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INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HEADS' SELF-EFFICACY AND GOVERNANCE:
AN INTERVENTION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

Joshua Ashley Garrett

Director: Dr. Lars Bjork, Professor of Educational Leadership Studies

Lexington, Kentucky

2021

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HEADS' SELF-EFFICACY AND GOVERNANCE: AN INTERVENTION

As international school heads (ISHs) advance through the school leadership pipeline, many find the transition to their new roles and responsibilities as an executive leader difficult, and as a result they struggle to fulfill the expectations of their governing board. In conversations with ISHs in the International Schools Organization (ISO), a pseudonym, several attributed this problem to the lack of preservice, executive leadership training. Most ISO school heads were trained as teacher-leaders and school principals. They excelled in these roles and were consequently promoted to executive leadership. However, very few received formal training in executive leadership, as required of most United States (US) school superintendents and private independent school heads, meaning they often begin their tenures at a disadvantage. This study used a mixed-methods action research (MMAR) approach to increase the level of self-efficacy of ISO ISHs regarding organizational and school governance. This project found that a virtual community of practice (CoP) using targeted case studies may serve to increase the perceived self-efficacy of the participants.

KEYWORDS: International Education, Governance, Self-Efficacy, Head of School, School Leadership

Joshua Ashley Garrett

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INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HEADS' SELF-EFFICACY AND GOVERNANCE:
AN INTERVENTION

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(DEDICATION)

I dedicate this to my children, Annabelle, Ava Raye, Turner, and Tobias. I want them to grow up in a world where they can expect to achieve whatever goals they set for themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was completed during the global COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted the lives of everyone around the world. One of the most impacted segments of society was that of education. I want to acknowledge the herculean effort made by all members of my dissertation committee as they shifted workspaces and adjusted living arrangements. I especially want to thank Dr. Lars Bjork for his steadfast guidance and patience with me and the circumstances thrust upon us all. I also want to acknowledge my study participants, who were also colleagues of mine in the ISO. They committed valuable time and depleted their mental energy to participate in this study while leading school transitions to online/on-campus and all variations of learning in between. Their dedication to their profession has inspired me to press on during the most difficult moments of the past year.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

During the summer of 2019, I had the opportunity to attend a conference hosted by the Academy for International School Heads (AISH). The AISH is the preeminent international school head association that, according to its website, was founded “for heads, by heads,” and its mission is to serve “International School Heads through focused advocacy, support, and professional development” (AISH Mission & Vision). At the conference, I talked informally with the Executive Director of AISH, as well as many international school heads (ISHs) to identify the most significant challenges faced by the association and its members serving in schools around the world. Over coffee during a break and around a table during lunches, school heads related their greatest professional challenges. One of the most important issues that emerged was the short tenure of ISHs (three to five years), its causes, and its deleterious effect on schools. Many school heads commented that the career pattern of ISHs is often influenced by their availability and school-based necessity rather than preservice, executive leadership preparation. Several observed that many newly appointed ISHs find themselves unprepared to perform a wide range of professional roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding maintaining effective relations with their school’s governing board. This mixed-methods action research (MMAR) study focuses on increasing the level of self-efficacy among ISHs in working with their respective school governing boards through in-service professional development.

In this chapter, I discuss the context of the study, the key stakeholders, the role of the researcher, the overall MMAR design, the diagnosis of the problem of practice, and the literature review. In Chapter 2, I outline the MMAR plan. In Chapter 3, I present the results and analysis of the MMAR intervention to address the identified problem of practice.

Context

This study took place in the International Schools Organization (ISO), which is a pseudonym. This organization was chosen because it is where I currently work. The ISO is a nonprofit organization based in Europe. It has approximately 35 P12 schools throughout the world that serve the diplomatic and international business communities. School enrollment ranges from 30 students to 1,500 students. The ISO utilizes an outcomes-based approach to education and has developed its own academic standards and curriculum for each grade level in every school. Standards are often aligned with those developed in the United States (US), such as Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. Graduates of ISO schools attend universities throughout the world; however, the majority enroll in North American and European institutions of higher education.

Although the student population is diverse (ethnically, nationality, religiously, etc.) in all the schools, the senior school administrators are predominantly white (75%), male (70%), and citizens of either the US or Canada. The ISO often internally promotes teachers to principals, and principals to school heads, providing them with training prior to taking up the new positions. The headship training primarily focuses on reporting procedures and how to use the proprietary financial software.

Most ISO schools are in cities with a US State Department presence. The relationship with the US State Department is important to ISO schools. Many ISO schools are US-assisted schools and receive an annual grant from the US Government, as well as access to other grants (i.e., Soft Target grant and COVID-19 grant). These schools serve many US Government-dependent children throughout the world.

Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in this action research project are the ISO, its member schools, and the school heads who participated in the research project and who may benefit from the intervention. Additionally, the US Department of Overseas Schools is a stakeholder in this project, as they are especially keen to see international schools improve. Finally, the schools presently led by the participating school heads and those they may lead in the future may benefit.

The ISO and member schools. Leadership development for the ISO and its member schools is increasingly becoming an area of emphasis. If school leaders within the organization are sufficiently prepared to lead their schools, the schools should be better led. The ISO schools will benefit directly from a successful intervention focusing on improving the leadership of their school heads.

Participating school heads. The heads of school who participated in the MMAR gained new skills, considered new perspectives, and deepened professional relationships. It is my expectation that their participation increased their ability and confidence to lead their schools.

US Department of Overseas Schools. The US Department of Overseas Schools has partnered with ISO schools throughout the world. The Department is the largest

stakeholder for ISO schools globally. The US State Department, of which the Department of Overseas Schools is attached, has a stake in ISO schools being excellent learning communities. One of the most important questions State Department families ask when considering a transfer to a post is about the schools in the city. As ISO leaders develop and ISO schools continue to improve, the US State Department will benefit by being able to staff their embassies and consulates with the people who they think will best serve US interests abroad. Having a quality international school option locally removes one of the biggest areas of concern for US State Department families weighing their post choices.

Researcher Role

I began my career as a middle- and high-school social studies teacher with the ISO. I was promoted to deputy head and principal at the International School of Eastern Europe (pseudonym). After that, I was promoted to my current position as the head of school at the International School of the Balkans (pseudonym), both ISO member schools. As an ISO school head, my organizational responsibilities include budget preparation and implementation, educational program oversight, staff and faculty evaluation, community relations, implementation of the strategic plan, organizational and local governing board relations, as well as other responsibilities. In addition, I am a member of the AISH and an active participant in the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE). Thus, I am connected to ISHs throughout the world. As an ISO school head, I am a colleague of the research participants in this MMAR project.

Study Design

This study follows Ivankova's (2015) framework for an MMAR project. There are six phases: Phase I – Diagnosis, Phase II – Reconnaissance, Phase III – Planning, Phase

IV – Acting, Phase V – Evaluating Action, and Phase VI – Monitoring and Revising Action. In Phase I, a specific problem of practice is identified. In Phase II, reconnaissance data are collected to answer the research questions. In Phase III, an action is planned using the data from Phase II. Phase IV is the execution of the action plan. Phase V involves collecting data postintervention and evaluating the results as they relate to the research questions. In Phase VI, meta-inferences from the data are interpreted and future steps recommended (Ivankova, 2015).

MMAR Study Plan for “International school heads’ self-efficacy in school governance: an intervention

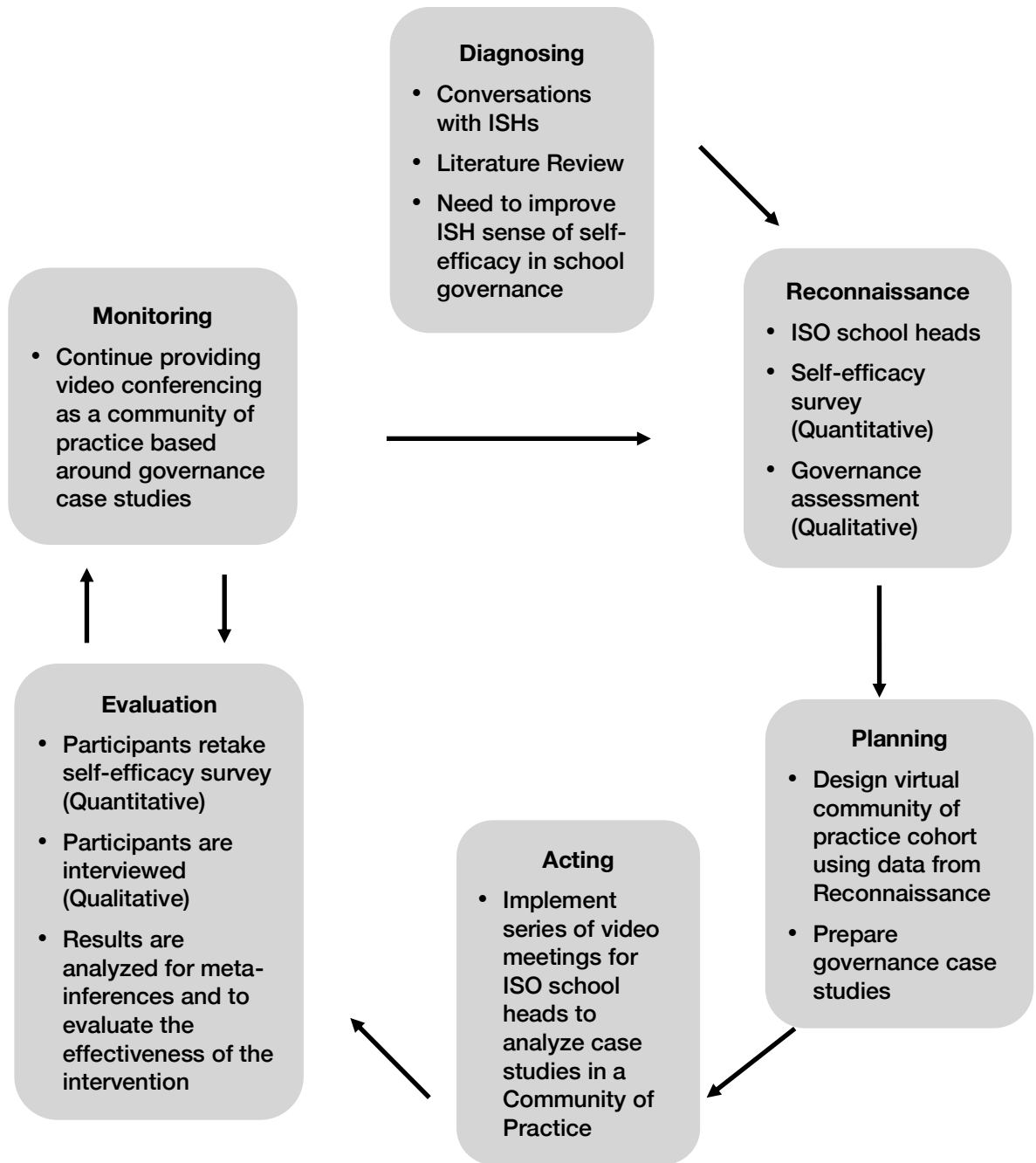


Figure 1. Mix methods methodological framework. Adapted from *Mixed methods applications in action research: from methods to community action*, p. 78. Copyright 2015 by SAGE Publications.

Phase I: Diagnosis

Problem of Practice

Diagnosis is the initial phase of an MMAR project, in which the researcher determines a problem of practice (Ivankova, 2015). A diagnosis is made after examining the current state of affairs in a particular area and a review of current literature. I began this phase by using a guiding question that helped me engage in conversations with ISHs and identify critical issues in the field. A major issue facing ISHs is high turnover rates attributed to the lack of preservice, executive preparation, particularly regarding governing board relations. Identifying this problem of practice informed my literature search. The diagnosis step in the MMAR process identified a problem of practice and guided my next step, the reconnaissance phase of the MMAR project.

Many ISHs move quickly through the school head / administrator pipeline. Consequently, they often find enacting their new roles and responsibilities as an executive leader difficult. They can struggle to fulfil the expectations of their governing board. Many are challenged to remain in their executive position for multiple contracts. In conversations with ISO school heads, several attributed the problem to the lack of preservice, executive leadership training. Most ISO school heads were trained as teacher-leaders and school principals. However, very few received formal training in executive leadership as required of most US school superintendents. The ISO heads observed that this lack of training contributes to their being unsure of how to enact their roles and responsibilities. As such, they often begin their tenures at a disadvantage.

Key Definitions

International education may appear to the uninitiated as complex and confusing. Therefore, it is important that any discussion of ISHs and governance is grounded by defining common terms, particularly those associated with international schools, management, leadership, and governance.

International schools. A firm understanding of an international school can be elusive. International schools vary both in terms of organization and mission. Some international schools are nonprofit organizations guided by a board of trustees. Some are for-profit businesses that, in addition to educating children, seek to return capital investment gains to shareholders. Most international schools use some international curricula as opposed to a local state-mandated curriculum. Many international schools use English as the medium of instruction, whereas others might use French, German, or Turkish. Some international schools are independent local entities, whereas others are part of global organizations. The variations and individual circumstances make defining international schools difficult. Hayden (2007) explains:

No one organization can grant the right to use of the term ‘international school’ in a school’s title...In essence, schools describe themselves as international schools for a variety of reasons including the nature of the student population and of the curriculum offered, marketing and competition with other schools in the area, and the school’s overall ethos or mission. (p. 10)

International schools tend to exist to educate expatriate children living in an international context. Many teachers in these schools are recruited from abroad. The curricula of these schools tends to be international in nature and not directly attached to local public

educational requirements and standards. Furthermore, the schools tend to be private, with revenue generated through tuition fees.

Leadership and management. The delineation between leadership and management has been articulated in many ways by scholars and practitioners in various professional fields. This can lead to confusion regarding these two very important terms. When considering different understandings of leadership and management, I settled on Rost's definitions of each. His book *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* is a foundational and formative text of my doctoral studies. Rost's view influenced my understanding of leadership and management and the initial framework for this MMAR project. He defines leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 102). He defines management as "an authority relationship between at least one manager and one subordinate who coordinate their activities to produce and sell particular goods and/or services" (Rost, 1991, p. 145). It is with this understanding that this paper progresses.

International school governance. Another concept that influenced my study is governance in international schools. Chojnacki and Detwiler (2019) note that,

An international school board of trustees has the ultimate responsibility for the success of the school, now and over time. It is entrusted with making sure that the school remains faithful to its mission and values, is well-managed, and has a secure future... The board must keep its eye on the big picture while delegating the management of the school to the head. (p. 17)

This is the essence of governance in an international school regardless of the specific and individual organizational structure. Chait, Ryan, and Taylor (2008) view governance as

leadership and identify three modes that governance takes in nonprofit organizations: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. A more in-depth exploration of governance is found in the literature review section of this chapter.

Guiding Questions

1. What skills and knowledge are essential before beginning a career as an international school head?
2. What specific leadership skill is of most concern for those assuming an international head of school position?

Conversations with Stakeholders

From the fall of 2019 to the spring of 2020, I had numerous informal conversations with ISO school heads. These took place during the ISO global school heads' conference in October 2019, during the ISO European regional conference in November 2019, and via various Zoom conversations during the spring of 2020. The school heads with whom I talked constituted a purposeful sample. They were chosen because of their availability and representation of a wide range of geographic regions (Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia). The school heads were participants in conference session groups in which I was also a participant. I used these group sessions as opportunities to elicit a better understanding of their experiences as ISO school heads.

These conversations about the challenges they face in their schools often focused on the school heads' relationship with the ISO organizational governing structure, as well as their respective local school advisory boards (ABs). These were sources of significant frustration and insecurity. The ISO governing structure promulgates the operational and

educational policies implemented by the ISO administration and determines how schools are operated. In addition, the ISO governing structure has the authority to extend or terminate a head of school's employment contract. Prior to taking on the role of an ISO school head, very little explicit direction is provided for dealing with the ISO governing structures (i.e., the local school board and organization district office); most of the learning about school governance occurs on-the-job.

The ISO is global in nature. Its corporate organizational structure is characterized by being both tightly and loosely coupled. It is tightly coupled regarding it being a corporate board and highly centralized operational structure, whereas it is loosely connected because schools are geographically dispersed in different countries around the globe and, consequently, heads of schools have some measure of independence.

The ISO has a board of directors that appoints a chairman of the board, a president, and a vice president. The vice president acts as the chief executive officer of ISO headquarters (HQ) and manages the finance, personnel, legal, school operations, communication, technology, curriculum, and resources departments for the entire organization. The director of school operations manages a team of regional supervisors who have supervision responsibilities over a group of schools. Each school is led by a head of school, who is charged with the daily management and leadership of the school. The head of school is assisted by a local AB that helps bear the responsibility of local governance. Often, the head of school will have principals, counselors, resource coordinators, and teacher-leaders who support the pursuit of the school's mission.

From my conversations with ISO school heads, there is significant autonomy in specific areas of running the day-to-day aspects of the school, but there are large and

important areas in which ISO school heads have little influence and are unsure about how to impact the direction their particular school takes. This situation is amplified by the global and geographically distant nature of the ISO. Except for one school, the head office is not physically present in the city of the school.

There are important areas over which school heads have little direct influence on critical issues such as curriculum, international teacher hiring, and strategic planning. For example, contractually, teachers are expected to have a certain number of student contact hours per day and a specific set of courses and classes to teach. This policy is set by the ISO central office, and no explicit method of advisement and feedback is provided that would enable a local ISO school to adjust its class schedule to fit local conditions. These circumstances create ambiguity in how school heads can impact the direction of their respective school.

Another area in which ISO heads acknowledge an insecurity concerns international faculty hiring. The ISO has an entire recruiting department tasked with finding educators to fill vacancies within schools throughout the world. Recruiters offer contracts to individual teachers without the input of the school head. This makes hiring a full faculty aligned with the specific school's mission and vision challenging. Some ISO school heads are unsure how to engage in the hiring process to exert more direct influence on who becomes an educator at their school. Given the lack of explicit channels for participation, some ISO heads of school feel disconnected in hiring their international faculty and express frustration at their lack of influence in these critical administrative decisions.

The ISO also has a department in charge of curriculum planning. The ISO specific commitment to an outcomes-based curriculum and mastery approach to learning engenders brand and organizational loyalty. This is a major selling point for both prospective educators and prospective families looking for a learning community in which to educate their children. However, ISO school heads have little input on current and future curriculum decisions. This again leaves many ISO school heads unsure about how they may influence the direction of the ISO curriculum. Thus, many ISO school heads disengage from curriculum discussions.

The ISO as an organization does not historically use long-term strategic planning, which has significantly impacted school leaders in their local contexts. Specific aspirational planning beyond a year or two has no substantive effect on future decisions. Furthermore, ISO school leaders rarely participate in strategic planning with the expectation that these plans will be pursued in any meaningful way. The closest many ISO schools come to strategic planning is through the Middle States Association (MSA) accreditation process that the schools engage in every seven years. The lack of strategic conversations in the organization has stunted leaders' growth as strategic thinkers. Consequently, many ISO school heads pay only cursory attention to strategic planning.

These aforementioned areas of frustration too often prevent ISO school heads from engaging in the deep conversations involving the fiduciary, strategic, and generative responsibilities of school governance as leadership. They feel themselves to be school managers who implement policy handed down from above. Many aspire to lead their schools into a secure future but are unsure about navigating the unique governance structures of the ISO.

Literature

When conducting my literature review, I had several aims. Since most ISHs come up through the ranks of school leadership, often recently completing tenure as school principals, I was curious about the differences in professional expectations between principals and heads of school. This interest led me to the literature of the US school superintendents. Through the conversations with school heads, the theme of school governance continued to emerge, so I wanted to understand more about governance structures and school head expectations. The insecurity of many ISHs, including ISO heads of school, toward governance led me to a review of literature on self-efficacy in school leadership and possible ways to increase leadership self-efficacy regarding issues of corporate and local school board governance.

This review of literature is organized around the following themes: differences in professional expectations for principals and school superintendents, school governance, and self-efficacy and school leadership. These sections create a narrative that leads to a possible intervention for ISHs in the ISO.

School leadership standards. Many national-, association-, and state-based standards are used to guide the practices of school leaders. The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) provide a framework of national standardization for school principals across the US. To provide a more international perspective in the English-speaking world, in addition to the PSEL standards, I also reviewed standards from Australia. I found the Australian Professional Standard for Principals had created similar professional expectations for Australian principals as the PSEL had for US principals. On the other hand, the AISH has a list of standards in its “Leadership Playbook for

International School Heads” that specifically addresses the professional expectations for international heads of school (2018). The standards are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sources of Professional Standards

Leadership Playbook for International School Heads	PSEL	Australian Standards for Principals
1 Mission for Learning	Mission, Vision, Core Values	Leading Teaching and Learning
2 Governance	Ethics and Professional Norms	Developing Self and Others
Human and Organizational 3 Development	Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	Leading Improvement, Innovation, and Change
Operations and Resource 4 Management	Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Leading the Management of the School
School-Home-Community 5 Partnerships	Community of Care and Support for Students	Engaging and Working with the Community
6 Professional Accountability	Professional Capacity of School Personnel	
7	Professional Community for Teachers and Staff	
8	Meaningful Engagement of Families and Communities	
9	Operations and Management	
10	School Improvement	

These professional standards share many common expectations for school leaders in the US and Australia and for ISHs throughout the world. It is notable, however, that the AISH standards are the only ones that specifically identify the domain of governance.

Although the PSEL standards have the most enumerated domains, they do not specifically mention governance, nor do the Australian standards. This omission may reflect an expectation that school principals do not have a significant leading role in the strategic, fiduciary, and generative governance of a school or district. International school heads do have a role in guiding teaching and learning at the school and classroom level, like principals in the US and Australia, but their professional executive responsibility regarding engaging the governing structures of the school is more in line with the professional expectations of school superintendents. International school head positions have four interchangeable titles in schools throughout the world: head of school, headmaster, director, and superintendent.

Public school superintendents. As the work of an ISH shares many traits with a school superintendent, an examination of school superintendency is worthwhile. Kowalski's (2013) work on American superintendents provides an initial framework for the discussion of executive school leadership. Although Kowalski's focus is on public schools in the US, rather than on private independent and international schools, he provides a lens that may help frame a discussion of executive school leadership as it pertains to governance. According to Kowalski (2013), the characteristics of school district superintendents include five distinct roles that have emerged over the previous 150 years: teacher-scholar, business manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and effective communicator (p. 16). He further notes that, "(1) The job is demanding. (2) Conditions of practice are dynamic. (3) The extent to which the job is demanding depends on a mix of contextual requirements and a superintendent's response to them" (Kowalski, 2013, p. 337). Marzano and Waters (2009) delineated five further essential

competencies for superintendents, of which one is to facilitate school district board support to achieve the district's goals.

Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) note that although the standards of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reflect the work of superintendents, they are not subsequently delineated in the Inter-State School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) policy standards (ISLLC, 2008), which were later replaced by the PSEL (2015). On the other hand, the standards promulgated by the AISH in the Leadership Playbook for International School more closely reflect those of the AASA and uniquely include a reference to governance (Table 1). Browne-Ferrigno and Glass (2005) recommend broad collaboration “to develop an approved superintendent-preparation curriculum that includes management tasks specific to the dimensions of the job” (p. 154). To conceptualize school superintendency better, Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) characterize the school district superintendent as a chief executive officer and outline a set of standards that may serve as a basis for evaluating superintendents. One standard they identify is entitled “Policy and Governance.” Among other indicators in the standard, a superintendent is expected to engage and participate in the “procedures for superintendent-board of education interpersonal working relationships” (p. 46). Bjork and Kowalski (2005) lament that, “Although the work of superintendents is qualitatively different than principals, the preparation of CEOs tends to be extensions of principal-oriented programs” (p. 81).

It is clear that engaging with the governing body of a school is a significant area of responsibility for school superintendents that is not expected of school principals. In a phenomenological study on international superintendents in American schools in Brazil,

five out of eight superintendents explicitly stated that keeping their school boards engaged, informed, and satisfied was essential for their job security. The study also asked the superintendents to describe their role. Three used the phrase “chief executive officer” (CEO), and the other five described the responsibilities that traditionally lie within the CEO purview (Heise, 2016). This is an important shift in mindset from that of a division principal or building leader who does not need to engage regularly with the governing body of a school or school district.

Governance. Governance is an uncommon word in everyday usage and has a very particular meaning in organizational research and practice. Hodgson, Chuck, Hadley, Stout, and Willows (2015) define governance as follows:

as the way in which organisations are directed, controlled and led, consisting of four distinct elements: (1) The relationship and the distribution of rights and responsibilities among those who work with and in the organization (2) The rules and procedures through which the organisation’s objectives are set (3) The means of achieving those objectives and monitoring performance (4) Assigning accountability throughout the organization. (pp. 2–3)

Governance structures in international schools vary from school to school and “might be determined by the school, the owner, the Board, the senior management team or head of school or managing agency” (Hayden, 2007, p. 113). A school board may comprise owners, student parents, teachers, and other interested community members. It is this governing body, whatever its organization and make-up, that employs the school head and, as such, have the responsibility to hire, evaluate the performance, and, overall, need to be pleased with the performance of the school head (Hayden, 2007). Governance of

nonprofit organizations has been organized around five domains: (1) mission and strategy; (2) organization and management accountability; (3) executive director or CEO performance review; (4) stewardship of organizational assets; and (5) organizational advocate to the external community (Taylor, Ryan, & Chait, 2013). Chojnacki and Detwiler (2019) found that high-performing boards “understand their role within the school,” “understand their school’s financial model,” and “commit to goals and objectives” (p. 98).

According to Taylor, Ryan, and Chait (2013), governance entails three distinct modes: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. The fiduciary mode is concerned with the organization’s financial and physical assets. It is the basic understanding of being entrusted with the stewardship of the organizational resources. This mode of governing involves ensuring that the organization’s assets are put to the best use for the continuation of the organization.

The strategic mode focuses on creating a plan for addressing internal and external issues, opportunities, and challenges. This mode considers what makes an organization unique (i.e., its local context, or specific value-add). A plan is devised regarding a not-yet-realized goal to take advantage of opportunities and to minimize threats.

The generative mode is sensemaking and creating community meaning by envisioning the future of the organization. This mode provides the strategic mode something to plan for, and provides the fiduciary mode with a purpose for which to ensure the future of the organization.

Effective governance must not only be proficient in each of these modes, but also properly discern when each mode is necessary. “Governance as leadership, then, is a

complex activity, one that cannot possibly be practiced through reliance on prescribed tasks alone” (Taylor et al., 2013, p. 666). Therefore, the governing structure of a school needs to have a future in mind for the school it is planning for and working toward (Hayden, 2007).

For schools to function well and to achieve the goals they have set for themselves, it is critical that the head of school and the governing board work together well. Vinge notes that a school head “is viewed as being experienced in governance and as an expert in education... This assumption requires that the Head and the Board members can function as critics, friends, counselors and confidants” (as cited in Hayden, 2007, p. 122). The board will have appointed a board chair tasked with speaking for the board and working directly with the school head. This relationship is important for the effective functioning of school governance. The school head and board chair need to:

work together to articulate the school’s mission, vision, and values to the school community,” “ensure that all major decisions are mission-driven and aligned to the school’s vision and values,” and “develop and communicate a common position on major issues to the board, the faculty, and others in the community. (Chojnacki & Detwiler, 2019, p. 78)

School heads have a significant role in school governance, and their engagement in governance is vital to the effective pursuit of a school’s mission.

Self-efficacy and school leadership. The belief that one can positively impact a result affects whether the person succeeds in accomplishing what he/she sets out to do.

Bandura (1997) articulates this definition as follows:

Self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments... Such beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress or depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize. (p. 3)

Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the power to effect change and impact the outcome in a particular situation. This belief impacts individuals' goals, the energy expended in achieving those goals, and the probability of attaining said goals (Carey & Forsyth, 2009). If one is not self-efficacious in a particular situation, that person, often, does not make the effort or have the energy required for success because of his/her perception that any attempt to alter the outcome would be in vain (Tschannen-Moran and McMaster, 2009).

Bandura (1977), in his foundational article "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change," writes:

The strength of people's convictions in their own effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations. High self-efficacy is an important characteristic of leaders that impacts their ability to bring to fruition the changes that they intend. At this initial level, perceived self-efficacy influences choice of behavioral settings. (p. 194)

Self-efficacy is an important quality in school leaders because parents, faculty, staff, and students look to the school leader to implement needed changes. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis's (2004) work on principals' sense of efficacy can be applied to heads of school as well. They found that:

Self-efficacy beliefs are excellent predictors of individual behavior. Principals with a strong sense of self-efficacy have been found to be persistent in pursuing their goals but are also more flexible and more willing to adapt strategies to meeting contextual conditions. They view change as a slow process. (p. 574)

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) also found that principals with low self-efficacy beliefs were “quicker to call themselves failures and demonstrate anxiety, stress, and frustration. ... The perception of the environment as uncontrollable had a debilitating effect on individual goal setting and problem solving” (p. 574). This finding parallels what has been identified in conversations I have had with school heads about the areas of responsibility in which they feel most out of control and unable to impact the outcome. Those school heads, at least on the surface, not only experienced increased anxiety, but also avoided engaging in those areas that felt beyond their control. Increasing an ISH's self-efficacy belief may reduce the anxiety, stress, frustration, and debilitation that Tschannen-Moran and Gareis identified in their study.

Increasing self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) identified four ways of building self-efficacy: verbal persuasion, vicarious experiences, performance accomplishments, emotional arousal. Performance accomplishment, also known as mastery experience, includes elements of modeling and performance. When a person attempts something that

is at least moderately difficult and perseveres to attain a level of success, that person's belief in their self-efficacy is impacted positively.

Additionally, a person can increase his/her sense of self-efficacy through the positive experience of another's success. Vicarious experience includes both live and symbolic modeling. Vicarious experiences are observed by or related to another.

Verbal persuasion, as a means of increasing self-efficacy, can include suggestion and self-instruction. Internal self-talks or external coaching have been found to increase self-efficacy. Simply telling ourselves that something is possible or hearing it from others grows our belief that we are capable of achieving our aims.

Finally, our positive emotional state also impacts our sense of self-efficacy. Emotional arousal includes attribution, symbolic exposure, and desensitization. If we feel positive, we can achieve something, our sense of self-efficacy is increased. We can be psyched into believing we are capable.

While there is very little literature concerned with increasing self-efficacy of ISHs, these four modes have been used to increase teacher self-efficacy in implementing new teaching strategies (Tschannen-Moran & McMaster, 2009). "The results lend support to the importance of an authentic task-specific mastery experience and of individualized verbal persuasion in raising self-efficacy beliefs... professional development training that included follow-up coaching... was related to increased implementation." (p. 242). Thus, a program using Bandura's modes of vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion for increasing self-efficacy could be employed to develop ISHs' self-efficacy beliefs. Professional preparation using videos, observations, and case studies is, historically, an important part of acquiring knowledge and skills in school leadership (Bjork & Kowalski,

2005). Using vicarious experience and verbal persuasion has long been a part of preservice professional preparation also.

Intervention Literature

This research project was partially conducted during the COVID-19 quarantine of 2020 and its aftermath. The ubiquity of online video conferencing could be a way to bring together an international cohort of school leaders in a community of practice (CoP). This CoP could analyze governance case studies to guide its conversation and develop self-efficacy in school governance.

Community of Practice

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) define CoPs as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 3). These communities occur naturally in organizations. They ebb and flow in membership and purpose to suit the needs of the group. Wenger (1998) writes, “communities of practice have life cycles that reflect such a process. They come together, they develop, they evolve, they disperse, according to the timing, the logic, the rhythms, and the social energy of their learning” (p. 95). Wenger (1998) stresses the mutual and interdependency of learning and the experience of learning as practice. Learning in a CoP is essentially a social enterprise in which knowledge and understanding are co-created (Wenger et al., 2002).

Wenger et al. (2002) note that, “A community of practice is a unique combination of three fundamental elements: a domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a community of people who care about this domain; and the shared practice that they are

developing to be effective in their domain” (p. 27). While CoPs have existed informally and organically:

organizations can do a lot to create an environment in which they (CoPs) can prosper: valuing the learning they do, making time and other resources available for their work, encouraging participation, and removing barriers. Creating such a context also entails integrating communities in the organizations – giving them a voice in decisions and the legitimacy in influencing operating units, and developing internal processes for managing the value they create. (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 13)

It is important that these elements are present in any CoP intervention to address the concerns of this research project.

Using case studies for self-efficacy development. The study of case studies based on governance issues in international schools may help increase school leaders’ sense of self-efficacy. Bjork and Gurley (2005) recommend that work-based education be the focal point of superintendent education. Bjork and Kowalski (2005) report that, “increasing an individual’s tacit knowledge (practical intelligence) will require working directly with exemplary CEOs, participating in high-risk activities, and engaging in reflective processes that are characteristics of exemplary superintendent internship programs” (p. 81). Aspiring superintendents need school-based experience in which they have opportunities to both “observe superintendent managerial behaviors” and “assume managerial responsibilities under the guidance of mentors” (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005, p. 152). In the absence of work-based preservice experiences, case studies serve as useful vicarious experiences that, as Bandura (1977) notes, are one of the modes that

build self-efficacy. Verbal persuasion, performance accomplishments, and emotional arousal are the others. Each mode would be present to some degree in a cohort engaged in collaborative case study analysis. Bandura (1977) specifically emphasizes the effectiveness of modeling writing:

Participant modeling has been compared with various symbolically based treatments. These studies corroborate the superiority of successful performance facilitated by modeling as compared to vicarious experience alone. When participant modeling is subsequently administered to those who benefit only partially from the symbolic procedures, avoidance behavior is thoroughly eliminated within a brief period. (p. 197)

A cohort focused on case study analysis provides the opportunity for modeling by the other participants in the group. As each participant shares their reactions to and thoughts about the case study at hand, they learn from each other. Through case studies, participants also have the opportunity to envision how they might deal with the case situation. Thus, participants within a case study cohort are exposed to the four sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishments (mental), vicarious experiences (learning from their cohort), verbal persuasion (explicit discussion about how the case unfolded), and emotional arousal (the good feeling of working together).

Research Problem Statement

International school heads are not specifically prepared in school governance, and this lack of preservice preparation may lead to lower levels of self-efficacy and could diminish their effectiveness. A possible solution to increasing ISH self-efficacy in governance is through an online cohort of ISHs that reviews school governance case

studies and discusses possible alternative solutions. What specific areas of governance need to be focused on and what the best format is explored in the reconnaissance phase of the study. Through the direct exploration of a school governance problem by a cohort of school head colleagues, participants can benefit vicariously from discussions and mental mastery by envisioning how he/she would act in the governance-oriented case study dilemma. These are two strategies used for enhancing an individual's sense of self-efficacy.

Study Plan

The purpose of this MMAR study is to increase the level of self-efficacy of ISHs regarding organizational and school governance. In the reconnaissance phase, I identified ISO school heads' current level of understanding of school governance and their self-assessed self-efficacy regarding school governance. In that phase of the study, I identified specific areas of governance in which ISO school administrators are the least knowledgeable and self-efficacious by using a concurrent mixed-methods design to collect and analyze data on ISO school heads' self-efficacy toward school governance and their working knowledge of governance. The rationale for applying mixed methods in the study is to gain more insights into the identified deficit of ISO school heads' self-efficacy in school governance in order to plan and execute an effective intervention.

Ethical Considerations

Following Ivankova's (2015) framework, issues concerning veracity, justice, beneficence, and fidelity have been paid much attention throughout this research project. There are no significant ethical concerns regarding the participants of this study. No children or other vulnerable populations participated in either the initial reconnaissance

phase or the intervention phase. I am a colleague of the research participants, and none of them work in my particular school, nor do any report to me. While none of the participants work for me, the fact that I am their colleague and that the other participants are their colleagues could pose professional risks. I have sought to minimize the exposure the participants will have by first using pseudonyms in place of their real names in all data reporting including this manuscript, second by emphasizing the confidentiality of the CoP meetings in which all of the participants were known to each other, and thirdly, and by encouraging the participants to participate to their comfort level. I explained to the participants at the beginning of each meeting that confidentiality of what occurs in during the online meetings cannot be guaranteed.

Even though I used pseudonyms to hide the participants' identities, this study may contribute to one of them being compromised. The small sample size as well as the specific professional position within the ISO may lead some to be identified as participants in this study which could lead to negative consequences. This is an inherent risk when you have such a small number of participants within an organization.

My role in the actual CoP meetings was simply to facilitate. I tried to minimize my presence by not commenting verbally or physically to anything being shared. I kept time, gave directions, and bounced around from small group to small group. It is possible; however, my limited presence may have impacted the direction the discussions took.

Throughout the process, I continually sought to uncover, address, and minimize any bias and/or prejudice. As the primary investigator of this project as well as a school head for ISO, I have a vested interest in the success of this intervention. I want to see my

colleagues grow and improve as school heads. I want the ISO to succeed in its mission around the world. I also have friendly personal relationships with all of the participants and have spent time with several of them outside the work environment. I know them beyond what they report in the findings. I have endeavored to keep my personal knowledge and views about the participants out of any discussion in this manuscript. Therefore, all effort was made to preserve the veracity, justice, beneficence, fidelity, and respect in all interactions with the research participants (Ivankova 2015).

Prior to the data collection, permission was sought and granted from the ISO to plan and carry out the MMAR. Participation in the research project was voluntary, and the participants were informed about the use of their data and consented to it. As I am a professional colleague of the participants and I work in Europe, every effort was made to ensure confidentiality and data privacy in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation protocols. The survey data were collected via Qualtrics, and they were secured online. After the 6-year IRB mandated period for retaining the data, the primary data will be destroyed (i.e. shredded and digitally erased).

Summary of Chapter 1

International school heads report that they have some measure of difficulty understanding and working effectively in both organizational and local school governance. The literature and experience of school heads confirm that governance is not adequately addressed in school headship preparation. This issue may lead to lower levels of self-efficacy concerning the governance areas of responsibility: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. A proposed professional development intervention employing a cohort-

based, case study analysis may increase school heads' sense of self-efficacy toward school governance.

Chapter 2

Introduction

This chapter lays out the specific plan for the MMAR project in the ISO. The aim of this phase of the project is to investigate the current level of understanding in and self-efficacy toward international school governance. The ISO presents a unique perspective and experience in international school governance.

Study Design

Phase I: Diagnosis

The beginning of this research project led with questioning how the prospect of an ISH remaining in her/his position for only three to five years affected their approach to their job. Talking with ISHs around the world, comfort with school governance emerged as a concern that impacted a school head's effectiveness in leading. This led to conversations with ISHs in the ISO to understand the specific challenges they face regarding school governance. I then explored the literature on school standards, governance, and self-efficacy.

Phase II: Reconnaissance

In Phase II, I investigated the current level of self-efficacy toward school governance and knowledge of governance for ISO ISHs. An eight-question questionnaire (Appendix A) was emailed to 14 current ISO school heads. The questionnaire assessed each ISH's baseline sense of self-efficacy toward school governance. Concurrently, a governance qualitative assessment was sent to the same participants. The governance

assessment was a seven-question opened-ended survey concerning school governance (see Appendix B). This instrument was designed to illuminate ISO ISHs' specific understanding of their experience in ISO school governance. This phase was completed at the beginning of March 2021, prior to the commencement of Phase III.

Phases III & IV: Planning and Acting

Phase III involved planning the specific action of this MMAR. The data provided in Phase II informed the direction the intervention took by providing insights that helped me choose appropriate case studies. Phase IV was the implementation of the three-meeting virtual CoP that analyzed the chosen governance case studies. These two phases were completed in the middle of March 2021.

Phase V: Evaluation

In Phase V, the participants of the CoP were given the self-efficacy questionnaire again. The results were compared with the previous responses to identify any changes between the two. Additionally, each participant was interviewed at the conclusion of the third and final case study analysis meeting using the interview questions in Appendix C. The data from both the survey results and the interview were analyzed to check if any meta-inferences could be made from the effectiveness of the intervention. This phase was completed at the end of March 2021.

Phase VI: Monitoring and Revising

Phase VI involved recommendations for the continuation, expansion, and improvement of the virtual CoP based on case studies. This would be ongoing and regularly monitored for effectiveness and usefulness. Phase VI could continue over the following school year of 2021–22.

Research Setting

This MMAR project occurred in an online environment. The initial interactions of this project were via email, and both the survey and governance questionnaire were completed online using Qualtrics. The CoP took place via the video conferencing software Zoom.

The participants were ISO school heads. The ISO has approximately 35 schools throughout the world, with a total organizational student enrollment of over 6,000. Individual school sizes range from 30 to 1,400 students. Students come from over 100 countries. All ISO schools share the same governance structure, consisting of the ISO HQ and a local AB.

ISO governance model. Many different models of school governance exist for international schools throughout the world. There are proprietary schools, for-profit corporate schools, and independent nonprofit schools. Independent international schools tend to be nonprofit organizations governed by a school board of trustees in collaboration and consultation with the school head. As mentioned previously in this paper, the board is responsible for the hiring and firing of the school head.

The ISO governance model differs from these independent international schools given that it is a large multinational nonprofit school system. The ISO has an organizational HQ that coordinates school activities such as the recruitment of international faculty, the purchasing and shipping of instructional materials, and the hiring, firing, and transferring of school administrators. The organization HQ also writes general school policy and adopts a system-wide curriculum. In independent international schools, these activities are managed at the local level, and ISO schools also have a local

school board for each school that functions in an advisory capacity. The local school board maintains a level of influence on financial, reputational, and disciplinary issues. The school board also has significant input regarding the performance of the head of school. Having both a local board and the distant ISO HQ oversight further complicates the understanding and efficacy of ISO heads of school regarding governance.

Phase II: Reconnaissance Phase

The reconnaissance phase of this MMAR study examined the diagnosed problem of practice. In this study the reconnaissance phase provided the baseline data concerning ISO school heads' understanding of school governance and their sense of self-efficacy toward school governance. In this section, I outline the methods and procedures and discuss how the data were collected. At the end of this chapter, I explain how the analysis was made, and I provide the findings of Phase II.

Design

This MMAR study investigates the current level of ISO school heads' understanding of and self-efficacy toward international school governance by using a concurrent quantitative and qualitative MMAR design. This study consists of two strands: quantitative and qualitative. The aim of the quantitative strand is to identify current levels of self-efficacy in ISO school heads toward elements of school governance. The aim of the qualitative strand is to gain insights into the understanding of the ISO school heads' role in and knowledge of their respective school's governance. I chose a concurrent quantitative and qualitative MMAR design for the purpose of "obtaining complementary data and [to] produce well-validated conclusions" (Ivankova, 2015, p. 128).

The quantitative data from the school leadership self-efficacy survey was collected at roughly the same time as the qualitative data, during March 2021. Twenty ISO school heads were invited to participate in this program. Only two criteria were used for their selection. First, they must have been current ISO school heads, and second, they must have lived in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) +1 to +6 time zones to make the live Zoom sessions more convenient for all participants. Enrolment for this project was open from March 14, 2021 to March 20, 2021. Of the 20 invited school heads, 14 participated in the project. They were all either US or Canadian citizens.

Research Questions (RQ)

This portion of the MMAR project addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent do ISO school heads feel a sense of self-efficacy in working with the governing structures of their school? (Quantitative)
2. In what domains of working with the ISO governing structures (headquarters and school board) are school heads least knowledgeable and competent? (Qualitative)

Strand 1 (Quantitative)

Strand 1 of the project answers RQ1. A diverse, purposeful selection of ISO school heads based on geography was emailed, inviting their participation in the study and to fill out the self-efficacy toward governance questionnaire. As there are no existing self-efficacy questionnaires for school governance, this survey used Tschannen-Moran's (n.d.) Principal Efficacy Questionnaire as a model, and each question was tied specifically to the literature on organizational governance. I invited 20 school heads to complete the survey, which 14 did. Please see Appendix A for this instrument.

Procedures. The ISO school heads filled out an eight-question questionnaire (Appendix A) using Qualtrics. The data were stored on the Qualtrics' servers. The scores for each question ranged from 1 (Not At All) to 9 (A Great Deal) when answering the questions beginning, "In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you..." with each question filling in the blank; for example, "partner with ISO headquarters to manage the fiduciary responsibilities of your school?" Each question on the survey falls into one of the domains of governance as leadership (i.e., fiduciary, strategic, and generative). Using the survey, it was evident which areas of governance ISO school heads felt least efficacious in. This knowledge provided a baseline level of self-efficacy in governance.

Strand 2 (Qualitative)

Strand 2 answers RQ2. Each ISO school head who completed the initial self-efficacy questionnaire also filled out the researcher-prepared governance survey (see Appendix B). Each question on the survey relates to the roles and responsibilities of school governance.

Procedures. The same 14 participants completed the seven-question extended answer governance survey. This, too, was delivered via Qualtrics. The survey questions focused on eliciting responses in specific areas of either fiduciary, strategic, or generative governance within the ISO. Responses to the survey were used to evaluate ISO school heads' current understating of school governance and the role ISO school heads play in the governance of their schools.

Data Integration and Quality

Priority was given equally to the qualitative and quantitative data. Both provided insights into areas that benefited the action phase of the MMAR. When evaluating both the quantitative survey data on self-efficacy toward school leadership and the qualitative responses provided through the governance survey, specific areas of overlapping emerged in which there is both a lack of governance understanding and a lack of self-efficacy. Integrating the data in this way provided a fuller picture of areas for growth with ISO school heads that were addressed in Phase IV.

Reliability and Validity

Validity was addressed in all instruments as they directly asked question pertaining to research at hand. The instruments were designed to elicit responses concerning self-efficacy and knowledge about the three modes of governance (generative, strategic, fiduciary), the ISO HQ, and the ISO ABs. Additionally, validity was addressed in this research by each participant being given the same School Head Efficacy Questionnaire and ISO governance survey. The questionnaire was distributed again at the completion of the intervention to check whether there had been growth in the overall leadership self-efficacy of the participating school directors.

Reliability was addressed using a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire. The results are intended to provide a base-line level of self-efficacy for the participants. This same instrument was use in both instances. Additionally, reliability was addressed through both the questionnaire and survey. Together, these tools elicited responses that provided insights into the ISO school heads' work in school governance. Furthermore, the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire was modeled after Tschannen-Moran's (n.d.)

Principal Efficacy Questionnaire, and each question correlated to an aspect of organizational governance literature (i.e., fiduciary, strategic, and generative). The questionnaire provided a reliable baseline for the perceived self-efficacy of the participants. Taken together, these data offer insights into the specific areas of self-efficacy of ISO governance (i.e., AB collaboration and fiduciary governance). These insights enabled me to tailor the intervention of Phase IV to the specific needs of the participants.

Data Gathering

The ISO has 35 school throughout the world and each of those schools has a head of school. Given that this is an organization-based action research project, my potential sample size is restricted to the number of schools in the organization, and I further restricted it by the only inviting ISO school heads in UTC +1-+6 time zones. I sent out an invitational email which included the IRB approval letter (see appendix D), the Informed Consent Document (see appendix E), and the GDPR Privacy Notice (see appendix F) to 20 ISO school heads, to which nine quickly responded that they would like to participate in the project. Three days later I sent out a reminder email to the other school heads who had not responded to my initial invitation. At that point, I got five more positive responses and three negative responses. This brought the total number of participants to 14. I did not send out further email invitations to those who did not respond.

Once the ISO school heads agreed to participate in the research project, I sent out an email with a Qualtrics link to the questionnaire and the survey. This link included the informed consent document and a check box to provide consent with their name. Once this box was checked and their name was provided, they were allowed to move to the

School Head Efficacy Questionnaire (see appendix A). Once they completed the questionnaire, they moved to the Governance Survey (see appendix B). When all of the participants finished the governance survey, Phase II: Reconnaissance data collection was completed.

Once the final virtual CoP ended, the participant again filled out the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire via a Qualtrics link I sent them in the Zoom meeting chat. Directly following the final CoP meeting, I scheduled interview with each of the participants. The interview lasted 5-10 minutes following the Postintervention Governance Interview Questions (see appendix C). Each participants' responses were written down by me as contemporaneous notes. The interviews were not recorded.

The overall data collection process went as follows:

- Invited 20 participants via email. Nine responded to initial invitation.
- Three days later a reminder email was sent to the 11 ISO school heads who did not respond. Five additional respondents agreed to participate and three declined the invitation.
- A total of 14 ISO school heads agreed to participate.
- Participants filled out the online survey and questionnaire which took as little as two minutes and as much as 20 minutes to complete.
- Participants then participated in three online communities of practice each meeting lasting 45 minutes.
- At the conclusion of the final meeting, each participant filled out the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire again
- After the final CoP meeting, I interview each participant for 5-10 minutes.

The School Head Efficacy Questionnaire which was used in this project used Tschannen-Moran's Principal Efficacy Questionnaire as a framework to study self-efficacy in international school heads. An instrument that measures international school head efficacy in governance does not exist. The one used here has been developed solely for in this research project. I have tried to maintain Tschannen-Moran's structure and remain faithful to the intent of the original instrument.

I coded the survey and later the postintervention interview data separately using the same process. I utilized inductive coding to allow the themes to emerge from the participants' responses. The first round of coding was In Vivo coding to use the statements of the participants as they responded to survey questions via Qualtrics or as I wrote them down during the post-intervention interview. I then used pattern coding to examine themes across the data.

Once the data were organized by ranking the efficacy ratings and identifying the themes that emerged in the survey and interview data, I was able to draw conclusions from what emerged. The lowest score on the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire provided a starting point and became the targeted goal of the action research project. In an attempt to intentionally impact self-efficacy in the short time of the project intervention, I focused on the specific low efficacy area that emerged from the data rather than on all of the areas of efficacy. The partnership with the ISO school heads and the local advisory board to manage the fiduciary responsibilities was the laser focus of this study. The qualitative data both confirmed the responses for the questionnaire scores as well and provided more context these responses.

Findings

Using both the self-efficacy survey and the governance questionnaire findings, I identified specific areas in which ISO school heads may benefit from further collaborative learning. The qualitative, open-ended survey questions aligned with the quantitative questionnaire questions to obtain a deep and rich understanding of the responses. These combined data enabled me to identify the least-efficacious areas, which were addressed in the planning and intervention phases of the study. The data informed the direction of the MMAR intervention in Phases III and IV (i.e., the most pertinent case studies to be analyzed). Findings from the quantitative survey are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5. Data from the open-end survey questions are reviewed and summarized in Table 6.

Quantitative Data

The participants rated their self-efficacy to reflect the extent to which they felt they could function in particular modes as a school head. The participants assigned themselves ratings from 1 to 9 in eight situations. A score of 1 indicated extremely low self-efficacy. A score of 5 was the middle of the rating scale and indicated the participant had “some degree” of self-efficacy. A score of 7 indicated “quite a bit” of self-efficacy, and a score of 9 meant the participant had “a great deal” of self-efficacy. The results of each question are recorded in Table 2. The response data indicate there were three specific areas the participants had the least self-efficacy in: partnering with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities (4.43), collaborating with ISO headquarters to create a strategic plan for your school (4.86), and participating with ISO headquarters to generate a shared vision for the school (5.00).

Table 2

School Head Efficacy Questionnaire Results

“In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...”										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
1. partner with ISO headquarters to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?			2		3	3	2	2	2	6.21
2. collaborate with ISO headquarters to create a strategic plan for your school?		1	4	2	2	2	1	1	1	4.86
3. participate with ISO headquarters to generate a shared vision for the school?			4	2	4	2			2	5.00
4. impact the future sustained direction of your school?				1	3	2	5	2	1	6.50
5. initiate change in your school through ISO governing structures?	1			1	4	4	3	1		5.57
6. participate with local advisory board to generate a shared vision for the school?		1			3		6	2	2	6.64
7. partner with the local advisory board to manage the fiduciary responsibilities of your school?	1	2	2	1	3	3	2			4.43
8. collaborate with the local advisory board to create a strategic plan for your school?	1		1	1	2	3	3	3		5.71

The qualitative research question, “To what extent do ISO school heads feel a sense of self-efficacy in working with the governing structures of their school?” was asked at the beginning of this phase of the project. As reported in Table 3, the average self-efficacy rate per participant was 5.57, meaning ISO school heads, on average, “somewhat” felt a sense of self-efficacy in working with the governing structures of their school. Thus, there is clearly room for improvement regarding ISO school heads’ feelings of self-efficacy.

Table 3

Average Self-Efficacy Rating by Participants

Phil	6.38	Nilufer	6.75
Buddy	8.00	Kakha	7.11
Roberto	4.75	June	4.75
Franz	3.63	Ryan	5.75
Joseph	4.50	Francisco	4.87
Allen	5.75	Anthony	6.13
Tekla	4.13	<i>Average</i>	<i>5.57</i>
Ali	5.50		

In addition to the overall average self-efficacy rating per participant, I wanted to determine the degree to which the ISO participant school heads reported their self-efficacy in each of the three modes of governance: fiduciary, strategic, and generative. Table 4 reports that, on average, the participants felt “somewhat” efficacious in all three modes of governance, with scores ranging from 5.29 to 5.93.

Table 4

Average Responses for Governance Domains

Strategic	Generative	Fiduciary
5.29	5.93	5.32

Since ISO schools have both an organizational HQ and a local AB, I wanted to determine what level of efficacy was felt, on average, in relation to each governing body. Table 5 reports that, for both the HQ and the local AB, the ISO school heads felt “somewhat” efficacious.

Table 5

Average Responses for Headquarter and Advisory Board

HQ	AB
5.36	5.59

Interestingly, in the different ways of grouping the data (i.e., AB vs. HQ to fiduciary and generative), the group scores consistently fell around 5.00. This outcome indicates that, on average, there was some degree of efficacy among the participants, but there was also plenty of room for them to improve. This finding validated the conversations I had over the past year and a half as I was diagnosing areas for growth and intervention with ISO school heads. The three areas with the most potential for growth among ISO school heads were partnering with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities, collaborating with ISO HQ to create a strategic plan for your school, and participating with ISO HQ to generate a shared vision for the school.

Qualitative Data

The participants completed an open-ended governance survey with seven questions. The question responses enabled me to obtain greater insights into areas in which the participants felt least self-efficacious, which, combined with the quantitative

data, were used to inform the planning and intervention stages of the study. The emerging themes are identified, below, where I briefly review the open-ended question responses for each question. A summary of the major themes is provided in Table 6.

Question 1: Describe your school's and organization's governing structure.

The responses to this question framed the ISO's hierarchical organizational structure.

Joseph outlined ISO governance as:

broken down into overall organization-wide and then local components. The structure at the organization-wide level is led through a typical hierarchical structure including: President, Vice President, Operations, Regional Supervisor, and Director hierarchy. The structure at the local school level consists of the Director of the school with guidance and support from the Advisory Board supported by the Director of Instruction.

A few respondents identified the specific local school-level positions of authority, such as the school director, members of the school's senior leadership team, and the AB. Other respondents identified the relationship of the director and regional supervisor. For example, Anthony wrote, "ISO Headquarters provides input through the regional supervisor. Director is the main decision-making person at the school level."

Half the respondents connected the organizational structure of their school with the ISO HQ and delineated the specific role the ISO HQ plays in school governance. Phil explained:

ISO Board develops Policies to govern ISO. ISO HQ evaluates policies and develops programs/processes/systems as they pertain to ISO practice and individual school practice. Individual ISO schools use HQ systems to grow the

ISO mission in the individual school. School Advisory Board has little clear authority to affect school mission other than expert advice and fiscal matters such as scholarships.

Ryan explained that, when there are areas of conflict or confusion, “ISO then has a governing board as well as a president that makes the ultimate decisions.” In these responses, the participants clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the various elements of ISO school governance. The participant responses to this open-ended question suggest that the ISO has a hierarchical organizational structure that is well understood.

Question 2: How are decisions concerning the school’s financial obligations made? What is your role in the process?

The budgeting process was described similarly by all the respondents and is fairly typical for large organizations. The budget is developed locally and approved by ISO HQ. The school director works in consultation with the ISO regional supervisor to formulate the annual budget.

The degree to which school directors collaborate with their local school AB and faculty to develop an annual budget varies considerably. Some school directors develop the budget alone, whereas others seek input from the school’s local AB, business manager, and faculty. For example, Francisco pointed out that in his school, budgetary “decisions are made in a leadership council or admin council,” and he stressed his role in “facilitating the conversation and decision-making process.” However, Roberto stated he “makes the decisions about the budget” before involving the regional supervisor or ISO HQ. In Nilufer’s school,

Decisions concerning the school's financial obligations are made through discussion between the school director and the advisory board, and the financial manager. We look at the budget to discuss spending trends, salaries, enrollment fees and determine a proposed grant or structure most efficient for the school's success. Next, the budget is shared with our ISO regional supervisor to implement suggestions and finalize the account before sending it to ISO headquarters. Finally, the Director of Finance sends the budget to the President of the organization for approval.

Although each school begins the annual budgeting process a little differently, each school's budget must be finally approved by ISO HQ. Anthony stated that ISO "has final say on the budget." Ali described the role of the ISO director as "that of a middle-man; negotiating the needs of the local school community and the expectations of the parent, ISO." These responses suggest that the formal ISO budgeting process is similar from school to school, but the degree to which the school head collaborates with the school community in making budgeting decisions varies greatly.

Question 3: How is strategic planning done in your school and organization?

What is your role in the process?

Strategic planning in the replies was very often connected to the school accreditation cycle. Of the 14 respondents, eight mentioned external accreditation. Ten of the respondents identified staff and community committee participation in the process of strategic planning. Roberto wrote:

I lead the strategic planning for my school. We started with SWOT documents done by all stakeholders. After analyzing the SWOT documents, the admin and

policy teams determined the individual plans that needed to be created. Groups of stakeholders worked on these individual plans. The plans were then put together in one Strategic plan that was reviewed by the Advisory Board. The Plan was then submitted to ISO as part of the System Accreditation.

Allen acknowledged the continual development required with strategic planning and that his school is “developing systems to facilitate a wide body of stakeholders in our decision making and strategic planning.” The strategic planning process is similar to the budgeting cycle in that school heads vary in their process, and in the extent to which they collaborate with the stakeholders throughout the school community.

An analysis of the responses to this open-ended question suggests that connecting strategic planning to the school accreditation process is important, even though school accreditation only occurs every seven years. The responses suggest that strategic planning is thrust upon school leaders as an element of accreditation rather than as an integral and essential part of leading a school organization.

Question 4: Describe the responsibility and role of the school head in your school and organization to generate and articulate a vision for the school.

Several respondents strongly emphasized the main promulgator of the school vision in the community being the school head. Anthony wrote, “The school head articulates a vision through the input of the advisory board and the faculty committees.” June wrote, “the director has complete freedom to develop the vision for the school.” Nilufer added, “The school Director has a responsibility to articulate a vision for the staff and community.” Tekla explained, “The director has complete responsibility to lead and articulate a vision for the school.” Allen wrote, “I set the tone and expectation for

everyone.” Joseph stated, “The responsibility for providing a vision falls directly on the head of the school. The Director creates and controls the development of the vision...”

Others responded by outlining a more collaborative approach. For example, Francisco replied, “The school head facilitates the collective generation of the school vision, and leads the communication and implementation of this via the weekly meetings, school communication, and professional development activities, PLCs, Staff Meetings, etc.” Ryan added, “The Director helps provide the support for the whole community to work towards the vision that was created by the school.”

Again, several respondents connected the generation and articulation of school vision to the school accreditation process. Kakha wrote, “school leadership is encouraged to generate and articulate a vision, often through the lens of accreditation.” Phil stated, “the MSA Accreditation process is being used to create a preferred vision about what it means to carry out that mission statement.” The responses suggest that the ISO school head is the main driver and articulator of school vision. However, the degree to which the community participates in generating vision varies greatly.

Question 5: Describe the role of ISO Headquarters in relation to the governance of the school.

The participants identified several areas over which the ISO HQ exerts influence in local schools. For example, Anthony wrote that the HQ “sets the boundary conditions under which we create the program. This includes curriculum, budgeting, staff recruitment and other aspects of the program.” Ryan stated, “Headquarters has [a] direct say in any major spending in the school.” June made similar points and also acknowledged that ISO HQ continues to develop how it exercises its oversight. She

wrote, “Headquarters has an active and influential role in the governance of the school in terms of building development, curriculum development, textbook selection, approval for IB [International Baccalaureate] programs, and international hires. Over the past 7–10 years, HQ has opened up more to get ISO stakeholders’ opinions in some of these areas.” Phil summarized, “HQ creates and manages expectations, provides guidance (legal, financial, curricular, Child Protection, etc.), and manages oversight of individual schools.”

The ISO HQ creates policy and conditions in which schools can operate. Given the preponderance of similar responses, the HQ and school head relationship is clearly defined. The participants in this study were able to articulate succinctly the ISO HQ’s role in terms of school governance. These responses suggest the ISO HQ makes organization-wide policy, and its role is clearly defined.

Question 6: Describe the role of the ISO regional supervisor in relation to the governance of the school.

The ISO regional supervisor role was often explained using three descriptors: liaison, support, and supervision. Some directors used all three, whereas others focused on one or two of these aspects. Six of the respondents referenced the role of liaison. Eight respondents emphasized the supportive relational nature of the relationship between regional supervisor and school director. Only six directly acknowledged the supervisory and decision-making authority capacity of the regional supervisor.

For example, Nilufer described her relationship with her regional supervisor, stating:

Our school's regional supervisor plays an essential role in the governance of our school. The regional supervisor will often meet with the Director 2 to 3 times per week to discuss best teaching practices, the budgeting process, MSA accreditation, advisory board, and scholarship allocation. The regional supervisor's role also helps problem-solving and, most recently, navigate the process through the COVID-19 pandemic. In many situations, the Director will reach out to the regional supervisor for guidance and input, and suggestions regarding staffing issues, finance, and student-related issues.

Joseph wrote that:

[The] role is to provide support and guidance to the school's local governance. They have some final decision-making capacity that can be applied as needed when the Director seeks extended support. They are the direct connection to the organization from the local level. A major role that they serve is the communication channel from the organization to the school.” Franz stated he looked to the regional supervisor as a “[s]ounding board and strategic thinking partner for development of policy and interpretation of ISO policy.

Buddy wrote, “ISO Regional Supervisors are liaisons to the director and HQ senior management. ISO Regional Supervisors are there as mentors and support to school directors to help guide us in leading our school community.”

According to the responses, the supervisor becomes what the school director needs. The supervisors generally function, by default, as mentors and partners in addressing the needs of the school. They exercise their organizational authority generally through the budgeting process. The responses suggest that the regional supervisor is a

liaison, support, and supervisor. This role varies according to the needs of the school head and school community.

Question 7: Describe the role of your school's advisory board in relation to the governance of the school.

The local AB has limited official authority and is rarely used beyond the official capacity. Two modes emerged from the responses. One is a minimalistic mode that, in addition to general consulting, relegates the AB to only those domains in which the AB has direct authority (i.e., scholarship program, forfeited discount fees expenditure, and major infraction student discipline [expulsion from school]). The other mode may be referred to as maximalist. In this mode, school directors share decision-making with the AB and seek to bring the expertise of the AB closer into the governance of the school.

Allen wrote, "They act in an oversight position, not necessarily as a governing body. They maintain strict control of the scholarship programs, but little else. They provide guidance and support as needed." June commented:

The advisory board provides feedback to the director on the overall progress of the school. The director will include the advisory board on important plans and projects the school is researching. The advisory board does not have an active role in human resources or the finances of the school.

Ali identified a sensemaking responsibility of the AB through "helping the director get a sense of the local scene and stakeholder body. Leading the vision of the school along with the director." Buddy explained, "The board is there to help be my extra set of eyes and ears in the community to help guide the regional supervisor and me to make wise decisions for the school."

Phil described an intentionally limited role for his AB:

Our Advisory Board has little impact on the governance of the school. Their role is advisory – not policy based. I maintain a very transparent relationship with the advisory board, asking for their input on many governance issues. However, I take my role as school director seriously and choose not to give the advisory board decision ability in areas such as strategic planning, budgeting, personnel, etc.

Once again, there are significant differences between how school directors work with and through their school's local AB. The responses suggest that the local AB has limited formal authority, and the extent the local AB is used beyond the official capacity within ISO schools is quite variable.

Table 6 summarizes the findings from the analysis of the open-ended questions. These data provide an understanding of the nature of work issues, as well as insights into the participants' sense of self-efficacy regarding governance. Furthermore, these data, combined with the quantitative questionnaire data, enabled me to identify several promising areas to address in the planning and intervention phases of the study that focus on increasing self-efficacy.

Table 6

Summary of Survey Responses

Question 1: Describe your school's and organization's governing structure.	The ISO has a hierarchical organizational structure.
Question 2: How are decisions concerning the school's financial obligations made? What is your role in the process?	The formal budgeting process is similar from school to school, but the degree to which the school head collaborates with the community in making budgeting decisions varies greatly.
Question 3: How is strategic planning done in your school and organization? What is your role in the process?	Strategic planning is often connected to the external accreditation process, which occurs every seven years.
Question 4: Describe the responsibility and role of the school head in your school and organization to generate and articulate a vision for the school.	The ISO school head is the main driver and articulator of the school vision. The degree to which the community participates in generating this vision varies greatly.
Question 5: Describe the role of ISO Headquarters in relation to the governance of the school.	The ISO HQ makes organization-wide policy, and its role is clearly defined.
Question 6: Describe the role of the ISO regional supervisor in relation to the governance of the school.	The regional supervisor is both a liaison and a support. The role morphs according to the needs of the school head and the school community.
Question 7: Describe the role of your school's advisory board in relation to the governance of the school.	The local advisory board has limited formal authority, and the extent it is used beyond the official capacity within ISO schools is quite variable.

Summary

The collection of these data was intended to identify self-efficacy growth areas for ISO school heads. In the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire, the three lowest scoring (lowest efficacy rating) domains were in partnering with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities (4.43), collaborating with ISO HQ to create a strategic plan for your school (4.86), and participating with ISO HQ to generate a shared vision for the school (5.00). Additionally, according to the open-ended survey responses, the degree to which the school head collaborates with the local community in making budgeting decisions, as well as the school heads' collaboration with the local AB, varies greatly. Many respondents only used their AB in the minimal official capacity, whereas others brought the AB into the regular policy and fiscal decision-making process. Through the reconnaissance phase, the data indicate a specific area that ISO school heads have the potential to grow in: partnering with the local AB in financial decision-making.

Phase III: Planning

The reconnaissance phase supported the planning of the intervention by providing direction in what specific areas of governance ISO school heads felt least efficacious and had the least knowledge. The plan for the data collection is presented in Table 7. The intervention was designed to address the areas of weakness. Since the lowest average response (4.43) on the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire was to the question about partnering with a local AB to manage the fiduciary responsibilities of the school, and one of the widest variants in the governance survey involved the AB's governance of the school, I chose three case studies concerned with financial issues and collaborative decision-making through school boards. Although the ABs in ISO schools are nominally

for advice, there is an opportunity for school heads to learn ways to maximize the partnership between themselves and their AB. The case studies provided vicarious experiences of governance and fiduciary responsibilities from the points of view of a board member and school heads. The 14 participants then participated in a virtual CoP that analyzed these three case studies.

Table 7

Data Collection Plan

Instrument	Sample	Data	Time Period
Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (pre-intervention)	14 Current ISO School Heads	Level of self-efficacy in school governance (baseline data)	March 2021 – Prior to the first CoP meeting
Governance Assessment	14 Current ISO School Heads	Understanding and engagement of school governance	March 2021 – Prior to the first CoP meeting
Self-Efficacy Questionnaire (post-intervention)	14 Current ISO School Heads	Level of self-efficacy in school governance at completion of CoP	March 2021 – At completion of final meeting
Post CoP Interview	14 Current ISO School Heads	Qualitative feedback on the school heads' growth in self-efficacy in school governance	March 2021 – After final meeting

Summary of Chapter 2

Phase II of this MMAR study consisted of two strands. The first – quantitative – used a governance self-efficacy questionnaire for 14 ISO school heads. The data provided a baseline of self-reported self-efficacy in leadership for ISO school heads. The three lowest areas of efficacy reported were partnering with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities (4.43), collaborating with ISO HQ to create a strategic plan for your school (4.86), and participating with ISO HQ to generate a shared vision for the school (5.00). The second, but concurrent, data collection – qualitative – consisted of an ISO governance assessment for the same 14 ISO heads of school who volunteered for the intervention portion of the MMAR. The open-ended survey responses provided context for the efficacy ratings. Through the data collected, a specific area to address through the intervention emerged: partnering with the local AB in financial decision-making.

Chapter 3

Introduction

The purpose of this MMAR study is to increase the level of self-efficacy of ISHs regarding organizational and school governance. Based on the literature review, ISHs may not receive adequate training in governance prior to becoming school heads. These circumstances contribute to many beginning their administrative careers unsteadily and tentatively.

In the reconnaissance phase of this study, I found that many heads of school in the ISO do not have high levels of self-efficacy in school governance. Furthermore, partnering with the local school AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities were found to be the least self-efficacious domain. In the planning phase, a virtual professional CoP was created, and activities were designed that centered on the participants analyzing case studies in a group format. The three case studies analyzed were selected to address the question of, “In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...partner with the local advisory board to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?” The answers to this garnered the lowest self-efficacy rate.

This chapter describes the action phase and details the virtual professional CoP. The evaluation phase follows, with an analysis on whether this virtual case study analysis was an effective intervention for increasing ISO school heads’ self-efficacy toward governance. The monitoring phase, at the conclusion of the chapter, includes recommendations for ISO school heads’ professional development.

Phase IV: Acting

Community of Practice

In March 2021, 14 ISO school heads participated in three virtual case study analysis meetings. The first meeting took place on Saturday, March 20 at 11 am Central European Time (CET) and lasted 45 minutes. The second meeting took place on Tuesday, March 23 at 4 pm CET and lasted 45 minutes. The third and final meeting took place on Saturday March 27 at 11 am CET and also lasted 45 minutes. Each meeting was conducted via the video conferencing software Zoom. I used the Four As' protocol for the virtual case study analysis. The Four As are Agree, Assume, Argue, and Aspire. The participants needed to review the case study and, in small breakout groups, discuss what they agreed with, what assumptions were made in the study, what they argued with in the case study example, and what they aspired to from the text (Venables, 2018). This protocol provided a flexible framework to stimulate individual analysis and group discussion. I also instructed the participants to go where the conversation took them and not to be too tied to the protocol. The role of the protocol was to help facilitate discussion.

At the beginning of each of the three virtual case study meetings, I read the following group norms and expectations to the participants to create a safe research environment.

“Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research project. I want to remind you of a few things before we start.

1. We ask that each of you protect the confidentiality of the discussion that we have here.

2. Even though we ask that confidentiality be adhered to, there are limits to group confidentiality, and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for information disclosed in a group setting.
3. Please do not identify other individuals in discussion comments.

Group norms and protocols

1. Mute your microphone if you aren't talking.
2. Use your real name.
3. Pause before speaking to ensure you are not speaking over someone.
4. Use polite language.
5. Seek first to understand.
6. Assume positive intent.
7. Default to active participation.

There are no expected risks or discomforts from participating in this intervention.

Given that there will be an analysis of governance case studies, the expectation is that there will be differing opinions offered. The faint possibility exists that an overly aggressive discussion could devolve into an argument. I, as the principal investigator, will have the ability to mute audio, turn off the video, and even end the meeting altogether. I will be ready to use this authority in the very unlikely event that the conversation turns abusive.”

The three meetings followed the same format: 10 minutes to read the case study individually and write down the Four As, 20 minutes for small-group discussion of four to five participants, then, finally, 15 minutes for whole-group discussion to put forward any interesting perspectives that emerged in the small groups. I acted as timekeeper and

facilitator. During the small-group times, I visited each group to see how the discussion was progressing. Other than the case study and the Four As protocol, no other direction was given to the participants.

A decision I struggled with internally was to not preteach what this research project was about. I did not discuss self-efficacy with the participants. I did not define words such as governance, fiduciary, generative, or strategic. This was a struggle because I really want to help my colleagues increase their self-efficacy in governance and to realize their potential as school leaders, but I also wanted to see if simple targeted case study analysis would lead to higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in the participants. It was a challenge to not overdo it. If I were to continue this intervention, I would integrate explicit teaching about governance and self-efficacy at the end of each meeting. This would be a way of collecting and connecting the big ideas that emerge from the discussions. The power of case studies lies in individuals and groups being able to see themselves in the case. If individuals can connect with the scenario and experiences, case study analysis can be helpful. The questions I had on the eve of the intervention were as follows: Have I chosen the most impactful CoP mode? Have I chosen an effective meeting protocol? Have I chosen impactful case studies?

Case Study #1. The first case study the group analyzed was “Dream Big Academy Charter School” (Howard & Shaw, 2017a). The discussions could be characterized as lively. The case study was immediately accessible to the group as the topic was a head of school needing to address an anticipated budget shortfall. Through collaboration with the school board, the director decided to increase class sizes. The response from the teachers once this was announced was not favorable.

The case study groups immediately connected with this scenario. The small-group discussions began immediately once the breakout rooms were populated. When the entire group came back together to discuss the emerging ideas, there was no need for me to prompt the participants to engage in discussing the case. There was wide participation during the whole-group meeting, and the discussion was not dominated by one or two eager participants. There was so much shared that, in the interest of respecting the time of all the participants, I had to cut off discussion at 15 minutes, otherwise people would have shared for many more minutes.

Case Study #2. The second analysis was “If We Build It They Will Come: The Role of Governance in Expansion Decisions at Crandall University” (MacDonald & Steeves, 2016). This case was chosen for its context. Instead of a P12 school, the case is set in a private Christian university. The board in the case study was considering whether to fund a significant building project. One faculty representative on the board did not support the measure. The case focused on the ways the lone dissenting board member attempted to make his concerns known.

This case was chosen to give the participants the view of a board member. It was also sufficiently removed from the normal day-to-day activities of the participants that they had to consider multiple points of view. It was the most challenging case study as it was by far the longest and was very detailed regarding finance and a board’s fiduciary duty.

The discussion in the small groups took more time to develop as the participants navigated the data and issues. The direct connection between their current roles and this case study was not immediately evident as the participants worked to identify who they

were in the scenario. Once they started to progress through the dense material, the conversations turned productive. When everyone returned to the main group for the final discussion, ideas and insightful comments again filled the time. Many had begun making comparisons between the university governance and the ISO's corporate governance. This created noticeable uneasiness in the meeting. The participants self-censored their comments to not reveal too much about their views and feelings on the ISO's corporate governance. When I noticed this, I reiterated the confidentiality all in the group agreed to and also encouraged people to share or to not share. Overall, the conversation summed up that organizational board governance is messy, and the challenge is managing all the different constituencies and interest groups. I again had to stop the conversation after 15 minutes or it would have continued long after.

Case Study #3. In the final group meeting, we returned to the same school of the first case study of "Dream Big Academy Charter School" (Howard, 2017b). This scenario extended the analysis of week one. The teachers at Dream Big Academy escalated their dissatisfaction with the larger class sizes with a letter to the founding board chair. The scenario centered on the steps the school took to remedy the problem.

Once again, in the small groups, the participants began a lively conversation. Since this was a recapitulation of Case Study #1, the case was familiar and more immediately accessible than Case Study #2. I found that the small groups finished their discussion about the case quicker than in the previous meetings. It seemed the groups had developed a familiarity with each other and began to discuss their own organizational issues. When we returned to the main group, the discussion was less lively. This could be because everyone was reflecting on what they had just discussed. The all-group

discussion was dominated by a couple of participants who continued to process their own school issues. Interestingly, this time, I did not have to stop the discussion.

Phase V: Evaluation

Phase V is the evaluation of the intervention. This occurs through the analysis of the data and interpretation of the findings. This phase was a concurrent quantitative and qualitative design. At the conclusion of the acting phase, the same School Head Efficacy Questionnaire was administered, and then then I interviewed each participant, asking three questions (see Appendix C). The changes in the responses to the school head questionnaire from the pre-intervention responses integrated with the interview question responses not only provided insight into the effectiveness of the interventions, but also several meta-inferences emerged that could be useful in further action research (Ivankova, 2015).

Data Analysis and Findings

Postintervention questionnaire results. The same questionnaire given to each participant prior to beginning this study was filled out a second time. This postintervention questionnaire was intended to determine if this targeted case study approach could be effective for increasing the perceived self-efficacy toward governance in ISO school heads. The results for each question are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

School Head Efficacy Questionnaire Postintervention Results

“In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...”										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
1. partner with ISO headquarters to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?			1	1	3	4	3	1	1	6.00
2. collaborate with ISO headquarters to create a strategic plan for your school?		1	3	1	6	2		1		4.64
3. participate with ISO headquarters to generate a shared vision for the school?		1	3	3	4	1	1	1		4.57
4. impact the future sustained direction of your school?	1				3	3	4	2	1	6.14
5. initiate change in your school through ISO governing structures?			3	1	5	3	2			5.00
6. participate with local advisory board to generate a shared vision for the school?			1	2	2	1	5	2	1	6.21
7. partner with the local advisory board to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?		2	2	1	4	2	2	1		5.14
8. collaborate with the local advisory board to create a strategic plan for your school?			2	1	5		5	1		5.77

To see the change that has occurred, the pre-intervention responses were compared with the postintervention responses. Table 9 displays the change in average response for each question. The data indicate that, on average, for all but one question, the score for perceived self-efficacy decreased or nominally stayed the same. Most notably, the responses increased by 16% to Question 7: “To what extent can you partner

with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?” This question previously had the lowest average response on the scale and was directly targeted by this research project intervention. For the second round of responses, three other questions have lower averages.

Table 9

School Head Efficacy Questionnaire Comparison

“In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...”				
	Before	After	Change	% Diff
1. partner with ISO headquarters to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?	6.21	6	-0.21	-3%
2. collaborate with ISO headquarters to create a strategic plan for your school?	4.86	4.64	-0.22	-5%
3. participate with ISO headquarters to generate a shared vision for the school?	5.00	4.57	-0.43	-9%
4. impact the future sustained direction of your school?	6.50	6.14	-0.36	-6%
5. initiate change in your school through ISO governing structures?	5.57	5.00	-0.57	-10%
6. participate with local advisory board to generate a shared vision for the school?	6.64	6.21	-0.43	-6%
7. partner with the local advisory board to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?	4.43	5.14	0.71	16%
8. collaborate with the local advisory board to create a strategic plan for your school?	5.71	5.77	0.06	1%

When examining the data for each individual participant, nine participants increased their reported self-efficacy, three recorded a double-digit percentage increase (see Table 10). Only five participants recorded decreased self-efficacy, and four of those were double-digit percentage decreases.

Table 10

Average Self-Efficacy Rating per Subject Comparison

	Before	After	Change	% Change
Phil	6.38	4.38	-2	-31%
Buddy	8.00	5.00	-3	-38
Roberto	4.75	5.25	0.5	11
Franz	3.63	3.75	0.12	3
Joseph	4.50	4.63	0.13	3
Allen	5.75	5.88	0.13	2
Tekla	4.13	6.25	2.12	51
Ali	5.50	6.75	1.25	23
Nilufer	6.75	5.00	-1.75	-26
Kakha	7.11	7.75	0.64	9
June	4.75	5.00	0.25	5
Ryan	5.75	5.25	-0.5	-9
Francisco	4.87	4.13	-0.74	-15
Anthony	6.13	6.38	0.25	4
<i>Average</i>	<i>5.57</i>	<i>5.46</i>	<i>-0.11</i>	<i>-2</i>

When comparing responses in the governance domains, both strategic and generative domains saw the average response decrease, see Table 11, below. The fiduciary domain increased by 5%. The fiduciary domain was targeted by this research intervention.

Table 11

Average Responses for Governance Domains Comparison

	Before	After	Change	% Diff
Strategic	5.29	5.21	-0.08	-2%
Generative	5.93	5.48	-0.45	-8%
Fiduciary	5.32	5.57	0.25	5%

The responses were also compared for self-efficacy toward the ISO HQ and the ISO local AB. Table 12 lists the changes. Recorded self-efficacy toward the local AB increased by 2%. The AB relationship was targeted in this intervention.

Table 12

Average Responses for Headquarter and Advisory Board Comparison

	Before	After	Change	% Diff
HQ	5.36	5.07	-0.29	-5%
AB	5.59	5.71	0.12	2%

Specific case studies involving scenarios with board governance and fiscal consideration were chosen. The intent was to impact the perceived self-efficacy of the ISO participants. The data indicate this intervention was, to some extent, effective. The respondents reported a 16% increase in their ability to partner with the local AB to manage fiscal responsibilities; a 5% increase in self-efficacy for questions concerning fiduciary responsibilities; and a 2% increase for those questions concerning the AB. It is

notable that in virtually every other domain the average response to the questions decreased.

Interview responses. In this section, I analyze the interview responses while connecting them to their specific self-ratings on the self-efficacy questionnaire. The case studies for analysis were chosen to target the question that garnered the lowest average self-efficacy rating: “In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...partner with the local advisory board to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?” Therefore, the participants’ responses to this question are especially pertinent. The interview answers may offer additional insights into why each participant responded to the questionnaire the way he/she did.

Phil. On the self-efficacy rating, Phil gave himself an average score of 6.38 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 4.38 after the intervention, which is a 31% decrease. Additionally, Phil’s perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities decreased by six points.

Phil did not think that the case study analysis changed his understanding of ISO governance; instead, it reinforced previously held conceptions. Phil thought the first case study resonated with him more; it reminded him of a situation he was in prior to joining the ISO. He felt it was a real situation he had experienced before.

Phil thought the case study analysis meetings had come at “a pretty interesting time.” Before joining the group, he had been reevaluating his leadership style in terms of the effectiveness of transactional versus transformational leadership. Case Study #1 was a “distillation of that question” and “confirmed some things” he was thinking about. He said, “The time we are [in] is heavy COVID times and requires a lot of decisions that

need to be made, and it easier to make some of these decisions as a transactional way...My way or the highway.” This mode of decision-making has left him “feeling more separated from teachers and colleagues.” He has realized this feeling involves his way of “leading through a crisis.” Phil’s processing of crisis leadership may be part of the reason his overall self-efficacy decreased, and especially his response to crisis as “my way or the highway” could impact his perceived ability to work collaboratively with his AB.

Buddy. On the self-efficacy rating, Buddy gave himself an average score of 8 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 5 after the intervention, which is a 38% decrease. Additionally, Buddy’s perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities decreased by two points.

Buddy’s perception of his understanding of ISO governance did not change as a result of this intervention. He recognized that his scores decreased despite the scores not being shared or even discussed with the participants, but Buddy remembered enough to know that his overall scores decreased. He said, “I thought I was more involved in the process,” which seems to allude to idea that collaboratively analyzing the case studies had exposed him to other ways, perhaps more hands-on ways, of engaging in school governance. Buddy also felt the first case study had the biggest effect on his thinking because he was able to relate to the situation the most.

Buddy’s participation in the case study analysis group reminded him there are different perspectives and that he is not the only one who has to do the things he is doing with regard to difficult discussions and collaboration with ISO HQ. He also recognized that “these are organizational issues rather than personal or individual.” This process

made him “realize that other directors are going through the same thing. It is not a personal deficiency. And I cannot fix it because I am not involved in the higher-up decisions.” This led to the revelation he is “not as involved as I [he] thought.” Buddy’s self-efficacy scores decreased by 38%. It seems his expectations involving governance expanded; exposure to other ways of doing things can affect one’s clarity.

Roberto. On the self-efficacy rating, Roberto gave himself an average score of 4.75 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 5.25 after the intervention, which is an 11% increase. Additionally, Roberto’s perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by three points.

Roberto had been with the ISO for a long time. Participation in this research project reinforced his view that “changes are needed” and that ISO HQ “needs more director input in governance.” He then said, “It would be good to have director representative on the ISO main board.” These discussions reminded him that ISO directors “don’t get minutes from HQ board meetings.” Roberto felt Case Study #3 had the biggest impact. It has started him “thinking about incorporating teacher leadership into decision-making.”

Roberto acknowledged that “this is a weird year to make any big changes.” Earlier in the year, he had created a policy committee within his school. It had been a challenge to continue it with all the requirements of COVID, but participation in the case study analysis “reinforced the need to keep the committee going.” He wanted to keep teachers “part of the decision-making process.” Even though Roberto had been with the

ISO a long time, he seemed very thoughtful about this experience and worked to get the most out of it. This could explain the 11% increase in his self-efficacy rating.

Franz. On the self-efficacy rating, Franz gave himself an average score of 3.63 before the case study intervention. He gave himself a 3.75 after the intervention, which is a 3% increase. Additionally, Franz's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by two points. Franz had the lowest average self-efficacy scores of the participants.

For Franz, the biggest takeaway was that all ISO school heads are experiencing similar situations and asking the same questions in their schools. Franz felt that Case Study #3 resonated with him the most. He said, "it made everything come full-circle." He also appreciated the discussion on "how to better include faculty on big school decisions." He said that, going forward, he wants the inclusion of faculty in the decision-making process to become "practice rather than reactionary."

Joseph. On the self-efficacy rating, Joseph gave himself an average score of 4.5 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 4.63 after the intervention, which is a 3% increase. Additionally, Joseph's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by three points.

Joseph appreciated that these case study meetings provided him with a different perspective of governance structures. He said, they "helped me understand that the governance of ISO schools will be different. This provided a format for getting feedback and being exposed to the thinking process of other directors, as they would have handled different scenarios and issues." Joseph thought that Case Study #1 had the biggest effect on his thinking. He said, "it provided me a framework for thinking from a non-ISO

governance structure.” He also felt the case study informed him “how assumptions can play a role in final outcomes.”

Joseph felt that his practice as a school head would change as a result of this experience. The case studies broadened his frame of reference, and he was exposed to things that will lead to bigger discussions. He plans to use a more “collaborative problem-solving approach.” Joseph had a moderate increase, on average, for his overall self-efficacy, but he increased by three points on Question 7.

Allen. On the self-efficacy rating, Allen gave himself an average score of 5.75 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 5.88 after the intervention, which is a 2% increase. Additionally, Allen’s perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities remained the same.

These case study analysis meetings made Allen think about the teacher role in governance. He expressed the need for the ISO to put a current ISO director on the organizational governing board, but while reflecting on his own school situation, he acknowledged that he was “not comfortable with teachers tinkering with my governance” as he has “a specific vision for this school.” Case Study #3 had the biggest effect on his thinking because “it was a situation that could happen in my school.”

When reflecting on how his practice as a school head might change because of this experience, he said, “Teachers’ role in governance has come up quite about bit lately. It appeals to me to have a stronger teacher role. Sit in on decision-making. Secrecy is not intentional, but currently there is no process for sharing with staff.” This is one aspect he will be changing in the future.

Tekla. On the self-efficacy rating, Tekla gave herself an average score of 4.13 before the case study intervention. She gave herself 6.25 after the intervention, which is a 51% increase. Additionally, Tekla's perception of the extent to which she can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities remained the same.

Tekla said that it was good "to see the outside case the same sorts of things we are going through right now. ISO directors talking about a non-ISO case was refreshing. It is good to get some outside examples." Case Study #3 had the greatest effect on her. She thought deeply about the scenario. She said, "In the case, it says 'the teacher understood the decision of the board.' Did they understanding the meaning, the process and information or did they understand the rationale?" This point perplexed her, and she felt there was not enough information in the case. She thought it was, "Interesting how the attitudes had changed and would like to know more about how that happened."

As a result of her participation in the case study discussions, she was reminded to "take a step back" and consider whether she should "involve other people in the decisions." Furthermore, she noted the importance of "pausing and reflecting how decisions are perceived by other people. It is good to pause." Tekla had the largest increase of all the participants in overall self-efficacy.

Ali. On the self-efficacy rating, Ali gave himself an average score of 5.5 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 6.75 after the intervention, which is a 23% increase. Additionally, Ali's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by six points.

Ali responded that his understanding of ISO governance had not changed at all as a result of the case study discussions. He felt the cases were not complex enough

compared with what ISO directors regularly do. The experience made him wonder whether an ISO director should more directly work to impact the ISO governing board, perhaps through a mechanism for asking questions directly to the board. He desired to have “more communication between school directors and [ISO] board of directors.” He felt Case Study #3 was “pretty good.” He said, “The board member coming to the teacher meeting was a smart move. That was a nice thing. Every once in a while when putting out a fire, the more senior members need to make themselves available to lower levels.”

Ali “not going to change” as a result of this case study analysis. He added, “If anything, I am doubting if I offer too much compromise [with teachers]. People are interested in winning. Always looking for a win.” He said this last part very confidently. Ali increased his overall self-efficacy rating by 23% and had the largest numerical gain on Question 7 regarding working with the AB and finances.

Nilufer. On the self-efficacy rating, Nilufer gave herself an average score of 6.75 before the case study intervention. She gave herself 5 after the intervention, which is a 26% decrease. Additionally, Nilufer’s perception of the extent to which she can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities decreased by two points.

Nilufer said this experience made her “think more about the structure of HQ and [the] ISO governing board.” She also, for the first time, considered how “decisions are made in ISO overall.” She did not know if she had a better understanding, but she realized her organizational ignorance. She thought Case Study #2 was the most impactful. She noted that:

The board was hell bent on building a structure. The person responsible for crunching the numbers was not brought in until late in the game. She also

disagreed with the final decision. Make[s] more sense to say look at the numbers and take a little at a time. This was a tough situation for the board member if you cared enough.

As a result of her participation in the case study discussions, Nilufer said she would consider when she brings figures to the board, and that she needs to bring someone with financial experience to vouch for the analysis. She may even have this person present to the board.

Kakha. On the self-efficacy rating, Kakha gave himself an average score of 7.11 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 7.75 after the intervention, which is a 9% increase. Additionally, Kakha's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by one point.

Kakha recognized that the school-level ISO governance boards "do not have as much influence as the case study boards." The local AB is a "limited governing body." He felt Case Study #2 had the biggest effect on his thinking. In this case study, the board is hand selected, and this has the effect of limiting debate. Kakha had been thinking about the importance of selecting board members. He thought "putting a director on the ISO governing board would have [an] impact."

Kakha's experience in the case study discussion affected how he viewed his role in the future, especially regarding fiscal responsibility. He expressed the huge effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on schools worldwide. He said, "Our schools need money saved. An emergency fund. When we send surplus to HQ, I don't know if that is the best decision. Does that put my individual school at risk? Something in place to help individual school[s]' sixth month reserve."

June. On the self-efficacy rating, June gave herself an average score of 4.75 before the case study intervention. She gave herself 5 after the intervention, which is a 5% increase. Additionally, June's perception of the extent to which she can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities remained the same.

June stated that her understanding of governance in an ISO school had changed little. She already knew the limitations within the ISO. She knew that she "can do a lot with the limited area." June appreciated all three case studies as they each concerned finances. She remarked, "Understanding finances is one of the most misunderstood areas in education administration." The case studies were nothing special, she said, but it was "a good exercise in considering responses to possible future experience."

She said that the key takeaway for her was "more of a reminder and inspiration to stay committed to talking about finances in various aspects like discussing the budget with teachers so they are familiar with it." She stressed "relationships and financial conversations." She wanted to "stay committed to financial conversations and small changes."

Ryan. On the self-efficacy rating, Ryan gave himself an average score of 5.75 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 5.25 after the intervention, which is a 9% decrease. Additionally, Ryan's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities increased by two points.

Ryan's understanding of ISO governance did not change as a result of his participation in the case study discussions. He said he is "always reconsidering and working to improve his position with ISO and local governance." He generally tries to focus on, as he stated, "what I have control over and what I don't have control over."

Ryan considered Case Studies #1 and #3 to have had the biggest effect on his thinking as they were more relevant to his day-to-day work. These case studies “dealt with teacher leadership and [were] more directly related” to Ryan. Regarding when and how he might change the way he works as a result of his participation in the case study discussions, he said, “It is always good to step back and look at how you are doing things...Good to consider other ideas and how people are doing it.”

Francisco. On the self-efficacy rating, Francisco gave himself an average score of 4.87 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 4.13 after the intervention, which is a 15% decrease. Additionally, Francisco’s perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities decreased by two points.

Francisco’s understanding of ISO governance did not change as a result of his participation in the case study discussions, but he said, “it is interesting to see how other organization are governed.” He felt Case Study #2 had the biggest effect on his thinking. He said he appreciated “a more specific view of a board member’s struggle for how to participate in a board.” The case study caused him to “wonder how all my board members feel about being on the board.” He also benefited from exploring the role that board culture played in the scenario.

Francisco said he was considering his use of the local AB as a result of his participation in the case study discussions. He said, “The advisory board is tricky. But how can you make it more impactful for the community? It can be more meaningful than it is now.” He claimed he would like to cultivate “more transparency with the board.”

With the entire community knowing who the board are and what the AB does, this would contribute significantly toward having the AB and community feel more connected.

Anthony. On the self-efficacy rating, Anthony gave himself an average score of 6.13 before the case study intervention. He gave himself 6.38 after the intervention, which is a 4% increase. Additionally, Anthony's perception of the extent to which he can partner with the local AB to manage school fiduciary responsibilities decreased by one point.

Anthony's understanding of governance in ISO schools did not change much. He had been working in ISO school leadership for 10 years. He felt he had a good idea of ISO governance. He pointed out the isolated nature of ISO schools' interaction with ISO HQ. Historically, schools interacted and solved problems with ISO HQ independently, rather than as regional ISO groups. He used the example of school budgets begin completed individually with ISO HQ at the single school level rather than cooperatively through school regions. Anthony felt that Case Studies #1 and #3 had the biggest effect on him. The small independent school scenarios resonated with his experience. He also was reminded of the importance of "having the back-up of ISO financially. I don't think you can run a 120-person school well without organizational backing. This is a major advantage of the ISO program."

Anthony did not envision his practice changing much as a result of his participation in these case study discussions. He recognized that this view might be a result of his age and experience. He said, "I am pretty sure what I am doing and where I am going from there." It is worth noting that Anthony's self-efficacy rating changed very

little over the course of the intervention, which supports his idea of him not changing much.

The case study analysis provoked varied individual responses. The open-ended nature of the final interview allowed for these varied points of view to emerge. Generally, the interview responses fell into four main areas: ISO governing board, local AB, school finance, and teacher participation in governance. Five responses emphasized school finances and the need for ISO schools to address these issues properly. Four respondents recommended more school head participation in the ISO governing board meetings. Five respondents were considering better ways to work with and through their local AB. One unexpected outcome of these discussions was the five respondents considering how to increase faculty participation in local school governance.

Themes by question

The responses to opened ended questions such as the postintervention survey questions provide insight into the thinking of the participants. Many of their answers to the questions are presented here.

Question 1. How has your understanding of governance in ISO schools changed through your participation the case-study discussions?

Several of the participants did not think that their understanding of governance changed much if at all through this intervention. Francisco said “My understanding hasn’t changed.” Ali agreed, “It hasn’t changed at all. Nothing actually changed. It wasn’t meaty enough compared to what we have done as ISO directors.” June replied, “Not much. Already aware of the limitations within ISO.” Anthony said, “It didn’t change much. I have been working in ISO governance for 10 years now. I have a pretty good concept.”

Phil replied, “I don’t think it has changed much. It has just reinforced previous held conceptions.”

Some were more reflective about their experience. Franz said, “Biggest thing is that we [ISO school heads] are all going through the same types of things.” Joseph replied that this CoP “Provided me with a different perspective of governance structures. Helped me understand that the governance of ISO schools will be different. This provided a format for getting feedback and the thinking process of other directors as they would handle different scenarios and issues.” Allen continued this reflection, “Made me think about the teacher role. The need for a director on the ISO board. I am not comfortable with teacher tinkering with my governance. I hope that would change in a bigger school. I have a specific vision for this school.”

Kakha recognized “The school level governance boards do not have as much influence as the case study boards.” He goes on to say that this is neither a good nor bad thing, but rather just an observation. Nilufer commented, “Made me think more about the structure of HQ and the ISO governing board. Consider how decisions are made in ISO overall. I don’t know if I have a better understanding but gave me a reason that I don’t really know.” Tekla reflected, “It was good to see the outside cases [processing] the same sorts of things we are going through right now. ISO directors talking about a non-ISO case was refreshing. It is good to get some outside examples.”

The CoP intervention did not have a profound effect on the participants, but it does seem to have been useful in exposing some participants to other ways of view governance. Some of the participants became more thoughtful about school governance and their role in it for their particular school.

Question #2. Which case-study had the biggest impact on your thinking, and why did it? Question two was helpful to this study as it provided better context on which case study resonated with the participants.

Case Study #1. Joseph said case study #1 “provided me a framework for thinking from a non-ISO governance structure. It also allowed me to see how assumptions can play a role in final outcomes.” Phil replied that first case study was most impactful as he “related to the case study more... It reminded me of a pre-ISO situation I was in.”

Case Study #2. Francisco felt case study #2 was more impactful. He said it gave a “more specific view of a board member’s struggle in how to participate in a board” and caused him to “wonder how all my board members feel about being on the board. The board culture was a valuable piece of the case study.” Nilufer too resonated more with case study #2. She said that the scenario was a “tough situation if you cared enough for the board member.” Kakha reflected on case study #2 and said that the “selection of board is pretty important.”

Case Study #3. Ryan preferred case study #1 and #3 as he felt they were more relevant to K12 school leadership. They “dealt with teacher leadership and more directly related to me.” Roberto preferred case study #3 as it got him thinking more about incorporating teacher leadership into school decision-making. Allen preferred case study #3 “because it was a situation that could happen in my school.” Tekla also felt case study #3 had the biggest impact and caused her to “think deeply.”

Anthony preferred both case studies #1 and #3 since they dealt with “small independent schools [which] resonate[d] with his experience.” He said it “Reminded him

of having the back up of ISO financially. I don't think you can run a 120-person school well without organizational backing, which is an advantage of the ISO program." June liked all the case studies. "All three of them had to do with finances. Understanding finances is one of the most misunderstood areas in education administration... Nothing groundbreaking, but it was a good exercise in considering responses to possible future experience."

Question #3: Based on your participation in the case-study discussions, how will your practice as a head of school change?

The responses to this question were quite broad and hit on a number of themes. Buddy replied that this CoP "reminded me that I am not the only one." He "recognized these are organizational issues rather personal or individual" issues that he is dealing with in the ISO. Roberto felt that "this is a weird year to make any big changes." He did however form a policy committee this year and this CoP "reinforced the need to keep the committee going and keep teachers a part of the decision-making process." He also "realize[d] that other directors are going through the same thing. It is not a personal deficiency. And I cannot fix it because I am not involved in the higher up decisions. Not as involved as I thought" in ISO decision making.

Franz is now thinking about "about including staff in big decisions" so their participation "becomes part of practice rather than reactionary." Joseph thinks his practice "will change." He wants to use a "collaborative problem-solving approach" which can "expose things that lead to bigger discussions." Allen stated that "Teachers' role in governance has come up quite about bit lately. It appeals to me to have a stronger teacher role." He would like to have teachers "sit in on decision making." He recognizes that

“Secrecy is not intentional, but [there is] no process for sharing with staff, except with personal information.”

Francisco acknowledges that the “advisory board is tricky.” And wonders “how [he] can make it more impactful for the community” and that “it can be more meaningful than it is now.” He would like to see “more transparency with the board” and help “the board and community feel more connected.” Nilufer was thinking very practically and said, “It made me think that whenever I bring numbers to the board that I bring someone with finance experience to the board I want to make sure that my data is correct. Even have them present it to the board if possible.”

June said this CoP was “more of a reminder and inspiration to stay committed to talking about finances in various aspects i.e., discussion the budget with teachers so they are familiar with it. Missing from case studies was a community with a good understanding about what good budgeting is.” June went on to emphasize “personal and organizational financial discussion, relationships, and financial conversations.” She wants to “stay committed to financial conversations and small changes.”

Ryan said, “It is always good to step back and look at how you are doing things. Considering transition from previous director. Good to consider other ideas and how people are doing it.” Tekla also was reflective. She said “I would like to think it is a good reminder to consider, take a step back, should I involve other people in the decision. Pausing and reflecting in how decisions are perceived by other people. Good to pause. Maybe the teachers need to be brought in earlier.”

Phil said, “It [the CoP] came at a pretty interesting time, because of other thoughts that came before this Case Study.” He is evaluating his leadership style “Transactional vs.

Transformational.” He said, this “Think Big Academy was a distillation of that question, so I guess the case study confirmed for me some things I was thinking about. We are in the is heavy COVID time and requires a lot of decisions [that] need to be made and it is easier to make some of these decisions in a transactional way. My way or the highway. I was feeling more separated from teachers and colleagues. When I examined that it had more to do with my way of leading through crisis.”

Ali responded that he is “not going to change. If anything, I am doubting if I offer too much compromise. People are interested in wining. Always looking for a win.”

Anthony also didn’t see his practice changing much. He says “maybe I have gotten to the laissez-faire age. I am pretty sure what I am doing and where I am going from there.”

In the responses to all three of these questions, there is both a sense of confidence and a sense of humble reflection. The ISO school heads are thoughtful in their responses and seem to genuinely be considering how to improve both their leadership in their schools and their leadership within the ISO organization. Seven themes emerged from the questionnaire results and survey responses that are helpful to this study: Room for increased self-efficacy, thoughtful reflection of school heads, desire to learn from each other, the school head’s relation to the ISO governing board, the nature of collaboration with and through the local AB, the proper management of school finances, and the desire for greater teacher participation in governance.

Table 13

Interview Themes

Theme	Quote
Thoughtful reflection	“We are in the is heavy COVID time and requires a lot of decisions need to be made and it easier to make some of these decisions in a transactional way. My way or the highway. I was feeling more separated from teachers and colleagues. When I examined that it had more to do with my way of leading through crisis.”
	“It was good to see the outside cases [processing] the same sorts of things we are going through right now. ISO directors talking about a non-ISO case was refreshing. It is good to get some outside examples.”
Desire to learn from each other	“It is always good to step back and look at how you are doing things. Considering transition from previous director. Good to consider other ideas and how people are doing it.”
	“I am doubting if I offer too much compromise. People are interested in winning. Always looking for a win.”
Relation to the ISO governing board	“Made me think more about the structure of HQ. and ISO governing board. Consider how decisions are made in ISO overall.”
	“realize[d] that other directors are going through the same thing. It is not a personal deficiency. And I cannot fix it because I am not involved in the higher up decisions. Not as involved as I thought” in ISO decision making.
Collaboration with and through the local AB	“Advisory board is tricky.”
	“How I can make [AB] more impactful for the community”
Management of school finances	“All three of them had to do with finances. Understanding finances is one of the most misunderstood areas in education administration
	“It made me think that whenever I bring numbers to the board that I bring someone with finance experience to the board I want to make sure that my data is correct. Even have them present it to the board if possible.”
Desire for greater teacher participation in governance	“Teachers’ role in governance has come up quite about bit lately. It appeals to me to have a stronger teacher role.”
	“I would like to think it is a good reminder to consider take a step back should I involve other people in the decision. Pausing and reflecting in how decisions are perceived by other people. Good to pause. Maybe the teachers need to be brought in earlier.”

Meta-Inferences

This MMAR study was designed to determine what effect a virtual CoP analyzing case studies could have on ISO school heads' perceived self-efficacy in school governance. Could self-efficacy be increased? In the reconnaissance phase, I identified that the area of self-efficacy could be targeted by this intervention by partnering with the local AB in financial decision-making. Using these findings, I designed a virtual CoP to analyze three case studies using the Four As' protocol. Now that the data have been collected and analyzed, several meta-inferences can be made from the themes that have emerged through the study: (1) thoughtful reflection, (2) desire to learn from each other, (3) school head's relation to the ISO governing board, (4) the nature of collaboration with and through the local AB, (5) proper management of school finances, (6) desire for greater teacher participation in local school governance, (7) need for increased self-efficacy.

First, the intervention was effective to some degree. The intervention intentionally targeted with laser focus the domain with the lowest average response on the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire: "To what extent can you partner with the local AB to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school?" (4.43). This domain increased by 16% while all other domain responses decreased when the respondents completed the questionnaire after the intervention. This percentage increase does not mean that the intervention was a complete success, but it does seem that for the targeted objective of the action research some growth was experienced by some participants. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the responses to the interview question revealed quality reflection by the participants. The school heads thoughtfully considered their relationship

to the ISO governing board. They evaluated their own collaboration with their local AB. They expressed desire to proper fiscal leadership and incorporating teachers into the more the decision-making apparatus of the school. This study was targeted and restricted to the ISO ISHs and the sample size and length of the study is too small to indicate definitively whether self-efficacy may be increased through focusing on areas of low efficacy in CoP analyzing case studies. The school head self-efficacy questionnaire and interview responses indicated that the case study analysis may perhaps be one possible way to address the governance issues of finance and boards. An intentional focus on professional learning may have impacted the participants' perceived sense of self-efficacy in a targeted area.

Second, the need for continued increases of self-efficacy among ISO school heads is evident. The quantitative data reveal that ISO school head participants continued to feel only "somewhat" efficacious, as opposed to "quite a bit" or even a "great deal," in the various domains of school governance. Notably, the participants ratings in many of the domain questions on the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire decreased after the CoP intervention. This is an interesting finding as it is the opposite result than I was anticipating. The CoP case study analysis may have revealed to some participants that they do not know as much as they thought they did at the beginning of the study. Some may have begun the study confident in their way of doing things, but when confronted with others' opinions and thoughts about the case studies, the participants may have questioned their own perspective. This humble disposition may point to a leader who is reflective and open to learning from others. The process of learning from others is actually very good but may have a meliorative effect on the outcome of the School Heads

Efficacy Questionnaire results depressing the results. These mixed results point to the complex nature of self-efficacy and the study thereof. Self-efficacy is not something that can be adequately addressed in the short period of this study.

Third, within the ISO there is a strong desire for continued participation in a virtual community. I sent 20 invitation to 20 very busy ISO school heads during a global pandemic which greatly impacted the day-to-day operations of schools around the world. I received 14 positive responses from school heads who wanted to participate in the CoP. That was an excellent response rate. The 14 participants were much more than what I had initially expected. Many ISO school heads desire professional learning and collaboration with each other in the form of an ongoing professional CoP, which would differ from regular organizational meetings because these case study analysis meetings would not be discussing ISO specific cases. The participants could be more objective in their analysis than they would have been if they were considering ISO cases. This objectivity allows entry points for all the participants, as well as giving the participants freedom to make the connections to their own experiences. Thus, the connections emerge naturally. The school heads in this study liked this approach of a case study analysis through a CoP. This approach has the benefit of removing emotionality and entrenched thinking to allow the participants to maintain perspective.

Fourth, Bandura (1977) discusses vicarious experiences as one way people increase their self-efficacy. In this study, the participants were required to look at governing decisions through the lens of board members and board chairs, rather than just from the viewpoint of a head of school or teacher. They were exposed to others' points of view. These vicarious experiences could play an role in the professional development of

ISO school heads, allowing them to appreciate different perspectives in a safe and supportive, low-stakes environment. Given the reflective nature of the interview responses, the participants gained tools and strategies they could employ in future situations.

Phase VI: Monitoring

The monitoring phase is the final phase in the MMAR design. This phase was informed by the previous evaluation phase. The intervention was adjusted based on the feedback and recommendations from the previous iteration (Ivankova, 2015). Although the study intervention has concluded, the participant interview data suggest that time should be set aside for more virtual CoPs within the ISO. Throughout the post-intervention interview, the participants stated their desire for further similar opportunities. The format is both effective and desirable for ISO school heads. The now-concluded virtual CoP would be a good start for a continued professional CoP based on case study analyses for school heads and senior leaders throughout the ISO. The findings of this project will be passed along to ISO HQ for them to consider the usefulness of continuing a CoP such as this. For my own local school, a CoP that uses case studies to increase self-efficacy will be a part of our future.

Study Limitations

After I had received IRB approval for this project, and prior to the commencement of the virtual CoP, I became concerned that three virtual meetings may not be enough time to be effective. How much can one increase self-efficacy in three meetings? I questioned whether the aims of this project were realistic. This type of

intervention, to have a lasting impact, should be much longer than three meetings within a month. I would recommend three to six months of focus on case study analysis.

Given that Bandura (1977) identified that one input that impacts a person's sense of self-efficacy is their affective state, I wonder to what extent the participants' moods on the day they were completing the questionnaires affected their responses. This issue may be a persistent limitation of a self-efficacy questionnaire. Other ways of measuring self-efficacy that are more longitudinal rather than being so time-constrained could be tried in future projects. This approach may require the development of alternative instruments for measuring self-efficacy.

I also wonder to what extent these case studies exposed areas of uncertainty within the participants. The case studies may have introduced alternative ways of thinking that negatively impacted the participants sense of self-efficacy in the other domains of governance. The three meetings may not have provided enough time for these newly uncovered areas to be addressed and worked through to restore equilibrium.

As a novice researcher, much was learned through this process. The coding of the qualitative survey and interview data could have been done more explicitly. I could have had a better plan for how I was going to process the qualitative data that would have more rigorously analyzed what was being communicated. I don't think the findings would have been different, but I could have explained my process better so that others could follow in subsequent investigations.

This study used Tschannen-Moran's Principal Efficacy Questionnaire as a framework for the School Head Efficacy Questionnaire. This framework works well in giving a snapshot of school heads sense of self-efficacy in a given role or function in a

school. It provides useful information, but if I were to design this study again, I would look to develop a more longitudinal and environment-specific instrument which could capture the feelings of efficacy throughout the day over the course of months. Using the questionnaire twice does not provide the rich data I would want to gain in a future research project. This project would have benefited from more data points that were situated in real-world real-time self-efficacy measurements.

The aims of this intervention were ambitious and were limited significantly by length of CoP and the number of participants. Self-efficacy, as has been discussed, is a complex construct. I was perhaps naïve in hoping that a three meeting CoP with only 14 participants could move the needle in any significant way for ISHs self-efficacy. This is simply not a long enough time period nor does this study have enough participants to first address individuals deeply held beliefs about themselves and secondly, to impact organizational culture around efficacy. At the conclusion of this MMAR, I see it now as the initial diagnosis phase of a much larger MMAR within the ISO.

Implications

There is clear potential for ISO school heads to increase their self-efficacy. This study revealed that a virtual case study approach may be a way to address this. There certainly was enthusiasm among the participants for more case study analysis and collaboration in problem-solving. One could expect these approaches to continue among the selected ISO school heads.

One cannot complete a major, education-based research project such as this without acknowledging the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project could have been postponed indefinitely as everyone scrambled to adjust to an abnormal reality.

However, COVID-19 also created great advantages for this project. The global move to online virtual environments led to the ubiquity of Zoom and the increased comfort of a virtual meeting. The pandemic also generated greater opportunities for collaboration and a greater need for school leaders to develop self-efficacy. This situation made it easier to recruit people for this study. Additionally, the frenetic change required by school leaders throughout the world has led many ISO school heads to work closely with their local ABs for the first time. The ISO needs school leaders who are high in self-efficacy. The challenges of the modern world keep coming. School leaders need to consider themselves as capable and empowered. The ISO should commit to providing school heads and other leaders with opportunities to increase their self-efficacy by building competence and confidence.

Reflections

As this project ended, I considered what I would do differently and what I have learned throughout the process. While this is my final dissertation, as a school leader, it will not be my last action research project. I have learned much that I can carry forward.

The wording of questions is very important and needs to be precise. The phrasing of the quantitative questionnaire prompt may need to be reworded. In this project, I asked, “To what extent can you...”. I wonder if this was interpreted by some as, “To what extent are you allowed...” rather than “To what extent are you capable of...” This latter rewording may address self-efficacy more directly. If the phrase was interpreted as the former, signifying permission, I think that would significantly skew the results of the questionnaire, especially if the intervention was targeting self-efficacy, as it was in this case.

The length of intervention was arbitrarily constrained by graduation dates. If this was solely an organizational research project, the number of case study meetings should be expanded. Three case study analysis meetings may not have a deep and lasting impact, but a CoP that meets regularly over weeks, months, or even years could achieve something remarkable.

It was very clear at the beginning of the case study meetings that not everyone began with a shared understanding of governance and self-efficacy. These are such specific words with nuances that affect meaning. I deliberately chose not to preteach and define the scope of these and other words. If I were to conduct this project again, over the course of a month or two, I would find a way to come to a collective understanding of what is meant by the important words of the discussion.

Conclusion

The purpose of this MMAR study was to increase the level of self-efficacy of ISHs regarding organizational and school governance. I found, through the mix of qualitative and quantitative data, that a virtual CoP using targeted case studies may be useful to increase the perceived self-efficacy of the participants. Through continued iteration, the use of a virtual CoP around case study analysis may lead to ingrained elements of effective professional learning. Future iterations of this study could expand into other professional disciplines that need to develop self-efficacy.

Appendix A

School Head Efficacy Questionnaire

adapted from Tschannen-Moran's (n.d.) Principal Efficacy Questionnaire

<https://wmpeople.wm.edu/asset/index/mxtsch/pse>

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for international school heads in their school activities.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side. The scale of responses ranges from “None at all” (1) to “A Great Deal” (9), with “Some Degree” (5) representing the mid-point between these low and high extremes. You may choose any of the nine possible responses, since each represents a degree on the continuum.

Your answers are confidential.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

“In your current role as head of school, to what extent can you...”

(1) None at All (3) Very Little (5) Some Degree (7) Quite a Bit (9) A Great Deal

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. partner with ISO headquarters to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 2. collaborate with ISO headquarters to create a strategic plan for your school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 3. participate with ISO headquarters to generate a shared vision for the school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 4. impact the future sustained direction of your school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 5. initiate change in your school through ISO governing structures? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 6. participate with local advisory board to generate a shared vision for the school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 7. partner with the local advisory board to manage fiduciary responsibilities of your school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| 8. collaborate with the local advisory board to create a strategic plan for your school? | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |

Appendix B

Governance Descriptive Survey

1. Describe your school's and organization's governing structure.
2. How are decisions concerning the school's financial obligations made? What is your role in the process?
3. How is strategic planning done in your school and organization? What is your role in the process?
4. Describe the responsibility and role of the school head in your school and organization to generate and articulate a vision for the school.
5. Describe the role of ISO Headquarters in relation to the governance of the school.
6. Describe the role of the ISO regional supervisor in relation to the governance of the school.
7. Describe the role of your school's advisory board in relation to the governance of the school.

Appendix C

Postintervention Governance Interview Questions

1. How has your understanding of governance in ISO schools changed through your participation the case study discussions?
2. Which case study had the biggest effect on your thinking, and why?
3. Based on your participation in the case study discussions, how will your practice as a head of school change?

Appendix D

IRB Approval



Office of Research Integrity
IRB, RDRC

EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

IRB Number: 64504

TO: Joshua Garrett
Educational Leadership Studies
PI phone #: 7205882077
PI email: Joshua.Garrett@uky.edu

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
Nonmedical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval for Exemption Certification

DATE: 3/4/2021

On 3/4/2021, it was determined that your project entitled "*INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HEADS' SELF-EFFICACY AND GOVERNANCE: AN INTERVENTION*" meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "[PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research](#)" available in the online Office of Research Integrity's [IRB Survival Handbook](#). Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through [ORT's web site](#). If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.

see blue.

405 Kinkead Hall | Lexington, KY 40506-0057 | P: 859-257-9428 | F: 859-257-8995 | www.research.uky.edu/ori/

An Equal Opportunity University

Appendix E

Informed Consent Document



Consent to Participate in a Research Study

IRB Approval
3/4/2021
IRB # 64504
Exempt

KEY INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL HEADS' SELF-EFFICACY AND GOVERNANCE: AN INTERVENTION

We are asking you to choose whether or not to volunteer for a research study about international school heads' level of self-efficacy toward school governance. We are asking you because of our current employment as a school director and your geographic proximity to the primary investigator. This page is to give you key information to help you decide whether to participate. We have included detailed information after this page. Ask the research team questions. If you have questions later, the contact information for the research investigator in charge of the study is below.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study aims to develop international school heads' self-efficacy in school governance through the use three virtual meetings where a cohort will analyze case studies concerning organizational governance. Data will be collected via survey, questionnaire, and interview.

By doing this study, we hope to learn to what extent international school heads self-efficacy can be enhanced. Your participation in this research will last about 3 hours over the course of a two weeks.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

By participating in this project, you may benefit through the rich discussion and analysis by increasing your self-efficacy toward the governance of your current and future schools. You will also be contributing to the understanding and development of international school head leadership, specifically in your organization.

WHAT ARE KEY REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

You may not want to participate in this project because of the time commitment over the course of a couple of weeks. You may not want to participate in another online meeting via Zoom. You may not want to discuss organizational and school governance with your peers.

For a complete description of risks, refer to the Detailed Consent.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

I am a student conducting this research through the University of Kentucky and am being guided by my faculty advisor, Dr. Lars Bjork. If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study contact Joshua Garrett (principal investigator) of the University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Leadership Studies at jaga258@q.uky.edu or Dr. Lars Bjork at lars.bjork@uky.edu and +1 (859) 257-2450.

If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact staff in the University of Kentucky (UK) Office of Research Integrity (ORI) between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428.

Appendix F

GDPR Privacy Notice

University of Kentucky GDPR Privacy Notice

IRB Approval
3/4/2021
IRB # 64504
Exempt

This privacy notice applies to all personal identifying information that the University of Kentucky (UK) and UK researchers, identified in the informed consent, collect or process about you in connection with your participation in this research project. Personal identifying information is information about you through which you can be identified. The basis for collecting and processing your personal information is the following:

- You have consented to the collection and processing of your personal information

Your data will be used and/or stored as long as needed for the research study and consistent with University of Kentucky policies.

Your Rights

- You have the right to see the information being collected about you in the study. To ensure integrity of the study, you will not be able to review some of the data until after the study has been completed.
- You have the right to request corrections to your Personal Information if it is not correct.
- You have the right to limit the collection and use of your Personal Information under certain circumstances (for example, if you think that the information is inaccurate).
- You have the right to request the deletion of your Personal Information if you are no longer participating in the study. However, there are limits on your ability to request deletion of your Personal Information if deletion would seriously impair the progress of the study or if your Personal Information is needed to comply with legal requirements.
- You have the right to file a complaint with a data protection authority

Withdrawal from the Study

If you withdraw from the study, you will no longer be able to participate in the study. No new information will be collected about you or from you by the study team. Your withdrawal has no effect on data collected prior to your withdrawal.

After your withdrawal, your data and personal information may still be maintained to ensure integrity of the study, to satisfy any legal requirements including reporting and retention requirements, and/or for any other purposes permitted under applicable data protection and privacy laws.

Security

We ensure a level of security appropriate to the risk of the personal information we process. These measures are in place to protect the confidentiality of your information.

International Data Transfer

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Vita

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Professional Experience

Director, International School in Balkans: 2018–Present

International Guest Instructor, University of Kentucky: 2019–Present

Deputy Head / Director of Instruction, International School in Caucasus: 2014–18

International Educator, International School in the Caucasus: 2013–14

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