THE IMPORTANCE OF CLARITY

IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM GOALS

by

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A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Boise State University

August 2013

BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COLLEGE

DEFENSE COMMITTEE AND FINAL READING APPROVALS

of the dissertation submitted by

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Dissertation Title: The Importance of Clarity in Educational Leadership Program Goals

Date of Final Oral Examination: 17 July 2013

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DEDICATION

To Anna, my eternal companion, dearest friend, and most trusted confidant.

To Warner, Bridger, and Eliana, for their laughter and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dear wife Anna for her loving-support and determined resolve. Her persistent faith and encouragement provided a life-line that calmed my mind, inspired my soul, and allowed me to dream. I am grateful for her personal sacrifice and dedication for the past seven years. Her selflessness and kindness are exemplary; I will forever be grateful for her love and support. I am also especially grateful to my children, Warner, Bridger, and Eliana. Their love and laughter provided a needed respite that renewed my resolve and determination to be their provider and protector.

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Keith Thiede, Dr. Kelly Cross, Dr. Roger Quarles, and Dr. Jonathan Brendefur for their patient support, proficient editing, and generous commitment of time and energy. Each member of the committee provided needed encouragement and seasoned advice for which I am grateful.

I would also like to thank my English teacher Mrs. Freshman for instilling within me a belief that I could write. Dr. Lee Dubert and Dr. Roger Stewart were also instrumental in my development. I am grateful for their kind and honest direction that corrected my course and encouraged me to move forward.

I am also grateful for the extraordinary support I received from family and friends. My Father and Mother, David and Laura, continually provided encouragement and hours of service for my young family. Thank you for taking care of us. The hours of editing and extra time with the grandchildren enriched our lives and lightened our

burdens. To Monte and Mary Lou, thank you for your regular trips to Idaho and for

allowing Anna and the children to escape to Utah for a needed getaway and renewal.

Your kind words and generous support also enriched our lives and strengthened our

resolve in times of need. I would also like to thank my siblings (Greg, Lance, Katie,

Chelsea, and Caley) and their families. Your love and support are greatly appreciated.

To our dearest friends, Jeff and Jamie, Cole and Kristen, Kristian and Lindsey, Petar and

Veann, and Joe and Becky, we are grateful for your valued friendship and support.

Most importantly, I am eternally grateful to my Heavenly Father and His son

Jesus Christ for their incomparable grace and mercy. Their tender blessings and sensitive

guidance empowered me throughout this process and continue to provide a sure

foundation upon which to stand. I now know, as never before, that "I can do all things

through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13, King James Version).

ABSTRACT

Goal Setting Theory suggests specific and difficult goals when accompanied by high self-efficacy are essential to produce high levels of motivation and task performance. Goal Setting Theory has proven to be one of the most valid and robust motivational theories developed to date. Although the majority of the research on Goal Setting Theory is conducted at the individual level, many features that hold for individuals also hold for groups. For example, clearly stated goals improve performance for individuals and groups. The present research examined whether three regional educational leadership programs differ in the clarity of their stated goals, and whether graduates from those programs differ in their ability to articulate their respective program goals. The results indicate a lack of goal clarity in program goals. The results between all groups suggest that graduates were unable to identify official communication goals and coordinator goals. Additionally, there was no significant difference between programs regarding either official communication/graduate or coordinator/graduate comparisons.

Keywords: goal setting theory, goal clarity, goal specificity, program goals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HPC   High Performance Cycle

ITP   Intermediate Task Performance

SE   Self-Efficacy

GC   Goal Commitment

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Goal Setting Theory began with a simple question, "Do goals affect action?" (Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990, p.xvi). Goal setting research at the individual level (micro level) includes over 100 tasks, 40,000 participants, and time spans ranging from 1 minute to 25 years (Locke & Latham, 1990; 2002, p.714). The effectiveness of Goal Setting Theory is well accepted and is considered to be one of the most convincing and practical theories of motivation to date (Latham, 2012; Latham & Pinder, 2005). Goal Setting Theory includes multiple features that influence motivation and task performance.

The robust research results at the micro level lead to the application of Goal Setting Theory at the group, team, and organizational level (macro goal level). Macro level research gained momentum in the 1990's, but has experienced a decline since the dawn of the 21st century (Kleingeld, van Mierlo, & Arends, 2011)—perhaps because some question whether micro level findings generalize to the macro level (Barsky, 2008; Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009; Schweitzer, Ordóñez, & Douma, 2004). Many have called for more research of Goal Setting Theory beyond the micro level (Kleingeld et al., 2011; Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly, Martocchio, & Frink, 1994). The present study will attempt to expand the application of Goal Setting Theory to the macro goal level.

Statement of the Problem

One of the key findings from Goal Setting Theory research is that difficult and specific goals lead to better performance (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990). Clear goals are crucial to maximizing performance, both at the individual level (Locke & Latham, 2002) and the group level (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). Thus, for an educational program to be effective, the goals of the program must also be clearly stated and understood by students in the program. The present research will examine whether three independent educational leadership programs differ in terms of the clarity of stated program goals/official communication goals, and their students' ability to articulate them.

Significance of the Study

Current research suggests that the essential features of Goal Setting Theory are effective at increasing motivation and task performance. However, less is known about their application at the macro goal setting level (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990). The demand for a macro goal setting theory continues to increase as all types of organizations become more complex (Bush, 2006; Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; Want, 1986). Education is no exception because of the numerous stakeholders involved (Bush, 2006). Furthermore, educational organizations are often forgotten as research repeatedly focuses on the effectiveness of goal setting in business settings (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Therefore, increased attention on goal setting in education is especially needed as educational organizations demand increased effectiveness and proficiency from school leaders, teachers, and the students they serve (Levine, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the difference in clarity of program goals in three independent educational leadership programs. Goal clarity will be analyzed by comparing the program coordinator's stated program goals, goals expressed through official communications, and their students' ability to articulate the stated and official communication goals.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a difference in the clarity (specificity) of stated program goals within educational leadership programs in a Western state?

2. Does goal specificity increase Educational Leadership graduates' ability to describe official program goals?

Definitions

The following terms are defined to assist in review of this study.

High Performance Cycle (HPC)

The high performance cycle is a comprehensive framework that explains how the application of Goal Setting Theory will increase motivation and task performance (Locke & Latham, 1990). The HPC states that specificity, difficult goals, and self-efficacy are the essential elements of Goal Setting Theory that lead to motivation and achievement (Latham, 2012).

Goal

Goal refers to the "desired outcomes in terms of a level of performance to be attained on a task rather than to the desire to take a specific action" (Locke & Latham, 1990, p.24). In other words, a goal is "What the individual is consciously trying to do" (Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968). The following words are synonymous for goal as accepted by Goal Setting Theory: standard, objective, and intention (Locke & Latham, 1990, p. xvii) as well as performance standard, quota, work norm, task, deadline, and budget (Locke et al., 1981, p.126). A distinction between these terms can be made (see Locke et al., 1981; Locke & Latham, 1990); however, it is their commonality toward a desired end that makes them a part of Goal Setting Theory.

Task

A task "is a piece of work to be accomplished" (Locke & Latham, 1990, p.25). For example, toys to assemble, wood to cut, cars to clean, or dishes to wash.

Specificity (Clarity)

Specificity refers to a specific and clear goal and "the degree of quantitative precision with which the aim is specified" (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1981, p.4). Clear goals also provide a clear expectation of what is to be done (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1981). For example, a construction company set the specific goal to build five houses every month of the year. In contrast ambiguous goals are goals that invite numerous interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005). For example, a vague or

ambiguous goal for a construction company, would be to build as many houses as they can each month.

Difficult (Hard) Goal

A difficult goal refers to the expected level of proficiency as compared to the standard (Locke et al., 1981). For example, cars cleaned to a specific standard or wood cut at a specific rate. Difficult goals are usually determined through a review of previous performance, which will generally indicate an average, low, or high level of performance. This information is used to set goals, for an individual or group, considered difficult to attain for the specific task.

Macro Goal

Macro goals refer to goals at the organizational level (Locke & Latham, 1990). For example, businesses, universities, and even nonprofit organizations all set goals, which are often established and then disseminated throughout the organization. Macro goals are set by an organizations leadership in an effort to unify the efforts of their members.

Micro Goal

Micro goals refer to goals that are set at the individual level (Locke & Latham, 1990). That is, these goals are set by an individual for his or her own growth and satisfaction. Individual goals can also be assigned goals if the individual commits to the assigned goal. Micro goals influence individuals and small groups.

<u>Delimitations and Limitations</u>

Qualified participants graduated with a Master's degree from one of three educational leadership programs from 2008-2013. The majority of the participants graduated previous to their participation. However, students graduating in May 2013 were allowed to participate. This was permitted to increase the number of potential participants and was not considered a significant change to the population as the additional students participated during the final quarter of their program after finishing all course work and the majority of their internship.

Some of the limiting factors were the small sample size that does not allow for generalizability and the limited time duration for completion of the survey may have decreased the accuracy and thoroughness of survey responses. The accuracy and thoroughness of responses may also have been influenced by the variation in graduation dates 2008-2013. This variation may have influenced participant responses and should be considered limiting factor of the study. The survey may also have limited responses by directing attention to specific and acceptable forms of response. (Such as, five words to describe the goals of your program.) It is possible that participants may have given more accurate and thorough responses if they were allowed a more flexible response format. The survey may also be considered a limitation as it was created by the researcher. However, in an effort to increase validity and reliability the instrument was vetted by a group of educational professionals that are familiar with the issues associated with educational leadership programs and goal setting.

As a graduate from one of the participating programs, it is possible that data analysis may have been influenced by the researcher's familiarity with one of the three

programs. However, measures were taken to ensure objectivity, such as, an anonymous survey and cross examination with program coordinator responses, which decreased researcher bias by increasing the objectivity of the analysis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This paper discusses the history and theoretical foundation of Goal Setting Theory. Additionally, the following features of Goal Setting Theory will be discussed in detail: goal, motivation/task engagement, intermediate task performance, self-efficacy, feedback, goal commitment, and final performance. Each feature will be defined in the context of Goal Setting Theory, theoretically explained, and empirically discussed as to its success and limitations in increasing motivation and task performance through goal setting.

History and Theoretical Framework of Goal Setting Theory

Goal Setting Theory is one of many theories that attempt to explain human motivation. As Driscoll (2004) explained, the study of motivation began as an emphasis in psychology, which focused on motivation as a behavior that moved the subject to act. During the 1930-1950's, human behavior was considered too complex to study. For example, Skinner (1953), a radical behaviorist, focused his efforts on observable data. He believed the mind could not be studied or understood. However, the relationship between environmental variables (i.e. hunger, temperature, etc.) and the behavior of the subject could be studied and understood. Drive-reduction theorists such as Hull (1934) accredited behavior and motivation to the physiological workings, which controlled development and learning. However, both theories denied the existence of valence (free

will) in regard to an innate human ability to choose his beliefs and actions, which is an integral assumption in Goal Setting Theory.

The positivist paradigm, according to Locke and Latham (1990), failed to explain human motivation and behavior because of a few miss-held assumptions, which included a failure to explain how past events (reinforcements) are connected to the future (learned behavior), and that the reductionist approach of studying man from the outside while only considering his internal physiology was inconclusive. As the study of motivation developed, additional theories included cognitive processes, such as Tolman's (1928, 1967) Purposive Behavior Theory. His theory made a connection between behavior and guided purpose, which assumed the absorption of information and the creation of cognitive maps. The eventual acceptance of internal stimulus and cognitive maps played a crucial role in the development of cognitive motivation research and laid a solid foundation for the continued development of cognitively based motivation theories, such as Goal Setting Theory.

Goal Setting Theory, originally developed by Edwin A. Locke, an industrial/organizational psychologist, states that goals affect task performance and human action (Bryan & Locke, 1967a, 1967b; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1968, 1969b). Locke's (1968) interest in motivation and task performance stemmed from his desire to understand the discrepancy between worker efficiency on similar tasks. His core beliefs concerning motivation were strongly influenced by the work of Cecil A. Mace (1935) who studied the influence of incentives, efficiency, and standards on performance as well as the work of Thomas A. Ryan (1958, 1970) regarding drives, tasks, and intentional behavior (Locke, 1968). Their work inspired Locke to study

motivation through a cognitive lens and directed him away from the contemporary and more popular behaviorist models.

Locke developed his theory based on the assertion that conscious goals direct behavior and are an observable form of data (Locke, 1968); therefore, motivation and performance could be observed indirectly through individual goal setting processes. The theoretical base of Goal Setting Theory was also influenced by the philosophies of Rand and Bandura (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1981). According to Rand (1979) human beings survive by the use of their minds and are governed by conscious or subconscious mental processes. Furthermore, Bandura (1969, 1977a, 1977b) suggested that conscious regulators of action and self-efficacy also influence learning and motivation. The theories developed by Mace (1935), Ryan (1958), Rand (1979), and Bandura (1977a, 1977b) formed the foundation of Goal Setting Theory in its earliest stages of development, convincing Locke that cognitive intentions could be observed and studied (Bryan & Locke, 1967a, 1967b; Locke, 1996; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1968, 1969b; Locke & Latham, 1990). However, Locke knew his theory needed considerable investigation and development to gain footing in the traditionally behaviorist epistemology of motivation. His theory gained both support and credibility from the foundational laboratory studies he performed (Bryan & Locke, 1967a, 1967b; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1968, 1969b) as well as the field studies performed by a young field-researcher by the name of Gary Latham (Latham & Baldes, 1975; Latham & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Kinne, 1974; Latham & Locke, 1975).

Locke and Latham met in 1974 at a symposium organized by Milt Blood. They quickly became friends and contemporaries and immediately recognized the

complementary nature of their strengths as laboratory and field researchers respectively (Latham, 2007; Locke & Latham, 2005). Earlier in his career, Latham became aware of Locke's work in the late 1960's as he searched the Georgia Tech library archives for ways to improve the productivity of pulpwood crews. Latham remained an avid reader of Locke's work throughout his doctoral studies at the University of Akron; in fact, Latham wrote Locke a letter sharing the details of his field studies on goal setting; Locke's response provided encouragement for Latham to publish his goal setting studies in a journal, which he did (Latham, 2007; Locke & Latham, 2005). Their fortuitous meeting, complimentary skills, and genuine interest in goal setting forged a relationship that has lasted for nearly 40 years and led to the development of Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2005).

Overview

In the following pages, I will discuss the pertinent features of Goal Setting Theory: goal (specificity and difficulty), motivation/task engagement, intermediate task performance, self-efficacy, feedback, goal commitment, and final performance. Each feature will be defined in the context of Goal Setting Theory, theoretically explained, and discussed as to its success and limitations in increasing motivation and task performance through goal setting.

Goal

The following section will define the term "goal" in the context of Goal Setting Theory as well as explain the theoretical development of the feature including the essential elements of specificity and difficulty. Additionally, empirical evidence will be

explained in regards to the success of goal specificity and goal difficulty. Their ability to increase motivation and task performance through goal setting will also be discussed.

<u>Definition</u>

The focus of Goal Setting Theory is on observing personal motivation by inferring purpose through direct observation of a task or intention; Locke developed his theory with a focus on one specific and inclusive term: goal (Locke, 1968; Locke & Bryan, 1966a; 1966b). Goal Setting Theory initially defined a goal as "what the individual is consciously trying to do"; as the theory developed, "goal" was additionally defined as "the object or aim of an action…" (Locke, 1968, p.159; Locke & Latham, 1990, p.25; 2002, p.705).

Locke followed a pattern initiated by Ryan (1958) who equated numerous terms to the concept of a task, such as, desire, goal, want, and wish (p.78). Similarly, in Goal Setting Theory goal is analogous with deadline, end, aim, purpose, performance standard, quota, work norm, objective, and intention (Latham & Locke, 1979; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke & Latham, 1990, p. xvii; Locke et al., 1981, p.126). A distinction between these terms can be made. However, it is their commonality toward a desired end that makes them a part of Goal Setting Theory (See, Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1981).

Locke chose the term goal because it suggests that there is something a person wants to attain or achieve, which is directly connected with their conscious intentions (Locke, 1968, 1969; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b). Additionally, Locke believed that a goal was an observable and reliable form of data from which motivation could be examined and explained. However, Locke knew his theory needed considerable

investigation and development to gain acceptance in the traditionally behaviorist epistemology of motivation.

Though Goal Setting Theory considers many terms to be analogous with goal, it is important to understand the difference between a goal and a task. Locke and Latham (1990) use the term goal to describe "desired outcomes in terms of level of performance to be attained on a task rather than to the desire to take a specific action" (p.24); a task by contrast, "is a piece of work to be accomplished" (p.25). For example, a goal is the desired level of performance, such as, thirty dishes to be cleaned in one hour or five cars to be washed in two hours (A level of desired proficiency or cleanliness may also be included in the goal aspect of the assigned task.). A task is the job of washing dishes and cleaning cars or the work to be done, not the level of performance. Understanding this distinction is fundamental to a deeper understanding of Goal Setting Theory.

Goal Specificity and Goal Difficulty

The assumption that goals regulate action suggests that simply setting a goal will improve performance on almost any level of task, required or self-set (Locke et al., 1981). This simple approach to motivation, however, does require the application of two important goal setting elements: goal specificity and goal difficulty. Numerous research studies suggest that goal specificity and goal difficulty strongly influence both motivation and task performance (Bryan & Locke, 1967a; Latham, 2012; Latham & Baldes, 1975; Locke, 1968; Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke and Latham, 1990). These elements support many goal setting features and are the nexus of Goal Setting Theory (Latham, 2012; Latham & Locke, 1979; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968; Locke et al., 1981; Ronan, Latham, & Kinne, 1973).

Locke (2003) emphasized the importance of a specific and difficult goal, with some powerfully persuasive empirical evidence. The following evidence suggests that Goal Setting Theory (specificity and difficulty) is both generalizable and valid:

> With goal-setting theory, specific difficult goals have been shown to increase performance on well over 100 different tasks involving more than 40,000 participants in at least eight countries working in laboratory, simulation, and field settings. The dependent variables have included quantity, quality, time spent, costs, job behavior measures, and more. The time spans have ranged from 1 minute to 25 years…the effects have been found using experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlational designs. Effects have been obtained whether the goals are assigned, self-set, or set participatively. (Locke & Latham, 2002, p.714)

In addition, the deliberate and disciplined development of Goal Setting Theory over the past four decades is supported by over 500 studies (Locke, 1996), many of which were conducted by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham, the recognized originators of the theory.

As was discussed previously, goal specificity and goal difficulty are the essential elements of effective goal setting. This is because they produce the highest levels of motivation as well as the highest levels of performance. Moreover, the absence of either, specific or difficult goals, leads to a decline in motivation and task performance (Latham & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Kinne, 1974; Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). In the following section I will discuss a few exemplary studies that model the effectiveness of goal setting to increase motivation and task performance through setting specific and difficult goals.

Goal difficulty refers to the expected level of proficiency as compared to the standard (Locke, 1968; Locke et al., 1981). Specificity refers to a specific and clear goal (Locke & Bryan, 1966a; Latham & Locke, 1979). Locke and Bryan (1966a, 1967, 1968) originally showed that difficult and specific goals led to a higher level of performance over easy or moderate goals; their findings have been replicated using several tasks including: brainstorming, complex computation, addition, perceptual speed, toy construction, reaction time, and grade achievement, to name a few (Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990). However, Goal Setting Theory lacked broad support because of its isolated application in a laboratory setting with little application in practical field settings (Latham & Blades, 1975).

Latham and Locke (1975) would soon change the limited scope and application of their theory by applying Parkinson's Law and Goal Setting Theory in a field setting (Parkinson's Law states that an assigned task or assignment will expand to fill the time available for its completion. For example, if a student is given two weeks or seven days he will fill the time provided to complete the assignment.). They evaluated the effect of time restraints on production of industrial pulp and paper mill employees. Their approach was influenced by previous laboratory studies by Bryan and Locke (1967a) in which participants were given varying time limits to finish basic addition problems. Their laboratory findings suggest that participants given more time to complete the task use more of the allotted time than did participants with a shorter timeframe. In other words, participants with less time worked faster and participants with more time worked more slowly to complete the assigned task. Bryan and Locke (1967a) also found that participants' performance was mediated by goal setting; participants with less time set

more difficult goals than did participants with more time, which influenced task performance.

In an attempt to expand the application of Goal Setting Theory, Latham and Locke (1975) applied Parkinson's Law in an experiment in which logging crews would be encouraged to reach a difficult goal in a shorter amount of time than had previously been allowed. The study predicted that wood-harvesting crews would produce at a higher rate per man-hour when quotas or restrictions limited the days of the week crews could sell to the mills. This would effectively shorten the timeframe allowed to produce the product, which in theory should increase the rate of production. Wood-harvesting crews (N=379) had at least one year of experience and were paid on a piece-rate or by the cord (a cord of wood is 4feet X 4feet X 8feet), which increased a need to be efficient even before the study began and served as a motivator once the restrictions of the study were in place (Latham & Locke, 1975). Data were collected over a three-month period (April, May, and June). Output rate was determined by dividing the number of cords delivered per crew by the total man-hours worked. Each month was treated as a separate and distinct test of the hypothesis. This was done to control for the variations in productivity due to weather and other factors that appeared to influence crew productivity. The findings suggest that quotas and time limits increased output rate while their absence appeared to decelerate productivity per man-hour. Therefore, when paper mills restrict purchasing days, production per man-hour increases. These results support the hypothesis of this study and also the findings of the Bryan and Locke (1967a), which suggested that Parkinson's Law was valid in a field environment just as it has been in a laboratory setting.

Additionally, Latham and Baldes (1975) were successful in providing evidence for a connection between Goal Setting Theory and productivity through setting specific and difficult goals. Their study also involved logging crews; however, this study gathered data that could be tied directly to goal setting as the driving force of change and motivation. Latham was hired by Weyerhaeuser Company to increase the efficiency and productivity of logging crews responsible for the transportation of felled lumber (Latham, 2012). Each load was required to meet strict transportation regulations and this was accomplished by "eye balling" the correct number of logs, which could vary as greatly as 60-120 logs/trees per truck (Latham & Baldes, 1975).

This inconsistent process led to low efficiency and productivity. However, Latham and Baldes (1975) believed that goal setting would quickly increase both efficiency and productivity within the first three to four weeks. The study took place in Oklahoma and involved six logging operations; each team of 6 to 10 workers were responsible for the following: falling trees, transporting the trees to a landing, loading the trees, and transporting the loaded trucks to a mill where they would be weighed and unloaded (Latham & Baldes, 1975). Each operation was supported by approximately 6 trucks and 6 drivers who were unionized employees and paid by the hour. The company employed 36 logging trucks in that area of Oklahoma and all 36 were involved in the study.

Latham and Baldes (1975) analyzed the company records for each logging operation and found that drivers often loaded their trucks well under the legal maximums. This inefficient practice was caused by the pressure of coming in under the maximum weight to avoid fines. However, it slowed productivity, costing Weyerhaeuser money and

time. Latham and Baldes (1975) informed timberland management of their analysis and plans for implementation. They also reaffirmed their belief that both efficiency and productivity would be increased by setting clear and difficult goals with each trucking team. During the most successful months for wood cutting (July, August, and September) drivers were encouraged to "do their best." The net weight of each truck was recorded as a pre-test of efficiency and productivity. For the next nine months drivers were encouraged to reach 94% of the maximum weight allowed for each truck. No additional training or compensation was given to drivers or their supervisors during the goal setting portion of the study.

The three months of "do your best" goals showed an increase of a few percentage points just above 60% followed by a sharp drop to below 60% in net weight per truck. The goal setting months started with a sharp increase in productivity to just over 80% in net weight per truck, just as Latham and Baldes (1975) predicted. This drastic increase was followed by a sharp drop in efficiency and production due to the workers' curiosity in the managerial promise that no repercussions would follow if expected outcomes were not met. After some reassurance the workers retained over a 90% net weight per truck for the duration of the study. The driver's ability to retain this increase is strong evidence for the second hypothesis that claimed that not only would Goal Setting Theory show evidence quickly, but it would also improve efficiency and productivity over a sustained period of time.

This initial effort by Latham and Baldes (1975) increased efficiency and productivity through setting specific and difficult goals, which resulted in over a quarter of a million dollars in savings. These findings provided strong support for the field

validity of Goal Setting Theory by showing that specific and difficult goals appear to increase productivity, motivation, and task performance. The following research also provides evidence of the effectiveness of goal specificity and goal difficulty: Bryan and Locke (1967a, 1967b), Locke and Bryan (1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1968, 1969b), Latham and Kinne (1974), and Latham and Dossett (1978).

Limitations

The following section will discuss the limitations of goal specificity and goal difficulty. The strengths of goal specificity and goal difficulty greatly outnumber the limitations. However, there are some exceptions to their effectiveness. For example, when task complexity is high and self-efficacy and experience is low a specific and difficult goal may lead to lower motivation and performance (Latham & Brown, 2006).

Additionally, goal setting may affect performance and motivation if directed attention limits strategy development. For example, Earley, Connolly, and Ekegren (1989) suggest that specific and difficult goals may harm performance and strategy development when task complexity is high (Note: Goal difficulty refers to the performance level required to achieve a goal.) For example, running a mile in under five minutes is a difficult goal for a novice runner. Not because it is complex, but because the goal is hard to achieve for most novice runners. Task complexity in contrast, refers to the difficulty in determining appropriate strategies in response to the required tasks. For example, a novice runner may experience task complexity while determining running form, shoes size, and hydration if strategy and skill development either strain or exceed the current ability of the individual.) Drach-Zahavy and Erez (2002) also suggest that when task complexity and stress are high a goal may be perceived to be a threat (negative

focus on failure) and not as a challenge (positive focus on success).   Participants who perceived the goal to be a threat experienced more stress and attained pointedly lower task performance. Wood, Mento, and Locke (1987) suggest that specific difficult goals work best with simple tasks, such as, reaction time, and brain-storming, but may be less effective when the goal is difficult and complex. Huber (1985) and Campbell (1988) also found evidence that suggests that easy goals may result in higher performance in some cases.

In response to these concern Seijts and Latham (2005) as well as Latham and Brown (2006) suggest that learning goals, in contrast to "do your best" goals, are the most effective approach to awaken the discovery of appropriate task strategies and skills when current performance goals (e.g. increase your average sales per hour by 10%) exceed ability. This is because learning goals (e.g. learn three effective strategies to increase your sales per hour) focus on strategy building and skill development that lead to higher levels of self-efficacy (Latham & Brown, 2006). High levels of self-efficacy (task specific confidence) often lead to more difficult self-set goals, increased goal commitment, and a greater willingness to receive and act upon either negative or positive feedback (Bandura, 1977a; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). For example, a piano teacher may assign the following learning goal: over the next two weeks, learn five strategies for memorizing the notes in both the treble and base clefs; in contrast, a "do your best" goal might be: "do your best" to learn the notes over the next fourteen days. Learning goals allow for the application of goal specificity while controlling the level of difficulty. Learning goals may also increase strategy building, goal achievement, and self-efficacy by decreasing stress and anxiety, which allows for an increase in goal flexibility while

needed skills and strategies are developed in an attempt to reach a specific and difficult performance goal.

Summary

Goal Setting Theory attempts to observe personal motivation by inferring purpose through the direct observation of a task or intention. Locke chose the term goal because it suggests that there is something a person wants to attain or achieve, which is directly connected with their conscious intentions (Locke, 1968, 1969; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b). Locke chose the term goal to be analogous with deadline, end, aim, purpose, performance standard, quota, work norm, objective, and intention (Latham & Locke, 1979; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke & Latham, 1990, p. xvii; Locke et al., 1981, p.126). Additionally, Locke and Latham (1990) use the term goal to describe "desired outcomes in terms of level of performance to be attained on a task rather than to the desire to take a specific action" (p.24); a task by contrast, "is a piece of work to be accomplished" (p.25).

The supposition that goals regulate action suggests that simply setting a goal (assuming goal acceptance, ability, and knowledge) will improve performance on almost any level of task, required or self-set (Locke et al., 1981). The essential elements, which support the effectiveness of Goal Setting Theory, are goal specificity and goal difficulty (Latham, 2012; Latham & Locke, 1979; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968; Ronan et al., 1973). This is because they produce the highest levels of motivation as well as the highest levels of performance. Additionally, the absence of either, specific or difficult goals, leads to a decline in motivation (Latham & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Kinne, 1974; Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). However, when performance goals are set, goal specificity and goal difficulty can limit effective goal setting if task complexity is

high and ability as well as self-efficacy is low. When this occurs it is important to set specific and difficult learning goals that allow for strategy building and skill development.

Overview

In addition to goal specificity and goal difficulty, the following features are also influential and will be discussed in detail: motivation/task engagement, intermediate task performance, self-efficacy, feedback, goal commitment, and final performance. Each feature will be defined in the context of Goal Setting Theory, theoretically applied, and discussed as to its success and limitations in increasing motivation and task performance through goal setting.
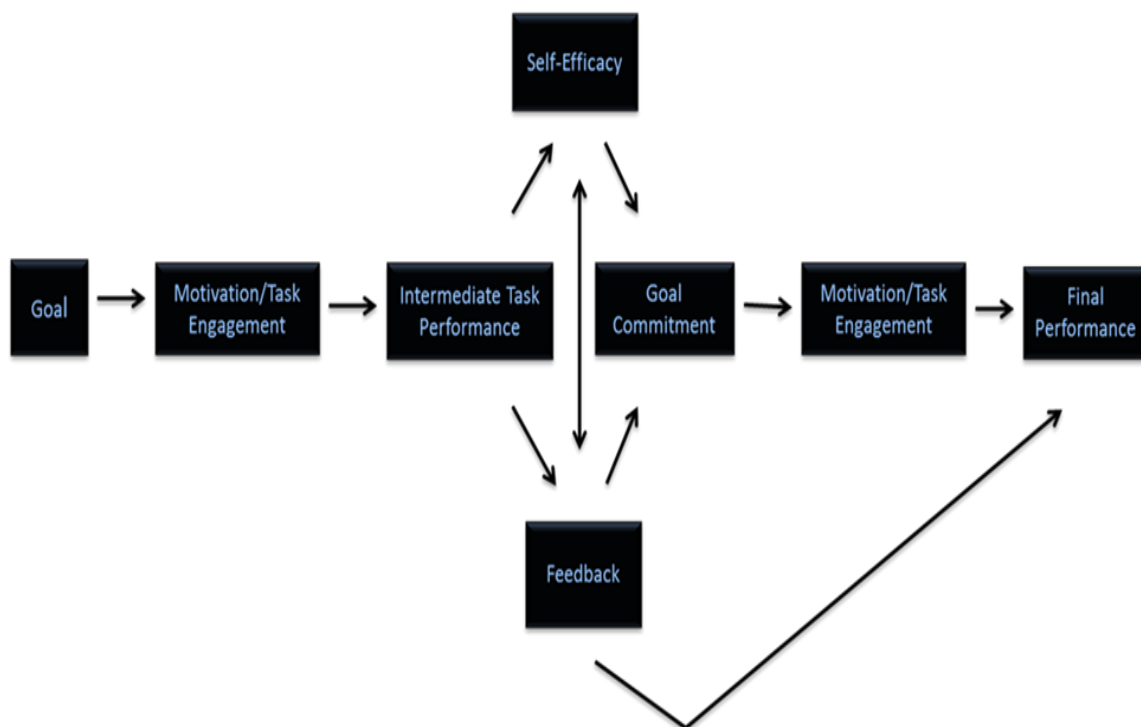
Figure 1. **The conceptual framework serves as a visual representation of key features in goal setting. The interactions between goal setting features are represented by single direction arrows or two-way arrows, which represent the influential relationship between features.**

Motivation and Task Engagement

This section will define the concepts of motivation and task engagement in the context of Goal Setting Theory as well as explain their theoretical application. Additionally, empirical evidence will be discussed in regards to the success and limitations of each as it relates to individual goal setting functions, such as, directive function, energizing function, and persistence function.

<u>Definition and Theoretical Application</u>

Goal Setting Theory attempts to observe personal motivation (individual action) by inferring purpose and motivation through the direct observation of a task or intention; for example, searching out food to satisfy hunger. Motivation, in the context of Goal Setting Theory, is measured indirectly by considering secondary characteristics, such as, persistence, focus, and effort, which indicate the level of motivation and task engagement possessed by an individual (Bryan & Locke, 1967b; Locke & Bryan, 1966b). In an attempt to better understand motivation, Locke chose to focus his efforts on examining individual goals. Because, as Locke suggests, a goal implies there is something a person wants to attain or achieve, which is directly connected with their conscious intentions (Locke, 1968, 1969b; Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b).

Additionally, Locke (1968) proposes that a goal is an observable and reliable form of data from which motivation can be examined and explained. Locke and Latham (1990) use the term goal to describe "desired outcomes in terms of level of performance to be attained on a task rather than to the desire to take a specific action" (p.24); a task by contrast, "is a piece of work to be accomplished" (p.25). For example, a goal is the desired level of performance, such as, 20 foul shots made in less than two minutes or 10

rooms cleaned in less than one hour. The task is the job or the work to be completed

(shooting baskets or cleaning rooms), not the level of performance required by the goal.

In addition to motivation (individual action), task engagement is also an important feature

of goal setting. Task engagement is similar to goal commitment which refers to an

individual resolve to reach a goal. However, task engagement suggests a commitment to

the work to be done. For example, a student may be highly motivated to attend Harvard,

but may not be sufficiently engaged in the task or work to be done, such as advanced

placement classes. Task engagement strengthens motivation (desire to act) and goal

setting if the outcome of attaining the goal is sufficiently important and if task specific

confidence or self-efficacy is well established (Locke & Latham, 2002).

As Weiner (2001) explained, people act upon acquired knowledge in an attempt

to understand themselves and the world around them. Locke and Latham (1990)

similarly suggest that individuals set goals based on previous experience and knowledge;

in addition, they assert that "a goal is the object or aim of an action" (p.25) and that goals

and intentions are "immediate precursors and regulators of much, if not most, human

action" (p.8). Task motivation and task engagement appear to be influenced by goal

specificity and goal difficulty through the following sub-features of goal setting: directive

function, energizing function, and persistence function.

<u>Directive Function</u>

The directive function is an essential element and mediator of Goal Setting

Theory (Locke & Bryan, 1969b). The directive function describes the capacity that

specific difficult goals possess to direct attention and action toward relevant activities and

away from irrelevant activities, which often results in increased motivation and task

engagement. For example, a specific difficult goal to achieve a 4.0 grade point average may direct attention toward relevant actions, such as doing homework, meeting with teachers, asking for feedback, and setting additional learning goals. In contrast, a goal may also direct attention away from irrelevant behavior, such as playing video games the night before a test, going to the football game versus working on a term paper, or settling for a lower grade after failing a difficult assignment. The ability to direct attention away from irrelevant behavior and toward relevant behavior often increases motivation, task engagement, and ultimately final performance or goal achievement.

For example, Locke and Bryan (1969b) demonstrated the effectiveness of the directive function in a study involving drivers who were given feedback regarding five elements of their driving performance. In the study, drivers were assigned a goal in only one of the driving elements required by the task. The directive function of a specific difficult goal directed their attention toward the driving element and away from the driving elements for which they had no goal. As a result, the driving element for which the drivers set a goal showed marked improvement over all other driving elements. The increase in performance suggests an increase in both motivation and task engagement as drivers must be more highly engage in the task and must also be more highly motivated to increase performance.

Latham and Dossett (1978) found goals direct attention, increase task engagement and motivation in their study involving beaver trappers. In their study, the trappers were given continuous or hourly incentive plans or a variable incentive plan, which included daily payouts according to the number of animals caught. The variable schedule also included guessing the correct color of a marble, which the trapper then attempted to draw

from a bag. (Correct guesses were rewarded with monetary prizes.) The results of the study showed a significant increase in both motivation and task engagement as a result of the specific and difficult goal of trapping more animals and the possibility of drawing the correct marble, which especially directed attention away from trapping toward the goal of "winning" more money.

Energizing Function

In addition to the directive function, Goals Setting Theory suggests that goals also have an energizing function or an ability to increase and prolong effort (motivation and persistence). In particular, specific difficult goals lead to greater effort (motivation) than easy vague goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). For example, a student who sets a goal to achieve a 4.0 grade point average may become more highly motivated and engaged (assuming goal acceptance and ability) because he is energized to act in a different way than a student who sets an easy goal of retaining a 3.0 grade point average. Latham and Locke (1975) found that workers give more effort and are more highly engaged when given less time to finish the task. Locke and Bryan (1966a) found that participants given specific difficult goals (matching light patterns) were more highly motivated, engaged, performed at a higher level, and often prolonged effort. Locke and Bryan (1966b) also found this to be true in a study involving feedback or knowledge of results. Participants in the goal group reportedly gave more effort (motivation), were more highly engaged, and performed at a higher level than the "do your best" group, the "improvement" group, and the "other" group.

Bryan and Locke (1967b) also proposed that goal setting has an energizing function that may increase motivation and task engagement. In this study, each

participant self-reported their focus and effort during a simple addition task. These

results were combined with the results of 12 trials of increasing duration with special

attention given to the result of the longer trials, which were used to measure motivation.

A lower score on a longer trial was interpreted as lower motivation, and a higher score as

higher motivation. Participants with the lowest self-reported scores and lowest

motivation scores from the trial were placed in the goal group and the higher performers

were placed in the "do-best" group. The goal group increased in motivation, task

engagement, and performance while the "do-best" group decreased in performance.

<u>Persistence Function</u>

The effect of goal setting on persistence (duration of effort) is found in that

specific difficult goals tend to prolong effort, as a result of directed and energized action

over a prolonged period of time (Bryan & Locke, 1967a; Locke & Latham, 1990; Mace,

1935). Locke and Bryan (1969a), in a simple addition experiment, found that goal

specificity and goal difficulty increased the intensity of effort (motivation) and

engagement as well as the duration of effort (persistence). Bryan and Locke (1967a)

combined Parkinson's Law and Goal Setting Theory in an attempt to better understand

the influence of time constraints on motivation and performance. The study combined

specific difficult goals with varying time constraints as well as "do-best" goals with

varying time constraints. The results of their study appear to indicate that goals increase

motivation, task engagement, performance, and persistence. The application of goal

setting also appears to increase persistence in sports and managing health behavior

(Locke & Latham, 1985; Strecher et al., 1995). The results from the aforementioned

studies, however, only provide support for the importance of persistence over short

durations of time. More studies involving longer durations of persistence are needed. However, the effectiveness of goal setting in increasing short-term persistence is well developed and empirically supported.

Limitations

The directive function, energizing function, and persistence function are foundational sub-features of goal difficulty and goal specificity, which positively influence the entire goal setting process. However, they are also limited in their application and may negatively impact motivation and task performance in some cases. The limitations of the aforementioned sub-functions in relation to motivation and task engagement will be discussed in the following section.

The directive function helps focus attention toward a desired goal. This narrowed focus, however, may have a negative effect on motivation and task engagement if other important factors are overlooked or intentionally left out in pursuit of one particular goal. For example, Staw and Boettger (1990) asked participants to proofread a short passage that would be published in a business school brochure. They found that participants who were encouraged to "do their best" were more likely to correct both grammatical and content errors than participants who were given a specific goal of correcting one specific type of error. Earley et al. (1989) in their study involving stock market predictions, also suggested that specific difficult goals decrease prediction accuracy in contrast to "do your best" goals, which encouraged more efficient strategy development and prediction accuracy.

The energizing function is the motivational sub-feature of goal specificity and goal difficulty; however, the increase in motivation and effort can be limiting in the

pursuit of a goal. For example, Knight, Durham, and Locke (2001) found that specific

difficult goals may alter risk assessment, often causing more risky behavior as a result of

increased motivation and task engagement, regardless of the cost. According to Kanfer

and Ackerman (1989) specific and difficult goals appeared to hinder appropriate strategy

development in a study involving traffic controller simulations. Participants became

highly motivated and engaged, which caused them to be overly focused on their

performance goal and were less likely to seek out new strategies than the "do best" goal

group.

The persistent function or duration of effort may also negatively affect motivation

and task engagement in similar ways as the previous sub-features. For example, in the

study involving traffic control simulation, participants persisted even when current

strategies were less than effective; ultimately leading to a decrease in motivation and

engagement (Kanfer and Ackerman, 1989). In their study involving Parkinson's Law and

Goal Setting Theory, Bryan and Locke (1967a) found that participants with specific and

difficult goals persisted in their efforts to achieve their goal. However, LaPorte and Nath

(1976), in their study involving prose learning, found that participants prolonged effort

only when they were allowed to control the time to finish the task, which suggests some

flexibility is needed. Finally, Earley et al. (1989) also suggested that specific difficult

goals increased persistence (duration of effort), which hindered strategy development and

prediction accuracy; furthermore, "do your best" goals out performed specific difficult

goals in almost every measure of the study.

Summary

Goal specificity and goal difficulty influence motivation (individual action or desire to act) and task engagement (commitment to the task or work paired with the importance of results) through the following sub-functions: directive function, energizing function, and persistence function. The directive function describes the capacity that specific difficult goals possess to direct attention, while the energizing function describes their motivational ability (Locke & Latham, 2002). Persistence (duration of effort), the third sub-feature suggests that specific difficult goals tend to prolong effort, as a result of directed and energized action over a prolonged period of time (Bryan & Locke, 1967a; Locke & Latham, 1990; Mace, 1935). As instrumental as these features are in increasing motivation and task engagement, they also possess the following limitations: the directive function may narrow the focus of an individual, which could have a negative effect on motivation and task engagement if other important factors are overlooked; the energizing function may increase risk taking and also hinder strategy development; the persistent function may also hinder strategy development and has been found to lower performance.

Intermediate Task Performance

This section will define intermediate task performance (ITP) in the context of Goal Setting Theory. It will also explain the theoretical application of ITP through an examination of empirical evidence, which will be discussed in regards to the success and limitations of ITP.

<u>Definition and Theoretical Application</u>

ITP is the process leading to the arousal, discovery, and application of relevant knowledge and task strategies, which may lead to an increase in motivation and final performance. Because of the complexities involved in gaining relevant knowledge and task strategies, it is important to discuss the sub-elements of ITP. These sub-elements are: automatic skills, related skills, new skills, self-efficacy, and complex tasks (Wood & Locke, 1990).

First, automatic skills are previously obtained skills directly related to a specific task. For example, a professional basketball player who sets a goal to make 90% of his free-throws can assess what is needed and begin working on the goal with little preparation. In most cases, automatic skills obtained through prior experience will be used to effectively pursue the current goal. Second, related skills are also previously obtained skills and strategies, however, they do not directly relate to the current goal, but may be adapted and applied.   For example, a baseball player who set a goal to learn the game of cricket may choose to adapt his baseball skills (swinging, throwing, running, and catching) to the new game of cricket. The application of related skills may necessitate the acquisition of game specific knowledge, as well as the adaptations of similar skills to be effective.

Third, new skills are not previously obtained skills; in contrast, they are skills that are deliberately developed in an effort to attain a unique goal. For example, a football player who sets a goal to become a concert pianist, assuming the football player has no prior experience, must deliberately develop new skills and strategies. These might include: finding a teacher, buying a piano, obtaining music, and learning to read music.

The achievement of the goal may require additional planning and strategy development as new skills are obtained. Fourth, self-efficacy or "task specific confidence" (Locke & Latham, 2002, p.706) more often leads to the development of effective strategies as well as increased effort and persistence (Locke & Latham, 1990). This is because a high level of self-efficacy tends to strengthen goal commitment, confidence, and persistence, as well as increase receptiveness to feedback and escalate the difficulty level of personal goals, which collectively lead to greater motivation and performance (Bandura, 1977a; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). Self-efficacy is known as a moderator in Goal Setting Theory and will be discussed in detail in a later section.

Fifth, complex tasks (task complexity) are often the cause of failure when attempting to achieve a goal. A task is considered to be complex when strategy and skill development either strain or exceed the current ability of the individual. When a goal or task is considered to be complex a "do your best" goal, although strongly discouraged in Goal Setting Theory (Locke et al., 1981), does lead to effective strategies in some cases (Latham & Brown, 2006). For example, when self-efficacy and experience are low, it is sometimes more effective to encourage the participant to set a "do your best" goal, which may reduce performance stress and anxiety, allowing the participant to discover needed skills and strategies (Locke & Latham, 2002). Latham and Brown (2006) also suggested the use of proximal or short-term goals in addition to distal or long-term goals. This is because proximal goals provide more regular feedback, which allows for needed adjustments to current task strategies.

Latham and Brown (2006) also suggested that learning goals, in contrast to "do your best" goals, are the most effective approach to awaken the discovery of appropriate

task strategies and skills. This is because learning goals are most often proximal goals, which allow for planned strategy building throughout the goal process. For example, a piano teacher may assign the following learning goal: over the next two weeks, learn five strategies for memorizing the notes in both the treble and base clefs; in contrast, a "do your best goal might be: do your best to learn the notes over the next fourteen days. Learning goals allow for the application of specific difficult goals as part of the strategy building process and beneficially lead to goal achievement and higher self-efficacy.

The influence of these sub-features is illustrated in a study by Latham and Brown (2006), which involved business school students (n=125) in their "foundation" year program at a Canadian university (Each student participated in the same classes taught by the same faculty.) The hypothesis of the study was that Goal Setting Theory would influence self-efficacy and personal satisfaction. Latham and Brown (2006) tested the effectiveness of a variety of goals: do your best goals, specific challenging learning goals, distal outcome goals, and proximal outcome goals paired with distal outcome goals. The distal goal group and proximal/distal goal group were asked to set 3-5 specific and difficult outcome goals for the year. The proximal/distal goal group also set proximal outcome goals for the current semester. The learning goals group was encouraged to set 3-5 specific processes that would lead to a satisfying semester. The do your best goal group was encouraged to do their best to make their experience both satisfying and meaningful.

The results of the study suggest that specific and difficult distal goals are not as effective as do your best or learning goals at increasing self-efficacy (Latham & Brown, 2006). The specific learning goal group expressed higher satisfaction with the program

and the proximal/distal goal group achieved a higher GPA than the distal (only) goal group and do your best goal group. However, the learning goal group matched the proximal/distal goal group grade point average scores. This study, though not by design, demonstrated the sub-features discussed above: automatic skills, related skills, new skills, self-efficacy, and complex tasks. The following paragraphs will use the study by Latham and Brown (2006) to outline and explain these important sub-features of ITP.

First, the participants in the study were master's degree seeking students; it is therefore safe to assume that they possess both automatic and related skills they obtained through previous experience and applied to their current goal of obtaining a master's degree. The presence of these types of skills was assumed in the study by Latham and Brown (2006); for example, the participants were not prepared by the researchers to set certain goals. It was assumed that students would understand what types of outcome goals were relevant to their current goal and that any related experience in setting previous goals would also apply to the current situation. The assumption was correct as both the distal goal group and proximal/distal goal group set identical distal goals, such as, grade point average and job applications to be completed (Latham & Brown, 2006); participants also set goals without any specific training from the researchers, which indicated they used related goal setting skills.

Second, new skills are an inherent part of gaining an education, which requires expanding upon the automatic and related skills already possessed. A new skill, which may have been introduced to many of the participants in the learning goal group, was the strategy of setting a learning goal in contrast to a performance or outcome goal. Thirty-two students participated in the learning goal group. It is reasonable to assume that many

of the participants set a performance goal of obtaining a specific GPA. However, it is

less likely that many of the participants had set a specific and difficult learning goal, such

as: developing learning strategies for material they disliked or employment networking

strategies.

Third, self-efficacy or task specific confidence was a key component of the study;

Latham and Brown (2006) found that there was no significant difference between the

learning goal group and the do your best goal group nor the distal (only) and

proximal/distal goal groups. They also found that the distal (only) goal group had the

lowest sense of self-efficacy and appeared to hinder the development of self-efficacy as

soon as the goals were set. Nonetheless, self-efficacy did correlate with end of year

satisfaction and GPA. Fourth, the complex task, in this case, obtaining a master's degree

is evident. Clearly three students did not complete the year and many more were not

satisfied with the result they achieved, which suggests obtaining a master's degree is both

difficult and complex.

Limitations

The limitations of ITP and related sub-features will be discussed in the following

section. The arousal, discovery, and application of relevant knowledge and task

strategies create a complex process with innate challenges. For example, task complexity

is one variable that appears to have a diminishing effect on increased performance, which

results from the application of specific and difficult goals (Wood et al., 1987). Wood et

al. (1987) also suggest that goal setting effects were more effective for simple tasks and

less effective for complex tasks. Furthermore, the sub-features involving skill

development and application are also problematic as they can be inadequately developed

or ineffectively applied (Early et al., 1989).

Summary

Intermediate task performance is the process leading to the arousal, discovery,

and application of relevant knowledge and task strategies. This process is influenced by

the following sub-elements: automatic skills, related skills, new skills, self-efficacy, and

complex tasks (Locke & Latham, 2002). Automatic skills are previously obtained skills

directly related to a specific task; related skills are also previously obtained skills and

strategies, however, they do not directly relate to the current goal, but may be adapted

and applied. Additionally, new skills are not previously obtained skills; in contrast, they

are skills that are deliberately developed in an effort to attain a goal. Self-efficacy

represents the confidence an individual has in their ability to achieve a specific task or

goal. Lastly, task complexity may lead to failure if the ability and skill of an individual is

strained or exceeds present ability. Furthermore, ITP is not without limitations. For

example, task complexity may diminish increased performance (Wood et al., 1987) and

goal setting effects appear to be more effective for simple tasks (Wood et al., 1987).

Moreover, the sub-features involving skill development and application can be

inadequately developed and ineffectively applied, which often leads to lower

performance and motivation (Early et al., 1989).

Self-Efficacy and Feedback

The following section will discuss the pivotal roles of self-efficacy (SE) and

feedback in Goal Setting Theory. Furthermore, the strengths and limitations of both SE

and feedback will also be discussed by exploring empirical evidence. Finally, the

interdependent relationship between SE and feedback will be explained.

<u>Definition and Theoretical Application</u>

To claim that SE influences the entire goal setting process is perhaps overzealous.

However, the influence of SE on the motivational aspects of Goal Setting Theory is

evident and central to successful goal setting and task performance (Bandura, 1969,

1977a, 1977b; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Locke & Latham, 1990). As was discussed

previously, SE describes the level of "task specific confidence" possessed by an

individual or group (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, p.706). Such confidence often leads

to the development of effective strategies, increased effort and persistence, and an

increase in task performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). This is because a

high level of SE tends to strengthen goal commitment, confidence, and persistence, as

well as increase receptiveness to feedback. In this case, feedback accompanied by a high

level of SE will escalate the difficulty level of personal goals, goal commitment,

individual confidence, and persistence, which often lead to greater motivation and

performance (Bandura, 1977a; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002).

For example, Latham and Brown (2006) found that SE correlated with end of year

satisfaction and GPA in a study involving business school students and Locke, Frederick,

Lee, and Bobko (1984) suggest that SE is one of the key factors that influence goal

choice, task performance, and future performance. Latham and Locke (1979) also found

that individuals with low self-confidence (SE) should be given attainable goals, while

individuals with high self-confidence could be given specific and difficult goals. Carroll

and Tosi (1970), in a study involving a management-by-objectives program, found that

individuals with high-assurance (SE) tend to increase persistence and effort as goals became more difficult. Dossett, Latham, and Mitchell (1979) found that clerical workers with high self-esteem (SE) who received feedback attained their goals more often than did participants with low self-esteem. Essentially, individuals with high SE set higher initial goals, respond more favorably to feedback, set higher and more specific goals following feedback, and tend to increase persistence and effort as goals become more difficult, all of which lead to an increase in motivation and final performance.

This increase in final performance is largely dependent on the individual level of SE and quality of feedback received throughout the goal setting process. Feedback or knowledge of results (progress relative to the goal) influences goal setting and task performance, in large part, due to its interdependence with SE (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Dossett et al., 1979; Locke & Latham, 1990). For example, Dossett et al. (1979) found that individuals with a high level of self-efficacy (self-esteem) responded more positively to both negative and positive feedback. In contrast, an individual with a low level of SE responded less positively to positive feedback and was also more strongly influenced by negative feedback. Bandura and Cervone (1983) also found that higher levels of SE led to higher levels of effort and that neither goals nor feedback affected changes in motivation unless feedback led to additional goals and was accompanied by a high-level of SE. The combination of high SE and feedback that leads to specific and difficult goals is considered to be a causal relationship in motivation and performance (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Locke et al., 1984).

<u>Limitations</u>

The effectiveness of SE has been well established. However, it does have some limiting effects on motivation and performance. For example, Audia, Locke, and Smith (2000) found that individuals with high levels of SE may become overly motivated and committed to current goals and strategies in an effort to achieve high levels of performance, which may cause undue loyalty to faulty strategies and practices. Additionally, Vancouver, Thompson, Tischner, and Putka (2002) suggested that high levels of SE can lead to overconfidence, which may increase the likelihood of committing logic errors. Vancouver, Thompson, and Williams (2001) also found that high levels of SE can be positively influence by performance. However, SE does not positively influence future behavior. Bandura and Jourden (1991) suggested that high levels of SE led to lower motivation and performance when success is easily accomplished and socially compared; meaning the individual is satisfied with their success in comparison to their competitor even when their personal performance is low. These limitations raise some serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of SE in increasing motivation and performance. However, Bandura and Locke (2003) suggested that these limitations were conditional upon the goal relationship. For example, learning goals can increase SE when a performance goal is excessively complex and difficult. Similarly, SE is conditional upon individual ability and the need for strategy development. Therefore, just as learning goals can trump performance goals when the conditions require preparation over performance, learning SE may also trump performance SE when the conditions require it.

Summary

SE, in the context of Goal Setting Theory, describes the level of "task specific confidence" possessed by an individual or group (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, p.706). Such confidence often leads to the development of effective strategies, increased effort and persistence, and an increase in task performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). Additionally, SE appears to indirectly influence goal setting through the feedback feature. This is because an individual with a high level of SE will often respond more positively to negative feedback and more positively to positive feedback. Whereas an individual with a low level of SE, often responds less positively to positive feedback and is more negatively influenced by negative feedback. The motivational effectiveness of high SE and feedback that leads to specific and difficult goals is one of the most substantiated claims found in goal setting research (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Locke et al., 1984).

SE does have some limiting effects on motivation and performance. For example, individuals with high levels of SE may become overly motivated and committed to faulty strategies and practices; SE may also lead to overconfidence when success is easily accomplished and the individual is satisfied with their success in comparison to their competitor. These limitations raise some serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of SE in increasing motivation and performance. However, Bandura and Locke (2003) suggest that these limitations are conditional upon the need to increase learning over performance.

Goal Commitment

The following section will define and discuss the goal commitment (GC) feature in the context of Goal Setting Theory. The relationship between GC and self-efficacy and GC and feedback will be explained. Furthermore, the limitations will also be discussed.

Definition and Theoretical Application

GC may also be referred to as goal acceptance (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987) and is defined as an individual's resolve to reach a goal (self-set, participatively set, or assigned) as well as their attachment to the goal (Locke, Latham, & Erez, 1988). GC also suggests that an individual is sincerely trying to attain a goal (Locke & Latham, 1990). Measuring GC can be difficult. However, it can be measured inferentially, directly, or indirectly through direct-questioning, an indirect assessment of the difference between assigned goals and the actual goal, or through judicious monitoring of performance (inferring commitment based upon individual action) (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1988).

For example, Erez and Zidon (1984) performed a study involving 140 technicians and engineers who performed two perceptual speed tests three weeks apart. The participants were then asked to indicate their level of commitment to the assigned goal using a 9-point Likert-type scale. Their study suggests a positive linear relationship between performance and goal difficulty when GC is high and a negative relationship when goals are not accepted or GC is low. Locke (1982) also found a positive relationship between GC and performance in a study involving 247 undergraduate students who were asked to think of uses for common objects in a one minute time

period. Locke (1982) found an increase in performance even when goals were

considered to be impossible as long as the participants tried to achieve (implying GC)

their assigned goal. These are only two of many studies that indicate a positive

relationship between GC and motivation (see Locke & Latham, 1990). However, for the

purposes of this paper, they provide sufficient evidence as to the positive relationship

between GC and motivation. The following paragraphs will discuss the relationship

between GC and feedback (knowledge of results) as well as SE (task specific

confidence).

According to Locke (1968) the existence of GC is practically self-evident during

the goal setting process. Additionally, Locke et al. (1988) suggested if GC is nonexistent

then goal setting will not work. Both SE and feedback influence GC during the goal

setting process through their independent and positive relationship. SE describes the

level of "task specific confidence" possessed by an individual or group (Locke &

Latham, 1990, 2002, p.706). Such confidence often leads to the development of effective

strategies, increased effort and persistence, and an increase in task performance and

motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). Additionally, SE appears to indirectly influence

GC in much the same way it has an influence on feedback. This is because an individual

with a high level of SE will often respond more positively to negative feedback and more

positively to positive feedback, which leads to a higher level of GC (Dossett et al., 1979).

This cycle, as discussed previously, leads to higher GC as well as more difficult

goals following feedback, which often increases performance and motivation. Just as a

high level of SE leads to greater acceptance of negative feedback and higher performance

it is a reasonable assumption to accept a positive relationship between SE and GC (Locke

& Latham, 1990). This positive relationship would also lead to greater levels of GC in the initial stages of goal setting as well as following feedback (Bandura and Cervone, 1983). Additionally, Locke et al. (1984) found that SE was positively related to GC for self-set goals, and Erez, Earley, and Hulin (1985) found that GC strongly influenced performance.

The increase in performance as a result of high SE during GC and feedback stages of the goal setting process provides sufficient evidence as to the importance of GC for the purposes of this paper. However, it should be stated that GC is a complex feature of goal setting that may be influenced by many factors, such as authority, peer group, incentives and rewards, self-rewards, punishment, valence and instrumentality, ego, conflict, satisfaction, personality, and goal intensity (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Limitations

One limiting influence of GC develops from over commitment to a goal, which may hinder effective strategy development and future goal setting. The results of over commitment are similar to the results discussed in the sections on task complexity and directed attention, which suggest that complex tasks may over focus attention on goal achievement at the expense of strategy development or additional goal setting.

Summary

GC or goal acceptance (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987) is defined as an individual's resolve to reach a goal. Measuring individual resolve or GC can be difficult; however, it can be measured (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1988). According to Locke (1968), the existence of GC is practically self-evident. Additionally, Locke et al. (1988)

suggested if GC is nonexistent, then goal setting will not work. Both SE and feedback influence GC through their independent and positive relationship, which suggests that an individual with a high level of SE will often respond more positively to negative feedback and more positively to positive feedback, which leads to a higher level of GC and performance (Dossett et al., 1979). Over GC can lead to similar limitations as discussed in the sections on task complexity and directed attention, which suggest that complex tasks may over focus attention on goal achievement at the expense of strategy development or additional goal setting.

Final Performance

The final section of this chapter will define and discuss the feature referred to as final performance. In contrast to other goal setting features, this feature is considered to be the ending point of the model. Therefore, the discussion will focus on effective goal setting practices following goal completion.

<u>Definition and Theoretical Application</u>

Final performance is not strictly defined and is closely related to the feedback feature as it shares common characteristics. Final performance refers to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction a person experiences upon the completion of a goal, which inherently includes feedback. Goal Setting Theory does not define completion as the achievement of a goal, but focuses on the perception and response of the individual following completion. This is because many studies indicate that motivation and performance are increased even when specific and difficult goals are not achieved, but satisfaction is received and SE is high (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Dossett et al.,

1979; Latham & Brown, 2006; Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1984). This is because specific and difficult goals combined with a high level of SE often result in satisfaction even when the standard or goal is not attained- the opposite is true when SE is low (Latham & Brown, 2006). Naturally, satisfaction is attained when a goal is reached; however, studies indicate that the level of satisfaction is dependent on individual SE (Dossett et al., 1979; Latham & Brown, 2006).

As was discussed previously, SE or "task specific confidence" often leads to the development of effective strategies, increased effort and persistence, and an increase in task performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, p.706). This is because a high level of SE tends to strengthen GC, confidence, persistence, and receptiveness to the results of final performance (feedback). Additionally, an individual with a high level of SE will often escalate the difficulty level of new goals, increase GC, strengthen individual confidence, and prolong persistence even in when failure was the result of their initial effort (Bandura, 1977a; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). As a result, an individual with high SE will often set specific and difficult goals as a result of their personal belief in their ability regardless of past results. This pattern of goal setting will continue to reinforce the most influential elements of the Goal Setting Theory, which are specific and difficult goals paired with a high level of SE.

On the other hand, an individual with low SE will increase in confidence if success is achieved, though not at the same rate as an individual with high SE. When an attempt results in failure specific and difficult learning goals should be set, which will allow for necessary skill and strategy development (Latham & Brown, 2006). Additionally, the development of SE should be a primary focus. Locke and Latham

(2002) suggested that this can be done by setting specific difficult goals (learning and performance), receive applicable training, and participate in mental practice or visualization (mental rehearsal of a task). When SE increases all areas of the goal setting process will be positively influenced and greater motivation and performance will result.

Summary

Final performance refers to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction a person experiences upon the completion of a goal. Motivation and performance may increase following final performance even when specific and difficult goals are not achieved, but satisfaction is received and SE is high (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Dossett et al., 1979; Latham & Brown, 2006; Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1984). The development of SE should be a primary focus following final performance. This can be done by setting specific difficult goals, receive applicable training, and the practice of visualization (Locke & Latham, 2002). When SE increases more difficult and specific goals will be set, which often leads to greater motivation and performance.

Conclusion

Goal Setting Theory attempts to observe personal motivation by inferring purpose through the direct observation of a task or intention (Locke, 1968). In Goal Setting Theory the term goal is analogous with deadline, end, aim, purpose, performance standard, quota, work norm, objective, and intention (Latham & Locke, 1979; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke & Latham, 1990, p. xvii; Locke et al., 1981, p.126). The assumption that goals regulate action suggests that simply setting a goal will improve performance on almost any level of task, required or self-set (Locke, et al., 1981). This is especially

evident when specific and difficult goals are set. This is because they appear to produce the highest levels of motivation as well as the highest levels of performance (Latham & Dossett, 1978; Latham & Kinne, 1974; Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002). However, goal specificity and goal difficulty can limit effective goal setting if task complexity is high and ability as well as SE are low.

The sub-functions of specific and difficult goals appear to influence motivation and performance: directive function, energizing function, and persistence function, which increase motivation and task engagement. The directive function describes the capacity that specific difficult goals possess to direct attention while the energizing function describes their motivational ability (Locke & Latham, 2002) and the persistence function tends to prolong effort (Bryan & Locke, 1967a; Locke & Latham, 1990; Mace, 1935). The following limitations should also be recognized: the directive function may narrow the focus of an individual. The energizing function may increase risk taking and also hinder strategy development. The persistence function may also hinder strategy development if effective strategies are overlooked in pursuit of the goal.

Motivation, in the context of Goal Setting Theory, is measured indirectly by considering secondary characteristics, such as, persistence, focus, and effort, which indicate the level of motivation and task engagement possessed by an individual (Bryan & Locke, 1967b; Locke & Bryan, 1966b). Locke (1968) proposes that a goal is an observable and reliable form of data from which motivation can be examined and explained. For example, a goal is the desired level of performance, such as, scoring three goals in each soccer game. The task is the job or the work to be completed, not the level of performance required by the goal. Task engagement is also an important feature of

goal setting. Task engagement suggests a commitment to the work to be done. For example, a student-athlete may be highly motivated to become an Olympic swimmer, but may not be sufficiently engaged in the task or work to be done. Such as, swimming laps or doing homework on the bus. Task engagement strengthens motivation and goal setting if the outcome of attaining the goal is sufficiently important and if task specific confidence or self-efficacy is well established (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Intermediate task performance is the process leading to the arousal, discovery, and application of relevant knowledge and task strategies. This process is influenced by the following sub-elements: automatic skills, related skills, new skills, self-efficacy, and complex tasks (Locke & Latham, 2002). Automatic skills are previously obtained skills directly related to a specific task. Related skills are also previously obtained skills and strategies, however, they do not directly relate to the current goal, but may be adapted and applied. Additionally, new skills are not previously obtained skills. In contrast, they are skills that are deliberately developed in an effort to attain a goal. The limitations of these sub-features arise when the skill development and application are inadequately developed and ineffectively applied, which often leads to lower performance and motivation (Earley et al., 1989).

Self-efficacy, in the context of Goal Setting Theory, describes the level of "task specific confidence" possessed by an individual or group (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, p.706). Such confidence often leads to the development of effective strategies, increased effort and persistence, and an increase in task performance and motivation (Locke & Latham, 1990). An individual with a high level of self-efficacy will often respond more positively to negative feedback and more positively to positive feedback. The

motivational effectiveness of high self-efficacy and feedback that leads to specific and difficult goals is one of the most substantiated claims found in goal setting research (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Locke et al. 1984). The limitations of self-efficacy may occur when an individual becomes overly committed to faulty strategies and practices or becomes overconfident when success is easily accomplished.

GC or goal acceptance (Hollenbeck & Klein, 1987) is defined as an individual's resolve to reach a goal. According to Locke (1968), the existence of GC is practically self-evident. Both self-efficacy and feedback influence GC through their independent and positive relationship, which suggests that an individual with a high level of self-efficacy will often respond more positively to negative feedback and more positively to positive feedback, which leads to a higher level of GC and performance (Dossett et al., 1979). Over commitment can lead to similar limitations as discussed in the sections on task complexity and directed attention. Final performance refers to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction a person experiences upon the completion of a goal. The development of self-efficacy should be a primary focus following final performance. This is because when self-efficacy increases, individuals frequently set more specific and difficult goals that often result in greater motivation and performance. Self-efficacy can be increased by setting specific and difficult goals, receiving applicable training, and through visualization (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Goal Setting: Beyond the Individual

Goal Setting Theory primarily focused on micro goal setting or personal goal setting from the inception (Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990). Subsequently, goal setting research is largely quantitative, experimental by design, and laboratory based

(Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke et al., 1981). This effective and efficient

approach has the following advantages: GC and participation are more easily guaranteed

and individual goal setting elements are effectively isolated, leading to more varied and

valid results (Bryan & Locke, 1967a, 1967b; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968; Locke

& Latham, 1990). As was mentioned previously, hundreds of studies support specific

and difficult goals at the individual level. This emphasis stems from the original

hypothetical inquiry that sought to explain individual motivation (Locke, 1968).

The disparity between micro and macro goal setting research does raise some

concerns regarding validity and generalizability when applied to macro or organizational

goal setting. The following section will discuss the limitations and weaknesses of Goal

Setting Theory when applied at the organizational level. The following goal setting

elements will be highlighted: goal identification, GC, and goal conflict. The need to

expand goal setting at the macro level will also be discussed briefly with special

emphasis given to the organizational level of education.

Limitations and Weaknesses

Much of the success and stable foundation of Goal Setting Theory is attributed to

the methodical and persevering research practices of Edwin A. Locke (Locke, 1968;

Locke & Latham, 1990). His dedication to sound research and careful consideration of

the influential elements of goal setting deserve high praise and recognition. However,

many of the limitations and weaknesses of the theory arise from its foundation in

laboratory studies. For example, many goal setting studies are limited in time, scope, and

GC (Locke & Bryan, 1966a, 1966b; Locke, 1968; 1969). This is because asking

individuals to participate in a study involving a prearranged goal for one hour is not

necessarily generalizable. Furthermore, most goal setting studies involve simple specific tasks paired with a difficult goal (Latham & Yukl, 1975; Locke, 1968; Locke et al., 1981), which also does not readily suggest valid and generalizable results outside of the laboratory. Goal setting field studies do resolve some of these concerns regarding validity and generalizability, but only at the individual goal setting level (Latham & Blades, 1975; Latham & Dossett, 1978; Ronan et al., 1973).

The intense focus on micro goals, to the exclusion of macro goals, calls into question the application of Goal Setting Theory at an organizational and group level. According to Locke and Latham (1990), macro goal setting could require a new approach with additional questions or possibly a new theory of goal setting. Not because the findings are invalid, but because macro goals tend to be more complicated. The difficulty of macro goal setting research is created by the inherent complexities due to an increase in the following challenges: goal identification, goal commitment, and goal conflict (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Perrow, 1961). Other goal setting elements are also made more complex; however, goal identification, goal commitment, and goal conflict represent especially complex challenges. They are also the most relevant goal setting elements for this study.

Well-designed micro goal setting research will often initiate controls for goal identification, goal conflict, and goal commitment, which often eliminates the complexity and negative effects altogether. This approach has proven to be very effective and has yielded fruitful results for nearly fifty years at the micro goal setting level. It is unclear if this approach will be effective in macro goal setting research in which goal identification, goal conflict, and GC are highly complex issues that may not be so easily controlled.

Furthermore, macro goal setting research may require less isolation of key goal setting elements. Leading to more complex research designs that allow for real-time observation and data collection as GC, goal conflict, and goal identification interact.

Goal Identification

Goal identification becomes problematic because of the acceptance of a flawed assumption, which accepts goals as rudimentary and ubiquitous (Perrow, 1961). This flawed assumption is generally accepted because many organizations already set goals and perceive other needs as more pressing. This mindset results in a false security concerning the effectiveness of previously established organizational goals and often ignores the intentional processes required to establish goal acceptance, GC, and to avoid goal conflict.

An important distinction must be made when dealing with organizational goals. Perrow (1961) suggested they should be classified as either official or operative. The distinction is found in the minutiae: official goals are expounded in the organizational documents, charter, or company-wide communication, which express the general purpose of the organization. Operative goals, on the other hand, specify detailed aims that communicate day-to-day operations and are often distinct from the official goals of the organization (Perrow, 1961).

Identifying operative goals may be essential to understanding organizational behavior and performance as they describe the objectives and challenges that determined their application (Perrow, 1961). Operative goals are developed in response to the needs of the organization. It is therefore, the operative goals and not the official goals that distinguish one organization from another. For example, two furniture companies may

sell the same brand of furniture for equivalent prices with identical official goals: please our customers and sell as much product as possible. However, unique challenges and objectives determine the daily operative goals (e.g. customer service policies, weekly sales, access to inventory, etc.), which influence how customers will be cared for and how the product will be sold. The operative goals of each company delimit the influence of shared official goals, thus creating potentially divergent companies (e.g. Target and Wal-Mart). (It is also challenging to distinguish the origin of operative goals. For example, operative goals could originate at the individual level, managerial level, or administrative level.) This pattern is prevalent in the contemporary business world. Many competing companies provide nearly identical goods and services. However, the distinctive operative goals create a polarized presence that either encourages customers to seek their services or repel them.

Goal identification is crucial to the future application of goal setting research at the macro level. As Price (1972) suggested, "if the goals of an organization cannot be distinguished, then effectiveness cannot be measured…" (p.4). Additionally, the inability to identify organizational goals, either operative or official, directly influences goal acceptance, and goal conflict. This weakness suggests serious consequences and raises concrete doubts about the application of current Goal Setting Theory findings to macro goal setting conditions. The suggested distinction between official and operative goals greatly assists in goal identification, which may increase GC and decrease goal conflict (Perrow, 1961).

Goal Conflict and Goal Commitment

When organizations increase goal identification goal conflict may be reduced. This comes as a result of directed attention to the goal, which also increases awareness of potential conflicts with internal and external factors, such as alternative goals. Organizational goals are no exception, due to an increase in the number of goals as well as an inherent conflict between personal goals, operative goals, and official goals at the group, team, or organizational level (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994).

GC is also more complicated at the macro level, which is caused as individuals attempt to balance time, energy, interest and effort in pursuit of often divergent personal, program, and organizational goals (Latham, 2012; Locke et al., 1988). Locke and Latham (1990) thoroughly discuss GC and goal conflict at the individual level suggesting that authority, peer groups, and goal intensity could affect GC. These suggestions are only three of twelve factors with sixteen subgroups that could, according to Goal Setting Theory, affect GC at the individual level (see Locke & Latham, 1990, p.151). These factors appear to be relevant at the micro level; however, further research is clearly needed to better understand the factors that influence GC at the macro level (Latham, 2012; Locke et al., 1988; Locke & Latham, 1990).

Group and Organizational Goals

In the early 1990's Goal Setting Theory expanded the application of individual goal setting features to group goals (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). Group goals, like organizational goals, are also challenged by goal identification, goal conflict, and goal commitment. However, group goals also share some of the more flexible characteristics

of individual goals, such as, greater variable control and manageable size. The following paragraphs discuss a few examples of such studies including a brief description of their basic design and findings.

Klein and Mulvey (1995) sought to better understand how goal setting might motivate a group's effort. Two independent studies were performed. In the first study, participants were college-aged students who volunteered to participate in the study in an effort to earn extra credit. In the first study, 222 students (52 groups) participated. The participants were asked to investigate a human resource subfunction of an organization for seven-weeks. Group goals were self-set and all assigned goals were excluded. The purpose of the study was to gain insights on the influence of group performance, cohesion, and variables. The findings suggest that cohesion has little effect on group performance; however, goal process, group goals, and commitment have a marked influence on performance (Klein & Mulvey, 1995).

The second study involved group sessions that included 12 to 16 individuals per group (365 total participants). Each session involved 3 to 4 randomly assigned groups who were assigned a specific difficult goal involving an adapted form of "Scrabble." Groups were encouraged to work together; however, they remained autonomous regarding participation and strategy building. First, participants answered a brief survey regarding background information. Second, groups were randomly assigned and encouraged to do their best during the first two rounds. The following three rounds they were encouraged to reach a total point value of at least 100. This score was deemed difficult based on a previous pilot study in which only 10% of the participants reached this point total. Third, participants were given a second survey regarding goal

commitment, cohesion, and several other variables. For the final round groups set a performance goal regarding the amount of points they would be competing for during the final trial.

The detailed findings of these studies need not be discussed in length presently. However, both studies suggested that group goal difficulty lead to higher performance as did group goal commitment. These studies represent a growing body of research that provides evidence that Goal Setting Theory is also relevant in a group goal setting context (Klein & Mulvey, 1995; Kleingeld et al., 2011; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). In an attempt to better understand the existing research involving Goal Setting Theory and groups, O'Leary-Kelly et al. (1994) performed a meta-analysis and narrative review to evaluate the influence of group goals on performance as well as discuss the generalizability of the findings. Their study in addition to the (41 studies) qualitative review performed by Locke and Latham (1990) found that over 90% of the studies showed strong support for the application of both specific and difficult goals in group goal settings (Kleingeld et al., 2011; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). These findings suggest that the application of Goal Setting Theory in group and organizational settings must continue to expand and diversify.

The variety and quantity of groups found throughout work and learning environments are almost incalculable (Latham, 2012). Nevertheless, they share common tasks, aims, purposes, and goals, which suggest that the application of Goal Setting Theory will also continue to apply to group and organizational goal setting (Kleingeld et al., 2011; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). According to Kleingeld et al. (2011), group goal setting research was robust and productive during the 1990's. Both

field and laboratory studies provided insights to group goal setting. However, since the dawn of the 21st century, the focused shifted back to individual goals and away from group goals. This shift continues to ignore the need for macro goal setting research. Leaders in goal setting research also suggest some important areas of emphasis for future research. Such as, educational goals, organizational goals, work alliance, life-span, levels of analysis, complex tasks, goal properties, feedback on complex tasks, and macro goal setting (Kleingeld et al., 2011; Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994).

Though the majority of research has focused on personal and group goal setting, there is evidence that goal setting is effective at the organizational or macro goal setting level. For example, Rodgers and Hunter (1991) suggested that goal setting practices are effective at the organizational level as part of an organizational management approach known as Management by Objectives. However, this management approach does not include a detailed review of key Goal Setting Theory features. This of course, leaves many unanswered questions regarding effective goal setting at the organizational level. Nevertheless, macro goal setting appears to be effective and should be investigated further. One expanded application of goal setting is found in mission statement research.

For example, Want (1986) suggested that mission statements are vital to an organizations productivity and profitability (performance). His study involved a large corporate organization that implemented multiple strategies to increase productivity and profits, but had failed to acquire the desired results. In an effort to understand why, extensive interviews and surveys were completed. Several deficiencies were discovered including the need for a clear corporate mission and business plan (94 percent of those

surveyed reported a need for a clear mission statement). Want (1986) delves deeply into many aspects of corporate mission statements; however, for the purpose of this study, I will focus on his discussion concerning clear mission statements (goal specificity) and the connection between mission statements and corporate performance.

Want (1986) proposed the following five components as the foundation of an effective mission statement: purpose, principle business aims, identity, policy, and values. Accordingly, he suggested that the implementation of a clear mission is the foundation of success for any organization and is the motivation for corporate performance. Furthermore, the corporation in the study was able to increase productivity and ultimately profitability by establishing a clear mission statement, which focused corporate attention and unified the workforce.

As promising as these findings appear to be, Pearce and David (1987) argued that more investigations are needed. The function of a mission statement is generally accepted as a clear statement of purpose, which should affect performance (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Pearce & David, 1987; Want, 1986). However, the key components have yet to be well established (Pearce & David, 1987). Nevertheless, researchers continue to investigate different elements of effective mission statements as well as the effectiveness of mission statements. For example, Pearce and David (1987) created a list of key components of mission statements and compared them to the mission statements of 61 Fortune 500 firms. Their review suggested that the link between mission statements and performance is most likely found in the increased attention given to strategy planning and development. This link is significant because Smith, Locke, and Barry (1990) also

suggested that the link between effective organizational goal setting and performance is also planning.

Additionally, much of the research suggests that mission statements should include a declaration of future goals and should motivate performance sufficiently to increase productivity and ultimately performance (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Pearce & David, 1987; Want, 1986). Still others suggest that a mission statement should simply communicate a description of the organization, which allows stakeholders to decide if they would like to participate in said organization (Bartkus, Glassman, & McAffee, 2000). There is one element, however, upon which they all agree. No matter the purpose or key elements, a mission statement must be communicated in a clear manner so as to engender understanding (Bartkus et al., 2000; Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Pearce & David, 1987; Want, 1986).

Goal Setting and Education

Goal setting, in general, is not new to education (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956; Marzano, 2001). According to Kubiszyn and Borich (2003), goals, standards, aims, program objectives, and instructional objectives are all an important part of our educational system. The complexity of goal setting in education arises from the many individuals and groups involved in the process. For example, the general public, state superintendent, board members, district superintendents, department heads, coordinators, principals, teachers, and students are all stakeholders in the process (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2003). With numerous stakeholders involved, the goal setting process becomes a complex balance as each stakeholder pursues their individual, group, and organizational goals.

In an effort to better understand these distinct terms, a difference should be acknowledged. Goal Setting Theory refers to a goal as something an individual is trying to accomplish. In educational research, goals refer to three distinct aims: goals (broad outcomes, such as: be a good listener), program objectives (more narrowly defined outcomes, such as: all students will achieve reading proficiency), and instructional objectives (specific learner focused outcomes, such as: all students will memorize the state capitals by Friday) (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2003). Goal Setting Theory would accept each one of these as an expression of what an individual and/or group is trying to accomplish.

For the purpose of this study, I will focus on program objectives or program goals, which Kubiszyn and Borich (2003) define as "more narrowly defined statements of educational outcomes that apply to specific educational programs" (p.73). Instructional objectives have received more than adequate attention (Bloom et al., 1956; Eisner, 1983; Mager, 1962; Marzano, 2001). The intense focus on individual results in the classroom should not come as a surprise. As was mentioned earlier, micro goal setting provides valuable data and feedback concerning individual progress, which is the ultimate goal of education. However, teachers and students are not the only stakeholders who influence teaching and learning. State and district administrators as well as principals also influence the culture of their respective organization along with the organizational goals, which define the nature and purpose of each organization (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bamburg & Andrews, 1991; Leitner, 1994; Schmuck & Runkel, 1985).

Overview of Study

Goal setting and educational theorists agree on the importance of goal specificity or clarity. This is because a clear understanding and recognition of a goal is required to begin the process of strategy identification and implementation (Latham & Locke, 1979). Considering the essentiality of goal specificity at the individual level, gaining a greater understanding of the importance of goal specificity at the macro level is vital to the expanded application of the theory (Smith et al., 1990).

This study will attempt to better understand the importance of goal specificity at the organizational level in education. The literature suggests that performance is enhanced when individuals and groups have a clear understanding of their goal (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990). Thus, for an educational program to produce graduates with the attributes that define what the program values, the attributes to be developed (goals of the program) must be clearly specified. Moreover, for a program to reach its goals, the goals must be shared with students and students must accept the goals as their own. The primary purpose of this study is to examine whether program goals are clearly stated and whether the goals can be articulated by students in the program.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods used in the study, which attempted to better understand the importance of goal specificity at the organizational level in education. The literature suggests that performance is enhanced when individuals and groups have a clear understanding of their goal (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990). Thus, for an educational program to produce graduates with the attributes that define what the program values, the to-be-developed attributes (goals of the program) must be clearly specified. Moreover, for a program to reach its goals, the goals must be shared with students and students must accept the goals as their own. The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether program goals are clearly stated and whether the goals can be articulated by the graduates of a particular program.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a difference in the clarity (specificity) of stated program goals within educational leadership programs in a Western state?

2. Does goal specificity increase Educational Leadership graduates' ability to describe official program goals?

To address the first question, the clarity of goals as described by (A) official communications (e.g., website, pamphlets, etc.), and (B) the program coordinator were compared across the three educational leadership programs. This involved having trained reviewers extract goals from materials, and then classifying the goals as clear or ambiguous. To address the second question, graduates of the programs were asked to

describe the goals of the program from which they had graduated. These goals were then compared to the lists extracted by the reviewers from the first question. The degree of agreement was compared across the three programs.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will, in order, describe the methods used to address the research questions. However, I will begin by describing the three programs involved in this study.

<u>Programs</u>

Three educational leadership programs participated in the study. The following section will describe the programs according to the information provided on their respective websites. This source was chosen based on the assumption that the majority of perspective students would seek out program information via electronic sources.

<u>Program A</u>

Program A is a cohort model (all classes are taken with the same group of students throughout the program). The program and curriculum are aligned with state standards and seek to prepare well qualified graduates. Completion of the program requires five consecutive semesters and is only offered in a traditional classroom setting at the main university campus (face-to-face). In addition to course work, students are required to participate in an internship as an integral part of the final module. Program A seeks to develop leaders who strive to continuously improve learning, develop school cultures, and are highly qualified administrative candidates.

Program B

Program B is a traditional model (classes are scheduled by individual students). The program and curriculum are aligned with state standards. Classes can be attended at the main university campus or at two satellite locations. There are also numerous cohorts throughout the state. Instruction is offered in a traditional classroom setting (main campus and two satellite locations), online, and through web-assisted instruction. Program B seeks to develop leaders who will gain an understanding of pertinent theory as well as the skills needed to influence policy-making and to improve educational institutions.

Program C

Program C is a modified-cohort model. (Classes are offered in a specific order in an effort to create a core group of students in each class; however, students are allowed to take classes at an individual pace. Students are not required to take classes in a defined group.) The program and curriculum are aligned with the state standards. Course work is offered face-to-face (main university campus) and online with special emphasis given to action research. Program C seeks to develop leaders who will develop instructional leadership skills and who will become servant leaders in their community.

As noted above, to address the first question, the clarity of goals as described by (A) official communications (e.g., website, pamphlets, etc.), and (B) the program coordinator were compared across the three educational leadership programs. This involved having trained reviewers extract goals from materials, and then classifying the goals as clear or ambiguous.

Reviewers

Six graduates from a variety of graduate programs were asked to participate in the study as reviewers. Reviewers were initially contacted via email. The email contained an explanation of the study and requested an opportunity to discuss the matter by phone. A date and time was arranged and the details of participation were explained. Reviewers were also given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding their role in the study. Once an agreement to participate was made, each reviewer was provided a generic copy of the official communications material via email. All official communications materials were copied and pasted from the respective program websites to a word document and all identifying information was removed from the document, such as program names and locations. Each reviewer was instructed to identify the stated goals of each program, and then determine whether a goal was clear or ambiguous (the instructions are in Appendix C). The following definitions were provided for identifying clear and ambiguous goals: Clear goals are stated in a specific and measurable way and provide a clear expectation of what is to be done (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke, Chah, Harrison, & Lustgarten, 1989). Ambiguous goals are goals that invite numerous interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005). Thus, each reviewer provided a set of goals extracted from the official communications (e.g., website, pamphlets, etc.), and from the program coordinator—with each goal classified as clear or ambiguous. Comparison across programs was largely a qualitative analysis.

As noted above, to address the second question, graduates of the programs were asked to describe the goals of the program from which they had graduated. These goals

were then compared to the lists extracted by the reviewers from the first question. The degree of agreement was compared across the three programs.

Participants and Design

Participants were graduates from three educational leadership programs. As Program A is a relatively new program, to keep the groups equivalent in terms of time since graduation, participation was restricted to only those who had graduated within the past six years (2008-2013). Moreover, to equate for time in the program, participation was restricted to only those students who graduated within three years of beginning the program. Approximately 300 graduates were contacted: 100 from Program A, 100 from Program B, and 100 from Program C. (These numbers are estimates because the networking strategies used to contact qualified participants, as well as the anonymous survey, did not allow for accurate tracking of contacts.) Table 1 provides basic demographic information about the total set of graduates who agreed to participate in the study; however, not all completed the survey and incomplete surveys were dropped from the analyses. The total number of participants with complete survey responses was as follows: 37 from program A, 32 from program B, and 17 from program C.

Table 1.   **Participant Demographics (Table includes incomplete responses.)**

Which program did you attend:		Program A	Program B	Program C	Total
	2013	6	5	2	13
	2012	12	4	6	22
	2011	6	9	2	17
What year did you graduate from your educational leadership program?	**2010**	9	8	3	20
	2009	9	5	3	17
	2008	1	2	2	5
	2007	3	5	2	10
	2006	1	4	1	6
	2005	1	2	1	4
	Total	48	44	22	114
	1 year	0	1	1	2
How long were you enrolled in your program (start to finish) :	**2 years**	38	27	16	81
	3 years	4	10	4	18
	4 years	2	2	0	4
	5 years	1	2	0	3
	6+ years	1	2	0	3
	Total	46	44	21	111
	Male	27	23	12	62
What is your Gender?	**Female**	19	21	9	49
	Total	46	44	21	111

As each participant graduated from a different program, I used "program" as the

sole independent variable in this study. That is, graduates' ability to state the program

goals was compared across the three programs.

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study included a section for collecting demographics on participants (reported in Table 1 above), and a section that asked participants to articulate the goals of the education leadership program from which they graduated.

The survey questions are as follows:

1- Based on your experience, please list five key words that summarize the goals of your Educational Leadership program.

2- If a prospective student were to ask you: What are the goals or expected outcomes of the Educational Leadership program you attended? How would you answer?

I developed the survey to assess participant awareness of their respective educational leadership program goals. I vetted the instrument with a group of educational professionals that were familiar with the issues associated with educational leadership and goal setting, and made modifications based on their feedback. The first question provided five short answer blocks (one block for each response). The second question allowed for an essay type response (see Appendix A for the complete survey). Ultimately, each graduate provided a list of program goals, which were matched to the stated program goals, and compared across programs.

Procedure

Data were collected through networking. First, colleagues were contacted to create a list of possible participants. Secondly, the State Department of Education was contacted and a public records request was submitted for a list of qualified administrators in the state. This was provided and used as another networking tool. Email addresses were collected from colleagues, friends, family, and public school websites. Participants

were also asked to provide contact information for qualified participants via email and at

the end of the survey. Once a substantial list was generated, I contacted graduates via

email (see Appendix B for recruitment letter). Numerous participants provided contact

information for possible participants via email or at the end of the survey. These

individuals were also contacted and invited to participate. This cycle of networking was

repeated multiple times. Qualified participants from Programs A and C were also

contacted via their program coordinators who agreed to forward the email request to

possible participants from their programs. It is my understanding that both coordinators

assigned this task to their assistants and were not directly involved outside of approving

the email communication. The coordinator of Program B was also contacted. However,

direct support for the study was denied. Programs A and C both approved the study only

after an official review by their respective Institutional Review Board.

Planned Data Analysis

The first question regarding the clarity of program goals was addressed by

reviewing each program's official communications (e.g., website, pamphlet, etc.) for

evidence of clearly stated program goals. Six reviewers reviewed online materials for

each program and generated a list of goals, which were used to assess the match between

stated program goals and graduates' perceived goals. The six reviewers then categorized

respective program goals as either clear or ambiguous goals. The following definitions

were used in identifying clear and ambiguous goals: Clear goals are stated in a specific

and measurable way and provide a clear expectation of what is to be done (Latham &

Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1989). Ambiguous goals are goals that invite numerous

interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005). Their analysis was cross examined using

inductive coding techniques for themes and patterns, which were used to measure the clarity of stated program goals in the official communications of each program. Official statements from each program coordinator were also analyzed for goal clarity and ambiguity. Coordinator responses were compared to the program goals identified in the official communications of the program based on the assumption that clearly defined program goals should create significant crossover between the two lists.

For the second question regarding how well graduates can articulate the program goals, this was addressed by assessing the match between graduates' list of goals and the list of goals (1) derived from online materials, and (2) provided by the coordinator. As the coordinators could identify more than five program goals, a match score was computed for the top five program goals provided by the program coordinator, and a list of all the program goals provided by the coordinator. Thus, each graduate produced three different match scores, which are simply the number of goals that appear on graduates' list of goals and those of the program coordinator. The number of matches was the dependent variable. These data were compared across programs with a one-way ANOVA, with program as the independent variable.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

Current research suggests that the essential features of Goal Setting Theory

increase motivation and task performance in a variety of settings. However, research

repeatedly focuses on the effectiveness of goal setting in a business environment

(Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 2002; Locke et al., 1981). Therefore, increased

attention on goal setting in education is especially needed as educational organizations

demand increased effectiveness and proficiency (Levine, 2005; U.S. Department of

Education, 2010). The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a difference

in clarity of program goals in three independent educational leadership programs in an

effort to better understand the importance of goal specificity as applied at an educational

program level.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Is there a difference in the clarity (specificity) of stated program goals within
   educational leadership programs in a Western state?

2. Does goal specificity increase Educational Leadership graduates' ability to
   describe official program goals?

Question 1: Is there a difference in the clarity (specificity) of stated program goals within educational leadership programs in a Western state?

Question 1 was addressed by reviewing each program's official communications (e.g., website, pamphlet, etc.) for evidence of clearly stated program goals. Six reviewers independently reviewed the official communications for each program. Each reviewer was provided a generic copy of the official communications material. All materials were copied and pasted from the respective program websites to a word document and all identifying information was removed from the document, such as program names and locations. Each reviewer was sent an instruction page as well as the generic official communications material via email (see Appendix C). After reading the official communications material, each reviewer produced a list of goals based on their interpretation of the materials. Their goal lists were then inductively coded by the investigator and an independent reviewer. The independent reviewer coded 50% of the official communications goals to increase the reliability of the results. Only minor differences in coding were identified between the investigator's and independent reviewer's analysis of the six reviewers' interpretation of the official communications of each program (see Appendix E). Consensus about the final goals was reach through discussion. Inter-rater agreement was 100% on goal identification. A final list of official communications goals was used to assess the match between the coordinator stated program goals and the description provided by the program graduates (to address the second research question). Table 2 provides the top five official communications goals produced by the inductive coding of the goal lists produced by the reviewers.

Table 2.   Top Five Official Communications Goals by Program

Program A	Program B	Program C
1- Recruit/Develop leaders who inspire, mobilize, and support people to continuously improve student learning and achievement. (5/6)	1-Cohort model develops collaborative environment. (5/6)	1- Action research is an essential goal of the program. (5/6)
2-Develop leaders with first-hand, real-world, authentic and situational experience that provide realistic preparation. (5/6)	2- Reach out to educators across the state with flexible on-line program. (4/6)	2- Cohort model is an important part of the program. (5/6)
3- Develop school culture, conditions, and people capabilities proven to support high levels of student learning and achievement. (4/6)	3- Develop skills needed to make positive changes in education. (4/6)	3- Qualified by the state to be an administrator. (4/6)
4- Preferred recruits of school districts in the state. (4/6)	4- Develop leaders who are prepared to influence policy-making. (3/6)	4- Building leadership and motivational skills (goal setting, human potential) (4/6)
5- Use a cohort design to promote collaboration. (3/6)	5- Produce marketable leaders at all levels of education and increase earning potential. (3/6)	5- Program meets the needs of working professionals. (4/6)

Note. Program goals were produced by an inductive analysis of online materials. The number of reviewers (x/6) who identified each goal is in parentheses following each goal.

The results of the official communications goal review suggest a moderate level

of clarity as multiple reviewers were able to identify similar goals for each program. In

fact, of the top five goals, at least three reviewers were able to identify each goal and

often four or five reviewers identified each goal. However, the fact that not one goal was

identified by all six reviewers raises some doubt as to the clarity of the program goals

represented in the official communications of each program. Additionally, each reviewer

identified many goals not identified by other reviewers. Table 3 provides the official

communications goals not included in the top five list as identified by the reviewers. The

lengthy goal lists produced by the reviewers also suggests greater goal ambiguity over goal clarity as expectations were not defined, but were left to multiple interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005; Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1989). Additionally, when a complete list of identified online goals was considered, the online goal lists differed more than they agreed on the apparent goals of each program.

Table 3.   Additional Official Communications Goals by Program

Program A	Program B	Program C
1-Develop reflective practitioners. (2)	1-Encourage personal growth. (1)	1-Develop Instructional and servant Leaders. (3)
2- Create a leader who can help students have a democratic education and environment. (1)	2-Forefront of theory. (1)	2-Hands-on experience provided through an internship. (3)
3-Teach leaders to uphold professional responsibilities at school and in the community. (1)	3-Collaborative environment with faculty and student to enhance teaching and learning. (1)	3-Build leaders as "principal teachers". (1)
4-Curriculum aligned with state standards. (1)		4-Develop organizational structure and management skills. (1)
5-Admissions (1)		5-Succeed as an administrator. (1)
6-Lead in a pluralistic democratic society and a moral obligation to ensure an equitable and excellent education for all students. (1)		

Note. The numbers of reviewers who identified the goal is indicated in parentheses.

The six reviewers then categorized each program goal as either clear or ambiguous goals. The following definitions were used in identifying clear and ambiguous goals: Clear goals are stated in a specific and measurable way and provide a clear expectation of what is to be done (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1989). Ambiguous goals are goals that invite numerous interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005).

Table 4.   Goal clarity/ambiguity assessment of Official Communications Goals by Program

Program A	Program B	Program C
1- Recruit/Develop leaders who inspire, mobilize, and support people to continuously improve student learning and achievement. (5/6) 5 clear	1-Cohort model develops collaborative environment. (5/6) 2 clear, 3 ambiguous	1- Action research is an essential goal of the program. (5/6) 3 clear, 2 ambiguous
2-Develop leaders with first-hand, real-world, authentic and situational experience that provide realistic preparation. (5/6) 4 clear, 1 ambiguous	2- Reach out to educators across the state with flexible on-line program. (5/6) 2 clear, 3 ambiguous	2- Cohort model is an important part of the program. (5/6) 2 clear, 3 ambiguous
3- Develop school culture, conditions, and people capabilities proven to support high levels of student learning and achievement. (4/6) 3 clear, 1 ambiguous	3- Develop skills needed to make positive changes in education. (4/6) 1 clear, 3 ambiguous	3- Qualified by the state to be an administrator. (4/6) 2 clear, 2 ambiguous
4- Preferred recruits of school districts in the state. (4/6) 3 clear, 1 ambiguous	4- Develop leaders who are prepared to influence policy-making. (3/6) 1 clear, 2 ambiguous	4- Building leadership and motivational skills (goal setting, human potential) (4/6) 1 clear, 3 ambiguous
5- Use a cohort design to promote collaboration. (3/6) 3 clear	5- Produce marketable leaders at all levels of education and increase earning potential. (3/6) 3 clear	5- Program meets the needs of working professionals. (4/6) 2 clear, 2 ambiguous

Note. The number of reviewers to identify the goal along with the clarity/ambiguity assessment is represented as follows: (x/6) identified the goal; x clear, x ambiguous.

The variability in the official communications goal assessment regarding goal clarity or ambiguity also raises doubts about the clarity of the online materials. Only three goals did not receive a rating of "ambiguous" by any of the reviewers who identified the goal. The remaining twelve goals were identified as either ambiguous or the reviewers were divided in their assessment. Either way, the assessment of the official communications material suggests the goals invite numerous interpretations and are

generally ambiguous. Stated Coordinator goals were also collected in addition to online

goals and the clarity/ambiguity assessment and are listed in Table 5.

Table 5.   Stated Coordinator Goals by Program.

Program A	Program B	Program C
1- Instructional Leadership	No Data Provided	1-Servant Leader
2- Transformational Leadership		2-Educational Leader
3- Social Justice Leadership		3-Curriculum Leader
4- Learning in Community		4-Organziational Leader
5- Leadership as Moral Endeavor		5-Building Manager
6- Continuous Improvement		6- Community Servant
7- Data-driven Decision Makers		7-Childrens Advocate
8- Connect Theory and Practice		8-Community Resource
9- Link Between Role and Soul		9-Education Advocate
10- Place Consciousness		10-Teacher Advocate

Note. Program Coordinators were asked to provide a list of words (phrases) describing the goals of their respective program. The top five goals were in order of importance. An additional five goals of the program were provided in no particular order.

Stated Coordinator goals were collected based on the assumption that the

Coordinators, as the leaders of each program, would have a clear understanding of their

respective program goals. Program Coordinators were contacted via email to set an

appointment for a telephone call in which the investigator explained the purpose of his

research and his desire to obtain a list of stated program goals from three coordinators of

educational leadership programs in the state.   The coordinators from Program A and

Program C both agreed to participate contingent upon IRB approval. (An official IRB

proposal was approved by each university.) Program B declined to officially participate

in the study and encouraged the investigator to access already published statistical and

program information.

Coordinator responses were also compared to the official communications goals of the program based on the assumption that clearly defined program goals should create significant crossover between the two lists. This assumption was accepted based on the following definition of a clear goal: clear goals are stated in a specific and measurable way and provide a clear expectation of what is to be done (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke et al., 1989). Table 6 provides the matches between the top five official communications and top ten coordinator goals. The limited number of matches between the official communications and coordinator goal lists also suggests a high level of ambiguity and a low level of goal clarity.

Table 6.   Match between Official Communications and Coordinator's Goals by Program

Program A	Program B	Program C
Connect Theory/Practice	No Data	No Matches
Place Consciousness		

Summary

The results obtained from the analysis of official communications and coordinator goals provides evidence that Programs A, B, and C have not communicated clearly defined program goals. The difference in clarity between the programs was negligible. The following results suggest greater goal ambiguity than clarity: not one official communication goal was identified by all six reviewers and numerous official communication goals were identified by only one reviewer. Additionally, the

investigator and independent reviewer found all ten coordinator goals from programs A and C to be ambiguous and the comparison between online goals and coordinator stated goals also showed poor agreement. The variability in the assessment of goal clarity and goal ambiguity also raises concerns regarding the clarity of the goals.

Question 2: Does goal specificity increase Educational Leadership graduates' ability to describe official program goals?

To address Question 2 the following were compared: graduates' list of goals and the list of goals (1) derived from official communications materials, and (2) provided by the coordinator. Thus, each graduate had three different match scores based on the number of goals that appeared on the graduates' list of goals and those of the following groups: coordinator's top five goals (in order of importance), coordinator's second five goals (no particular order), and goals produced from each program's official communications material. To be complete, a random sample of goals reported by graduates is presented first in Table 7 (for a complete list of responses see Appendix D). The list does not represent common answers, but actual survey responses from graduates. Therefore, repetition is to be expected.

Table 7.   Sample of Actual Survey Responses by Program.

	Program A				
1	leadership over management	collaboration	politically correct	working in the system	social justice
2	Efficacy	Collaboration	Knowledge	Awareness	Legal
3	establishing relationships	maintaining structure	observing instructional strategies	resolving conflicts	increasing student achievement
4	Change	curriculum	leadership	relationship	learning communities
5	Social Justice	Cohort	Collaboration	Self-Reflection	Theory of Action
	Program B				
1	preparation for future	leadership skills	understanding the law	research based approaches	practical application
2	Educational Law	Educational Finance	Research Based Decision Making	Leadership standards	Practical Application of Admin. Skills
3	parental involvement	collaboration	lead by example	communication	involvement
4	Leadership	Strategic thinking	Listening	Collaboration	Time management
5	Educational Law	Educational Research	Supervision of personnel	Educational Philosophies	Educational Practices
	Program C				
1	servant leadership	Curriculum/ instruction	instructional leadership	Action Research	due process for all
2	Prepared	Ready	Skilled	Well-informed	Balanced
3	Educational law	Research	Effective Instruction	Professionalism	Curriculum
4	Leadership	Organization	Management	Recruitment	Public Relations
5	instruction leader	finances	communication with staff	safety of students and staff	delegating

Note: Each row represents a participant's survey response.

The principal investigator provided the initial coding of all matches. Additionally, 100% of the matches between the stated program goals (coordinator's top five and additional five goals) were coded by an independent reviewer (inter-rater agreement was 93%) and 50% of the matches between the graduates' list and the official communications material were also independently coded (inter-rater agreement was 94%). Only minor differences were found between the two, consensus about the final matches was reach through discussion. The number of matches was the dependent variable. These data were compared across programs with a one-way ANOVA, with program as the independent variable.

The match between graduates' reported goals and those obtained from official communications are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. **Mean (Standard Deviation) Matches Between Goals of Graduates and Official Communications Materials.**

	Mean (SD)
Program A	.92 (.894)
Program B	.66 (.787)
Program C	1.35 (1.115)

There was a significant difference in match between graduates' stated program goals and those derived from official communications, $F(2, 83) = 3.30$, $MSe = .82$, $p = .04$, partial eta squared $= .07$. Follow-up post hoc tests showed that match was greater for Program C than for Program B. Program A did not differ from the other groups. The mean scores indicate the average number of times a graduate was able to identify only one official communication goal. For example, a mean score of 1.35 shows that on average a graduate from program C was able to identify 1.35 goals out of five or 1/5 of

the official communications goals. Graduates from Programs A identified almost one

goal out of five and graduates from Program B were able to identify less than one goal on

average.

As further evidence of the graduates' inability to articulate goals derived from

official communications, Table 9 provides the top five goals from official

communications for each program. The number in parentheses is the number of

graduates who listed the goal. Note that fewer than half of the graduates, from each

program, identified any goal stated in official communications.

**Table 9.   Number of Graduates Who Identified the Top 5 Official
Communications Goals by Program.**

Program A (n=37)	Program B (n=32)	Program C (n=17)
Develop school culture, conditions, and people capabilities proven to support high levels of student learning and achievement. (11)	Cohort model develops collaborative environment. (7)	Building leadership and motivational skills (goal setting, human potential) Program meets the needs of working professionals. (8)
Use a cohort design to promote collaboration. (10)	Develop skills needed to make positive changes in education. (3)	Action research is an essential goal of the program. (4)
Develop leaders with first-hand, real-world, authentic and situational experience that provide realistic preparation. (4)	Develop leaders who are prepared to influence policy-making. (2)	Program meets the needs of working professionals. (2)
Recruit/Develop leaders who inspire, mobilize, and support people to continuously improve student learning and achievement. (3)	Reach out to educators across the state with flexible on-line program. (1)	Cohort model is an important part of the program. (0)
Preferred recruits of school districts in the state. (0)	Produce marketable leaders at all levels of education and increase earning potential. (0)	Qualified by the state to be an administrator. (0)

Note. Goals are listed in order of most identified to least identified.

The match scores between graduate responses and coordinator goals were also compared to assess graduates' ability to articulate the goals of their respective program (see Table 10).

Table 10.   Mean (Standard Deviation) Matches between Goals of Graduates and Coordinators.

	First 5 Goals	Second 5 Goals
Program A	.70 (.812)	.84 (.898)
Program B	No Data	No Data
Program C	1.06 (1.249)	.59 (.712)

In regard to the first set of program goals, there was no difference between the groups, on coordinator matches, $t(52) = 1.26$, $p = .22$. On the second set of program goals, there was also no difference between the programs, $t(52) = 1.00$, $p = .32$. The mean scores indicate the average number of times a graduate was able to identify a goal stated by the program coordinator. Graduates from Program A and B were able to identify less than one goal on average.

As further evidence of the graduates' inability to articulate goals stated by the respective program coordinators, Table 11 provides the top five goals from the coordinators for each program. The number in parentheses is the number of graduates who listed the goal. Note that fewer than half of the graduates, from each program, identified any goal stated by the coordinator.

Table 11. **Number of Graduates Who Identified the Coordinator's Stated Goals by Program.**

Program A (n=37)	Program B (n=0)	Program C (n=17)
Learning in Community (9)	No Data	Education Leader (6)
Instructional Leadership (6)		Servant Leader (5)
Transformational Leadership (4)		Building Manager (4)
Social Justice Leadership (4)		Curriculum Leader (3)
Leadership as Moral Endeavor (3)		Organizational Leader (2)
Additional Program Goals		
Place Consciousness (12)	No Data	Community Resource (3)
Link Between Role and Soul (11)		Education Advocate (3)
Connect Theory and Practice (5)		Teacher Advocate (3)
Data-driven Decision Makers (2)		Children's Advocate (2)
Continuous Improvement (1)		Community Servant (1)

Note. Goals are listed in order of most identified to least identified. As low as .03% and as high as 32% of the graduates were able to identify a particular goal.

The low number of matches between the graduates' responses and the top 5 goals as stated by the coordinator of the program suggests that the program goals are poorly communicated. That is, of course, based on the assumption that the coordinators should have a clear understanding of the goals of their program.

Given that the official communications materials and coordinators had different stated program goals, it seemed important to assess whether the different sources (official communications versus coordinator) were more influential in determining the graduates' stated program goals.   There was no difference between Coordinator (top 5) and official communications goals for Program A, $t(36)$ 1.24, $p = .22$; or for Program C, $t(16) = 1.16$, $p = .26$. Thus, neither source of goals was more influential in shaping graduates' perceptions of the program goals.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSION

This chapter provides a brief review of pertinent goal setting literature and a discussion of the findings and implications of the study. The limitations and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Goal Setting Theory

Goal Setting Theory developed as a result of an intense effort to understand the connection between goals and action (Locke, 1968; Locke & Latham, 1990, p.xvi). Researchers initially examined this connection by preparing carefully developed micro goal setting (individual goal) laboratory experiments. The success of these foundational studies led to the application of Goal Setting Theory at the macro level. Macro goal setting (large groups, university programs, and organizations), however, has received little attention in comparison to micro goal setting. Many researchers suggest this is because micro goal setting is less complex than macro goal setting (Barsky, 2008; Ordóñez et al., 2009; Schweitzer et al., 2004). Even Locke and Latham (1990), the founders of the theory, question the generalizability of their micro goal setting findings because of the high levels of goal complexity, goal conflict, and goal identification at the macro goal setting level (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Perrow, 1961).

The demand for macro goal setting research continues to increase as organizations, such as universities, become more complex (Bush, 2006; Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; Want, 1986). The present research was an attempt to examine

whether the principles of Goal Setting Theory are consistently applied to educational leadership programs at the university level. In particular, the present study examined the importance of goal specificity at a macro level in education, a foundational element of Goal Setting Theory.

Findings and Implications

<u>Findings</u>

<u>Questions 1: Is there a difference in the clarity (specificity) of stated program goals within educational leadership programs in a Western state?</u>

Question 1 was addressed, in part, by reviewing each program's official communications (e.g., website, e-pamphlet, etc.) for evidence of clearly stated program goals. The results of the official communications goal review suggest a mediocre level of clarity. For example, 80% of the official communications goals were identified by at least 4-5 of 6 reviewers (see Table 2). However, not one goal was identified by all six reviewers, which raises some doubt as to the clarity of the official communications program goals. Additionally, each reviewer listed multiple goals not identified by other reviewers (3-6 per program), which also suggests lack of focus on a well-defined set of goals. The variability in the official communications assessment of goal clarity or ambiguity (see Table 4) also raises doubts about the clarity of these goals. Only three out of fifteen goals were classified by the reviewers as clear goals and of those three goals only one goal was classified by five of the reviewers.

The coordinators' stated goals were similarly assessed by the investigator, and an independent reviewer, who found all ten goals from Programs A and C to be ambiguous.

The comparison between official communications goals and coordinator stated goals also showed poor agreement, with only two matches for program A and none for program C.

Question 2: Does goal specificity increase Educational Leadership graduates' ability to describe official program goals?

The lack of clarity found in the assessment of official communications goals and the coordinator goals suggests that there would be poor agreement between these goals, and those identified by the graduates; because it is unlikely that graduates would identify poorly defined goals. The results between all groups suggest that graduates were unable to identify the official communication goals and coordinator goals. Program C was the most successful with an average of about 1 match per graduate. That is, the graduates were only able to identify 1 of the top 5 program goals. Thus, all the programs can improve their communication of goals to students in their program, and Goal Setting Theory suggests this will increase the likelihood the programs will graduate the type of leaders they aspire to produce.

Implications

Goal Setting Theory includes multiple features that influence motivation and task performance, such as task engagement, self-efficacy, feedback, and goal commitment (Locke & Latham, 1990). However, the most foundational features of Goal Setting Theory are goal specificity and goal difficulty (Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990). Clear goals (specificity) are especially crucial to maximizing performance, both at the individual (Locke & Latham, 2002) and group levels (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994) because they clarify what the individual, group, or organization is expected to achieve. Difficult goals, on the other hand, require a greater amount of effort, which often results in

increased motivation and performance. The combination of clearly understood expectations and increased effort due to specific and difficult goals appears to have increased motivation in over 100 tasks in hundreds of studies over a thirty year period (Locke & Latham, 2002).

Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework of effective goals, which begins with a specific and difficult goal and ends with final performance or the end result. In a best-case scenario an individual or organization will set a specific and difficult goal, which will clarify the expected outcome and increase motivation. Positive or negative feedback will then inform the process and a high level of self-efficacy will lead to greater goal commitment, renewed motivation/task engagement, and a high level of performance. This process, however, is much more difficult, if not impossible, when goals are not specific or clear because the expected outcome is unclear.

In an effort to highlight the importance of specificity, consider the following examples: Runner A sets a goal to run the mile race "as fast as he can" while runner B sets a goal to run the mile race "10 seconds faster than his personal best". By setting a specific goal runner B more clearly understands what the expected outcome is and can more specifically prepare by setting additional specific goals such as quarter mile pace goals. On the other hand, runner A can only "run faster", but has no specific way to measure performance or progress.

The lack of specificity in the example above (runner A) highlights the affect nonspecific goals have on performance and motivation. In contrast to the example discussed previously, nonspecific goals lack the clarity of purpose needed to increase motivation throughout the goal setting process depicted in Figure 1. This limitation can

effectively eliminate the benefits of goal setting altogether. Considering the limiting effect nonspecific goals have on the effectiveness of goal setting, the results of this study are particularly concerning. According to Locke et al. (1981), goal setting research has found no distinction between groups told to "do their best" and those assigned no specific goals. In other words, nonspecific goals are as effective as not setting goals. Considering the importance of the educational leadership programs and their role in preparing future administrators and leaders, establishing clearly defined goals should be quickly and carefully addressed.

Educational organizations across the country expect increased effectiveness and proficiency by teachers, administrators, and students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This expectation will require intentional efforts to increase individual and organizational motivation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the history of motivation research is vast and varied; however, few theories have proven to be as effective at increasing motivation as Goal Setting Theory (Latham, 2012; Latham & Pinder, 2005). Goal setting is often assumed to be ubiquitous or commonplace (Perrow, 1961). This may account for the lack of clearly defined goals suggested by the results of the present investigation. The coordinators may have assumed that goal setting was already happening, which is likely true to a degree, and set their attention on other pressing needs such as advising and publishing. The gap caused by this assumption often leads to the all too common result of goals that lack clarity and commitment and therefore remain unachieved.

The apparent lack of goal clarity may also be caused by potential conflicts with internal and external factors (goal conflict). This is often produced due to an increase in the number of goals as well as conflict between personal goals, operative goals, and

official goals (Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). In other words, with numerous goals competing for a student's time and energy, program goals must be extremely clear in order to increase goal identification, which may reduce goal conflict as a result of directed attention to the goal. The lack of goal clarity greatly inhibits the ability clear and difficult goals have to motivate an individual or organization to choose between competing or conflicting goals.

Goal commitment may also explain the absence of goal clarity or more specifically the graduates' inability to describe their respective program goals (official communications goal or coordinator). A lack of goal commitment is caused as individuals attempt to balance time, energy, interest, and effort in pursuit of conflicting goals (Latham, 2012; Locke et al., 1988). This conflict may have contributed to the graduates' inability to describe their respective program goals as their attention was divided among contradictory goals, such as, passing the class, graduating the program, receiving a promotion at work, or a myriad of other possible conflicting goals.

An alternative explanation may be that coordinators and graduates provided different kinds of goals. Coordinators may have described lofty long-term or distal goals similar to a graduate schools mission statement, while graduates may have described more short-term or proximal goals similar to a classroom objective. This may have influenced the results slightly. However, after a review of the official communications, coordinator, and graduate goal lists (see Tables 2, 5, and 7), there appears to be an equal emphasis on distal or long-term goals; thus, this does not appear to be able to account for the lack of match between program goals and those identified by graduates.

Additionally, goal setting becomes more complex as task complexity increases; furthermore, task complexity, in particular, has shown to have a moderating effect on performance (Wood et al., 1987). The moderating effect of goal complexity may have influenced the outcome of this study. Meaning, the complexity inherent in a university program's goals may explain the lack of clarity reported in this study. However, it should be noted that complexity has been shown to moderate, but not eliminate the positive effects of goal setting (Locke & Latham, 1990; Wood et al., 1987); thus, clear goals remain crucial to program success.

Limitation and Future Considerations

<u>Limitations</u>

Some of the limiting factors of this study were the small sample size and low response rate from two of the programs, (3 programs and 86 survey responses equate to the following response rates: Program A 44%, Program B 10%, and Program C 12%), which does not allow for generalizability and may have weakened the validity of the results. In other words, the low response rate and small sample size may not be representative of the larger population. The accuracy and thoroughness of survey responses may also have been influenced by the variation in graduation dates 2008-2013. That is, a student who graduated in 2008 may remember less about her respective program's goals through attrition and not because of a lack of clarity in program goals, which might have influenced the results. Similarly, a student who graduated in 2013 may remember more about their respective program goals as a result of more recent participation. This variation may have influenced participant responses and should be

considered as a limiting factor. As a graduate from one of the participating programs it is possible that data analysis may have been influenced because of my familiarity with one of the three programs. However, measures were taken to ensure objectivity, such as, an anonymous survey, an independent review, and allowing sufficient time (three weeks) to lapse between two complete coding sessions by the investigator, which decreased researcher bias by increasing the objectivity of the analysis and allowed for cross examination between coding sessions.

Future Considerations

Goal identification is crucial to the future application of goal setting research at the macro level. As Price (1972) suggested, "if the goals of an organization cannot be distinguished, then effectiveness cannot be measured…" (p.4). This study attempted to add to the growing body of research that provides evidence that Goal Setting Theory is also relevant in a group and organizational goal setting context, especially specific and difficult goals (Klein & Mulvey, 1995; Kleingeld et al., 2011; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). These findings suggest that the application of Goal Setting Theory in group and organizational settings must continue to diversify as organizational goal setting research expands.

The variety and quantity of groups found in work and learning environments are almost incalculable (Latham, 2012). Nevertheless, they share common tasks, aims, purposes, and goals, which suggest that the application of Goal Setting Theory will also continue to apply to group and organizational goal setting (Kleingeld et al., 2011; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994). Leaders in goal setting research also suggest some important areas of emphasis for future research, such as, educational goals,

organizational goals, work alliance, life-span, levels of analysis, complex tasks, goal

properties, feedback on complex tasks, and macro goal setting in general (Kleingeld et

al., 2011; Latham, 2012; Locke & Latham, 1990; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994).

The findings of this study, as related to goals specificity or clarity, support the

need for a greater variety and depth in macro goal setting research. Special emphasis

should be given to the following areas of emphasis: specificity in education, specificity in

large groups and organizations, how to increase macro goal specificity, and the influence

of goal specificity on goal conflict and commitment in macro goal setting. The evidence,

as mentioned previously, strongly supports specificity at both the micro and macro levels.

However, future research should focus on understanding the intimate interactions

between macro goal specificity and other goal setting elements to verify their

effectiveness at the organizational levels found in business and education.

For example, future studies might focus on the influence specific and difficult

goals have on other goal setting features at the macro goal level, such as, goal

commitment, goal complexity, and goal conflict. These features are only a few of the key

features; however, they represent the need for further examination of these features at a

macro level. As Locke and Latham (1990) suggested, much of the goal setting process

becomes more complex at the macro goal level; this complexity, they suggest, may

require an entirely new theory of goal setting. Therefore, the examination of key goal

setting features at a macro level is essential considering the effectiveness of goal setting

in increasing motivation and performance.

For effective goal setting to take place in educational settings, researchers must

dedicate more of their time, talents, and resources to the study of goal setting in

education. This area of emphasis, as mentioned previously, has received limited

attention. Future studies should focus on the effectiveness of the key features presented

in figure 1. The complexity of educational organizations will require a diverse body of

research that considers the effectiveness of goal setting for administrators, teachers,

students, and other stakeholders. There should also be considerable attention given to the

transfer of goals from administrators to teachers and teachers to students. In other words,

are administrator's and teacher's goals aligned and are student's goals considered in the

process? Are the goals of the organization communicated in a clear and accessible way?

Do administrators, teachers, and students have a clear understanding of the expectations?

Do administrators, teachers, and students have similar goals?

Another important question regarding goal setting is, what can an administrator,

teacher, or student do to set more effective goals? The following suggestions are an

attempt to elicit discussion and application. Administrators, teachers, and students should

focus on setting specific and difficult goals that are measurable and require a significant

amount of increased effort.   Goals should be carefully set according to past performance

measures and should be difficult, but attainable. However, the emphasis of goal setting

should not focus on achieving a perfect score, but on growth and increased ability. For

example, an administrator, teacher, or student should focus on an increase in performance

from 70% to 80% as a success even if the goal was to achieve 85%. This focus does not

excuse the "failed goal," but focuses attention on the increase in performance and

motivation, which can increase self-efficacy and future goal setting efforts. Additionally,

performance goals should be accompanied by learning goals, which also direct attention

to the purpose of education (learning) as well as encourage appropriate strategy and skill

development as opposed to strict performance, such as, earning a grade (Latham & Brown, 2006). Learning goals may also increase self-efficacy and motivation as students focus on learning strategies and skills, which may increase their performance.

Additionally, the alignment of administrative, school, and classroom goals should be given serious attention and consideration. As was found in this study, the alignment of goals can be easily overlooked resulting in poorly communicated goals that lack the needed clarity to influence motivation and performance. This alignment may be compared to the importance of clearly stated mission statement in business. As was discussed in Chapter 2, many researchers agree, no matter the purpose or key elements, a mission statement must be communicated in a clear manner so as to engender understanding (Bartkus et al., 2000; Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Pearce & David, 1987; Want, 1986). Educators at every level must begin by making a conscious effort to clearly identify and communicate the goals of their organization in a way that increases understanding and specifies the expected outcomes. This will allow the exploration and application of other key goal setting features to positively influence the levels of motivation and performance of all committed stakeholders involved.

Conclusion

Remember "Ambiguous goals are as effective as not setting goals!" The goal to do my best to earn an "A" in English, in most cases, will be as effective as not setting a goal. However, the goal to earn a 98% in English coupled with a goal to learn five new strategies to increase my study skills and proficiency will increase motivation and performance. Setting specific and difficult goals increase motivation and performance

more effectively than ambiguous goals by clarifying the expected outcome and requiring an increase in effort to achieve the goal.

Goal Setting Theory is a dynamic and carefully developed motivational theory found to be highly effective at the micro and group goal setting level. However, the theory must continue to be applied to a variety of settings, situations, and group sizes to assure its effectiveness in a diversity of applications. As the application of the theory expands and is more distinctly developed its utility will be greatly increased, which according to Latham (2012) is a continually increasing need in our perpetually diversifying world.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

The following document provides an explanation of the study and your rights as a participant. Please provide consent at the end of the document. Thank you for your participation.

Purpose of the Study/Participants

You are invited to participate in a research study gathering data to determine Educational Leadership graduates perceptions of their program goals. You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a graduate of an Educational Leadership program in the state of Idaho.

Procedures/ Benefits of Participation

Data collection will involve the completion of a brief online survey designed to assess your perception of your Educational Leadership program goals. From participating in this study, your data will contribute to a better understanding of Educational Leadership programs ability to disseminate program goals to participating students.

Risks of Participation

The risks involved in this study are minimal (for example, fatigue from answering questions.) Your responses and data will not be revealed to other participants, nor will they be given to anyone else in a manner that would reveal your identity. This is an anonymous survey. Your identity will never be reported with your responses, or be made public in a manner that could link you to your responses. The confidentiality section on this page contains further details on ensuring confidentiality and data security. The survey will include a section requesting demographic information. Due to the make-up of Idaho's population, the combined answers to the question in the survey may make an individual person identifiable. We will make every effort to protect participants' confidentiality. However, if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions, you may leave them blank. In the unlikely event that some of the survey questions make you uncomfortable or upset, you are free to decline to answer or to stop your participation at

any time. Should you feel discomfort due to participation in this research you should contact your own health care provider or call the Idaho CareLine at 2-1-1.

Cost /Compensation

There will be no financial cost to you to participate in this study. You will not be compensated for your time spent on answering the questionnaire.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Matthew Featherstone at (208) 447-7735 or via email at mattfeatherstone@u.boisestate.edu. You may also contact Dr. Keith Thiede at (208) 426-1278 or via email at KeithThiede@boisestate.edu. Research at Boise State is conducted under the oversight of the BSU Institutional Review Board. Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the BSU IRB office, Boise State University, Office of Research Compliance, 1910 University Drive, Simplot Micron Building Room 218, Boise, Idaho 83725-1138, Telephone: (208) 426-5401.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study via the contact information described above.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential and all data will be shared as aggregate. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to your responses to this study. All study records will be stored on a password secure computer cabinet at Boise State University for three years, at which time they will be deleted. (This is an anonymous survey.)

Participant Consent

I have read the above information and agree to participate in the study. By completing the following survey I am consenting to participate and allowing my data to be used in research.

❍ I agree to participate (1)
❍ I do not agree to participate (2)

Which University did you attend?:

❍ Boise State University (1)
❍ Idaho State University (2)
❍ Northwest Nazarene University (3)
❍ University of Idaho (4)

What year did you graduate from your Educational Leadership program?

❍ 2013 (1)
❍ 2012 (2)
❍ 2011 (3)
❍ 2010 (4)
❍ 2009 (5)
❍ 2008 (6)
❍ 2007 (7)
❍ 2006 (8)
❍ 2005 (9)

How long were you enrolled in your program? (start to finish):

❍ 1 year (1)
❍ 2 years (2)
❍ 3 years (3)
❍ 4 years (4)
❍ 5 years (5)
❍ 6 or more years (6)

What is your Gender?

❍ Male (1)
❍ Female (2)

Based on your experience, please list five key words that summarize the goals of your Educational Leadership program.

Example: The goals of my literacy program focused on: 1-tutoring, 2-letter recognition, 3-sound recognition, 4-teaching techniques, and 5-parental involvement.

Key word #1 (1)
Key word #2 (2)
Key word #3 (3)
Key word #4 (4)
Key word #5 (5)

If a prospective student were to ask you: What are the goals or expected outcomes of the Educational Leadership program you attended? How would you answer?   Based on your experience, please describe the goals of your Educational Leadership program.

Have any of your colleagues or associates graduated from an Educational Leadership program in the State of Idaho in the past 5 years? If so, please forward this email to them and invite them to participate in the study or simply provide their contact information below. Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

Hello, my name is Matthew Featherstone. I am a doctoral student currently working on my dissertation with the assistance of Dr. Keith Thiede at Boise State University. We are conducting a research study on Educational Leadership and the importance of clearly defined program goals. I am contacting you because you are a graduate of an Educational Leadership program in the state of Idaho. **The survey contains an explanation of the study, consent form, and eight questions.** Completion of the survey should take about 5-10 minutes.

Your participation in this dissertation study is greatly appreciated.

Go to this link to take the survey:

https://boisestate.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_7WFcKeBRMElbLMw

Please contact us with any questions. Thank you for your help.

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APPENDIX C

Reviewer Instructions and Online Materials

Purpose: Identify program goals by reviewing the (website) material provided.

Reviewer instructions:

1-Review each program individually. Please list any goals you have identified before moving on to the next program. Organize your notes according to program A, B, and C.

Please categorize the program goals you identified as either clear or ambiguous goals. (Just add a bolded C for clear or an A for ambiguous at the end of each goal.

 Clear goals are ones stated in a specific and measurable way (Locke et al., 1989).

Ambiguous goals are goals that invite numerous interpretations (Chun & Rainey, 2005).

2-Review only the information provided. All identifying information has been removed from the documents.

3-Please save the attachment to your computer and add your notes to the document. Reattach the document when you have completed the review and send it back to me. Thank you!

Once I have saved your response you will receive an email requesting you delete your copy.

Special note: A non-answer does not help my study. Please do your best to identify the goals of the educational leadership programs--even if it is your best guess. In other words, you are describing the program goals based on the information provided by the educational leadership website. You may have to critically read the information in an attempt to come to specific conclusions.

The information provided is from the program websites. Minimal changes were made in an effort to remove program identifiers.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

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Boise State University

Graduate Student

Program A

PROGRAM GOALS

> To develop educational leaders who:
> 1-Inspire, mobilize, and support people to continuously improve student learning and achievement.
> 2-Develop school cultures, conditions and people capabilities that are proven to support high levels of student learning and achievement.
> 3-Are the preferred recruits of Idaho school districts.

Program A… Educational Leadership (M.Ed.). Today's school leaders face the challenge of building collaborative communities in which professionals use their collective expertise to address common challenges for a common purpose. The program uses a cohort design through which students gain firsthand experience about how to foster a professional community of practice.

Each fall semester a new cohort of students (up to 25) is admitted. Leadership candidates complete five six-credit modules, one each semester, for five consecutive semesters. During the academic year, the cohort meets one night per week and one Saturday per month. A team composed of…faculty and exemplary practicing principals teach each module.

Instructional methodology is designed to scaffold learning within authentic learning contexts. A problem-based approach utilizing case study and simulation developed from realistic problems of practice is central to the curricular design. Curriculum content is coherent, integrated, and aligned with the… State Standards for Leaders. Core beliefs that guide the curricular content and field experiences include:

• Public school leaders in a pluralistic, democratic society have a moral obligation to

ensure an equitable and excellent education for all students.

• Educational leaders nurture and sustain processes and structures that lead to the

improvement of schools as place for learning.

• Educational leaders encourage authentic involvement, as well as create and support

opportunities for collaboration and community-building.

• Educational leaders commit to critical reflection of practices in their schools and

promote inquiry as a professional responsibility.

Admission to the program is based upon the applicant's current qualifications, leadership ability and/or potential, and level of commitment. Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 GPA in the previous undergraduate or graduate degree and should have four years of fulltime certificated experience working with students in grade K-12 while under contract

in a school setting. Admission decisions are made based on a comprehensive review of the candidates application materials and a personal interview.

Program A Notes:

After reviewing the website content I have identified the program goals as:

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

(add more as needed)

Program B

A Master of Education (M.Ed.) or an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) in Educational Leadership prepares you as a leader in education administration. The degree places you on the forefront of theory, and positions you to have an influence on policy-making and improving educational institutions.

This degree is for teachers and administrators who desire to be on the leading edge of their professions. With this degree, professionals will learn the skills to make important changes in the educational field at the local, regional, state and national levels. Students should have leadership skills and a desire to make positive changes in education.

The College of Education has established several educational leadership cohorts in communities where schools encourage personal growth. Cohorts (3 locations) have provided unique learning opportunities for teachers seeking to progress their education while continuing to teach.

This degree is available online, at location #1 campus, at the location #2 campus and with various cohorts throughout the state.

Current faculty research is being conducted on the following topics:

Culturally responsive leadership

Social and cultural contexts of education

How technological and economic forces transform higher education

School law

Standards-based curriculum and assessment

Hands-On Experience

Educational leadership cohort groups form strong bonds that evolve into powerful networks of educational leaders statewide. As research projects evolve, students collaborate with faculty and other students to enhance both teaching and learning. Some of these projects include…research on the experiences of beginning teachers in rural schools and how school leaders can mentor them effectively… presented a research paper at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in New York in March 2008.

Online & Outreach

Instruction may be live, online or Web-assisted to accommodate the schedules of working professionals. Summer classes meet daily in two four-week sessions or are delivered online. It is possible to take most classes online with advisor approval.

What You Can Do

Graduates become superintendents, principals and higher education administrators. Doctoral graduates are prepared for specialized positions in education and to provide administrative leadership.

Most educational leadership graduates are hired in public school district offices, universities, and private institutions and companies. Potential job titles include dean of instruction, academic division director and education specialist. Salaries range from $57,000 to $111,000, but salaries vary from state to state.

Program B Notes:

After reviewing the website content I have identified the program goals as:

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

(add more as needed)

Program C

Successful completion qualifies the graduate for recommendation to the State of … for a K-12 principal's certificate. (Individuals should check for specific requirements for certification in other states.)

Each student completes a nine-month internship in a school setting under the supervision of a qualified building principal. The internship assignment must be approved by the school district and the program director.

Another significant expectation is that each student will identify a specific topic or problem of interest. During enrollment in …, the student will develop an action research proposal. The student will complete the action research effort, submit the results in a formal paper to…program C, and make an in-service presentation during his or her internship year.

Coursework may be taken to lead to principal certification only or to the M.Ed. degree with certification.

The program utilizes a cohort model.

Both online and face-to-face schedules are designed to allow the educator to complete a master's degree while teaching full time.

Degree completion takes approximately 23 months, including the nine-month internship.

The Educational Leadership program is designed for those seeking formal educational leadership roles such as building-level principals, assistant principals, or instructional team leaders. It emphasizes the administrator as an instructional leader and a servant leader. Skills appropriate to goal setting and maximizing human potential, the unique aspects of an organizational structure, and the management tasks of an administrator are identified.

We have designed our Graduate Programs in Education around the working professional. Both face-to-face and online cohorts are available. The face-to-face classes are held during the day in summer and one night per week during the school year. Your administration internship is completed in the building in which you are teaching and can be completed around your teaching schedule. We utilize a cohort model, enabling you go through your classes with the same group of people, which builds camaraderie both during the program and after you graduate. Your professors at program B are Educational Leaders themselves and provide you with the knowledge you need to succeed as a building administrator.

Cohort Schedules

New face-to-face cohorts begin in summer of each year, and online cohorts begin in fall of each year. A student who joins an active cohort is placed in the one that corresponds to the student's expected graduation date.

Program C Notes:

After reviewing the website content I have identified the program goals as:

1-

2-

3-

4-

5-

(add more as needed)

APPENDIX D

Complete Survey Responses by Program

Table D1:   Complete Survey Response for Program A

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
leadership over managment	collaboration	politically correct	working in the system	social justice
Efficacy	Collaboration	Knowledge	Awareness	Legal
establishing relationships	maintaining structure	observing instructional strategies	resolving conflicts	increasing student achievement
change	curriculum	leadership	relationship	learning communities
Social Justice	Cohort	Collaboration	Self-Reflection	Theory of Action
transformative leading	staff buy in	transparent leading	trust	knowledgable
Instructional Leader	Student Learning/ Achievement	School Culture	Professional Learning Community	Relationships
leadership	PLC	achievement	change	goals
Instrcutional Leadership	Culture	Collaboration	Leadership	Sense of Place
Transformational leadership	Authentic instruction	Professional learning communities	Sense of place	Sense of self
instruction	evaluation	systems	change	leadership
Leadership	Community	Relationships	Educational Law	Self Identity
Personal	Applicable	theoretical	pragmatic	FUN!
top up	consensus	PLC	school as a place	mentoring
Place	Morality	Accountability	Leadership	Vision
instructional	transformational	community	collaboration	responsibility

Table D1 (cont.):   Complete Survey Response for Program A

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
school culture	School cummunity	implementing change	personal beliefs	community of leaders
transformational leadership	multiple perspectives	understanding "place"	self awareness	change theory
Instructional leaders	project based learning	building relationships	action research	internships
Personal	Reflective	Practical	Timely	Relevant
Relationship Building	Ethics/Morals	Self-Refletion	Life-Long-Learner	Consistency is Key
Mentoring	Real-World Experience	Leadership Theory	Practical Decision-making Skills	Cohort Involvement
Intimate knowledge of place	Leading for change	systems change	collaboration	evaluation
shared leadership	place matters	community and culture awareness	identifying your leadership strengths	organizing resources based on priorities
Vision	Management	Instruction	Ethics	Accountability
shared leadership	teaching techniques	communication skills	mediation skills	legal issues
Place matters	Empathy	Change agents	Leadership	Communication
Leadership	Problem based learning	Judgment	Equity	Collegiality
Application	Theory	Practice	Inquiry	Research Based
Change	School Law	Research-Based	Instructional Leadership	Implementation

Table D1 (cont.):   Complete Survey Response for Program A

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
Prepare	Guide	Evolve	support	gain experience
Relataionships	Problem-based learning	Stakeholder perspective	A sense of place	The Challenges of change and/or leadership
Instructional Leaderisp	Collaboration	Community and Sense of place	Theory of Change	Social Justice
preparation	professionalism	relationships	legal competence	leadership style
Social justice	Equality	Teacher leader	Relationships	Self
oversee	delegate	dominate	communicate	desimate
teaching techniques	content knowledge	content experience	classroom management	model teacher
Observation	Participation with students	Lesson planning	Assessment	Analyzing
who am i	who am i as a leader	major issues facing education	how can I be an effective agent of change	I'm out

Table D2:   Complete Survey Response for Program B

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
preparation for future	leadership skills	understanding the law	research based approaches	practical application
Educational Law	Educational Finance	Evidence/Research Based Decision Making	Leadership standards	Practical Application of Administration Skills
parental involvement	collaboration	lead by example	communication	involvement
Leadership	Strategic thinking	Listening	Collaboration	Time (management
Educational Law	Educational Research	Supervision of personnel	Educational Philosophies	Educational Practices
motivator	collaborative	knowledgeable	leader	reflective
accountability	Community	Relationships	collaboration & professional development	outreach & support
Ethics	Law	Data	Community	Education
leadership skills	educational laws	knowledge	professionalism	future
Administration training	Learning the law	Learning to Mediate	Fiscal Responsibility	Overall managibility of a school
Traits	Law	Erhics	Leadership	Vision
leadership	supervision	policy implementation	decision making	vision
Ethics and Law	Data Driven Instruction	School Finance	Special Eduation Law	Code of Ethics
collaborative	current	applicable	rigorous	experience

Table D2 (cont.):   Complete Survey Response for Program B

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
responding to change	managing varying demands	curriculum development	managing staff and leadership	recruiting staff
Law	observation	practice	pedagogy	legislation
Leadership	Law	Management	Finance	Multi-tasking
knowledge	leadership	community	case law	best practice
professional	supervision	evaluation	relationships	standards
instructional leadership	ethical leadership	legal leadership	student advocacy	visionary leadership
Leadership	Parent Involvement	Discipline	Teacher Evaluation	School Improvement
Change agent	Leadership skills	instructional leader	Educational Law awareness	Collaboration
Leadership	Professional Learning Community	Collaboration	Communication	Continuous Improvement
administrative responsibilities	legal aspects	financial aspects	leadership aspects	adminstrative policies and procedures
Educational Law	Developing quality teachers	Understanding School Finance	Fostering diversity	School leadership
Public Relations	Informed about Law	Financing	Employee Management	Academic Leadership
law	mentoring	supervision	record-keeping	discipline
Leadership	Experience	Knowledge	Service	Collaborative Teams
law	evaluation	budget	leadership skills	data
Leadership	Supervision	Collaboration	Research	Curriculum

Table D2 (cont.):   Complete Survey Response for Program B

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
standards	professional	student achievement	leadership style	community involvement
Standards	Law	Preparation	Community	Leadership
leadership	the law	ethics	research	student and school improvement
Instructional Leader	Managing Programs	Ethics and Law	Policy and Procedures	Evaluations
Visionary and strategic leadership	Instructional leadership	Management and Organizational Leadership	Family and Community Partnerships	Professional and Ethical Leadership
Leadership Styles	Goal Setting	Culture and Environment	Data Analysis	Special Education Law
Vision as a leader	Competence as a leader	Communication	Leadership in Instruction	Managing change
Leadership	Preparedness	Understanding	Legal Responsibilities	General Responsibilities
Preparedness	Law	Continuous Improvement	Data	Experience
Visionary & Strategic Leadership	Instructional Leadership	Management & Organizational Leadership	Family & Community Partnerships	Profession/Ethical Leadership, Governance
Leadership	Supervision	Legalities	Budgeting	Maintenance

Table D3: **Complete Survey Response for Program C**

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
servant leadership	curriculum and instruction	instructional leadership	Action Research	due process for all
Prepared	Ready	Skilled	Well-informed	Balanced
Educational law	Research	Effective Instruction	Professionalism	Curriculum
Leadership	Organization	Management	Recruitment	Public Relations
instruction leader	finances	communication with staff	safety of students and staff	delegating
types of leadership	school management	curriculum development	teacher evaluation	law perspectives
Sped laws awareness	Educational leader	Budget	research	technology
Student Achievement	Student success	Teacher knowledge	Data Driven	Best practice
Practical Knowledge	Real Experiences from Professionals	Book Knowldge	Supervision Skills	Character Development
Instructional Leadership	Servant Leaders	Organizational Structure	Maximize Human Potential	Management of multiple tasks
Laws	Philosophy	Diversity	Technology	Grants
Effective Leadership	Teamwork	Involvement in School Activities	Application of knowledge	Research
servant leadership	education law	personnel issues	community involvement	change agents
continuous improvement	servant leadership	collaboration	research based	data driven

Table D3 (cont.):   Complete Survey Response for Program C

Key word #1	Key word #2	Key word #3	Key word #4	Key word #5
Models of Admin	Coaching	Culture	Values	Learning
leadership	stakeholders	financial	district involvement	state involvement
Instructional Leader	Qualities of Highly Effective Schools/Leaders-Marzano, McRel, Fullan,Elmore	Instructional Rounds-observations,evidence, formative, summative	Budget	Law
Servant based	school improvement	leadership	flexibility	practical
Well-rounded	Applicable	Interesting	Caring	Thought provoking
management	professional development	supervision	law	safety and planning
Professional Learning Communities	Evaluation	Character Education	Management	Instructional Leadership

APPENDIX E

Inter-Rater Agreement

Table E1:   Minor Differences in Coding between Investigator and Reviewer by Program.

Program and Goal	Investigator	Independent Reviewer
Program A	No difference in coding.	No difference in coding.
Program B **Develop skills need to make positive changes in education.**	4 of 6 reviewers identified the goal.	5 of 6 reviewers identified the goal.
Program C **Action research is an essential goal of the program.**	5 of 6 reviewers identified the goal.	4 of 6 reviewers identified the goal.

Note: Both goals listed above were identified by the investigator and independent reviewer. However, there was a difference in the number of reviewers who identified the goals. No other difference was identified.