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program must be a priority for the Head of School at all times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School are perceived to be leaders of the community as opposed</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to being led by the community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School must be adept at both developing both permanent and</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporary coalitions with often disparate community groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Head of School’s ability to articulate an instructional vision has a</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>significant relationship to the school’s academic success.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School should inspire a shared vision for the comprehensive</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integration of technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively managing “buildings, busses, books and monies” are essential</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the Head of School.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Christian education is essential for the position of Head of School.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School ensure that curricular design, instructional strategies and learning environments integrate appropriate technologies to maximize teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School leadership has been significantly influenced by the accountability to the school board.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School ensure that curricular design, instructional strategies and learning environments integrate appropriate technologies to maximize teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the current educational environment, a Head of School must be an instructional leader.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board turnover affects Head of School turnover.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion is the ultimate tool for a Head of School in Christian education.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section two of the survey instrument asked the heads of school to rank in order of importance ten head of school leadership characteristics, with the value of 1 representing the most important characteristic and 10 representing the lowest of the characteristics. The rank order of the ten head of school leadership characteristics is provided in Table 2.

Heads of school ranked visionary leader \((M = 1.91, SD = 1)\), team builder \((M = 3.18, SD = 1.59)\), and effective school board relations \((M = 4.36, SD = 2.27)\) as the three most essential leadership characteristics. School law \((M = 8.18, SD = 1.99)\), intellect \((M = 7.82, SD = 2.08)\) and professional development experience \((M = 7.64, SD = 1.72)\) as the three least essential leadership characteristics. The lowest degree of variability occurred in the top ranked characteristic, visionary leader \((M = 1.91, SD = 1)\), and the highest degree of variability occurred in a mid-ranked characteristic, Christian school experience \((M = 5.09, SD = 3.20)\).

The mode of the top characteristic, visionary leader was 1, meaning this was the value selected most often. It was also the highest percentage of number one rankings at 45.5%. The
highest mode in one of the lower ranking characteristics, intellect, was 10 with the percentage of 36.3% of the responses.

Table 2

*Ranked Means of Heads of School Leadership Characteristics by Heads of School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Heads of School (n=15)</th>
<th>Ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leader</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Builder</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Board Relations</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian School Experience</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Community Builder</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Finance Experience</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Experience</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Law Experience</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 2: *What leadership characteristics do school board chairpersons identify as essential for the position of head of school?* Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to identify the mean responses for each of the first 19 questions on the survey. The survey questions were related to different characteristics and other roles of the heads of schools. A four-point Likert scale ranging from: (1=Strongly Disagree; and 4=Strongly Agree). The means and standard deviations from each of the board chairperson responses for each question are presented in Table 3.

As was the case with the head of school responses the data presented in Table 3 shows that most items received mean scores between 3 and 4. This represents responses that range from agree to strongly agree. The highest two mean responses from the school board chairpersons were #5, personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential characteristics for the head of school ($M = 4.00, SD = 0.00$), and #7, developing and managing resources to support the instructional program must be a priority for the head of school at all times ($M = 4.00,$
The third highest response was the same for four of the survey questions, #8, establishing a clear vision for teaching and learning is critical to head of school leadership, #6, effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in the head of school leadership ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.37$), #4, head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.37$), and #2, experience in Christian education is essential for the position of head of school ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.37$). The items that received the lowest mean scores from the school board chairpersons were survey question #1, in the current educational environment, a head of school must be an instructional leader ($M = 2.5, SD = 0.50$), #10, persuasion is the ultimate tool for a head of school in Christian education ($M = 2.67, SD = 0.47$), and #12, school board turnover affects head of school turnover ($M = 2.83, SD = 0.69$).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the Head of School.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional program must be a priority for the Head of School at all times.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Christian education is essential for the position of Head of School.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School-School Board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in Head of School leadership.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a clear vision for teaching and learning is critical to Head of School leadership.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Head of School’s ability to articulate an instructional vision has a significant relationship to the school’s academic success.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations, and vision are the areas of responsibility inherent in the Head of School position.</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School leadership has been significantly influenced by accountability to the school board.</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School foster an environment and culture conducive to the realization of that vision.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School must be comfortable with managing media relations, public meetings and other pressures.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School are perceived to be leaders of the community as opposed to being led by the community.</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School should inspire a shared vision for the comprehensive integration of technology.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School ensure that curricular design, instructional strategies and learning environments integrate appropriate technologies to maximize teaching and learning.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School must be adept at both developing both permanent and temporary coalitions with often disparate community groups.</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectively managing “buildings, busses, books and monies” are essential to the Head of School.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board turnover affects Head of School turnover.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion is the ultimate tool for a Head of School in Christian education.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the current educational environment, a Head of School must be an instructional leader.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section two of the survey instrument asked the school board chairpersons to rank in order of importance ten head of school leadership characteristics, with the value of 1 representing the most important characteristic and 10 representing the lowest of the characteristics. The rank order of the ten head of school leadership characteristics is provided in Table 4.

School board chairpersons ranked Christian school experience ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.74$), team builder ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 2.10$), and visionary leader ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 3.16$) as the three most essential leadership characteristics. School law experience ($M = 7.60$, $SD = 3.32$), school finance experience ($M = 7.20$, $SD = 0.75$) and instructional leader ($M = 6.80$, $SD = 2.48$) as the three least essential leadership characteristics. The lowest degree of variability occurred in one of the three lowest essential characteristics, school finance experience ($M = 7.20$, $SD = 0.75$), and the highest degree of variability occurred in the lowest ranked leadership characteristic, school law experience ($M = 7.60$, $SD = 3.32$).

The mode of the top characteristic, Christian school experience was 1, meaning this was the value selected most often. It was also the highest percentage of number one rankings at 50.0%. The highest mode in one of the lower ranking characteristics, school law experience, was 9 with the percentage of 50.0% of the responses.
Table 4

*Ranked Means of Heads of School Leadership Characteristics by School Board Chairpersons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>School Board Chairpersons (n=6)</th>
<th>Ranked M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian School Experience</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Builder</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leader</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Board Relations</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Community Builder</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Experience</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Finance Experience</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Law Experience</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: *How do the perceptions of head of school leadership characteristics compare between the school board chairperson and the head of school?*

Table 5, located on page 54, provides a comparison of the mean responses of both heads of school and board chairpersons for comparisons of the 19 survey questions as answered according to the Likert scale. The review of mean responses of the heads of school and board chairpersons shows that the three highest mean responses to the characteristics were: (1) personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the head of school; (2) head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success; and (3) effective communication with board members, staff, parents, and the community is essential in head of school leadership. The three lowest mean responses were: (1) persuasion is the ultimate tool for a head of School in Christian education, (2) school board turnover affects head of school turnover, and (3) In the current educational
environment the head of school must be an instructional leader. The findings also show that in 10 of the 19 statements, the mean value of the head of school responses was higher than the board chairpersons and in 8 of the 19 the board chairpersons’ responses were higher than the head of school responses. There was one mean response that was the same for both the head of school and for the board chairpersons.

Independent samples $t$ tests were used to determine if significant differences existed in the mean responses of the head of schools and the board chairpersons for each of the 19 survey statements. $T$ tests for equality of means between the scores of both groups at the 0.05 confidence level indicated that a significant difference exists between heads of school and board chairpersons regarding developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional program must be a priority for the head of school at all times. There was a significantly higher level of agreement with board chairpersons ($M = 4.00$) when compared to heads of school ($M = 3.53$), $t = 2.179$, $p = 0.021$ regarding developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional program must be a priority for the head of school.

Table 6 contains the comparative results of the ranked means for the 10 leadership characteristics for a head of school. Respondents of both groups ranked each of the characteristics using a rank ordering system where 1 was perceived as the most important and 10 was perceived as the least important. The characteristic ranked the highest by Heads of School was visionary leader ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.00$) and the characteristic ranked highest by board chairpersons was Christian school experience ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.74$). The heads of school second highest rated characteristic as team builder ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.59$) whereas the board chairpersons ranked visionary leader ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 3.16$) and team builder ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 2.10$) tied for the second highest ranking. The third highest ranking from the heads of school was effective school board relations ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 2.27$) and there was agreement with the board chairpersons as they ranked this characteristic ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 2.64$) the next highest of the characteristics, although it is ranked fourth due to the tie for second most important for board chairpersons between visionary leader and team builder.

School law experience was ranked tenth by the heads of school ($M = 8.18$, $SD = 1.99$) and board chairpersons ($M = 7.60$, $SD = 3.32$). Intellect was ranked ninth by heads of school ($M = 7.82$, $SD = 2.08$) and school finance experience was ranked ninth by the board chairpersons ($M = 7.20$, $SD = 0.75$). The eighth rank characteristic for heads of school was professional
development experience \((M = 7.64, \ SD = 1.72)\) whereas the board chairpersons ranked instructional leader eighth \((M = 6.80, \ SD = 2.73)\). Overall the heads of school ranked 4 of the 10 characteristics higher than the board chairpersons, board chairpersons ranked 3 of 10 characteristics higher than the heads of school and 3 of 10 were ranked the same by each group.

Table 5

*Mean Responses of Heads of School and School Board Chairpersons to the Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>HOS</th>
<th>Chair</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the current educational environment, a Head of School must be an instructional leader.</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.450</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Christian education is essential for the position of Head of School.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>-1.552</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School leadership has been significantly influenced by the accountability to the board.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>-1.456</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of School-School Board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.648</td>
<td>0.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the Head of School.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>65535</td>
<td>#NUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication with board members, staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in Head of School leadership.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.678</td>
<td>0.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional program must be a priority for the Head of School at all times.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-2.179</td>
<td>0.021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing a clear vision for teaching and learning is critical to Head of School leadership.</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>-0.830</td>
<td>0.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Head of School’s ability to articulate an instructional vision has significant relationship to the school’s academic success.</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>-1.514</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
The data analysis of the responses to the third research question produced means and standard deviations for heads of school and board chairpersons for each of the ten leadership characteristics. Differences between the heads of school and the board chairpersons were identified using an independent samples $t$ tests which is presented in Table 7. This table shows
the differences between the individual means of the heads of school and board chairpersons in response to their ranking of these leadership characteristics. Significant differences in the perceptions of heads of school and board chairpersons existed in school finance and visionary leader. The heads of school ($M = 5.82$) viewed school finance significantly more important than board chairpersons ($M = 7.20$, $t = -1.798$, $p = 0.047$). The heads of school viewed ($M = 1.91$) visionary leader significantly more important than board chairpersons ($M = 4.00$, $t = -1.859$, $p = 0.042$).

Table 6

*Ranked Mean of Head of School Leadership Characteristics by Both Respondent Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Heads of Schools (n=15)</th>
<th>Board Chairs (n=6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leader</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Builder</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Board Relations</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian School Experience</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Community Builder</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Finance Experience</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Experience</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Law Experience</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Comparison of Perceived Importance of Head of School Leadership Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Head of School (n=15)</th>
<th>Board Chair (n=6)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>-0.733</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Finance Experience</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>-1.798</td>
<td>0.047*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Experience</td>
<td>7.64</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Board Relations</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>-0.317</td>
<td>0.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leader</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-1.859</td>
<td>0.042*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Law Experience</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>0.406</td>
<td>0.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/Community Builder</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>-0.364</td>
<td>0.361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian School Experience</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.649</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Builder</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>-0.806</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.661</td>
<td>0.059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates significant difference at the .05 level

Summary

This study identified essential leadership characteristics for heads of school as perceived by the heads of school and board chairpersons at ACSI Christian schools with enrollments of five hundred or more students. ACSI determined there were 174 schools meeting these criteria. Of those 174 schools who were sent the survey 15 heads of school and 6 board chairpersons provided responses. This is a low response rate due to the high number of ACSI surveys sent at that time to schools. The response rate makes it impossible to generalize the responses to the population. Statistical and descriptive analyses were conducted to determine the perceptions of the respondents regarding the importance of these leadership characteristics for the role of head of school. Also, statistical analyses were conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the perceptions by the heads of school and the board chairpersons for each
of the characteristics. Chapter five will provide additional discussion of the data, the analysis of the data and discuss the study’s findings and other implications for future studies.
Chapter Five

Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify the desired leadership characteristics of heads of schools as identified by school board chairs and heads of schools who are members of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). This was done to better understand those characteristics needed by a head of school as determined by the heads of school and the board chairpersons of schools having membership in the ACSI. Respondents read 19 statements regarding the importance of leadership characteristics for a head of school. They responded by using a 4-point Likert scale which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The respondents also ranked 10 head of school leadership characteristics based on their importance. The survey was sent to the heads of schools and school board chairpersons of the 174 schools identified by ACSI as having 500 or more students. Of the 174 potential schools 15 heads of school and 6 school board chairpersons responded, representing a response rate of 8.6% for heads of school and 3.4% for school board chairpersons.

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What leadership characteristics do heads of school identify as essential for the position of head of school?
2. What leadership characteristics do school board chairpersons identify as essential for the position of head of school?
3. How do the perceptions of head of school leadership characteristics compare between the school board chairperson and the head of school?

Emergent Themes

The survey results indicated that all of the heads of school and school board chairpersons agreed that it is essential for heads of school to be able to demonstrate the characteristics of a visionary leader, team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience as the top four leadership characteristics from part two of the survey. The results indicate that a head of school must be able to demonstrate a clear vision, must be capable as a team builder, have effective school board relations and have experience serving in a Christian school.
Summary of Findings

Finding 1. Heads of school and school board chairpersons ranked visionary leader, team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience as the four most essential leadership characteristics. These were the highest ranked means for both head of school and board chairpersons although not the same order: heads of school - visionary leader ($M = 1.91$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 4.00$); heads of school - team builder ($M = 3.18$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 4.00$); heads of school - effective school board relations ($M = 4.36$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 4.80$), heads of school - Christian school experience ($M = 5.09$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 2.40$). Visionary leader and team builder were ranked in the top two by both heads of school and school board chairpersons. Visionary leader and effective school board relations as essential were supported by Thornton (2009) and Green (2017). Additionally, Price (2005) stated that a stronger relationship between the head of school and board members are traits of successful schools. Studies by Monroe (2005), Harrison and Allen (2012), Rough (2008) and Coley (2015) stressed the importance of a visionary leader. Coley (2015) supported effective school board relations and stated that the relationship with the board is important to any successful head of school.

Finding 2. Heads of school and school board chairpersons ranked school law experience lowest in the rankings than other leadership characteristics. Both the heads of schools and school board chairpersons lowest ranked mean score for ranking leadership characteristics from 1-10 was for school law experience as number 10, heads of school ($M = 8.18$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 7.60$). This was also supported by Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) where school law experience was ranked ninth or tenth by superintendents and board chairs.

Finding 3: School board chairs responses ranked Christian school experience as the most essential leadership characteristic. This was the highest mean score ($M = 2.40$) when ranking the ten characteristics from 1-10 by school board chairpersons. The response to the survey question, experience in Christian education is essential for the position of head of school, by school board chairpersons ranked Christian school experience in their top three responses ($M = 3.83$). No direct research as to the Christian school experience survey question but Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) asked a survey question as to experience in public education being
essential for the position of superintendent, with both reporting school board chairs ranking its importance higher than the superintendents’ findings.

Finding 4: Heads of school and school board chairpersons agreed that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the head of school. Both the heads of school and school board chairpersons were in agreement and ranked this as the highest of all the survey questions \((M = 4.00, SD = 0.00)\). This is supported by Thornton (2009), superintendents \((M = 4.00)\) and board chairs \((M = 3.97)\) which were the top means to the survey statement and Green (2017), where superintendents \((M = 3.83)\) and board chairs \((M = 3.91)\) ranked this the second highest survey statement.

Finding 5: Heads of school and school board chairpersons believe that head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success. Heads of school \((M = 4.00)\) and school board chairpersons \((M = 3.83)\) agreed that the head of school-school board relations has an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success. Effective school board relations was ranked third by heads of school \((M = 4.36, SD = 2.27)\) and fourth by school board chairpersons \((M = 4.80, SD = 2.64)\) in the list of ten head of school leadership characteristics. Price (2005) noted that developing a stronger relationship between the head of school and the board members are traits of a successful school. It is important to any successful head of school that there is a good relationship with the board was submitted by Coley (2015). Selby (2011) stated that knowing the expectations of the board assists the head of school to clearly understand their role.

Finding 6: Heads of school and school board chairpersons believed that effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in head of school leadership. The heads of school \((M = 3.93)\) and school board chairpersons \((M = 3.83)\) agreed and each group ranked this in their top three essential leadership characteristics for the head of school. Heads of school \((M = 5.27)\) and school board chairpersons \((M = 5.80)\) ranked school/community builder as fifth in the ten head of school leadership characteristics. These findings align with Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) where both studies ranked this as one of the top two survey responses to leadership survey statements. Dolson (2014) indicated in his findings that head of school-board relations impacted the school’s mission, resources and other school relationships.
Finding 7: Heads of school responses indicated that curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations, and vision are the areas of responsibility inherent in the head of school position. Heads of school ranked ($M = 3.80$) curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations, and vision as essential areas of responsibility for the head of school. The importance of gaining consensus on vision appear to strengthen the relationship between the head of school and their board was argued by Coley (2015). Baldwin (2012) supported this finding in that the head of school and board relationship is an important factor to enhance the mission of the school. Harrison and Allen (2012) also supported this finding as vision was ranked in the top two key topics in a ranking of twenty-two leadership attributes of a head of school.

Finding 8: Heads of school and school board chairpersons agreed that the one of the lowest leadership characteristics is that persuasion is the ultimate tool for a head of school in Christian education. Heads of school ($M = 2.33$) and school board chairpersons ($M = 2.67$) ranked persuasion as the ultimate tool for a head of school in Christian education as either the lowest or next to the lowest mean scores for leadership characteristic for a head of school. Thornton (2009) and Green (2017) support this finding as both studies ranked persuasion as the ultimate tool for a superintendent in the bottom two responses to their survey statements regarding superintendent leadership. Williams (2008) found nineteen indicators of leadership, none of the nineteen aligned with the use of persuasion by a head of school.

Discussion of Findings

This study was modeled after Thornton’s (2009) study of public school superintendents in Virginia and their school board chairpersons. The findings of this study were consistent with Thornton’s findings, with the most noted exception of agreement being the head of school’s instructional leadership being more highly rated in Thornton’s study. The goal was to study ACSI Christian schools heads of school and their school board chairpersons’ perceptions of the leadership qualities of a head of school. The conclusions of this study were related to the most and least essential leadership characteristics for the head of school. Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived visionary leader, team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience as essential leadership characteristics. Heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived that personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness and effective communication with board members, staff, parents, students, and the community is
essential in head of school leadership. Heads of school and school board chairpersons believe that head of school-school board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success. Both heads of school and school board chairpersons perceived school law experience is not an essential leadership characteristic and the use of persuasion is not the ultimate tool for a head of school in Christian education.

The conclusions of this study support visionary leadership, being a team builder, having effective school board relations and experience in Christian schools as being the most essential leadership characteristics for a head of school. This conclusion of visionary leadership is supported by Thornton (2009), Green (2017), Monroe (2005), Harrison and Allen (2012), and Rough (2008). The study by Coley (2015) supports effective school-board relations. Both heads of school and school board chairpersons believe the head of school-school board relationship can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.

Heads of school when ranking the 10 leadership characteristics from the second portion of the survey from 1 to 10 with 1 the most important, ranked visionary leader (M = 1.91) as the most important leadership characteristic. School board chairs ranked Christian school experience (M = 2.40) as the most important leadership characteristic of the 10 characteristics. Both groups were in agreement that visionary leadership and Christian school experience were in the top 4 of the 10 leadership characteristics. Visionary leadership and Christian school experience are characteristics necessary for the head of school in an ACSI Christian school along with the leadership characteristics of team building and effective school board relations.

Implication of Findings

The position of head of school in an ACSI Christian school continues to develop. The finding of Coley (2015) regarding the practices of Christian school boards that impact heads of school noted the failure of a productive relationship as the most significant concern in the Christian school movement of this decade. Coley added that a stronger relationship between a school board and head of school would be assisted by a clear understanding of the leadership characteristics for the position of head of school.

This study adds to the understanding as perceived by heads of school and school board chairpersons. The study’s finding can be used for those aspiring to the position of head of school as they recognize the leadership characteristics needed to succeed and by school boards as they hire heads of school.
Implication 1. Current heads of school and those who aspire to the position of head of school should develop skills/training in visionary leadership, as a team builder, effective school board relations and Christian school experience (supporting Finding 1, 3, 5).

Visionary leadership is an essential leadership characteristic for a head of school. The head of school must be capable of building a team for leading the school coupled with effective school board relationships and those desiring this position should have training in regard to these characteristics. Christian colleges with graduate programs for school leadership should consider training in these characteristics. The experience in Christian schools is highly valued by school board chairpersons and those who desire to be a head of school should recognize this and seek experience as a Christian school educator. Both the head of school and school board chairperson should maintain good relations with one another as it has an impact on the achieving and sustaining success as a school.

Implication 2. Heads of school and school board chairpersons view school law experience as not an essential leadership characteristic. The head of school and school board chairperson should consider hiring an attorney with an understanding and experience with school law (supporting Finding 2). The characteristic of school law experience is viewed as not essential in the role of head of school although the importance of adhering to school law is important. There will be school law matters to address and the head of school and the school board chairperson when hiring an attorney for the school should consider someone with experience and an understanding of school law.

Implication 3. The head of school should demonstrate the characteristics of personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness. School board chairpersons should hold the head of school accountable for demonstrating these essential characteristics (supporting Finding 4). All educators in Christian school should demonstrate these characteristics, the head of school position should lead in demonstrating these characteristics. The intentional practice of these characteristics leads to a school environment of trust, helping build a foundation of strong school leadership.

Implication 4. Heads of school and school board chairpersons should maintain effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students and the community (supporting Finding 6). Each part of the school community should be communicated with regularly and effectively. This is critical in building relationships and trust in
the school leadership. Effective communication keeps the school community involved in understanding the needs of the school and how they can respond to those needs.

Implication 5. A head of school should work to lead with vision, good relations with the school board and develop good skills with curriculum, finance and professional development practices (supporting Finding 7). The essential leadership characteristics of vision and good board relations reoccur here. The vision for curriculum, finance and professional development are an important part of the head of school’s leadership. Those aspiring to the position of head of school should acquire skills and training in the areas of curriculum, finance and professional development as they are essential in the development of a successful school.

Implication 6. (supporting Finding 8). Heads of school need to look to ways other than persuasion in their leadership practices. Practicing good communication with the school board chairperson, board members and all others in the school community helps to eliminate the need to use persuasion. Open and honest communication with transparency can be more effective than persuasion.

Recommendations for Future Research

Possible future research is proposed in the following list of recommendations.

1. Conduct a study that replicates this study in order to compare the results by surveying ACSI schools with fewer than 500 students.
2. Increase the sample size by including all size ACSI schools, not limited to those with 500 or more students.
3. Expand the setting by including all Christian schools, not limited to only those who are members of ACSI.
4. Consider a study that includes comparisons with studies of public, private (non-Christian) regarding the leadership qualities of a head of school.
5. Consider a study that includes the study conducted by Thornton (2009) to note comparisons and differences.

Reflections

As someone who has served in head of school positions in Christian schools for nearly thirty years this study was important to me. My desire to see improvement in the relationship between heads of schools and the school boards comes from hearing too often of schools where
the relationship between the two is not strong. After reading Thornton’s (2009) study I began to consider what a similar study of Christian schools would provide. Unfortunately, the response rate is much less than I had hoped it would be but I do think there is value in the data that resulted from the study. This was extremely rewarding to me professionally and personally.

It was good to see alignment with other studies of Christian schools and with Thornton’s study. As a head of a Christian school these findings are useful to my daily leading of a school and encourages me in my responsibilities. The low response rate makes it impossible to generalize the responses to the population, but this first effort to study the relationship among heads of schools and school board chairpersons in identifying the leadership characteristics for a head of school will be a valuable model for future research.
References


Appendix A

Head of School/School Board Chair Leadership Survey

Section 1:

Using a Likert Scale 1-4, where one (1) represents Strongly Disagree, two (2) represents Disagree, three (3) represents Agree and four (4) represents Strongly Agree, please respond to the following statements by circling your choice:

1. In the current educational environment, a Head of School must be an instructional leader.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

2. Experience in Christian education is essential for the position of Head of School.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

3. Head of School leadership has been significantly influenced by the accountability to the school board.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

4. Head of School-School Board relations can have an impact on achieving and sustaining school-wide success.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

5. Personal and professional integrity, honesty, and fairness are essential leadership characteristics for the Head of School.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

6. Effective communication with board members, school staff, parents, students, and the community is essential in Head of School leadership.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

7. Developing and managing resources necessary to support the instructional program must be a priority for the Head of School at all times.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

8. Establishing a clear vision for teaching and learning is critical to Head of School leadership.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree

9. The Head of School’s ability to articulate an instructional vision has a significant relationship to the school’s academic success.
   1-Strongly Disagree   2-Disagree   3-Agree   4-Strongly Agree
10. Persuasion is the ultimate tool for a Head of School in Christian education.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

11. Effectively managing “buildings, busses, books and monies” are essential to the Head of School.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

12. School Board turnover affects Head of School turnover.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

13. Heads of School are perceived to be leaders of the community as opposed to being led by the community.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

14. Curriculum, finance, professional development, school board relations, and vision are the areas of responsibility inherent in the Head of School position.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

15. Heads of School should inspire a shared vision for the comprehensive integration of technology.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

16. Heads of School foster an environment and culture conducive to the realization of that vision.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

17. Heads of School ensure that curricular design, instructional strategies and learning environments integrate appropriate technologies to maximize teaching and learning.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

18. Heads of School must be comfortable with managing media relations, public meetings and other pressures.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree

19. Heads of School must be adept at both developing both permanent and temporary coalitions with often disparate community groups.
   1-Strongly Disagree  2-Disagree  3-Agree  4-Strongly Agree
Section 2:

Please rank in order the characteristics you believe to be necessary for the position of Head of School. The most essential/important should receive the numerical value of one (1) and the lowest should receive the numerical value ten (10). All characteristics must be ranked with one of the remaining values from two through nine (2-9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Ranking (1-10):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Finance Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development Experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective School Board Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leader</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Law Experience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>School/Community Builder</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian School Experience</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Builder</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*You may add other essential characteristics that you deem vital for the position of Head of School in the space provided below.*
Appendix B
Letter of Invitation to School Board Chair

Clifton C. Williams, Jr.
15024 Manor Gate Court
Midlothian, VA 23112

XXXXXX XX, 2019

Dear School Board Chair,

My name is Clifton C. Williams, Jr. and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Educational and Leadership and Policy Studies program at Virginia Polytechnic and State University. In addition, I am currently serving as the Head of School for Richmond Christian School in Chesterfield, Virginia. My purpose in writing to you is to seek your participation in completing a survey to determine the essential leadership characteristics that practicing Head of Schools and school board chairs define as necessary for ACSI Head of Schools which have an enrollment of 500 or more students.

The results of the study will provide information of interest to practicing and aspiring Heads of Schools, school boards and others in ACSI as well as add to the literature in the field. The questionnaire has been reviewed by a cohort of doctoral students, a public school superintendent, and a Head of School for a private Christian school.

If you agree to participate, please answer the survey through the link provided. All responses are kept confidential. As such, no individual responses will be identified when analyzing the data or during the reporting of results. It would help if your response could be completed by XXXXXX XX, 2019. The success of the study depends on your timely participation. I would like to thank you in advance for participating.

Thank you again for taking the time to assist me in this research study.

Blessings,

Clifton C. Williams, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix C
Letter of Invitation to Head of School

Clifton C. Williams, Jr.
15024 Manor Gate Court
Midlothian, VA 23112

XXXXXX XX, 2019

Dear Head of School,

My name is Clifton C. Williams, Jr. and I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Educational and Leadership and Policy Studies program at Virginia Polytechnic and State University. In addition, I am currently serving as the Head of School for Richmond Christian School in Chesterfield, Virginia. My purpose in writing to you is to seek your participation in completing a survey to determine the essential leadership characteristics that practicing Head of Schools and school board chairs define as necessary for ACSI Head of Schools which have an enrollment of 500 or more students.

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Blessings,

Clifton C. Williams, Jr.
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix D

Training in Human Subjects Certificate