QUALITY OF LIFE AND STANDARD OF LIVING: PLANNING FOR CONFLICT OR COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

This study addressed the decisions Canadian school boards make in terms of quality of life and standard of living and how these reflect their notions of the purposes of education. In addition, it investigated the benefits of education from the perspective of the indicators quality of life and standard of living. The study was not designed to measure the monetary value of education but rather the values of education from the perspective of school boards (districts), administrators, and trustee. Therefore, this research is about "why do we invest in education?" The study also highlights the value component of trustee/superintendent decision making by specifying and categorizing types of indicators that define quality of life and standard of living from their personal and professional perspective.

Results suggested that school boards have multifaceted policies, plans, and priorities which relate to quality of life and standard of living. The indicators most valued by the school boards consisted of employment/income, health, safety, and human rights. The research revealed that administrators had intrapersonal value conflict between their personal and professional values; whereas, trustees (elected to govern school board) had no intrapersonal conflict between their personal and professional values. This conclusion was related to the fact that trustees were making decisions based on both personal and professional knowledge and experience, and were being more genuine in their roles. Superintendents who are defined as senior managers, were somewhat more constrained by their roles, and the need to project congruency with their professional values and their school board's official position, even in cases where it may have conflicted with their personal values.

INTRODUCTION

This article is based on research conducted in 2007–2008 and relates to Canadian school boards' intentions in planning and assessing the benefits of education. Benefits of education in this study are defined as quality of life and standard of living. Both concepts are used as indicators to investigate the nature, value, and purpose of education from the perspective of official school board documents and administrator values at both the personal and professional level.

Previous research on the benefits of education has been mainly conducted from an economic perspective and primarily is concerned with three strands of investigation: first, education as a private investment based on the rate of return for money, so investment tends to be high, paying the individual dividends in terms of higher income; second, education as a public investment by "neighborhood effects" or "externalities," that is, one tends to be a better citizen and, therefore, increases public good; third, education seen to contribute to economic growth (Cohn & Geske, 1990; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Hy, 2000; McMahon, 2006; Psacharopoulos, 1994).

Educational benefits are defined either economically or socially; school boards define these concepts through decisions and planning and the values they hold. Benefits imply multiple outcomes and multiple meanings to various stakeholders in society. In general, benefits received from education are believed to result in economic and social improvement (Haverman & Wolfe, 1994; McMahon, 2006; McMahon & Geske, 1982; Psacharopoulos, 1985). Viewed from a social perspective, benefits are activities contributing to effective civic and charitable institutions, less poverty, more social capital, lower prison costs, and better family planning (McMahon, 2006). This line of reasoning is consistent with improvements in quality of life for society and/or individuals. Benefits, as researched extensively by Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2004), can also be viewed from an economic perspective, related to income, employment, human capital, and economic growth. This conception of benefit is consistent with standard of living gains. The economic and social benefits debate implies a competitive nature that arises from both types of benefits and, therefore, it is important to investigate how educational planning treats both concepts. The competitive nature of quality of life and standard of living implies the value derived from budgetary decisions made by schools boards, that is which goals are funded more by school boards, becomes competitive in nature.

Thus, the major research question of this study was "To what extent are the values of quality of life and standard of living reflected in the purposes of education, as demonstrated by educational policies, plans, funding, and administrator values at the school board level?" This research question was addressed by the following sub-questions: To what extent do school board plans, policies, and strategy reflect goals of quality of life and standard of living?; What are school board administrators' priorities regarding goals of education in terms of quality of life and standard of living?; Is there a consistency between school board plans, priorities, and administrator perceptions in terms of goals of quality of life and standard of living?

Significance of the Study

Purposes of education and values are related inasmuch as the former are value imperatives (Hodgkinson, 1991), or end values of society that educators consider necessary to emphasize at a given time (Peters, 1977). This study was undertaken to contribute to our understanding of educational decision-makers' plans and policies reflected in these perspectives.

Previous studies in education provide correlational evidence that demonstrates the relationship education has to outcomes of social and economic benefit. Wolfe and Zuvekas (1995) reported on education benefits that impact social outcomes. For example, there is evidence that education is associated with reduced criminal activity and positively associated with research development and diffusion of technology. There is descriptive evidence to suggest that education is positively associated with voting and a stable democratic society and reduced alienation and inequality, as well as better health and family planning (Wolfe & Zuvekas, 1995). In terms of economic benefits, quantitative studies reported by Cohn and Geske (1990) showed the relationship education has to income and employment.

Correlational and descriptive research has tended to assess the measurable effects of education on economic and social outcomes after having been diffused throughout society. No research has been done using quality of life and standard of living indicators to organize the various benefits of education. Most of the research to date presented the benefits of education in a quantitative manner, which results in research that misses underlying relationships with the purposes of education. Moreover, most of the research on the benefits of education presents questions related to how much should be spent on education as opposed to *why* it is being spent (McMahon, 2006).

Previous research strips away values and observed actions from context (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). This study was designed to go beyond snapshots of "what" or "how many" to explore how and why things happen as they do. The emphasis is on lived experiences and meaning that superintendents and trustees (individual school board members) have about educational outcomes embedded in context. The contribution of this research is that educational outcomes are being observed from various school board perspectives before being diffused throughout society. In addition, educational outcomes are being interpreted by superintendents and trustees by meanings they place on them, their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions, and connecting these meanings to official school board policies and to the social world around them.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The School Board and Goal Incompatibility

School boards, like other organizations, operate within an environment of change. As context changes, planning becomes more difficult. Operating within the context of change, described as chaos and complexity (Begley, 2000; Hargreaves, 1994), administrators and school board trustees face conflicting decisions that impact the values they hold and the plans they create. As the system evolves and as context changes, planning can be viewed as a set of interdependent phases externally driven and internally defined. The defining moments faced by organizations is often path dependent: a decision, at a critical moment, can direct the system down a path that diverges widely from the one it otherwise would have followed (Homer-Dixon, 2001). Put another way, where the system (school board) is at any given time depends crucially on where it was – that is, on the accumulated events and decisions that have made up the system's history to that point.

As various external events impact school boards, they are increasingly characterized not only by greater control, but also paradoxically by greater fragmentation. (Bottery, 2002). Such trends toward

fragmentation and control are generated by a confluence of different forces, particularly coming from the increasing globalization of the world economies (Castells, 1994; Homer-Dixon, 2001; Ramo, 2009; Rifkin, 2000). As these have profound effects generally, and upon school boards in particular, it is wise for school boards to develop educational plans and, as well, for administrators develop responses to these influences and their effects.

Exacerbating this situation is the problem of educational goals or purpose of education. That is, goals are rarely clear and often conflicting and rapidly changing. The educational system is expected to deliver outcomes with unclear, unrealistic, or competing expectations (Cuban, 2004, Kelley, 1997). The debate amongst researchers, educators, and philosophers about the purpose of schooling began when schools first opened. Was schooling training for work, individual fulfillment, as a preparation for citizenship, to infuse a sense of patriotism, to support the Christian ethic, or simply for intrinsic value of liberal education (Bedard & Lawton, 2000; Gidney,1999; Osborne, 1999)? Not only were there disagreements about their purpose, each of these distinct purposes were defined very differently at different times. Others have framed the contentiousness of educational goals as a dichotomy between social and economic goals (Lawton & Tzalalis, 1994).

A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action (Kluckhohn, 1951). From this conception of the desirable, emerges a code or standard of behavior. Kluckhohn specifies desirable, conceptions, and selection as the three foci in his definition. Hodgkinson (1978, 1983) bases his definition of value on Kluckhohn's concept of the desirable. Choice is again considered important to the concept. In his discussion, Hodgkinson emphasizes a polar-relationship between value and fact. Hodgkinson (1978, p. 105) states that facts refer to propositions, which are ostensibly publicly verifiable and in some ways possess the quality of being true. Value, on the other hand, can never be true or false. A value is a function of the individual's mind. The world of fact is given, and the other, the world of value, is made (Hodgkinson, 1978, p. 104). This sets up a theme of opposition between objectivity (facts) and subjectivity (values).

Berleant (1973) believes that values must be conceptualized with reference to the human activities of believing, striving, and responding in all sorts of ways to the things and events which men encounter. He frames his discussion of facts and values within a context of experience and judgment. Berleant focuses on the experience of value on the value side, and statements about the experience, on the fact side. The facts or statements about the experience are verifiable. Cognitive and non-cognitive expression results from the experience of value. Beck (1974), like Kluckhohn (1951), also believes that values are based on human need. This need is expressed through an attitude of acceptance. For both Beck and Hodgkinson (1978), the attitude is identified as a more surface level phenomenon than values. An expression of value is formulated by factual claims plus individual expression. Beck's approach to value and theory in value, therefore, is one of limited objectivity. In these terms, limited objectivity represents a middle path on the issue of objectivity.

For Rokech (1973), a value system is a learned organization of principles and rules to help one choose between alternatives. Values are ordered, with this system, along an ongoing continuum which specifies their relative importance. The system is, therefore, an integrated, holistic orientation similar to Beck's (1974) conception of value system where values are balanced – not treated in isolation. Rokech similarly frames his discussion of values in terms of the matter of choice and selection from a number of possible alternatives.

Other aspects of Rokech's (1973) view also correspond to other theorists reviewed. His identification of value as something which refers to a mode of conduct, which, in turn, gives rise to standards that guide action, is one such similarity. Values are seen as an expression of human need which is in common with a number of value theorists. For Rokech, a value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. It is operative in conflict resolution and decisionmaking. This perspective is reflected in Johnston's (1987) view that values serve as guideposts; they tell individuals what they generally act in accordance with, what individuals profess, and what values help determine the correctness of any action either by the individual or institution might propose.

Later research investigated applied science models based on informed intuition. The applied science approach views knowledge as an instrumentality for the manager (Kennedy, 1984). Borrowing from the bureaucratic model, this view asserts that the best information available should be applied to the identification and definition of problems and then to selecting a treatment based on accepted current practices. In application, the applied science model often is merged with what Sergiovanni, Burlingame, and Coombs (1987) described as "reflective practice." This model posits that professional decision-makers rely heavily on informed intuition as they create knowledge and that such intuition is informed by theoretical knowledge and an appreciation of the management environment. Later work by Leithwood and Stager (1989) showed values to be a central pillar in decision making, often acting as substitutes for knowledge.

More recent research further investigated the role of values in decision making. Societies have become more pluralistic and demands and needs of interest groups in communities more diversified and insistent. The nature of school administration has altered dramatically (Begley, 2000). According to Begley, one outcome is the increase in value conflicts that occur in school environments. Furthermore, the role of educational leaders has become much less predictable, less structured, and more conflict-laden (Begley, p. 26). This leads to situations where consensus cannot be achieved, rendering obsolete the traditional rational notions of problem solving. More than ever, administrators recognize that the values manifested by individuals, groups, and organizations have an impact on choices made in school boards when making strategic and policy level decisions.

What school boards decide and what they implement signifies what is valued. Values are a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action. (Parsons & Shils 1962, p. 395) In administration, the making of choices is usually termed decision making or problem solving: activities familiar to most administrators. Willower (1992) puts it this way: "because a significant portion of the practice in educational administration requires rejecting some courses of action in favour of a preferred one, values are generally acknowledged to be central to the field" (p. 369). This line of reasoning is further corroborated by Ryan (1999), who says: "To be sure, every decision an administrator makes involves some sort of value choice" (p. 79).

The Parsons and Shils' (1962) definition expands the scope of the term value beyond the relatively narrow philosophical domain of the metaphysical to several other types of value relevant to educational administration. It includes: social ethics (Beck, 1990, 1993, 1999; Cohen, 1982; Frankena, 1973); transrational values (Hodgkinson, 1996); the rational moral domain of administrative decision making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2000; Strike, 1999; Willower, 1992, 1999); plus the realm of self-interest and personal preference (Begley & Johansson 1998; Evers & Lakomski 1996; Hodgkinson, 1996).

By unraveling the quality of life and standard of living decisions, it will be possible to identify the underlying values that are at work at both the personal, professional, and organizational levels. As Begley (2001) notes, the sophisticated administrators are wise to distinguish consciously among the arenas of personal, professional, organizational, social, and economic values of their environments.

METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study was qualitative. Qualitative researchers perceive what is happening in key episodes that represent lived experiences with direct interpretation and stories (Stake, 1995). This type of methodology was chosen because a profound understanding of the sample was required through conversation and in their natural setting in order to gain insight into policymakers' values about quality of life and standard of living as it relates to purposes of education. A second consideration for using the qualitative method is to understand the dynamic nature of decision-makers' constraints in formulating purposes of education within a complex system that cannot readily be reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships. The purpose of the methodology is to understand perceptions in-depth, not necessarily Generalizability of findings.

Data sources included interviews with senior level officials, such as superintendents and trustees, as well as the examination of documents and artifacts, such as strategic plans, school board minutes, newsletters, Director's reports and Chair's reports. These public documents were accessed via

websites and site visits from November 2007 to February 2008.

Four school boards were selected for the study out of 72 school boards in Ontario. Qualitative inquiry uses non-probability sampling as it does not aim to produce a statistically representative sample or draw statistical inferences. A purposive nonrandom sampling technique was used which allowed flexibility in choosing the specific participants needed for this study. The characteristics of the participants were used for the basis of the selection process in order to reflect the sample of interest. The sampling criteria were based on the following characteristics: school boards were first categorized into four geographic regions. The geographic regions were Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western Ontario. The list of school boards in each region was broken down into four categories: size, in terms of student enrolment (large/small); type (public/catholic); geographic (urban/rural); and language (French/English).

The planned sample size of participants was 20; however, 11 school board trustees and 7 superintendents agreed and took part in this study. Of the 11 trustees, 1 was a chair of the board and the rest were regular trustees. Of the 7 superintendents, 5 supervised a portfolio of schools, 1 was from Operations, and 1 was from Human Resources.

Interview questions were developed and administered to the 18 participants. The specific interview questions were structured in that the questions and order of presentation were determined. The interview questions related to each research question as well as the conceptual framework, which was based partially on the Calvert-Henderson Index and Menna (2009) depicted in Figure 1.
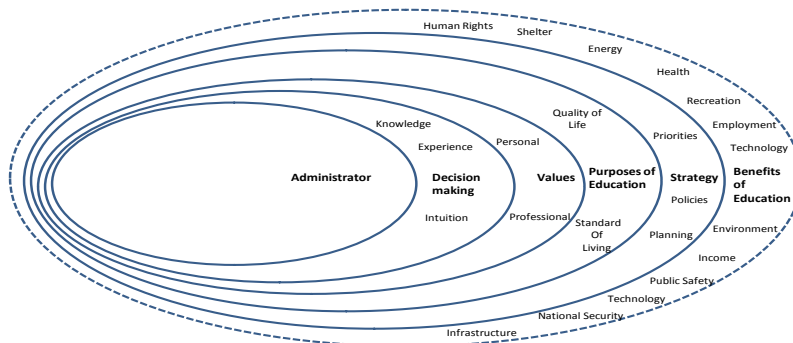

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Questions based on Calvert-Henderson Index

The *benefits of education* are the variables of quality of life and standard of living that actually have some positive benefits from the decisions made by school boards. In addition, this part of the framework involves appraising the outcomes of the decision and strategies made.

The *strategy* consists of plans, policies, and priorities. The three factors together provide major guidelines for action; they create frameworks that allow for direction and action. In this research, strategy is reflected in decisions and actions of the school board that determines its long-run performance and direction. School boards have strategies that involve setting objectives that direct the organization toward overall goals.

Purposes of education related to standard of living and quality of life are employment, energy, environment, health, human rights, income, infrastructure, national security, public safety, recreation, and shelter. These variables serve as proxies for the concepts of standard of living and quality of life and allow me to make determinations about the values school board trustees/superintendents hold with regards to standard of living and quality of life.

Values are those conceptions of the desirable which motivate individuals and collective groups to act in particular ways to achieve particular ends. They reflect an individual's basic motivations, shape attitudes, and reveal the intentions behind actions (Begley, 1999). The values investigated in this study are the personal and professional values of superintendents and trustees, and the values of the school board as expressed in official documents.

Decision making within the bureaucratic model posits key attributes for the management of any organization: Intuitive methods of decision-making and scientific method based on observation and analysis were used to align decision making to narrower descriptors of "resource allocation" and policy-making (Calvert-Henderson, 2000).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted (Creswell, 2003). The qualitative method evokes questions about the validity and reliability of the interview guide. This study, therefore, relied on face validity which questions whether the results appear to fit the reality. The nature of this study is such that it is unlikely that another researcher using the same data would come up with exactly the same interpretation of the facts. In this context, reliability is viewed as consistency of response, and the ability to obtain similar results by documenting what the participants express about quality of life and standard of living (Creswell, 2003).

The interviews were based on seven questions and a pre-interview paragraph. The pre-interview paragraph was used to make the subject feel comfortable and understand the parameters/concepts to be discussed. For example,

Good morning/afternoon, the so-called knowledge economy has brought many changes in the world, which include economic and social issues. One could say that standard of living and quality of life are important concepts to be addressed. That is, reconciling the economic and social goals of education, preparing people for making a living and living a life. Therefore, as an educator, how does one think about how to address not only making a profit and providing value for money but also ensuring human value, character, community and democracy, that is values for the greater good.

The interview questions along with definitions of the terms were explained before the interviews began. Interviews were tape-recorded, with permission of participants, and some notes were taken during the interview but most notes were written after the interview. During the interview, each participant was given a glossary which consisted of definitions of the variables of quality of life and standard of living and a list of the variables. This glossary of terms (variables) was used by participants to assign level of importance to each variable. Upon completion of each interview, the data were transcribed from tape recordings word for word. These verbatim transcripts were the research data. The researcher carefully and meticulously took field notes to record perceptions, attitudes, and values expressed. Once the data were organized and transcribed, they were sent to participants for review. All participants reviewed their transcripts and recommended no major changes. Documents and artifacts were analyzed from various official documents such as vision statements, official policy documents, websites, programs and recorded minutes of board meetings. Each document and artifact was studied and analyzed using content analysis. Key words were extracted from the documents and artifacts and matched with the conceptual framework to develop a count of how many times quality of life and standard of living descriptors were used.

The themes of the study were drawn from the data sources described earlier, and related to that part of the conceptual framework that dealt with the benefits of education (the outer most ring of the conceptual framework), which consisted of thirteen indicators, those indicators are: human rights, shelter, energy, health, recreation, employment, technology, environment, income, public safety, technology, national security, and infrastructure.

RESULTS

The data show that both quality of life and standard of living had consistencies and inconsistencies between and within school boards, as between professional and personal roles, and as defined within the framework of purposes of education. For example, when asked about the purposes of education, superintendents valued quality of life more than standard of living. Superintendents looked at education as a means of creating citizens that were part of the democratic process. One superintendent said, "Part of the reason our school system exists is to make sure students understand and take part in their civic responsibilities. They need to know what democracy is and, how to function in our society."

Another superintendent considered quality of life to be about the happiness of the individual, whether that is by learning something new, experiencing another culture, or how well a life is lived, adding that it all depended on the subjective nature from individual to individual. This superintendent noted that quality of life flows from standard of living. For example, if one is happy in a career, then quality of life follows. "Quality of life issues are non-monetary factors that will impact families. We as a school district need to be aware of the power of quality of life."

Superintendents valued certain quality of life indicators, specifically recreation and human rights. Although they spoke of the importance of employment/income, they focused on the importance of quality of life for the purposes of education. They moved away from commerce and spoke more of community; they remarked less on private interest and more on public life. They looked at globalization more positively than trustees and commented that schools must strike a balance between education for making a living and educating for living a life. They felt that one of the greatest threats to a young person's life is the fundamental nature of human character and added that the qualities of good work are not necessarily the qualities of good character. They felt that the real challenge for schools was to tie educational goals to context and to recast the purposes of education by connecting private and personal goals to intellectual, civic, and moral values. They added that schools are subject to so many competing pressures that unless they are able to set some clear goals, they run the risk of trying to move in so many different directions at once that they make no progress in any of them. The professional and personal values of superintendents were not consistent.

Trustees mentioned the dual role schools play in terms of education for jobs and education for citizenship. Participants felt it was hard to satisfy all members of society. One trustee said, "Our students should learn that quality of life is about cooperation, as well as social and individual harmony, exactly the opposite of what standard of living promotes in today's economic climate."

In general, the trustees expressed their main priorities as employment/income, recreation, health, and human rights. Repeatedly, the data reflected the trustees' primary regard for the individual and private benefits of education. Trustees expressed the importance of employment/income and the need for the educational system to prepare young people for employment and financial success. They also talked of the pragmatic and utilitarian role education should play in a student's life, and goals relating education to individual and private gain. That is, education was valued for its material purposes; jobs, income, and social status. They were strongly influenced by personal values and external influences. The data showed that trustees have an understanding of the global context, and feel that the world was getting more complex and changing rapidly. They felt that school boards needed to be better and quicker at making decisions that were timely and relevant. Many participants were overwhelmed by the pressures for change within their organization, to the point that schools were extending their purpose beyond what they should be doing. Most felt there was a danger of making schools accountable for social and economic problems that are really other people's responsibility.

Trustees talked at great length of globalization as an important factor that has brought change to people's lives. They felt that globalization was a matter not only of opportunity to increase standard of

living, but of moral responsibility to protect quality of life. Trustees felt that the challenges for school boards in today's environment were about how we should live our lives and for what kind of life we should be educating young people. Furthermore, the professional and personal values of trustees were consistent.

In terms of interpersonal values conflict, superintendents had difficulty in reconciling their personal and professional views, whereas trustees did not. For example, one superintendent said:

In my position I have to value quality of life issues like human rights and healthcare, even though the focus is on standard of living. I think standard of living is imposed on us, we as a society have no control over it, let's be serious about it.

Another superintendent was even more direct with her conflict between quality of life and standard of living:

Being a superintendent, at times, means minimizing my personal perspective and maximizing my professional role. Although this is difficult to do, I have learned to balance both perspectives; that has been the most difficult challenge in my role as superintendent.

From the perspective of their role as superintendents, they felt that they had an active role in school board decision making and added that the traditional role of governance, based on the private corporate model, did not apply to school boards since education is very political. They felt their role was more closely tied to political broker rather than manager, supporting various priorities and policies that were constantly shifting, intersecting, and contradictory. It was evident from the data that there was a relationship between fact and value, not a separation. This was an interesting revelation because superintendents' practice was not completely pragmatic and unreflectively focused on procedural matters, but rather had a strong influence from their personal values which, at times, conflicted with organizational values. This would suggest from previous research that personal values can be important influences on superintendents even though they may be less frequently articulated by superintendents (Begley and Johansson, 1998).

Results also uncovered the contentious and conflicting nature of educational goals as expressed by superintendents and trustees. Both groups of superintendents and trustees commented on the importance of standard of living and took the human capital approach to explain the link with education and income, that is, both groups shared some common elements of quality of life and standard of living. Although respondents some had concerns about official educational goals, for instance one superintendent said:

Our education system today, more than any other time in our history, is looked upon to meet many different challenges. I don't know how we can meet all of them; our system is all over the place, trying to satisfy as many economic and social issues as possible.

In contrast, a trustee noted:

Schools can only do so much, we cannot be all things to all people, one area that we can make a difference in is providing the necessary attributes to cope with the many challenges in life.

Although the results demonstrated the contentious nature of educational goals, the participants were aware that official school board documents capture all elements that were not expressed by their personal and/or professional views. Most of the participants referred to official school board policies and plans when they lacked a sufficient response to quality of life and standard of living goals. For instance, one trustee said: "Our school has programs that range from apprenticeship and technology to safe school and energy programs. We have all aspects of life, whether it be in the economic or social realm."

The official documents showed the multifaceted nature of policies, plans, and priorities of each of the school boards. They recognized almost all of the indicators of qualify of life and standard of living. The most valued indicator was income/employment (standard of living), followed by health, human rights, and recreation. The four school boards' official documents, with the exception of shelter, touched on all aspects of quality of life and standard of living. Employment/income, health, safety, and human rights were the most frequently discussed in the official documents. The next most discussed were infrastructure/ technology, recreation, and environment/energy.

Consistency existed among school board documents with respect to their plans, priorities, policies, programs, and Administrators' perceptions of quality of life and standard of living. The scope of the plans, priorities, and policies were wide enough to capture all the indicators of quality of life and standard of living. Therefore, the multifaceted nature of the school board made it easy to identify overlaps with the perception of administrators. Although the school board captured all indicators within their plans, priorities,

policies, and programs, the most prominent during the 2006-07 school year were employment/income, health, safety, and human rights. In general, the data showed that there were divergent perspectives about which quality of life and standard of living indicators were valued by administrators and those valued by the various school boards

In general, the indicators from the conceptual framework were used to match the frequency and attention each school board gave to each of the indicators related to quality of life and/or standard of living. Administrator values showed wide variations across and within school boards on some indicators of quality of life and standard of living and similarities on others. In general, trustees showed greater alignment between personal and professional values than did superintendents. In addition, superintendents valued quality of life indictors; whereas, trustees valued standard of living.

The results suggest that superintendents valued quality of life more than standard of living and, conversely, trustees valued standard of living more than quality of life. For instance one trustee remarked:

If we do not keep investing in our education system we will keep falling behind, I mean look at the global economy, China and India are quickly becoming more and more competitive, we have to do something now, our standard of living is in jeopardy.

Whereas superintendents expressed the current dilemma from a quality of life perspective:

A function of the school board is the notion of belonging. Feeling like an outsider is painful. It can happen to immigrants, the poor and even our students. I believe it's important to identify with and share in a community story and our schools do this and in fact must do it.

Although the data did show diversity in the views of superintendents and trustees about quality of life and standard of living, much of what they expressed was captured in various school board vehicles such as priorities, plans, policies and programs. In addition, the multifaceted nature of these vehicles within school boards allowed both trustees and superintendents the opportunity to champion indicators within standard of living and quality of life that they considered important from their roles, which may explain the divergence among administrator priorities and those of the school board.

There are some consistencies that are apparent between the school board, the trustees, and superintendents but there are also inconsistencies between both the role and board. The study showed the areas in which trustees and superintendents had variation in their perspectives about quality of life and standard of living with the official documents of the school board. Furthermore, areas in which trustees and superintendents had variation in their perspectives about quality of life and standard of living with the official documents of the school board was also apparent from the results. The data also showed that where trustees' value standard of living the corresponding gap is filled in with superintendents' value of quality of life.

A final finding of the study revealed that smaller school boards, in terms of student population and budgets, offered fewer programs for their jurisdiction than larger school boards. Smaller school boards offered more programs related to standard of living rather than quality of life; whereas, the larger school boards offered a mixture of both quality of life and standard of living. This implied that the larger school boards had the financial and staff expertise to offer both quality of life and standard of living programs; whereas, the smaller school boards offered standard of living not only because of inadequate financial resources but also because most of their students left the community for employment related issues and, therefore, the school board made it a priority to focus on the economic aspects of well-being as opposed to the social ones.

This research into the purposes of education has shown that in the perceptions of school board superintendents and trustees, increasing economic and material well-being does not necessarily improve well-being; instead, the study has shown that quality of life is seen as a major purpose of education more by superintendents than by trustees. Well-being is more than making money, and even more than just happiness. Well-being means developing a person, being fulfilled, and making a meaningful contribution to the community.

DISCUSSION

The first area in which this study contributed to knowledge in educational administration is in the area

of espoused values and underlying basic assumptions. Examining both espoused values and underlying assumptions may reveal much about why advocated educational goals are seemingly unattainable in certain school boards (Leonard, 1999). Moreover, if espoused values eventually get "transformed" (Schein, 1984) into underlying assumptions, then they are the precursor to understanding the process of how particular values become part of the educational landscape. Examining, analyzing, and describing organizational members' value orientations, variations in value orientations, and value conflicts pertaining to educational purposes are important steps in increasing our understanding of this phenomenon, thereby, narrowing the gap between value theory and educational practice.

The findings suggested educational goals are in conflict and not clear in a rapidly changing environment and, as a result, school boards are expected to deliver outcomes with unclear and competing expectations (Cuban, 2004; Kelley, 1997). The diversity and richness of opinions offered by administers are indicative of the complexity and nature of governance within educational organizations such as school boards. This was apparent in the conflict held by trustees and superintendents with their views on standard of living and quality of life. School boards in this study sought to overcome these conflicts by having a "big-tent" approach, that is, grand statements derived from official documents to include all community members. By developing these broad official statements, school districts would not leave any stakeholders out of their vision.

The research revealed that administrators had intrapersonal value conflict between their personal and professional values; whereas, trustees had no intrapersonal conflict between their personal and professional values. This conclusion may be related to the fact that trustees were making decisions based on both personal and professional knowledge and experience, and were being more genuine in their roles. Superintendents were somewhat more constrained by their roles, and the need to project congruency with their professional values and their school board's official position, even in cases where it may have conflicted with their personal values. According to Hodgkinson's (1978) framework and, that is, trustees used transrational, subrational, and personal good values while superintendents used rational and expert values.

The dual nature of the purposes of education, whether it is quality of life or standard of living, creates conflicting opinions among superintendents and trustees even though official policies, plans, and programs have been formulated and implemented. The study's results were consistent with the findings of other studies in expressing the difficulty in evaluating the quality of life or social benefits of education (Wolfe & Haveman, 2002). The study showed that trustees and superintendents had a difficult time unravelling both terms let alone trying to figure out how to measure each concept (McMahon, 2006).

Finally, the study unraveled the personal and professional conflict of values in the role of superintendent and trustee. Begley (2000) states that more research needs to delve below the surface of administrator practice to discover the intensions that motivate the adoption of particular values under particular circumstances. The multiple goals of education as seen from the analysis of the official documents of the school boards suggest the challenges school boards face in formulating purposes and policies to cope with a changing world, which could be attributable to the demands of cultural pluralism and economic ideology. The data showed that externally driven events matter, the school board, trustees, and superintendents defined it differently. The school board is left to capture the elements that individual parts of the system may not value or may have overlooked in the multiple goals perspective which characterizes most school boards. School boards have many social, political, and economic issues to confront. Furthermore, the planners within these school boards have the distinct and "interesting" challenge of a public trust that instructs them to preserve and communicate the values of society and yet, at the same time, to be on the forefront of educational, social and technological change (Foster, 1986). Many years earlier, Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) described the presence of a "web of tension" in the work lives of educational managers. School boards seem more preoccupied with maintaining the system rather than dealing with quality of life and standard of living. School boards seem to be torn in so many different directions that it would seem that they have no commitment to anything in particular. The result of this is that school board goals, priorities, and policies are being replaced by "emotivism," passing preferences rather than enduring values.

CONCLUSION

The general purpose of this study was to explain the value of quality of life and standard of living as

reflected in the purposes of education, and demonstrated by educational policies, plans, and administrator values at the school board level. In addition, the study explored the significance of values pertaining to the purposes of education from the perspective of educational leaders. The study also examined values embedded in policies, plans, priorities, and educational leaders' perceptions in order to understand the configuration between educational planners' philosophical beliefs and practices. Finally, the study investigated the consistency between school board plans, priorities, and administrator perceptions in terms of goals of quality of life and standard of living.

School boards in Ontario, in practice, contain multiple realities that are both externally driven and internally defined. These multiple realities may be characterized using standard of living and quality of life indicators as used in this study. The organizational variation in the indicators presented in the conceptual framework, among society and/or school board organizations within society, should be studied further. First, the structure of school boards should be studied in conjunction with externally driven trends, events, and opportunities to determine how school boards define and value such situations and incorporate them into policies, plans, and priorities.

Secondly, the study dealt with the value of education and its importance to economic and social value. Typically, most of the research in this area focused on market outcomes, particularly labour market returns, internal rates of return that compared earnings with the costs of schooling, both direct costs such as tuition and opportunity costs. Haverman and Wolfe (1984) and Wolfe and Zuvekas (1995) have studied the nonmarket effects of schooling. Some examples of nonmarket effects are better health, lower crime, and greater civic and community participation, to name but a few. More research could be done by using the quality of life and standard of living indicators to better measure the rates of return from education investments from a holistic perspective and/or sector based perspective. This type of research could further enhance the need to fund public education because it could demonstrate the value of education by using value for money based on the returns from both the market outcomes and non-market outcomes. The key for future research is the importance of demonstrating the linkages between education policy and economic and social policies.

Further studies could be advanced in regards to values and opinions about the purposes of education from other education systems. For example, investigating the purposes of education from a private school perspective, related to public and private benefits of education, individual goals versus public purposes and other issues related to public and collective values associated with conceptions of education, including the moral, civic, and intellectual elements and the promotion of equity. This type of research could be useful ultimately by showing the role of education is much more broad-based than just emphasizing job-ready skills and the skills employers want to the exclusion of other competencies.

In studying the role of decision making amongst school board trustees and superintendents, further research could be developed on external constraints on decision making. Policy, program, priority, and strategy issues revealed in this study the perceived limitations to decision-making latitude which related to the uncertainty on trustees' part about the boundaries of their roles. Examples of external constraints that could be studied are provincial and local rules and regulations funding, accountability, lack of information and planning tools, legal issues, and structure of the board.

Examining both espoused values and underlying assumptions may reveal much about why advocated educational goals are seemingly unattainable in certain school boards (Leonard, 1999). Moreover, if espoused values eventually get "transformed" (Schein, 1984) into underlying assumptions, then they are the precursor to understanding the process of how particular values become part of the educational landscape. Examining, analyzing, and describing organizational members' value orientations, variations in value orientations, and value conflicts pertaining to educational purposes are important steps in increasing our understanding of this phenomenon, thereby, narrowing the gap between value theory and educational practice.

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