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Staying Alive: A Content Analysis of the School Board Minutes of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and the Decision-Making Processes of the School Board for Redesigning the School

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Staying Alive: A Content Analysis of the School Board Minutes of the Governor Baxter School
for the Deaf and the Decision-Making Processes of the School Board for Redesigning the School

by

Rebecca Guth Falbo

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership to the Department of Leadership, school
Counseling, & Sports Management

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA
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This Dissertation titled *Staying Alive: A Content Analysis of the School Board Minutes of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf and the Decision-Making Processes of the School Board for Redesigning the School* is **approved**:

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Mark Falbo, and my children, Chelsea and Jake Hilding who supported me during the long process of earning a doctoral degree. I could not have succeeded without their genuine encouragement, patience, and interest. They were a steady comfort to me even about sacrifices impacting them due to choices I made to complete the requirements of the degree. My heartfelt love and gratitude go to them...always and forever.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the decision-making processes of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as they worked to keep their school alive. Thus, the research question was “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?”

The review of the literature followed key elements of the theoretical framework. The theories that informed the present study were School Board Governance Theory, Institutional Theory, and Organizational Resilience Theory. The conceptual framework for the study reflects key points from the theoretical framework and from the research literature.

The research design included directed content analysis of school board minutes and related documents from the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf from January 2005 through May 2018. The data were analyzed using the process of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) and Hatch’s (2002) typological analysis. Eisner’s description and interpretation dimensions within educational criticism involved six typologies: (a) attending to the centrality of language and communication; (b) building capacity; (c) navigating resources; (d) responding to stakeholders; and (e) envisioning opportunities.

The evaluation dimension of Eisner’s educational criticism focused on three values evident in the school board’s decision-making: allowing voices to be heard, anchoring decisions in the vision and mission, and developing policies to support the vision and mission. The

strategic plan, aligned with the vision and mission, reflected the voices of the board members and stakeholders and identified the resources necessary to address these challenges.

Analysis of the data led to the development of three themes: (a) The school board focused on striving for legitimacy through adherence to its vision and mission; (b) The school board valued stakeholders; and (c) The school board valued the sharing of new programs and procedures with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.

The following conclusions were derived from data analysis. The MECDHH/GBSD school board supported the importance of vision and mission through decision-making and policy development. Such decisions also adhered to the importance of language and culture of deaf and hard of hearing students. Further, the school board supported the role of stakeholders in providing appropriate and viable options for the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. The actions of the school board supported the view that the reciprocal sharing of educational knowledge matters because it benefits the profession in its service to deaf and hard of hearing students and because it promotes the learning of all. The school board also honored the school's traditions and organizational memory in their decision-making.

Themes led to recommendations for school board practice. Boards should adhere to their vision and mission to guide decision-making. Additionally, they should value stakeholders' input to ensure understanding the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. Finally, school boards should value the sharing of new programs and procedures with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Recommendations for further study include analysis of other school board documents, such as social media accounts and videos. Additionally, researchers may consider interviewing school board members to understand their perceptions of school board decision-making. Further, survey research of board members' perspectives and board members' self-reports regarding board behavior could also shape research efforts.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

School boards have existed in the United States for hundreds of years, though the design and powers of school boards have varied, depending on where they have been located and the type of school they have served (Sell, 2005). Presently, there are over 13,000 public school boards in the United States with a combined number of more than 90,000 school board members (National School Boards Association, 2019).

School board members have the potential to impact school district effectiveness and student achievement (Dawson & Quinn, 2004a). Although school boards have many responsibilities including employing and evaluating the superintendent, they are responsible to work with the superintendent to create a clear vision and to ensure accountability and adherence to school policy (Bentley, 2006). Along with their assigned responsibilities, school leaders and school boards face ongoing challenges at every level due to the increased complexity and continual demands from departments of education, local education agencies, and stakeholders (Fullan, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Owens & Valesky, 2015; Trombly, 2014).

Research on school boards has focused on what they should be doing or if they are still necessary for districts to have (Sell, 2005). Results of the research have centered on activity lists for boards to do as well as those things not to do, such as micromanage the organization (Land, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Indeed, Sell (2005) noted that little research has been conducted on the efficacy of those boards and how they change, restructure, and redesign their

districts in order to increase student and faculty performance. Furthermore, research is limited regarding how school boards of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing have taken steps to maintain their offering of educational choices for student learning that focus on language acquisition and development.

Given that little research exists regarding school boards of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing, the present study focused on one such school board that has, like other school boards, attempted to change, restructure, and redesign their organization in order to be more viable. That school chosen was the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) in Falmouth, Maine, near the populous of Portland. Like local school boards, GBSD's school board faced comparable internal and external challenges during the time frame chosen for the study. However, unlike local public-school boards, GBSD is both a state and public-school entity serving deaf and hard of hearing students from the entire state of Maine. Further, its school board members are not elected by the local community but are instead appointed by the governor.

Similar to other states, Maine has geographical challenges; however, its challenges are those associated with being a rural state. A major challenge arises because deaf and hard of hearing children are dispersed across a wide geographic area. Such geographic disbursement is a challenge for educators delivering the appropriate services in a way that supports the needs of the individual deaf or hard of hearing child. Furthermore, because language is crucial for communication (Goldbart & Caton, 2010) and because the window for learning language is between birth and age five (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höihle, 1978), providing early intervention and continual exposure to language is especially important for deaf and hard of hearing children. When such intervention does not occur, these children experience language deprivation (Hall,

2018). Further, avoiding language deprivation in deaf and hard of hearing children becomes critically important in promoting their quality of life.

Fortunately for deaf and hard of hearing students in the United States, laws support the need for proper language development and recognize that students, including those who are deaf and hard of hearing, have a right to language (Siegel, 2008). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; About IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA; EEOC, 1990) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (United States Access Board, n.d.), all have language in them that emphasizes the language and communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing persons, ensuring effective communication for them, and requiring direct instruction in the deaf and hard of hearing child's language. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also required that a continuum of placements be considered for each deaf and hard of hearing child. The continuum included neighborhood schools, center-based programs that serve larger groups of deaf and hard of hearing students at one site, and specialized day schools, or schools for the deaf, including those with boarding opportunities, that are designed specifically for students who are deaf or hard of hearing (IDEA, 2004).

Hearing and deaf or hard of hearing students who enter school speaking a language other than English are also afforded the opportunity to be taught in their home language while learning a new language. Indeed, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, until it was repealed, and the Equal Education Opportunity Act were enacted to help eliminate language barriers in schools (Humphries et al., 2013). However, the concept of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), mandated under the original creation of IDEA, has created controversy over the meaning of the

word “appropriate,” even though the word had not been defined (Moores, 2011). Rather, it has often been used as a synonym for learning in the general education environment (Zirkel, 2013).

The newest federal mandate of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has primarily focused on K-12 school accountability, measured, in part, through yearly high-stakes grade-level testing from 3rd through 12th grades (United States Department of Education, 2005). This mandate includes all students with disabilities, including deaf and hard of hearing children who are all expected to function similarly to non-disabled, hearing children within the school and to pass statewide assessments even if they do not have the functional language to support their learning (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2006).

Moreover, current trends for the education of deaf and hard of hearing children are profoundly impacting the qualitative aspects of their learning, the effectiveness of their educational placements, and the development of the whole person (Eisner, 2005; Kohn, 2005; Noddings, 2005). Mitchell and Karchmer (2006) reported that, because of state-level Department of Education mandates, deaf and hard of hearing students take grade-level tests that are several grades above their functioning level. Further, educational legislation typically does not consider the specific needs of deaf and hard of hearing students and the schools that serve them, likely because deafness is a small incidence disability (Cawthon, 2010). Rather, students must take grade-level statewide assessments, though they may not have had time to develop the linguistic and literacy skills sufficient to allow them opportunity to master the content areas and materials upon which the tests are based (Cawthon, 2010; Mitchell & Karchmer, 2006).

The historic context for current practice in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students can be informative with regard to the need for the present study. Early on, the need for

deaf children in the United States to have formal instruction in language acquisition and development was realized in the 1800s by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, who believed that deaf and hard of hearing children could learn (Goodstein & Walworth, 1979). He is credited with opening the first school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817 (Eyring, 2013). During the next two years, two more schools for the deaf opened on the east coast of the United States of America. Over time, nearly every state had opened at least one school for the deaf and hard of hearing. The schools had boarding programs to house the students who lived beyond a reasonable commuting distance. In these environments, students had an opportunity to acquire language, communication, and self-sufficiency with peers and fluent language models.

Prior to 1975, schools for the deaf educated more than 80% of deaf and hard of hearing children (Data Accountability Center, 2008). During 1975, however, the U.S. Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142; U.S. Department of Education, 2010) mandated that all children with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment (Shaver, Marschark, Newman, & Marder, 2014). As a result, since 1975, 85% of deaf and hard of hearing students have been educated in their local public schools (Data Accountability Center, 2008). Even though services and educational placements for deaf and hard of hearing children are to be selected based on the needs of the individual child, services and placements for children have often been determined by the district policy and services already available. As noted earlier, district policies have reflected the view that Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means inclusion into the child's neighborhood school where the child is placed with mostly hearing, non-disabled students, rather than in a school where language and communication are not a

barrier to education and where socialization and support services exist (Marschark & Hauser, 2012).

As of 2019, options for educational placements for deaf and hard of hearing students that provide opportunities where students can effectively learn language, communication, social skills, and self-determination have been declining (Council for Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, 2019), resulting in a decrease in the number of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing. In the past 10 years, 10 schools for the deaf have closed and many have eliminated programs, thus reducing the choices that parents have for educating their children. Students from the closed schools have often had to return to their local public schools where many are unable to educate deaf children appropriately, often placing them with service providers who have little knowledge regarding deafness and language development (Hardy, 2010).

Such limited opportunities for learning have not followed expert guidance regarding the education of deaf and hard of hearing children. Deaf and hard of hearing children should be immersed in an accessible language environment from birth. Because the window for developing language is optimal until age five (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höihle, 1978), exposure to language from birth is critical for avoiding language deprivation. “Learning a sign language is the only reliable way of ensuring that a deaf child gains language and thus is protected with respect to equal opportunities” (Humphries et al., 2013, p. 873). Further, the argument in support of an accessible language for deaf and hard of hearing children recognizes that “speech is not required for brain development. Hearing is not required for brain development. Language is required for brain development” (Sanzo, 2019, p. 1).

Research has shown that teaching deaf children American Sign Language and English using bimodal approaches (Nover et al., 2002) has met with success in helping deaf students acquire reading and written English skills. But deaf children of hearing parents still lag behind their hearing and hearing bilingual peers if they miss the critical window, from birth to five years of age, for immersion and exposure to visual language (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). Visual language immersion from birth is necessary for deaf children to acquire a first language, and to avoid language deprivation, regardless of communication options chosen by their parents (Hall, 2018). Both a language-accessible home environment and a school program that understands the deaf child's language and social needs with barrier-free communication are necessary for maximum educational benefit (Cheeseman et al., 2013). In so doing, deaf and hard of hearing students avoid language deprivation which may cause "cognitive delays and mental health difficulties across the lifespan" (Hall, 2018, p. 4).

The primary role of schools for the deaf, therefore, has been to teach those language and social skills; but, as noted earlier, schools for the deaf are closing at an alarming rate. Although all of those schools, like other educational institutions, have faced demands for change to deal with highly complex problems (Owens, 2001), schools for the deaf and hard of hearing face additional challenges. To meet these challenges, new types of leadership are necessary (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Owens & Valesky, 2015). School board members, including leaders and stakeholders, must be highly collaborative, demonstrating commitment and engagement with each other (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) to meet the challenges created by the complexity of the current educational system.

Statement of Problem

Since 2009, 10 schools for the deaf have closed and many have eliminated programs (Council for Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, 2019). The schools closed for a variety of reasons, including challenges due to states pushing for inclusion of the deaf and hard of hearing children into public schools, parents wanting their children closer to home, and reduced funding. Returning to their neighborhood schools, in many cases, means that deaf and hard of hearing students receive less than adequate services, or the service providers are not knowledgeable about deafness and language development and lack sufficient supervision for learning the necessary skills (Hardy, 2010).

Schools and programs for deaf and hard of hearing children still have a vital role to play in the education of deaf and hard of hearing children today (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). Deaf and hard of hearing children require specially designed instruction in language and communication that is not readily available in general education classrooms in public schools. In rural states, such as Maine, professionals providing services may either not be available, be of the best quality, or be appropriately trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing students when those students are enrolled in neighborhood schools. The demise of schools for the deaf reduces opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children to be educated within an environment including other students with similar language, linguistic, and social needs. Furthermore, when schools for the deaf and hard of hearing close, the educational choices and continuum of placements that parents could have for educating their deaf and hard of hearing children are reduced. In addition, parents of deaf and hard of hearing children attending local public schools

may not receive the training and support from the public schools that are specific to meeting their needs in raising their deaf or hard of hearing children.

The Governor Baxter School for the Deaf in Maine, a state-owned school, faced such challenges to remaining viable. The school was opened in 1876 in Portland, Maine, and, at one time, had more than 200 students who resided on campus and attended the school (Gannon, 2011). In 1957, the school moved from Portland to Mackworth Island in Casco Bay, near Portland. By 1968, the school had a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade program, including work–study and vocational programs. Yet the school and the way deaf and hard of hearing children learned in a special school for the deaf and hard of hearing were challenged due to the changing philosophy of mainstreaming that began with P.L. 94-142 in 1975. As a result, the school was frequently in danger of closing. However, the school has remained open and has continued to provide options for educating deaf and hard of hearing children. The school’s board has, therefore, played a significant role in helping the school to remain viable. The present study focused on how the board made decisions to support the school’s viability.

Previous research has not included how school boards of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing redesigned and restructured their schools to remain viable choices for the education of deaf and hard of hearing children. Therefore, the present study examined how, specifically, processes used by the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf to redesign and restructure the school enabled it to remain a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are constructs that frame perspectives (Roberts, 2010). They help us to make sense of our world and, in research, help us to frame the design of a given study and the interrelationships, if any, among relevant theories (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Theories are suppositional ideas, principles, and beliefs used to explain how we understand human thought and behavior (Roberts, 2010). A theoretical framework, with the literature review, can help to shape the course of a given research study with focus on the primary and secondary questions (Green, 2014). In the present study, several theories informed efforts to understand what processes the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board used while redesigning their school to be viable.

Three theories influenced the structure of the present study. They were: (a) school board governance theory; (b) institutional theory; and (c) organizational resilience theory (see Table 1).

Table 1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theory	Main Idea
School Board Governance Theory	This theory includes the management of all the financial, human, and other resources to attain the short-term objectives and long-term goals of the school/Agency. It also includes organizational memory.
Institutional Theory	This theory studies how organizations can increase their ability to grow, survive, and react to threats and strains experiences by the institution.
Organizational Resilience Theory	Organizational Resilience Theory includes organizational memory.

All three theories were valuable in understanding how a school for the deaf redesigned and restructured itself to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students throughout the state of Maine. These components influenced the development of the research question and the review of the literature for the present study.

Members of school boards must work together to govern districts and schools. The first theory, School Board Governance Theory, focuses on how school boards control their organizations so that they provide assurance to their stakeholders that the organization, that is, the school district, produces desired results through acceptable means (Carver, 2006; Carver & Carver, 1996). Local school boards determine the condition and quality of their schools' education through policy and systems oversight. School boards engage with their schools through strategic planning and goal setting, monitoring of student data, and aligning professional development with those areas that are mission critical (Hess & Meeks, 2010). Because of their actions, the National School Boards Association concluded that "local school boards that have a vision, a commitment to strong governance, and the resources to support data-based decisions can make a difference in the lives of children" (p. 5).

Decisions made by school boards are often influenced by organizational memory, which can be an effective tool for school boards to use when confronting challenges, though individuals' memories may be numerous and diverse (Hanson, 2001). Reviewing school board minutes can be an effective means of retrieving memories and discussions.

In leadership, organizational memories contain soft knowledge and hard knowledge (Hanson, 2001). Soft knowledge originates in people and documents. Hard knowledge is typically found in organizational rules, policies, and procedures (Mintzberg, 1975). For the

purposes of this study, school board minutes recorded by a variety of people, that is, soft knowledge, were analyzed to understand what strategies the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf used to reform the organization. However, directors' reports and communication access real-time translation (CART) transcripts, that is, live captioning of the actual verbal discourse during school board meetings, were considered hard knowledge because they included first-hand accounts of the experiences.

Institutional theory, the second theory in the theoretical framework, acknowledges how rules, norms, routines, and structures have functioned as standards for organizations such as schools (Scott, 2001). Though institutions may vary with regard to whom they serve and how they operate, they still have common denominators. According to Scott (1995), "institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carrier-cultures, structures, and routines—and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction" (p. 33).

Scott (1995) summarized these levels as three pillars of institutionalization. The three pillars are regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. These three pillars can elucidate how school boards in schools for the deaf and hard of hearing make decisions for their schools to remain viable.

Abundant research has taken place on organizational resilience, which is the third theoretical orientation for the present study. A search of the University of North Florida Content Server, ProQuest, Dissertations and Thesis (UNF, ProQuest, Global), ERIC (EBSCO Host), and Education Source did not locate studies that have focused on schools for the deaf and the efforts of their school boards to promote sustainability of the schools. In the case of the Governor

Baxter School for the Deaf, being resilient has been necessary for the survival of the organization. Though definitions of resilience vary, for this study resilience was “characterized by good outcomes despite adversity or risk factors” (Crane, 2017, p. 3). Resilience can apply to both people and organizations. For the purposes of this study, resilience pertained to one organization, that is, the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

When investigating resilience, a question can arise regarding why some organizations adapt to and seemingly bounce back from strains and challenges while other organizations falter? Three characteristics describe organizations which are resilient. Those characteristics are “a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief that life is meaningful; and an uncanny ability to improvise” (Coutu, 2003, p.6). However, being resilient has two sides. Resilience may be manifested by adapting to change or by resisting change (Mamouni Limnios, Mazzarol, Ghadouani, & Schilizzi, 2014). Organizations that are able both to adapt and to resist change, when appropriate, demonstrate flexibility in addressing and overcoming tensions (Hanson, 2001; Holling, 2001).

For the purposes of the present study, the theoretical framework and literature review focused on a form and function notion (Scott, 2005). Institutional theory takes the role of form, with its three pillars guiding the structure of the school board. School board governance, including organizational memory, is the function, so that both form and function guide and inform the other toward decision making. Organizational resilience, finally, is the brass ring to facilitate the learning within the pillars and to guide decisions that create a positive impact over time.

Research Question

Identifying the specific characteristics of school boards necessary for them to carry out their duties has been hindered due to a lack of research on board practices and efficacy (Sell, 2005). Although there have been studies examining board member motivation (Mountford, 2004), few studies have examined how school boards have responded to challenges and the impact that specific practices have had on meeting those challenges (Land, 2002). The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to explore the decision-making processes and strategies of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as they redesigned their school program so that it addressed the complexities and challenges of present-day school systems in order to remain a viable educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children.

The following research question guided the study: “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” Documents, such as school board minutes, and related reports, were used as data sources in order to answer the research question.

Study Design Overview

The present study employed content analysis of school board meeting minutes, including the executive director’s reports, and CART transcripts, from January 2005 to May 2018 in order to respond to the research question. Content analysis is a research method in which the analysis of written documents, interviews, media, and other forms of communication can be used to make valid inferences regarding the research topic (Krippendorff, 1989). It seeks to identify concepts and the relationships between and among the concepts that have been identified. In this study,

content analysis focused on the processes and practices used by the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board in making decisions supporting the viability of the school.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to understand the decision-making processes of one school board of a school for the deaf and hard of hearing through content analysis of documents, including school board minutes, CART transcripts of school board meetings, executive directors' reports, and related reports. Content analysis focused on how the school redesigned itself. In so doing, the study may have the potential to inform other school boards of schools for the deaf regarding how to address the challenges that they face. It may also contribute to the field of education and assist other school boards when faced with similar challenges. Additionally, this study may also contribute to the knowledge and theory regarding school and agency-based reform and governance procedures by bringing to light specific processes that the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board used that helped them successfully redesign their program. As with other qualitative research, the transferability of the study's results lies with readers who see comparable elements in their own experience (Eisner, 1998) and thus determine the applicability of results to their practice.

Definition of Terms

Key terms relevant to the present study were defined based on the literature of the field.

Bilingual/Bimodal—refers to the nonsynchronous use of two languages, for example, spoken

English and American Sign Language (Nover et al., 2012)

CART—refers to communication access real-time translation (CART) transcripts, that is, live captioning of the actual verbal discourse in a meeting

Cultural-Cognitive – refers to a pillar of institutional theory involving the shared beliefs of people, and the cultural support, norms, and foundations entrenched within the organization (Scott, 2008)

Deaf Culture—the unique characteristics found among the population of deaf and hard of hearing people, reflected in language, art, literature, social environments, values, and traditions (Bahan, 2008; Bauman, 2004; Lane, 1999)

Heritage language –the language typically used in the home and learned by the children in the home (Collier, 1987). Deaf children of hearing parents often do not learn the heritage language of their family (Nover et al., 2012).

Language – A system of communication, typically oral or written (Marschark et. al, 2012).

American Sign Language is a fully formed and independent language linguistically parallel to spoken languages, though distinctly different, with its own phonological and grammatical features (Stokoe, 2005).

Language deprivation—Inadequate access to language during the critical period of birth to age five that affects the brain’s ability to learn language altogether (Caselli, Hall, & Henner, 2010)

Normative – refers to a pillar of institutional theory “emphasiz[ing] values and norms about how educators should pursue valued ends through legitimate means” (Hanson, 2001, p. 646).

An example of this for an organization would be treating stakeholders fairly and equitably.

Regulative – refers to a pillar of institutional theory “prescrib[ing] actions through formal and/or informal rules that establish, monitor, and sanction activities” (Hanson, 2001, p. 646)

Chapter Summaries

The present study investigated decision-making processes and practices that the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board used while redesigning and restructuring itself to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children.

Chapter One introduced the idea that school boards, in general, face ongoing tensions at every level due to the increased complexity and continual demands from departments of education, local education agencies, and stakeholders (Cotton, 2003; Fullan, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Owens & Valesky, 2015; Trombly, 2014). Schools for the deaf have been a leading educational option in serving a marginalized group of students, that is, those who are deaf or hard of hearing. Yet, because of challenges in the United States educational system, school boards of several schools for the deaf have been unable to keep their schools open. Thus, schools for the deaf are closing at an alarming rate, resulting in fewer options for deaf and hard of hearing students. Such school closings affect students’ language development which is critical for their social and academic success. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing need immersion in language from birth in order to avoid language deprivation and the disproportionate achievement gaps between deaf and hearing children. School boards of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing must develop strategies to continually serve deaf and hard of hearing children in their states. One such school board has been able to restructure their program to remain an educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children in Maine, thereby providing an example

of board decision-making worthy of study. Thus, the research question for the present study focused on how the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board made their decisions.

Chapter Two includes the review of literature that examines the history of deficit thinking that led to the marginalization of deaf and hard of hearing students. Additionally, it includes discussion of the impact of delayed language exposure on this cultural and linguistic minority. The review further examines the constructs of institutional theory, school board governance, and organizational resilience and their influence on school board decision-making. The literature review thus informs efforts to respond to the research question, “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” The context for understanding the need for providing options for the education of deaf and hard of hearing children requires a historical overview of the educational experiences of the American Deaf community. Such education must value the role of language. This assertion sets the stage for the present study. After an introduction to language development for deaf and hard of hearing children and a brief history of deaf education, the literature review is grouped into three sections which reflect the theoretical framework: (a) School Board Governance Theory, (b) Institutional Theory, and (c) Organizational Resilience Theory. The conceptual framework for the study follows which reflects key points from the theoretical framework and from the research literature and forms the basis for the research design and methodology necessary to respond to the research question.

Chapter Three discusses and justifies the research design and methodology developed to address the research question, “What decision-making processes did the school board of the

Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children?" The chapter provides detail regarding the selection of the school board case (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014) and the content analysis process for data collection and procedures (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff 1998), along with a general description of data analysis approaches using typological analysis (Hatch, 2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998). The chapter notes that all data are in the public domain, and, therefore, the study did not require IRB approval. Chapter Three also addresses the processes for ensuring the credibility of the study based on meeting the standards described by Howe and Eisenhart (1990) and Eisner (1998).

Chapter Four describes the process of data analysis used in the present study to understand the how the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board made decisions. Eisner's (1998) four dimensions of educational criticism served as the overall structure for data analysis: (a) description; (b) interpretation; (c) evaluation; and (d) thematics. Typological analysis supported the process of educational criticism by organizing the data for description and interpretation (Hatch, 2002). Five typologies relevant to school board decision-making processes were identified: (a) attending to the centrality of language and communication; (b) building capacity; (c) navigating resources; (d) responding to stakeholders; and (e) envisioning opportunities.

Within data analysis, Eisner's (1998) third dimension of educational criticism, evaluation, revealed value statements regarding processes the MECDHH/GBSD school board used in their decision-making. Finally, thematics, the fourth dimension of educational criticism included three themes: (a) The school board focused on striving for legitimacy through

adherence to its vision and mission; (b) The school board valued stakeholders; and (c) The school board valued the sharing of new programs and procedures with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Chapter Five contains a summary of the present study, its limitations, recommendations for school boards and leadership, generalizability appropriate for the present study, arguments for credibility and warrant, recommendations for further research, and conclusions regarding the decision-making processes of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter Two presents historical background and research literature relevant to three main topics influencing the research question: “What organizational practices and decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” After presenting background on the history of and the need for schools and programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their right to language, the organization of the review of the literature follows key elements of the theoretical framework. They are (a) School Board Governance Theory; (b) Institutional Theory; and (c) Organizational Resilience Theory. These theories informed the present study regarding the decision-making of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD). Review of the literature indicates that these theories work together to influence the decision-making of school boards including the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. Additionally, these theories imply that a school board can make decisions in order to turn challenges into opportunities. Strategic and deliberate planning and decision-making are praxes leading to organizational success (Witmer & Mellinger, 2016). These common threads that weave the theoretical framework together informed the research process regarding the GBSD school board’s efforts to continue to offer a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children.

The specific population served by the GBSD provided the context for the decision-making processes of the school board regarding language development, specifically for deaf and

hard of hearing children. Therefore, the literature review includes an overview of the importance of language development for these students as it influenced school board decisions.

Further, because the history of deaf education has been wrought with its own challenges regarding language and communication, understanding the history of deaf education was relevant to the present study because of the value schools for the deaf have placed and continue to place on the language development and achievement of deaf and hard of hearing children.

The historical description of the policy decisions that influenced the current education of deaf and hard of hearing students begins with the 1880 Conference at Milan, Italy and continues to current educational practices responding to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. This history provides context for understanding some of the challenges in deaf education and emphasizes the need for understanding language development for deaf and hard of hearing children. Moreover, history informs current practice that has helped deaf and hard of hearing children and what has not worked for them, both of which influence the decision-making of school boards of schools for the deaf.

Following the background regarding the right to language for deaf children and the history of deaf education in the United States, the first section of the literature review focuses on school board governance theory and the challenge for a school board of a school for the deaf to respond appropriately to the emerging consciousness of the Deaf community as a cultural and linguistic minority and to the challenges regarding the viability of a school for the deaf. School boards, including those of schools for the deaf, need to be change agents (Sell, 2005) in order to provide viable educational options for the education of a cultural and linguistic minority. Following the section on school board governance theory, institutional theory as advanced by

Richard Scott (1987) is discussed. Finally, the third section focuses on organizational resilience and the conceptual framework for the study.

History of Deaf Education in the United States

A historical view of deaf education can provide perspective on how the deaf, a cultural and linguistic minority, have been marginalized. In spite of general marginalization over centuries, there have been exceptions. At one time there was an area in the United States where the deaf were not relegated to the status of lesser than the hearing, that is, they were not marginalized. On Martha's Vineyard, for example, census records as early as 1694 indicate that there was a large population of deaf people who were fully integrated into the general population as *everyone* signed (Bahan, 2008; Gross, 1985). According to Booth and Flournoy (1858), the shared signing community likely occurred because of a high prevalence of deafness on the island. Deaf persons owned businesses, participated in community activities without communication barriers, and enjoyed full access to the island society (Bahan, 2008; Gross, 1985).

Despite the phenomenon on Martha's Vineyard, the White, hearing majority culture in the rest of the United States did not recognize that education for marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities and African American children, was appropriate until the 19th century (Bahan, 2008). During the 19th century, the first educational institutions for the deaf were established. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Samuel Gridley Howe, among others, believed that people with disabilities could learn and could be contributing members of society.

Gallaudet's interest in teaching deaf children began when, as a minister-in-training, he met a young deaf girl, Alice Cogswell (Goodstein & Walworth, 1979). Gallaudet traveled to

London, England, to learn how to teach the deaf but was instead sent by English educators to Paris because programming for the deaf in London was lacking (Goodstein & Walworth, 1979). In Paris, he met Laurent Clerc, one of the deaf teachers at the Royal Institution for the Deaf (Shaw & Delaporte, 2011). The two traveled back to Connecticut and, during the long voyage, began the co-creation of American Sign Language (Bahan, 2008; Goodstein & Walworth, 1979; Shaw & Delaporte, 2011). In 1817, they founded the first school for the Deaf in the United States called The American School for the Deaf. Clerc became one of the first deaf teachers in the school, which employed both deaf and hearing administration and teachers (Pray & Jordan, 2010). In the following two years after the American School for the Deaf was established, two more schools for the deaf opened on the east coast of the United States.

Meanwhile, Alexander Graham Bell, whose mother was deaf, supported oralism. That is, he focused on developing the oral language skills of the deaf because he believed that deaf individuals without speech and lipreading skills were intellectually inferior (Bauman, 2004). The idea of deaf inferiority was not new, as even Aristotle believed that the deaf were cognitively impaired and incapable of learning and reasoning because they could not speak (Gannon, 2012). Alexander Graham Bell argued that the deaf should use only speech and not use their hands to communicate (Bauman, 2004). His concern was for the purity of humanity, and he advocated for controlling the procreation for deaf persons in the hope of eradicating deafness. Edward Miner Gallaudet, son of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and the first superintendent of the college that would become Gallaudet College, opposed Bell's beliefs and argued that sign language was, indeed, language; thus, he supported manual communication (Bauman, 2004; Shaw & Delaporte, 2011).

The argument regarding the use of oral versus manual communication with deaf students, along with similar arguments across Europe, culminated in 1880 with The Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf held in Milan, Italy. The decisions made at the conference ended what was considered a “Golden Age” for deaf education when deaf persons had access to communication, education, and jobs and were contributing members to society without being marginalized (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989, p. 89). Specifically, the Periere Society, a group of French educators who supported oralism, organized the conference. Their intent was to ban sign language (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). All 164 attending delegates were hearing except for one deaf person. Though records show that one deaf man attended as a delegate, no deaf people were involved with the planning of the conference and the development of the content of the resolutions that were passed. Five delegates represented the United States with the remaining delegates from Europe. Three speakers out of 12 supported the use of sign language.

During the conference, several resolutions were passed that would influence decisions for deaf education until the late 20th century. The ultimate purpose of the resolutions was to “fix” deaf children so that they could participate in society in a manner similar to hearing children. One resolution decreed that speech was superior to sign language and that only the oral, or speech, method of teaching would be permitted. Another resolution emphasized using the oral method and further asserted that the simultaneous use of speech and sign language would harm the development of speech and lipreading.

Because of the Milan Conference resolutions, manual communication was banned in schools in Europe and in the United States. Teaching methodologies switched to the oral method with heavy emphasis on speech therapy. Edward Miner Gallaudet, however, declared that he

would continue to use sign language at Gallaudet College despite the resolutions passed at the Milan Conference (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). Notwithstanding Gallaudet's continuation of sign language, deaf education was influenced by the decisions of the Milan Conference for more than 100 years (Bauman, 2004). Deaf teachers were not permitted by hearing persons in authority to be administrators or teachers because of their use of sign language (Bahan, 2008). Hearing people assumed most, if not all, of the responsibility for policy with regard to education and training for both students and teachers (Bahan, 2008; Bauman, 2004; Lane, 1999). As a result, such policymaking eliminated sign language because it was now thought to be a system of gestures used by deaf persons of lower intelligence (Bahan, 2008; Bauman, 2004; Lane, 1999).

Soon after the Milan Conference, language and communication in schools for the deaf were restricted to speech until the beginning of a resurgence of sign language in the 1960s (Bahan, 2008; Derrida, 2016). Remarkably, Jacques Derrida, the 20th century French philosopher, though not a scholar of deaf studies, offered a critique of the hegemony of oral communication. He described the historical assumption that speech is the most fully human form of language as phonocentrism because it resulted in systems of privilege, including education (Derrida, 2016). Moreover, such privilege creates a power of speech over sign language and hearing over deafness (Derrida, 2016). He further stated that voice and phonetic writing were “the most original and powerful ethnocentrism” (Derrida, 2016, p. 3).

Schools for the deaf have had a long history in the United States where practices reflected the complexity of the times by following the mandates of oralism while retaining American Sign Language. At one time, nearly every state in the United States had at least one school for the

deaf and hard of hearing. The schools had boarding programs to house the students who lived beyond a reasonable commuting distance. In these dormitory environments, students had an opportunity to acquire language, communication, and self-sufficiency with peers and fluent language models. Until the Milan Conference, schools for the deaf also used sign language for instruction and social communication. Even after the Milan Conference in 1880 when schools were required to change to the oral approach, students and boarding staff often used American Sign Language for communication in the dormitories, though education in the classroom was provided only through the oral approach (Bauman, 2004). For many deaf students, the oral approach restricted their development of language and acquisition of knowledge (Bauman, 2004; Lane, 1999). In spite of the mandate supporting oralism, American Sign Language still survived, though it was not recognized as a language until the mid 1960s (Armstrong & Karchmer, 2009).

Many events during the last 50 years have spurred change for the Deaf Community and for the education of deaf children. American Sign Language (ASL) was recognized as a language through the work of William Stokoe (Armstrong & Karchmer, 2009). Another turning point for the Deaf Community and the education of deaf students occurred in 1988. Gallaudet College students protested the hiring of another hearing president. Their protest, the Deaf President Now movement, led to the selection of the first deaf president in the College's history (Prayer & Jordan, 2012). That same year, the European Community acknowledged that the first language of the deaf in Europe was their native sign language, not the countries' spoken languages (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). It was not until the late 1980s that a school for the deaf, Marie Philip School at The Learning Center, in Framingham, Massachusetts, officially adopted a

bilingual-bicultural philosophy, that is, a philosophy that teaches via American Sign Language as the native language of deaf children, with written English taught as a second language (The Learning Center: Marie Philip School, 2012). Several other schools for the deaf followed suit. However, the numbers of deaf personnel in teaching and administration in those schools was then very low, despite acknowledgement that Deaf role models were necessary for students' language and social development (Bauman, 2004). Currently, although numbers of Deaf role models are increasing, they still remain low (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013). Further, Deaf role models in public schools are even lower than at schools for the deaf (Bauman, 2004).

Introduction to language acquisition for deaf and hard of hearing students

Children who are deaf or hard of hearing need early intervention to acquire language because the acquisition of language for deaf children can be an arduous task (Marschark et al., 2012). Regardless of whether parents choose American Sign Language, the oral approach, or something in between, deaf children need constant exposure to language in order to acquire language.

Upon finding out that their child is deaf, hearing parents have to make the decision about the language and communication choice their child will use in learning, whether it be spoken or sign language, speech, or signed communication, or a combination of both oral and signed modalities. The decision is often years in the making, which leaves the deaf child with sporadic opportunities for language development (Marschark et al., 2012). However, when a deaf or hard of hearing child is given an accessible visual language from birth, then language deprivation does not occur (Sanzo, 2019). Hearing loss does not cause language deprivation; rather language deprivation is a result of not having early and constant exposure to language.

Typically, though, parents place a child in a school, at age three or later, that supports their decision for language development and modality use. But often their decision-making involves trial and error in a variety of options. They frequently choose an oral approach initially, and, only after that fails, do they consider sign language (Marschark et al., 2012).

As a result, for the deaf often enroll students in middle school after those children have been failing in their public-school placements, and their reading and academic levels are significantly delayed (Humphries et al., 2013). Those children are then expected to function within a grade-level school curriculum and pass statewide assessments without the functional language to support their learning.

Often the way for a deaf child to develop fluent language is through sign language, with the learning of written English as a second language (Marschark et al., 2012), much like English Language Learners. However, there is difference between deaf bilingual students and hearing bilingual students. Hearing bilingual students have been grounded in their heritage language. They have heard that language from birth, from their parents, friends, the community, and media. Additionally, they have seen their language in their everyday life. Deaf students only have the visual pathway for learning language. Often, the deaf child of a hearing parent only has one family member who learns to sign, usually not fluently and only at a basic social level (Marschark et al., 2012). According to a study by Collier (1987), it takes hearing bilingual children, who are grounded in their heritage language, two to five years to learn social language and pragmatics in their new language. Deaf students, of hearing parents, who are still learning ASL as well as Basic English are even further behind in social English (Nover et al., 2002).

Even children with cochlear implants rely on visual information throughout their years of intensive training to learn how to make sense of the sounds that the implant provides those children (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011). Cochlear implants and digital hearing aids do not guarantee that a child begins his or her schooling with appropriate speech and language skills (McIlroy, & Storbeck, 2011).

Deaf children of hearing parents often do not have the advantage of learning American Sign Language at home because their parents' heritage language is something other than ASL. Thus, optimal language acquisition is not always possible in the birth to age five learning window that is prime for learning language (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). By age five, most hearing children have a solid foundation in their heritage language. Many deaf students, however, are just beginning the process of learning American Sign Language at the same time they are also expected to learn to read and write English. Oral English is another challenge for deaf children, including those who have cochlear implants. Even if the deaf child has a cochlear implant, providing deaf infants with ASL from birth can promote language development equivalent to a typical hearing child (Cheng et al., 2019).

Therefore, given the differences between hearing bilingual children and deaf bilingual children, it is understandable why deaf children have lagging English reading and writing scores throughout their years of schooling. Their exposure to one language that is enough to develop a strong foundation and an internalized linguistic resource in that language is often severely limited (Nover, Andrews, Everhart, & Bradford, 2002). Trying to learn a second language is a challenge at best. The reality is, according to Traxler (2000), the median reading level of a deaf

high-school senior is 4th-grade, despite methodologies and teaching techniques designed for deaf students.

Deaf and hard of hearing students also need to interact with a critical mass of deaf students and adults, that is, they need access to other deaf and hard of hearing children and adults for the development of a healthy self (McIlroy & Storbeck, 2011). Peer learning with other deaf and hard of hearing students is vital to self-actualization (Jankowski, 1997). Further, the ability to communicate formally and informally is vital for the development of human relationships, critical thinking, and decision-making skills. The lack of such opportunity to develop language, communication, and social skills can impact deaf students' ability to succeed in high school and later in college where such success depends on academic and communication skills characteristically developed in the K-12 years of schooling. Whether educated in a public school with other deaf and hard of hearing children or in a school for the deaf, students should have a choice of educational venue where the right to language is guaranteed.

A school for the deaf and hard of hearing provides one such venue where language development is primary to its vision and mission. The focus of deaf education in schools for the deaf has been on the whole child, including development of language, communication, self-determination, and socialization with deaf peers (Marschark et al., 2012). However, even schools for the deaf do not typically begin educating children until between the ages of three and six (Collier, 1987). In the past 25 years, residential and day programs for deaf and hard of hearing children have decreased by 32 percent (Educational programs for deaf students, 2014, 1990), thus limiting choices for deaf students to be taught in an environment where there is barrier-free communication, an environment that is least restrictive for academic and social

growth. Eliminating choices for deaf students has consequences. A multi-year study (Nover, 1997; Nover, Christensen & Cheng, 1998; Nover et al., 2002) showed that an ASL/English bilingual framework for teaching two languages separately to deaf children had positive results in their ability to acquire reading and written English, critical for social and academic success. Accordingly, in an age of parent choice, including academies, magnet schools, and charter schools, it is inconsistent that deaf and hard of hearing children are increasingly being denied education in the least restrictive environment that can address their linguistic, communication, and social needs.

The Importance of Language Development

The prevalence of deaf and hard of hearing children in the U.S. population is around four percent, 96 percent of whom are born to families with no deaf parents (Center for Disease Control, 2016). In 2012, 10 percent of deaf and hard of hearing children attended schools for the deaf, with 87 percent being educated in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). In 2013, with 40 state schools for the deaf reporting, Deaf staff, including those working in dormitories, comprised an average of less than 30 percent of the school staff (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2013).

As a result, these statistics indicate that deaf and hard of hearing students face a cultural mismatch with families and teachers who are not fluent in ASL. For language fluency and academic development to take place, mere exposure to any language is not enough (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höihle, 1978); indeed, students need to be immersed in at least one language. Without teachers as language models, that is, those who fluently sign American Sign Language like a native user, deaf and hard of hearing students have difficulty learning at an academic level

(Marschark et al., 2012; Simms & Thumann, 2007). The outcome for deaf and hard of hearing students, then, is an inadequate education and poor language development (Marschark et al., 2012; Simms & Thumann, 2007). Without language fluency, a deaf or hard of hearing child becomes linguistically deprived, often resulting in reading illiteracy, low academic achievement, social isolation, economic disadvantage, and psychological harm (Kushalnagar et al., 2010).

Language is a basic right, essential for social and cultural currency (Humphries et al., 2013; Kushalnagar et al., 2010; Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Simms & Thumann, 2007). To achieve high academic standards, deaf children must have grade-appropriate language development (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Trombly, 2014). Failure of schools to be culturally and linguistically inclusive leads to stereotyping about deaf and hard of hearing children's disability and speech skills, internalized marginalization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), and poor academic performance (Marschark & Hauser, 2012). Such stereotyping can also lead to audism, the belief that hearing and speaking are superior to deafness and sign language (Marschark et al., 2012; Simms & Thumann, 2007).

To illustrate the importance of early sign language, a French study of 155 four to eight-year-old profoundly deaf students and 39 hearing students of the same ages assessed the impact of language on cognitive development (Courtin, 2000). The deaf students were chosen according to parents' hearing status, deaf or hearing, and the children's communication modality, predominantly signing or predominantly oral. Results of the study clearly indicated that deaf children of deaf parents who predominantly signed had cognitive functioning that compared to or was greater than the hearing children who were oral and whose parents were hearing. Deaf children who predominantly signed and whose parents were hearing lagged behind the deaf

children of deaf parents and the hearing children. Deaf children who were predominantly oral and whose parents were hearing lagged even further behind the other groups. Deaf children who signed performed better on linguistic tasks than deaf children who predominantly used oral communication. Thus, the study reinforced the position that sign language provided young deaf children with early exposure to a linguistic system (Courtin, 2000). Furthermore, the results of the study emphasized the consequences of delayed exposure to language.

The acquisition of a first and second language and the importance of immersion in linguistically and conceptually accurate American Sign Language is vital to the achievement of deaf and hard of hearing children (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Simms & Thumann, 2007). If language is not provided, cognition suffers (Sanzo, 2019). To the contrary, hearing is not the building block for learning or for brain development; language is the building block for both learning and brain development (Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Sanzo, 2019; Simms & Thumann, 2007). As previously, language does not have to be spoken (Sanzo, 2019).

Many educators of the deaf, doctors, and parents believe that the use of sign language and the ability to use speech do not have to be mutually exclusive (Bauman & Murray, 2014; Sanzo, 2019). Human voice does not have to be rendered irrelevant; rather, they argue that deaf children should be encouraged to achieve as much linguistic competence in ASL, written English, spoken English, and other languages as they can. Such an inclusive approach validates and respects all deaf children's and deaf adults' experiences, cultures, ethnicities, and languages contribute to the "holistic development of the child" (Bauman & Murray, 2014, p. 6), rather than focusing on deafness being a loss and a pathology.

Deaf and hard of hearing children should no longer be marginalized in schools. They require full access to language, that is, the opportunity to be immersed in a language, oral or signed or both, where their brains can understand and absorb the language (Sanzo, 2019). Traditionally, language immersion occurred in schools for the deaf (Humphries et al., 2013). With fewer options of schools for deaf and hard of hearing children, school boards of the remaining schools for the deaf have another challenge to face.

History of Maine Public Education

Although the history of deaf education is important to the present study, school boards in states vary in their functions. Maine was once a part of Massachusetts. In 1642, Massachusetts enacted the first education law acknowledging the need to educate children (Smith & Chapman, 2018). Although there were no schools, parents were admonished to bring up their children on the principles of religion and to train them for a vocation. In 1647, due to the inability of parents to meet the requirements of the law, the Massachusetts General Court enacted “The Old Deluder Satan Act” which called for towns with 50 or more residents to hire a person “to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read” (Flaherty, 1969, p. 53). Towns with more than 100 residents were to establish a grammar school for their children (Flaherty, 1969). However, school committees, that is, school boards as they are now called, were not required until 1826 (Flaherty, 1969).

Though Maine became a state in 1820, the legislature did not address education until 1821, when it enacted “An Act to Provide for the Education of Youth” (Smith & Chapman, 2018, p.10). That act required that “schools be governed by each town’s school committee and

an agent of the school, who was elected yearly by each town” (Smith & Chapman, 2018, p.10).

Thus, the first school boards in Maine were established.

The Maine Supreme Court describes school boards as “the governing body with statutory powers and duties for a school administrative unit” (Title 20-A: Education; Chapter 101: General Provisions,” 2017, p. 28). Further, the court defined the authority of boards as follows:

The school committee acts as a public board. It in no sense represents the town. Its members are chosen by voters of the town, but after the election they are public officers deriving their authority from the law and responsible to the State for the good faith and rectitude of their acts. (Smith & Chapman, 2018, p. 26)

Further, 20–A of the Maine Revised Statutes (M. R. S. A.) outlines the powers of the school board. They include, in part, the power to do the following:

- Adopt policies that govern school units;
- Manage school property, including buildings;
- Select and hire the superintendent;
- Adopt curricula in line with the Maine Learning Results;
- Determine which students will attend school;
- Determine the expulsion of students;
- Adopt codes of conduct for the school. (Title 20-A: Education; Chapter 101:

General Provisions, 2017)

In Maine, school boards also approve the hiring of teachers and other staff, including principals, as well as the termination of those staff, if necessary.

The Maine School Board Association (MSBA) is a state agency that supports school boards in Maine. Though school boards are not required to use their services, their purpose is to do the following:

- Serve and represent local School Boards;
- Provide professional development to board members;
- Maintain local control of public schools;
- Advocate for the combined interests of Maine School Boards at the Legislature;
- Encourage cooperation among School Boards statewide and develop viable board regions;
- Keep boards and the public informed about the needs and accomplishments of public schools;
- Cooperate with other agencies in the state interested in improving public education.

(Maine School Board Association, 2014, p.1)

Such a list provides Maine school boards with guidance regarding their responsibilities.

School Board Governance Theory

Although several landmark theories for school board governance have identified various effective practices, they disagree with each other (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Land, 2002; Smoley, 1999). Nonetheless, United States public schools have been a target of the government when citing poor student performance, failing grades for schools, and public-school students not meeting or exceeding the achievement of their international peers (Ravitch, Marchant & David, 2014). Thus, many United States citizens believe that school boards are obsolete and ineffective (Land, 2002). Indeed, the federal government and states currently dictate what must happen in

schools (Fullan, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Owens & Valesky, 2015). However, many educators and citizens still value the role of the school board because they value local educational decision-making (Ravitch et al., 2014).

As part of their duties, school boards have a responsibility for student achievement and meeting state mandates for improving students' academic achievement. Since No Child Left Behind (NCLB), states have responded to the federal requirements by prescribing curricula, making teacher certification a more rigorous process, requiring student and teacher competency testing, establishing tougher graduation standards, and providing ongoing data collection, as well as keeping children with disabilities in general education classes in the mainstream (Owens & Valesky, 2015). Thus, because of their role in setting local policy, school boards have had to adjust in the continuing era of accountability since NCLB. Pressures from the states and federal government show no signs of waning (Owens & Valesky, 2015). However, school boards who operate with competence are likely to achieve positive organizational performance (Marzano et al., 2005; Mountford 2004).

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory is a theoretical framework that recognizes how structures, rules, norms, and routines become established as guides for public organizations (Scott, 2008). Through these guidelines, public organizations, such as schools, can increase their ability to survive by satisfying stakeholders. Because school boards are highly developed educational organizations with networks of rules, they can be considered institutions (Burch, 2007). Institutional theory may be used to explain the thinking of school board members and decisions made to address the challenges faced by the school, such as the geographical dispersion of its

students, policy mandates for the inclusion of special needs students into their least restrictive educational environments, and fewer financial resources.

Institutional theorists studying organizational behavior have considered why institutions that appear to not communicate nor have anything in common tend to develop similar practices, procedures, and policies (Burch, 2007). Further, they are concerned with why some policies and outdated procedures are so difficult to change despite poorly sustained improvements (Burch 2007).

In the initial evolution of institutional theory, organizations were viewed as open systems (Katz & Kahn, 1966). While the open system idea recognized the interaction between external and internal challenges within the organization, most models emphasized addressing the external pressures (Katz & Kahn, 1966). This idea soon was thought to be too narrow to explain how institutions work to survive as it primarily emphasized the technical and resource features of institutions (Scott, 1987). The focus was only on external influences and did not encourage the examination of internal forces impacting institutions.

Scott (2008; 2013) offered one theoretical approach to explain institutional behavior that included three pillars, or systems, of institutionalization. These symbolic and behavioral systems are regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive (Scott, 1987). Each pillar explains how procedures, structures, systems, and social behaviors, and norms of the institution impact its functionality (Scott, 2008). The regulative pillar involves federal, state, and local mandates, education codes, and legislative rulings to which boards must conform within their policies and decision-making processes (Scott, 2008). The normative pillar relates to the norms and standards of a school district and the relationships with external associations and stakeholders

that produce the behavior guidelines for school board processes (Scott, 2008). Finally, the cultural-cognitive pillar includes the actual school environment, the values and common beliefs of the school, that are supported by the school district's culture (Scott, 2008). Thus, for a school for the deaf, the community influences and beliefs are influenced by the local Deaf Community, with an emphasis on language, communication, and traditions.

As institutional theory began to include the field of education, researchers noted that conformity to rules, policies, practices, and procedures were necessary for survival and afforded legitimacy to the school, as such conformity gave the appearance of effectiveness (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987). Legitimacy is necessary for sustainability (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Schools can gain legitimacy to the extent that they satisfy the needs of other organizations and obtain necessary resources to sustain their functions (Meyer & Rowan, 2008).

School boards, as institutions, have laws, policies, practices, and procedures that must be followed in order to keep them afloat, viable, legitimate, and effective (Scott, 2008). Their organizational systems should be regularly reviewed and refined as school boards must "attend not just to consensus and conformity but to conflict and change in social structures" (Scott, 2008, p. 2). However, "when things blow up, boards tend to react in one or two dysfunctional ways" (Carver, 2012, p. 2) that are either proactive or reactive. All of those laws, policies, practices, and procedures can become forces for stability rather than change (Hanson, 2001). Accordingly, the pressures on schools and school boards to meet their various challenges while attending to the structures in place are similar in public schools around the country.

Correspondingly, schools' and school boards' reactions, according to institutional theory, often result in homogenization, otherwise called isomorphism (Rowan & Miskel, 1999).

Isomorphism is defined as “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 66), that is, places they perceive as more successful than they are.

DiMaggio and Powell (1991) identified three systems through which pressures are wielded for institutions to become homogenized. They are coercive, memetic, and normative isomorphism, that is, internal and external pressures which organizations use to resemble each other, though not necessary operate efficiently (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Coercive isomorphism derives from pressures for compliance (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The pressures may be formal and visible, such as requirements for schools to conduct statewide assessments and report data or to develop lesson plans with differentiated instruction for students with special needs. Conversely, they may be informal and invisible. In the present study focusing on a school board of a school for the deaf and hard of hearing, informal coercive isomorphism could include a board member’s belief that hearing men are the best equipped to be superintendent for schools for the deaf. As a result, Scott’s (2008) institutional theory recognizes that coercive isomorphism may operate in the regulative pillar or cultural-cognitive pillar of institutional behavior descriptions.

Mimetic isomorphism results, for example, when a school for the deaf tries to pattern and model itself after another school for the deaf that appears to have more success, such as through increased enrollment, higher standing in the Deaf Community, and more stable finances. Often this occurs when staff from one school for the deaf transfer to another school for the deaf. The tendency is to bring ideas, practices, and procedures to the next school (Hanson, 2001).

Finally, normative isomorphism is based on the processes established by departments of education, universities, and accrediting agencies who impose specific requirements for teacher

and administrator certification and school accreditation. Schools and school boards need to conform to these processes to maintain their legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987).

Institutional theory also presumes that organizations are like an onion, consisting of many layers with formal and informal rules, norms, groups, practices, and policies (Hanson, 2001).

Scott (1987) wrote that

Generalized models—beliefs, norms, menus, and scripts—flow down through the various levels, carried by socialization, social construction, and sanctioning powers. These codes are carried and reproduced, but also modified and reconstructed, by the interpretations, and inventions of subordinate actors: individuals, organizations, and fields. (p. 141)

The maintaining of stability in the institution relies on the degree of fit among the layers, notwithstanding the variance and extent of freedom at every level (Hanson, 2001). The trickle-down effect must also be balanced by cohesion in order for stability to be maintained.

Stability also derives from successful strategies used to react to challenges. Oliver (1991) described five strategies that can be used to attend to challenges. Using the example of a state that requires its schools to conduct high-stakes testing, Oliver (1991) listed the following strategies that schools may use:

- Acquiesce (do what is expected);
- Avoid (delay and hope it goes away);
- Compromise (give a modified version);
- Refuse (attack the test as ideologically tainted or culturally biased);
- Manipulate (teach to the test or flat out cheat). (p. 152)

Attending to challenges, however, does not accordingly generate organizational change or reform. Reform is defined as a “major change leading to a restructuring of core processes, programs, and/or procedures” (Hanson, p. 637).

Organizational Resilience Theory

Organizational resilience is defined as the “magnitude of disturbance the system can tolerate and still persist” (Mamouni Linnios et al., 2012). The theory was applied to the field of education with the work of Gunderson and Holling (2001). It initially recognized the ability of a system to return to stasis after disruption, while minimizing or avoiding any unwanted behavior (Horne, 1997).

Resilience may be manifested by resistance to change or adapting to change, either of which may be desirable or undesirable (Mamouni Linnios et al., 2012). Institutions and organizations exhibit a combination of resistance to change and an adaptive capacity to absorb change. Smart educational institutions and organizations “pursue intelligence. In that pursuit, they process information, formulate plans and aspirations, interpret environments, generate strategies and decisions, monitor experiences and learn from them, and imitate others as they do the same” (March, 1999, p. 1). Imitating others, or isomorphism, is the mimetic process that compels one unit in a population, in this study, a school for the deaf, to attempt to look like other units that face the same kinds of challenges (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

In pursuing intelligence, educational institutions and organizations use organizational memory, school culture, and acquired knowledge to aid in learning and making decisions (Hanson, 2001). Stakeholders contribute to acquired knowledge in the process of learning in order to respond to challenges. In the present study, organizational memory, school culture, and

acquired knowledge do not only come from school boards, but also from alumni, parents, employees, and current students.

For an organization to learn, it must apply acquired knowledge. Acquired knowledge as a concept relates to the concept of the learning organization (Senge, 1990).

Learning organisations are where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (Senge, 1990, p. 3)

In some ways, then, a given school board could become a learning organization.

Two functions for organizational learning are the concepts of single- and double-loop learning (Argyris, 1999). Single-loop learning involves the modifying or updating of routine methods and practices. Double-loop learning is necessary for the long-term future of the organization, particularly when change is necessary for keeping up with the competition, or in the case of GBSD, remaining a viable option for educating deaf and hard of hearing children.

Double-loop learning occurs when existing policies, practices, and procedures are questioned and challenged in an effort to improve existing methods (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Indeed, maintaining current practices may be inappropriate for meeting the new challenges that organizations face. Double-loop learning encourages system-wide thinking, continuous evaluation, and strategic planning (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017). However, “an organization can, for example, learn something in order not to change” (Cook & Yanow, 1996, p. 439). In some cases, resisting change is one side of becoming resilient (Mamouni Linnios et al., 2014).

From the perspective of institutional theory, the fit between layers of the organization determines its stability (Hanson, 2001). If the fit is weak between what external pressures demand and what the institution is doing, that is, if there are gaps, the organizations must work to narrow the gaps. If the gaps are too wide, for example, if a school radically changes its philosophy or mission, its legitimacy is called into question (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017). In summary, smart institutions and organizations, including school boards, “learn the lessons of the change process by feeding the experience back into organizational memory and learning” (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017, p. 660). Doing so may lead to organizational resilience (Hanson, 2001) because reviewing previous successes, mistakes, and overlooked opportunities allows organizations, including school boards, time and information to thoughtfully make decisions.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1 on p. 51) was developed from the review of the literature, the first section of which discussed the right to language for deaf and hard of hearing children. First and foremost, the need for schools and programs for deaf and hard of hearing children exists because of the right to language for these children. With early and ongoing immersion from birth in American Sign Language (ASL) and specially designed instruction in written English during the pre-school years and perhaps beyond, by educated teachers of the deaf, deaf and hard of hearing children can be kindergarten ready so that they are prepared for the challenges that K-12 education can present.

To remain a viable and legitimate educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children, schools for the deaf need to be resilient in meeting challenges. Linking the concepts of

institutional, school board governance, and organizational resilience can be a strategy used to inform a school board regarding ideas for becoming resilient and remaining viable. Studying how the concepts are evident within school board minutes may assist in understanding how the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf redesigned their school program so that it addressed the complexities and challenges of present-day school systems in order to remain a viable educational option for deaf and hard of children.

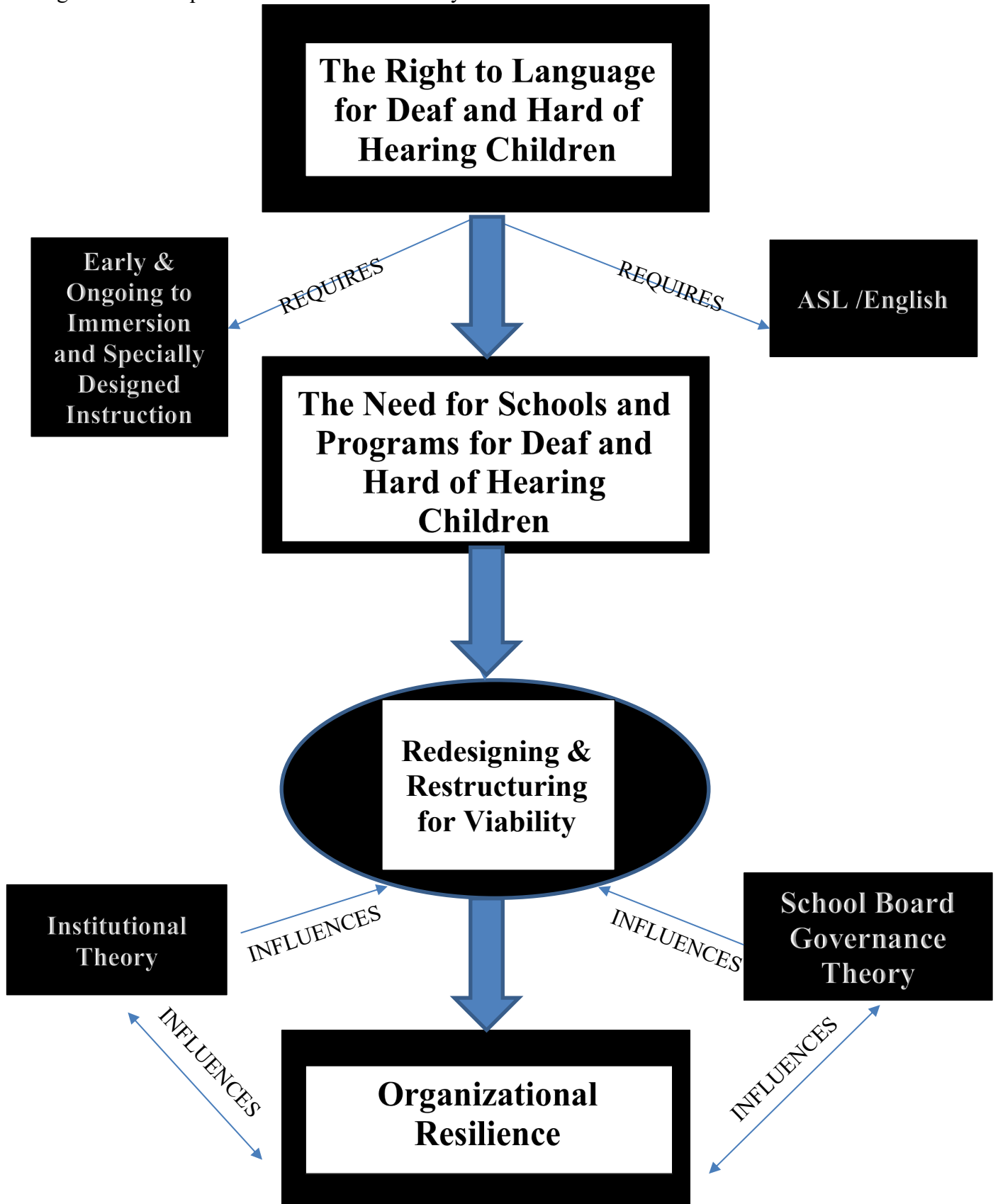
Facing all of its challenges, how did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf make decisions that sustained the school in supporting the language development of deaf and hard of hearing children across the state of Maine? How did they use their organizational memory to guide decisions about practices and procedures that helped to keep the school viable? Organizational memory is the repository of what the organization has learned through experience (Argyris & Schön, 1996). Archives of memories, such as minutes, contribute to this body of organizational memories. According to March (1999),

Inferences drawn from experiences are recorded in documents, accounts, files, standard operating procedures, and rule books; in the social and physical geography of organizational structures and relationships; in standards of good professional practice, in the culture of organizational stories, and in shared perceptions of “the way we do things around here.” (p. 83)

The school board minutes became the source of the organizational memories. For the present study, institutional theory, in conjunction with school board governance theory and organizational resilience theory, provided insight into GBSD’s governance, that is, the processes

and procedures of the management of short-term objectives and long-term goals of the school, through experiences recorded in their school board minutes and related documents.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Chapter Summary

The purpose of the literature review was to examine the topic of school board governance and to provide a knowledge base of related and relevant theories and research useful in supporting school boards in their decision making. School boards are faced with increasing internal and external challenges. School boards of schools for the deaf are faced with the additional challenges of ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing children acquire language. A history of deaf education in the United States was discussed with events and practices demonstrating how deaf and hard of hearing children have been marginalized. As a result, specialized educational environments are necessary to provide these children with options for their educational success.

Following the discussion on the right to language for deaf and hard of hearing children, discussion of the theoretical framework ensued, first regarding literature on school board governance and the need for school boards despite current state and federal involvement in public schools (Fullan, 2008; Marzano et al., 2005; Owens & Valesky, 2015). The literature indicated that organizational memory was an important component for organizational learning that leads to decision making and changes in practices and processes (Argyris & Schön, 1996; March, 1999).

Using institutional theory, the second part of the framework, helps in understanding how structures, rules, norms, and routines become established as guides for public organizations so that they can increase their ability to survive (Scott, 2008). Schools have to conform to practices much like other schools, including schools for the deaf and hard of hearing. This isomorphism, “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the

same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 66), helps schools acquire legitimacy so that they can remain viable. Finally, organizational resilience theory, combined with institutional theory, informs how school boards “learn the lessons of the change process by feeding the experience back into organizational memory and learning” (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017, p. 660).

Chapter Two also described how the literature and the theoretical framework influenced the development of the conceptual framework. This framework guided the research design for the present study.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology for the present study to answer the research question, “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” The present study relied on data from school board minutes, CART transcripts of board meetings, and the Executive Directors’ reports. Chapter Three also justifies the decision to use content analysis for the present study. Further, Chapter Three includes a description of the researcher as tool and how the researcher’s experiences led her to study GBSD and its school board’s decision-making processes and practices for remaining viable. Additionally, Chapter Three discusses ethical considerations and credibility relevant to the present study.

CHAPTER THREE: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The review of the literature in Chapter Two began with a history of deaf persons in schools in the United States. That history reflects a progression from their marginalization due to barriers to education with respect to the inaccessibility of language to the need for full access to communication. The review revealed the need for schools for the deaf to foster barrier-free communication access for students' language development and academic achievement. Further, the review of the literature further discussed strategies for school boards to embrace when redesigning their schools in order to remain viable.

The review of the literature also revealed that 10 schools for the deaf have closed in the past 10 years, a situation leaving deaf and hard of hearing children fewer options for their education (Council of Educational Administrators for the Deaf, 2019). However, little attention has addressed how school boards of schools for the deaf have taken steps to maintain their offerings of educational choices focusing on language acquisition and development. Thus, the present study addressed the research question: "What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children?" The present study focused on understanding the decision-making processes of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) while redesigning and restructuring itself to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children.

Research regarding the functions and behaviors of school boards has centered on lists of activities and practices for boards to follow and to avoid (Land, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Sell, 2005). However, little research has been reported on the efficacy of those boards and how

they function to change, restructure, and redesign their districts in order to increase student and faculty performance (Land, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Sell, 2005). The present study, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature through its examination of how one school board of a school for the deaf and hard of hearing made and implemented decisions in order to redesign itself as a viable educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Chapter Three explains the planning and research design decisions for the present study that were necessary for seeking knowledge regarding how the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf made decisions that enabled the school to stay open when 10 other schools for the deaf closed in as many years (Council for Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, 2019). Chapter Three includes description of the data collection and data analysis methodologies. Further, the chapter provides provisions for assuring the study's credibility and adherence to ethical standards. As such, the discussion which follows addresses standards recommended regarding the research design process (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990) for it to be rigorous. Those standards require: (a) a good fit between the research question and study design; (b) a disclosure of the researcher's point of view; (c) strict standards for rigorous data collection and data analysis; (d) provision for overall study warrant and validity; and (e) the recognition of ethical standards and value to education.

Researcher as Tool

Eisner (1998) emphasized that qualitative research must acknowledge the perspective and filter of the researcher, as they might influence the research process. Therefore, "research designs should include reflection on one's identity and one's sense of voice and perspectives, assumptions, and sensitivities" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 96).

My 45 years of experience as both a teacher and school principal within schools for the deaf have influenced the design of this study. I am a hearing person who has spent a majority of her life with deaf people, personally and professionally. As a child, I was introduced to the deaf community through my church, as my pastor's wife was the principal of a school for the deaf. I have many deaf friends from childhood. Professionally, I chose deaf education as my major. All of my professional experience has been with deaf and hard of hearing children. I am still, however, on the outer circle of the Deaf Community, though I am fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and have also been trained as an ASL interpreter, previously working for a video relay service.

I have been an educator of deaf and hard of hearing children for 46 years, 12 years in classroom teaching and 34 years as a principal of schools for the deaf. Additionally, I have had active roles in program and policy decisions at the school and state level, along with participation in national organizations for leaders of schools for the deaf. As such, I have a long professional and personal relationship with deaf children, deaf adults, and many other leaders in schools for the deaf. When I assumed a leadership role with the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD), now under the umbrella of the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH), I became interested in how GBSD reinvented itself when two of the other schools where I previously worked, as well as eight others, had closed. Some may interpret this involvement with the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as a conflict of interest; on the other hand, my professional relationship with the organization was what inspired the present study.

As an educator of the deaf, I am committed to practices designed for full access to language development and inclusion in a school's culture. As one example of my commitment

was experiencing, first-hand, the eyes of a deaf high-school student lighting up when I have presented a book passage in ASL. In doing so, I deviated from the school policy that required signing and talking at the same time, a practice that confused the student's comprehension of the passage due to the differences in syntax between ASL and English. As a principal, I saw the frustration of deaf students and staff when they entered a room where hearing people were not signing, even though the latter had the skills, knowledge, and the professional obligation to do so within a school culture dedicated to the holistic education of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Furthermore, I have been in countless meetings with public-school special education directors who had no knowledge of how deaf and hard of hearing children learn, only to have these directors insist that the least restrictive environment is always with hearing children. I have also witnessed deaf immigrant children's frustration at the official expectation that they learn spoken English by using headphones and spoken English to access the curriculum when many do not have experience with spoken language communication because their heritage language had not previously been accessible to them.

In addition, two schools for the deaf where I had been director closed a few years after I left them, thereby denying the deaf and hard of hearing children and their families an option for their education that included experts in the areas of language and literacy for deaf and hard of hearing children. Reflecting on why these school closures occurred motivated me to study GBSD and their school board in order to understand what processes and practices they used in their decision-making to keep the school open as a viable educational choice for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Thus, my motivation for undertaking the present study came from my connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998), that is, my expertise in areas of educating deaf children, from teaching all grade levels to being the principal of a teacher of the deaf in six schools for the deaf and in three mainstream programs for deaf and hard of hearing children. I have been involved with the Deaf Community for 62 years, and I love, value, respect, and appreciate Deaf people and the Deaf Community. Thus, my conclusions and judgments come from reflection on those years of experience (Eisner, 1985; Patton, 2002).

That connoisseurship, however, should not be used to distort or obscure the participants' voices. I must guard against becoming so personally involved with the school board minutes and related documents that I lose my reflexivity, that is, the awareness of my own perspective (Patton, 2002). Using rigorous procedures in the content analysis of school board minutes and related documents helped me use my knowledge and experience effectively to capture the unique perspectives and opinions that had been recorded (Eisner, 1998).

Research Design

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks described in previous chapters and the research question focused on understanding what practices and processes the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) used for decision-making while redesigning and restructuring itself to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children. Because the intent for the present study was to understand the organizational practices and processes of the GBSD school board, research to address the research question for the study was based on the characteristics of the knowledge sought (Eisner, 1998; Klenke, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Sell, 2005), the focus on understanding the nature of how the GBSD school

board navigated complex processes, and the intricacies that were fundamental to the role of the school board.

The present study employed an analysis of the content of school board meeting minutes and the executive director's reports and related documents to which the minutes referred from January 2005 through May 2018. Content analysis, for the purpose of this study, served to use the analysis of written documents to make valid inferences regarding the research topic (Riessman, 1993), in this case, the decision-making processes used by the school board of the GBSD to keep the school open and viable. Content analysis seeks to identify and explain the relationships between and among the concepts that have been extracted from specific documents to form an understanding, in this case, of how the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf worked to redesign and restructure the organization. In the present study, content analysis focused on school board minutes and accompanying publicly available documents. These other documents included communication access real-time translation (CART) transcripts, that is, live captioning of the verbal discourse during the school board meetings, and Executive Director reports to the school board referenced in school board minutes that represented the operationalized, institutional practices used by the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf to redesign itself.

Content analysis, as a qualitative research methodology, is a systematic, rigorous approach to analyzing documents (Krippendorff, 2004). It is useful for generating rich, narrative descriptions (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). "Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem" (Merriam, 1998, p. 118).

Potter and Weatherall (1994) proposed that researchers should “examine texts as social practices for answers to social or sociological questions rather than to linguistic ones” (p. 48). Qualitative content analysis is useful as a method for examining data material (Kohlbacher, 2006). Further, content analysis is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from text (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Additionally, it can be useful in understanding how people make sense of their reality, which is everchanging and unmeasurable (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2002). These data sources are also repositories of the organizational memory of GBSD (Argyris & Schön, 1996; Hanson, 2011; March, 1999). Thus, in the present study, content analysis was useful for analyzing school board minutes and related documents for understanding the practices and processes used in the decision-making of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

In order to understand the processes and procedures used by the school board of GBSD, data collection occurred using directed content analysis. Using directed content analysis allows a researcher to analyze documents, in this case, school board minutes and related documents, in order to substantiate or extend an existing theoretical or conceptual framework or theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis uses “existing theory or prior research to identify key concepts or variables as initial coding categories” (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 262). Following the identification of initial coding categories, operational definitions for each category are determined using the theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Initial and subsequent coding categories are deduced from the existing theory and prior research leading some researchers to call directed content analysis a deductive approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2011;

Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The present study followed the processes of directed content analysis, especially with regard to data collection.

Selection of the Case

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the processes used by the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, and subsequently its umbrella organization, the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, when making decisions in order to keep their program viable. One of the first steps in content analysis is to identify the case (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

In the past 10 years, 10 schools for the deaf have closed, thereby leaving deaf and hard of hearing children with fewer options for an appropriate, language-rich education provided by teaching experts in the areas of language and literacy for deaf and hard of hearing children. However, the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf has remained open despite facing similar local, state, and federal challenges faced by many other schools.

While I was the principal at the Austine School for the Deaf in Vermont in the 1990s, rumors circulated that GBSD had closed its dormitories and sent all of its students back into their district schools. I was surprised to learn, almost 30 years later, that, in 2005, the GBSD school board created an umbrella organization, Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH), so that they could better serve mainstreamed deaf and hard of hearing students statewide. However, GBSD remained open as a center school program in the Portland Public Schools for deaf and hard of hearing students within a 60-mile radius. Reflecting on this phenomenon motivated me to study GBSD, its umbrella organization MECDHH, and their school board in order to understand what processes and practices they used in their decision-

making to keep the school open as a viable educational choice for deaf and hard of hearing children. I chose to study this case because of the uniqueness and purposefulness of the sampling (Eisner, 2002; Merriam, 1998) of a small school for the deaf that was able to demonstrate its nimbleness in making decisions that helped to keep the school open when so many others had failed. The GBSD was an “information-rich” and “purposeful” (Patton, 1990, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 61) case that exemplified a “unique” (Merriam, 1998, p. 62) set of circumstances to investigate how school board decision-making could occur to provide educational options for deaf and hard of hearing students. Therefore, the GBSD provided a case that was heuristic in its decision-making processes in order to remain viable.

The present study used school board minutes and related publicly available documents, from January 2005 through May 2018, such as communication access real-time translation (CART) transcripts, that is, live captioning of the verbal discourse of the meetings, and Executive Director reports to the school board, from the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) and then from the “new” organization, Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD; CART TRANSCRIPT, April 2005). Participants in the study, so to speak, were the school board members of GBSD, and subsequently MECDHH/GBSD, during that time period who both contributed to the content of the minutes and reports and formally approved or accepted them for the public record. In addition, with this case study design, all of the minutes and related documents were included in the data set. The timeframe of January 2005 through May 2018 began with the school board decision in 2005 to create the umbrella organization, the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and to create a center school program in the Portland Public Schools. From

2005 forward, MECDHH/GBSD worked to become viable as a statewide program. The end date of May 2018 was chosen because I became employed by MECDHH/GBSD at the end of May 2018 and attended school board meetings, thus introducing the possibility of a conflict of interest.

Procedures for Data Collection

Data collection occurred using directed content analysis (Hseih & Shannon, 2005) in order to understand the decision-making processes of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. According to Krippendorff (2004), “content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). Directed content analysis is a structured process using existing theory and research to guide and focus the research question (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). The process began by identifying key concepts in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and theory and using them to determine initial coding categories. This process was deductive in that it “require[d] the use of theory to design the coding scheme” (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 264).

Documents relevant to directed content analysis can include minutes of meetings, organizational charts, staff reports, and memoranda (Owen, 2014). Yin (2003) concurred with using this type of documentation, as well as noting these modes of communication: (a) agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other written reports of events; (b) administrative documents, proposals, and other internal documents; (c) formal studies or evaluations; and (d) other articles appearing in the mass media. The following specific types of documents were chosen to analyze for the present study: (a) the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board minutes; (b) CART transcripts of the

school board meetings; (c) Executive Director reports; and (d) other related documents that were referenced in the school board minutes. The use of directed content analysis was logical because official school board decisions and actions transpired during the public meetings and the minutes recorded there became the official legal documents of the decision-making for the school system (Krippendorff, 2004).

In December 2018, I requested permission from the school board members of MECDHH/GBSD to access the school board minutes and related documents, both in the form of a letter and in person at a school board meeting (see Appendix B). Though all of the documents are public record, I requested permission in order to gain formal support from the school board. The board unanimously approved granting me access to the documents (see Appendix C).

Once the documents were received, the process of directed content analysis required construction of a framework for organizing and analyzing the data (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). A process of a priori coding (Weber, 1990) was completed by using categories based on the theoretical and the conceptual frameworks guiding the study. In the present study, coding began by charting the specific educational items, such as major activities, operations, and actions of the school board according to Scott's three pillars of institutional theory: Regulative, Normative, and Cultural-Cognitive with sub-categories from School Board Governance and Organizational Resilience theories. As analysis continued, additional codes were developed and the initial coding scheme was adjusted (Hseih & Shannon, 2005). The directed content analysis of the documents thus allowed the researcher to review the documents that described the vision, goals, operations, and activities pertaining to the MECDHH/GBSD school board.

The basic coding process in directed content analysis allowed for a priori categories to group codes into clusters (Patton, 2002) and to organize larger quantities of text into fewer categories (Weber, 1990). Any text that cannot be sorted by type into a particular code would be given a new code and relationships would be identified, that is, as representing a new category or subcategory of an existing code (Hseih & Shannon, 2005).

Categories from the literature ranged from the types of discourse of the school board members to the types of responses to challenges they faced. In addition, categories included norms, rules, strategic plans, and board processes that could be used to sustain the MECDHH/GSBD as a viable educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children. The review of related literature and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks provided categories through which to gather data from the approximately 20,000 pages of source materials. To facilitate the process of data collection, 10 questions were posed to use as the source materials were read (Hseih & Shannon, 2005).

1. What are the roles of the school board members of the MECDHH/GSBD?

(Chapter 101: General Provisions, 2017; Maine School Board Association, 2-14; Title 20-A: Education)

2. What external challenges did the school board respond to as reflected in the minutes?

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987, 2005)

3. What did the minutes report about vision and goals?

(Burch, 2007; Mamouni Limnios et al., 2014; Scott, 2001; Senge, 2006; Witmer & Mellinger, 2016)

4. What processes for decision making did they discuss?

(DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987, 2005; Witmer & Mellinger, 2016)

5. What did the MECDHH/GBSD school board minutes say about the role of language in deaf education?

(Bauman & Murray, 2014; Cheng et al., 2019; Humphries et al., 2013; Kushalnagar et al., 2010; Marschark & Hauser, 2012; Sanzo, 2019; Simms & Thumann, 2007)

6. What information about other schools for the deaf did the board discuss?

(Cook & Yanow, 1996; Hanson, 2011, Mamouni Limnios et al., 2014)

7. What norms are reflected in the minutes?

(Argyris & Schön, 1996; Burch, 2007; Scott, 2001)

8. What rules were discussed by the school board as reflected in the minutes?

(Argyris & Schön, 1996; Mamouni Limnios et al., 2014; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017; March, 1999; Witmer & Mellinger, 2016)

9. How did the school board discuss the strategic plan?

(Mamouni Limnios et al., 2014; Witmer & Mellinger, 2016)

10. How did the school board discuss daily operations?

(Argyris & Schön, 1996; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017; March, 1999)

These questions reflected key components of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks as discussed in Chapter Two and a review of the literature. The data collected in response to these questions formed the data set for the present study.

Procedures for Data Analysis

The purpose for data analysis is to construct meaning (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Moreover, the challenge of data interpretation in qualitative research involves the recognition

that the self is involved (Eisner, 1998). From Eisner's perspective, during analysis of the data, the researcher uses what she knows and has experienced, that is, her educational connoisseurship. One's connoisseurship or knowledge facilitates the data analysis process. In research, however, one must be transparent in describing how the data analysis process unfolded in order to justify any claims for rigor. In Eisner's view, such transparency is connected to educational criticism, that is, making public one's processes of using one's connoisseurship in data analysis.

The process of educational criticism, according to Eisner (1998), includes four dimensions: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. These dimensions can organize the processes for data analysis in research. In the present study, description provided a narrative account of the content contained within school board minutes and related documents that related to the content and processes of decision-making at GBSD. Interpretation sought meaning in the descriptions. According to Eisner (1998), "if description can be thought of as giving an account 'of,' interpretation can be regarded as accounting 'for'" (p. 95). Evaluation, the third dimension in Eisner's process of educational criticism addressed the educational worth reflected in the organizational practices and procedures used by the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as they redesigned their school program to remain a viable educational option for deaf and hard of hearing children. Thematics, the fourth dimension, provided the "recurring messages" (Eisner, 1998, p.189) arising from the data analysis of the school board minutes and related documents.

Eisner's (1998) approach to educational criticism thus served as the overall framework for the process of data analysis in the present study. Chapter Four provides further detail regarding the process of data analysis used in the present study.

Ethical Considerations

During every step of the research process, researchers must ensure credibility, trustworthiness, and ethics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One ethical consideration involves respect for the participants involved. However, for the present study, participants were involved only to the extent that they were named in the school board minutes of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf or could be identified by virtue of their position on the school board. As such, their involvement in the study had already occurred by virtue of their public role on the school board. In the act of becoming a school board member, they had already agreed to serve the public and thus allowed their names and roles to be used in the school board minutes. Therefore, informed consent from individual school board members was not necessary for the present study. However, even though a participant's role may have been identified in the publicly available school board minutes or CART transcripts, specific names were not used in the process of data analysis. Only the individual's role was named.

Other ethical considerations involve the role of the researcher in both data collection and data analysis. According to Howe and Eisenhart (1990), "research questions should drive data collection techniques and analysis rather than vice versa—and this is the form in which it is most often violated" (p. 6). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Patton (2002) encouraged triangulating the data in order to strengthen a given study and avoid concerns that the findings come from only one source. To address such concerns, Eisner (1998) advised that credibility could be fostered

through “referential adequacy” (p. 114), that is, employing multiple data sources in data analysis to provide the necessary support for the data analysis claims, even though the researcher’s connoisseurship contributed to data analysis.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that there are several strategies for increasing the credibility of a given study’s results. In the present study of school board minutes and related documents, data analysis of documents required “the careful coding of data, continual scrutiny of data for internal and external consistency, cross-checking of inferences with selected material, and continued assessment of credibility” (p. 106). Employing such processes contributed to the credibility of the present study.

From another perspective, Howe and Eisenhart (1990) offered standards to guide efforts in qualitative research. To ensure a given study’s credibility these standards include: (a) a good fit between the research question and study design, (b) the transparency of the literature review, (c) a disclosure of the researcher as tool, (d) strict standards for rigor data collection and analysis, (e) overall study warrant and validity, and (f) the recognition of ethical standards and value to education.

For the present study, the school board minutes and related documents of the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf were reviewed and examined using the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Thirteen years of school board minutes and related documents provided rich, thick data, and corroborating evidence to support the results of this study.

Another effort to ensure credibility related to the role of the researcher as tool in the present study. As I stated in *Researcher as Tool*, I have 46 years of experience in deaf education which gave me a professional connoisseurship regarding the educational opportunities available to deaf and hard of hearing children. I endeavored to be mindful to document carefully the role of that connoisseurship during all phases of the study. To do so, I kept an audit trail of decisions regarding my interpretations of the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Additionally, as content was analyzed, I consulted regularly with a “critical friend” who has expertise in qualitative content analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 253) in order to critique and justify analysis processes.

A study’s warrant is related to its credibility, that is, if the research process is credible, then the conclusions are warranted. Indeed, “the most warranted conclusions that we are capable [of] at any given moment in time are those that are drawn after robust and respected theoretical explanations that have been tentatively applied to the data” (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 7). Additionally, prolonged engagement with the data as well as persistent observation and referential adequacy can also increase the probability of credible and warranted findings (Eisner, 1998; Howe & Eisenhart, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Chapter Five provides further details for how these standards were met in the present study. Additionally, Chapter Five includes how the tenets offered by Eisner (1998) were addressed.

Delimitations

The research design was delimited to include school board minutes and related documents, such as CART transcripts, and Executive Director reports, from one school, the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, in one state, Maine. These delimitations were appropriate

to the study they aligned with the research focus on one particular case as expressed in the research question: “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” As a “unique” case of one school, when other schools have closed, this focus represented a particular type of case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 62).

The study was also delimited to examination of school board minutes and related documents from January 2005 through May 2018 when the school board of GBSD created the umbrella organization, the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH), to remain a viable option for the education of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three described the use of a content analysis research design to address the research question: “What organizational practices and decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” It reflected certain characteristics of qualitative research, including “to discern people’s perceptions of the world from the vantage point of self-reference” (McKeown & Thomas, 2013, p. 2), which, in the present study were gleaned via school board minutes, CART transcripts of board meetings, and the Executive Directors’ reports. The chapter justified the decision to use content analysis for the present study. Specifically, participants’ perspectives with regard to the research question (Brown, 1993) had been recorded without outside influence from the researcher. Further, Chapter Three included a description of the researcher as a tool in the research process, that is,

how her experiences led her to study GBSD and its school board's decision-making processes and practices for remaining viable. Additionally, Chapter Three provided an overview of data collection processes using directed content analysis, a brief discussion of data analysis procedures within the framework of educational criticism, a description of ethical considerations, and strategies for seeking credibility through addressing standards for qualitative research.

Chapter 4 describes the process of data analysis used in the present study to understand the decision-making processes of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) school board. Eisner's (1998) four dimensions of educational criticism served as the overall structure for data analysis. The processes of description and interpretation were structured using typological analysis (Hatch, 2002).

Eisner's third dimension of educational criticism, evaluation (1998) of the data analysis, then identified the school board's educational values during decision-making. Thematics, the fourth dimension of educational criticism, led to the identification of themes, or recurring messages (Eisner, 1998).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the present study was to understand the organizational practices and decision-making processes that the School Board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) adopted while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children. The study focused on documents such as school board minutes, all executive directors' reports cited in the school board minutes, and other accompanying publicly available documents to which the minutes and reports referred. Also included in data analysis were communication access real-time translation (CART) transcripts, that is, live captioning of the verbal discourse of the school board meetings. The data analyzed were the school board minutes and related documents from January 2005 through May 2018. All of the materials were located within public records.

I read all of the 13 years of the documents, approximately 20,000 pages, in hard-copy format when necessary, as only the minutes from years 2013 through 2018 were available on the school's website. I scanned all relevant documents into the *NVivo 12* program, a qualitative data analysis computer software program. I then sorted them chronologically, by month and year, and read through them twice during December 2019 in order to familiarize myself further with the material. After two weeks of viewing tutorials for how to use *NVivo 12*, simultaneously while rereading these sources, I identified the material in these data sources that related to the 10 questions previously developed from the review of the literature that served as guidance to gather the data relevant to the focus of the present study. These 10 questions became the buckets or "nodes," as *NVivo 12* calls them, for the purpose of collecting data relevant to the study. The

data extracted and relocated into the nodes became the data relevant to the present study. This process comprised data collection for the present study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Once the data were collected and sorted into nodes, intentional data analysis began by “separating the larger data set into smaller sets” (Hatch, 2002, p. 154). I reread the data collected within each node and identified categories within each node. Simultaneously, I kept an audit trail of thoughts, big ideas, and questions. The *NVivo 12* software is designed to record a data processing trail. Such an audit trail regarding one’s thinking at this point in data analysis reflects what the qualitative research literature recommends in acknowledging that data analysis inevitably begins while data collection is in progress (Patton, 2002).

Analysis of the material in the 10 nodes led to the identification of categories or typologies, using both knowledge of the literature and my professional connoisseurship and guided by Hatch’s process of typological analysis. Five typologies were identified by which to describe and interpret the data, the next phase of data analysis. Typologies occur by “dividing the overall data set into categories or groups ... generated from theory, common sense, and/or research objectives, and initial data processing happens within those typological groupings” (Hatch, 2002, p. 152). Those typologies included the following:

- Attending to the centrality of language and communication,
- Building capacity,
- Navigating resources,
- Responding to stakeholders, and
- Envisioning opportunities.

These typologies provided the framework for both the process of typological analysis (Hatch, 2002) and educational criticism (Eisner, 1998) that became the overall structure for data analysis.

Eisner's approach to educational criticism distinguishes between educational connoisseurship, a private activity and educational criticism, a public act (1998). As Eisner (1998) explained, educational connoisseurship calls upon researchers to "make fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities" (Eisner, p. 63) within their data. Although Eisner (1998) defined connoisseurship as the "art of appreciation" (p. 63), educational criticism is used to publicly elevate and share what connoisseurship has appreciated. Further, educational criticism employs a process using four distinct dimensions—description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics—as a way to "illuminate, interpret, and appraise the qualities that have been experienced" (Eisner, 1998, p. 86). Data analysis, for the present study, thus engaged Eisner's process of educational criticism as the overall structure, supported by typological analysis (Hatch, 2002).

The typologies previously listed provided the framework for describing and interpreting data, the first and second dimensions of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998). In the present study, description provides readers a narrative account of the content contained within the school board minutes and related documents regarding the processes of decision-making and, thus, an opportunity for readers to experience "what it would feel like if [they] were there" (p. 89). However, beyond descriptions, "interpretations are essential to understanding meaning" (Patton, 202, p.106). Eisner (1998) offered a distinction between description and interpretation. "If description can be thought of as giving an account 'of,' interpretation can be regarded as accounting 'for,'" (p. 95). Yet, in spite of a distinction between description and interpretation,

efforts to describe and interpret data can be “so intertwined that they often become one” (Patton, 202, p. 106) in the process of data analysis. Thus, data analysis for the present study combines the discussion of Eisner’s dimensions of description and interpretation.

Eisner’s third dimension, evaluation, addresses the educational worth reflected in what has been described and interpreted. Finally, thematics, the fourth dimension in educational criticism, provides the “recurring messages” (Eisner, 1998, p.189) arising from the discussion within the first three dimensions of educational criticism, in the present study, analysis of the school board minutes and related documents. Themes distill the major ideas that run through general educational matters and provide guidance, though not a guarantee or prediction, for understanding broader educational contexts (Uhrmacher, Moroye, & Flinders, 2017). The following sections of this chapter present data analysis organized according to Eisner’s four dimensions of educational criticism and supported by Hatch’s typological analysis.

Description and Interpretation

As previously stated, five typologies were identified within the data to structure the processes of description and interpretation within educational criticism. The following sections, organized according to the five typologies, describe and interpret the data.

Typology #1: Attending to the Centrality of Language and Communication

Language and communication instruction for an agency like MECDHH/GBSD is necessary for building a school for the deaf. Some schools for the deaf and hard of hearing promote the auditory-verbal approach during which students are taught to use what residual hearing they have in order to speak. Other schools use some form of sign language. Still others solely promote the use of American Sign Language. As language is crucial for communication

(Goldbart & Caton, 2010), the parental choice for what language through which their deaf or hard of hearing child will learn needs to be considered carefully. Further, full accessibility to language is crucial for deaf and hard of hearing children to learn (Dalton, 2013).

In 2005 and again in 2013, the MECDHH/GBSD School Board voted to approve a Language Philosophy document developed by the leadership team (School Board Minutes, August 2005; August 2013). The essence of the language philosophy statements was to affirm that both American Sign Language and Spoken English would be the two languages provided to students, while keeping both languages separate, that is, not signing and speaking at the same time (School Board Minutes, August 2005). Providing both languages separately optimizes access to vocabulary and communication and facilitates student language acquisition (Easterbrooks & Estes, 2007).

In March 2008, the Executive Director of MECDHH/GBSD presented to the board his Report to the Joint Standing Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee of the Maine Department of Education to further emphasize the need for deaf and hard of hearing students to have language accessibility. What follows is an excerpt regarding language accessibility:

I proposed an Educational Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. Children need to have full language accessibility at all times. They must have every opportunity to attend educational programs that pay close attention to their language and communication needs, including direct instruction, interpreters, cued speech transliterators, and hearing technology. (CART Transcript, March 2008)

The Bill of Rights was built on the solidification of the 2005 Language Philosophy, which was then reviewed and reapproved by the School Board in 2013 (School Board Minutes, August 2013).

An August 2014 CART transcript provides an explanation of how those policies were to be implemented, starting with the youngest children.

By offering a bilingual/bimodal approach, all children [in the preschool] are exposed to both American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English (when auditory access was available) [for both formal instruction and socialization]. There is about a 50 percent ratio of Typically Developing Peers [equal numbers of hearing and deaf children]. There are two rooms connected by a door. In one room, ASL is the only language used and in the other room only spoken English is used. The kids start out in the room with the language choice that their parents specify. After lessons are finished, the magic door opens, and kids can go to either room to work on centers. Children can go where they wish. [Children can switch languages though the languages continue to be separate in their real-time communication.] Frequently, we will see children choose a language different from what their parents want. We want them to have full access to communication. Without that, they will not achieve academically or socially.

The approach to teaching language to the preschoolers exemplifies the policy approved by the school board as it was put into practice. The preschool afforded the opportunity for exposure to two languages, experienced separately, with adults and children providing language models that allowed children to be immersed in the language that was most accessible to them and thus provided early intervention for language acquisition (Marschark et al., 2012).

MECDHH/GBSD also found ways to teach American Sign Language and Deaf Culture to students from remote regions of the state. The school used the Advanced Telecommunications for Maine (ATM) system (CART Transcript, December 2005). The school board had approved the submission of a “request for proposal” from the leadership team to the Maine Department of Education for the ATM system. The ATM system provided an opportunity for audio-visual equipment to be placed in 14 schools in Maine resulting in two-way, interactive learning. MECDHH/GBSD was one of the 14 schools that received the grant (School Board Minutes, December 2005). MECDHH/GBSD also used the ATM system to troubleshoot hearing technology for students in order to increase their access to language.

The December 2005 CART transcript recorded an explanation of the use of ATM as follows:

We use ATM in different ways. So that people in Maine better understand the Deaf and Hard of Hearing culture. And our students come with a variety of different technologies, and we have to be able to troubleshoot that. It is not a money machine. Also, it is a way for people in Aroostook County [i.e., the northernmost county in Maine] and others to participate simultaneously. Currently, we have 52 students enrolled.

The ATM, while located in the school on Mackworth Island, was also used for the deaf and hard of hearing students in the Public School Outreach program under the MECDHH umbrella. Thus, the school board had made both local and statewide decisions when approving the submission of the request for proposal.

Another way in which the board supported language and communication was through approval of both student visits for social and academic development and approval of staff visits

so that they could collaborate with other schools and organizations for the deaf on program development. Such student participation included visits to: the Eastern State Schools for the Deaf Athletic Association (School Board Minutes January 2005—June 2017); the American Sign Language (ASL) poetry competitions at the Marie Phillip School for the Deaf (School Board Minutes May, 2008); participation as extras in an all-deaf movie, *The Caretaker* (School Board Minutes, November 2008); and participation in the Academic Bowl at Gallaudet University (School Board Minutes January, 2005—May, 2018). Each of these opportunities allowed the deaf and hard of hearing children from MECDHH/GBSD to socialize with a broader community of deaf and hard of hearing children and adults who used the same language as they were acquiring.

Additionally, the school board approved webinars for use by parents and professionals about communication and other topics relevant to having or working with a deaf or hard of hearing child. The goal of webinars was to facilitate children's learning of language and communication. Simultaneously, the webinars were used as outreach to stakeholders. A March 2010 CART transcript reported about one webinar: "We presented 'Be a Communicative Partner: It's the Gateway to Learning.' Our teacher [name] offered great strategies for working with children with challenging communication needs" (CART Transcript, March 2010). After the report to the school board about the webinar, the school board members voted unanimously to support the school in offering webinars and to uploading them onto the MECDHH/GBSD website for viewing by any interested persons (School Board Minutes, March 2010).

The school board provided a further opportunity for the promotion of language exposure for deaf and hard of hearing children when they approved the use of the main campus of MECDHH/GBSD for meetings of the Maine Chapter of Hands & Voices (School Board Minutes, March 2008). Hands & Voices is a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to supporting both families and their children who are deaf or hard of hearing and the professionals who serve them (Hands & Voices, 2012). The organization is unbiased towards communication modes and methods, such as ASL, cued speech, spoken language, or combined methods (Hands & Voices, 2012). Deaf and hard of hearing children who attend events with their families get together with other deaf and hard of hearing children to play, read, and create in a language-rich environment. These events, led by adults who serve as language models, afford opportunities for peer groups of children to engage with others who use similar language (Hands & Voices, 2012). The school board approval for hosting Hands & Voices meetings and events supported and facilitated family and parental learning about their deaf and hard of hearing children's language needs, as well.

Analysis of the documents provided evidence that the board attended to the centrality of language acquisition and accessibility to language and communication within school programs in order to meet the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children, a cognitive-cultural pillar of Scott's (2005) institutional theory. Such a commitment promoted deaf children's right to language (Siegel, 2008) and their acquisition of language (Marschark et al., 2012). Indeed, if a child does not receive full communication access, even a little hearing loss can have a significant impact on academic achievement (Dalton, 2011; 2013).

Typology #2: Building Capacity

The following narrative offers description and interpretation regarding data associated with the second typology. Building capacity relies on building community and partnerships with those persons or agencies that work together to create something of value that is greater than themselves (Northouse, 2013). In this context, community is “a collection of individuals who have shared interests and pursuits and feel a sense of unity and relatedness” (Northouse, 2013, p. 223).

In the present study, community was important to the school board whose decision-making processes were the focus of the present study. In the August 2008 CART transcript of the school board, the Board Chairperson defined community as follows: “It is an all-inclusive term. It includes students, parents, families, staff, the state’s Deaf Community, statewide education agencies, the legislature, Department of Education personnel, the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) School Board, here and after referred to as the Agency, and, at times, other schools for the deaf” (CART Transcript, August 2008). According to school board minutes these groups came together at various times when requested by the Agency to discuss improvements to the programs and services of the Agency and to build partnerships. These efforts reflect the literature that emphasizes the need for partnerships to have ongoing and meaningful collaboration (Weiss, Miller Anderson, & Lasker, 2002; Senge, 1990).

Community capacity

Building community and partnerships, and, as a result, capacity means inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making (School Board Minutes, June 2017). The following excerpt

illustrates the reason that building capacity was important for MECDHH/GBSD. The Executive Director reported:

We are collaborating more with various agencies and educational organizations to achieve the full potential of each student placed in our care; Child Development Services (CDS), all local and state school districts, Newborn Hearing Screening Committee, and Community Counseling Services are a few that come to mind. As you peruse through this year's report, you will see the scope of our work as a statewide agency and how we make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve. (CART Transcript, May 2007)

Prior to May 2007, reported collaboration was with the Department of Education and school districts, as well as with other schools for the deaf. The purpose of collaborating with the above-named agencies and with others in the state was to increase or improve services and programs for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing students through "shared aims and activities" (CART Transcript, May 2007).

Another example of the partnership between the Agency and the Department of Education occurred in June 2014. School board members encouraged the leadership team to meet with the State Director of Special Education and special education directors within school districts to discuss regional services. The Executive Directed reported:

We had a very helpful discussion regarding the needs of public schools with their efforts to support deaf and hard of hearing children. We also discussed various regionalized services that might be created. We will work with the Department of Education to survey

all special education directors in Maine to gain a better understanding of the individual needs of each region. (CART Transcript, June 2014)

With school board approval, the leadership team reached out to special education directors and worked closely with Department of Education leadership to understand the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children across the state. Rather than offer a one-size-fits-all program, the school board and leadership team worked to identify individual needs of students and districts to determine how they might best be served, thus adhering to the Agency's mission and vision.

The MECDDHH/GBSD school board did not limit itself or staff to only capacity building within the state. The School Board Chairperson explained to the school board that networking was not only necessary within the state but also nationally.

We [schools for the deaf] are alone in our states and within that organization [Conference of Educators and Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf]. There is a lot we can do. . . . We really do have a dual role. We need to network within the state, but we also need to network on a national level because of the nature of deaf education.

(CART Transcript, March 2009)

An example of national networking indicated that members of the leadership team and teachers attended and presented at several national conferences each year, in order to highlight and spotlight the programs and services of MECDDHH/GBSD (CART Transcripts, 2005—2018). Additionally, the conferences kept the leadership team abreast of both national trends and responses to challenges that schools for the deaf faced. Two of those conferences were the National Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Conference (EDHI), and the National Outreach Conference.

Networking by the Agency extended beyond the national arena to the international arena. For example, at a 2018 EDHI Conference, a member of the Agency's leadership team gave three presentations about services and programs in Maine and how collaborations with other agencies helped to build capacity for serving the deaf and hard of students statewide. At the end of the conference, the leadership team member was asked by a group of leaders of early intervention programs to present at an international conference in Austria. "I was asked to go to Austria and tell them what we do in Maine. So now we are not only nationally known, but we will be internationally known." (CART Transcript, May 2018). The school board voted unanimously for the leadership team member to present at the conference in Austria (CART Transcript, May 2018).

Board capacity to govern effectively

In the present study, building capacity directly involved building board capacity. Such capacity refers to the school board members' knowledge. That knowledge includes the school's history, current conditions, and purpose, as well as the State's expectations for school board members and legislative information to help them understand the democratic nature of their roles and responsibilities. Following are excerpts regarding regular professional development that the Agency board conducted for itself. The School Board chairperson distributed a yearly binder to school board members and reported:

[The Executive Director's administrative assistant] made a binder with information for you to look through over the summer. Then, we will have the orientation. Hopefully, all will attend. It is for all Board members, not just the new ones. We as a Board need some professional development, as well, as it is so complicated with the State and all the

agencies we have to report to. We don't all know what is involved. I think we need to present that information to all. We need to fulfill our commitments to the Board and to the State to the best of our abilities. That is why we have so many trainings. (CART Transcript, June 2008)

The school board scheduled professional development a minimum of three times per year, along with a yearly retreat held in the fall of each school year (School Board Minutes, August 2005-2018). The purpose of the professional development for the school board was to keep school board members aware of changes in laws and procedures impacting the school board and the Agency. In so doing, they were also building capacity regarding professional development associated with the regulatory pillar of Scott's (2005) institutional theory.

An example of a formal professional development opportunity for the board was found in the August 2013 CART transcript. The School Board Chairperson reported:

Tonight, we have two presenters who come with much experience. Both have been superintendents of School Administrative Districts [school districts]. I am excited. They will give us information and ideas on how we as a school board can move our school ahead in the right direction. [Name] is currently the Executive Director of Maine School Management Association and [name] is the Associate Director. The purpose of this workshop is professional development which is one of the most important we can provide. We hope to provide information for newer and veteran members and determining how to maintain your focus. (CART Transcript, August 2013)

This excerpt demonstrates an element of a learning organization (Senge, 2006). School board members may not be well placed to understand expectations and mandates from the state and

national government; success as a board member is heavily dependent on each member's knowledge, skills, and experience in policymaking and school improvement (Leithwood, 2001). Continued performance of school board members requires frequent professional development. When one member leaves, the division of labor within committees becomes obsolete, as a new member needs time to understand expectations of the board. Compliance and accountability demand that school board members "stay abreast of best professional practices" (p. 225).

Following are excerpts from MECDHH/GBSD school board meetings that show board effectiveness in compliance and accountability demands. The Executive Director reported:

In view of the diversity of deaf and hard of hearing children, each program experiences different challenges from year to year based on ever-changing student needs. We meet these challenges with proactive and innovative programming to achieve educational goals. The Needs Assessment Team, in their report to the State Legislature's joint standing Educational and Cultural Affairs Committee appointed by the State Board of Education in February 2002 advised us to increase the level of services statewide to increase the opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing students. Therefore, we are implementing additional support programs and hiring consultants able to assess deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in public school. (CART Transcript, September 2005)

Likewise, another CART transcript noted the following with regard to collaboration with the state level regarding compliance and accountability:

Our collaboration efforts with the Department of Education and the Maine Directors of Special Education to design and start two regionally based service delivery systems for deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine are going well. These service delivery

programs, offered in Oxford and Hancock counties, will provide an itinerant teacher of the deaf and a part time speech/language pathologist. We are in the final stages of program design. (CART Transcript, April 2015)

The two regionally based service delivery programs were a direct result of collaboration and partnerships with the Department of Education and Directors of Special Education previously described. The partnerships identified the services needed and helped to pave the way for MECDHH/GBSD to continue serving students statewide.

In addition to adding services, per State advisement, MECDHH/GBSD had to make changes to their programs to meet the varying needs of students with regard to language support. The Executive Director reported the following:

The state and federal mandates for higher standards and student outcomes have resulted in our ongoing planning to give all students the opportunity to acquire the fundamental skills needed for lifelong learning through greater emphasis on literacy and numeracy throughout the school day. At the upper elementary grades, we have a cadre of students who have secondary disabilities. This necessitated the redesigning of our instructional program with greater emphasis on constructivist-based learning. Thanks to the board for creating flexibility within our current budget and approving monies to provide for this kind of support. (CART Transcript, August 2008)

Because students' needs had changed, the school board unanimously approved professional development for staff to work with those students. In so doing, they created a partnership with the Morrison Center, an organization that served students with severe disabilities who are not successfully served in public schools (CART Transcript, August 2008). These examples indicate

that MECDHH/GBSD responded to calls for accountability, compliance, and improvement as part of good school board practice. The school board endeavored to be effective and took their accountability, compliance, and improvement roles and responsibilities seriously. Indeed, board effectiveness is an indicator of organizational effectiveness (Green & Greisinger, 1996).

Land (2002) argued that school board members must be knowledgeable. They should be informed about their programs and services, politically active, and involved in doing the work of the board, that is, being well informed and having enough time to devote to the work of the board (Land, 2002). Research on nonprofit organizations has suggested that board capacity increases organizational performance (Marzano et al., 2005; Mountford, 2004).

In the present study, data analysis revealed that the MECDHH/GBSD school board made decisions for the purpose of improving services to deaf and hard of hearing children statewide, including those deaf and hard of hearing children with additional special education needs. The board was purposeful in building partnerships and thereby building capacity and maintaining compliance and accountability through professional development for board members.

Typology #3: Navigating Resources

Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) has been funded through the Maine State Legislature. The Agency has no other means of garnering funding, except through the legislature. Budgets are built on a two-year cycle. MECDHH/GBSD was frequently “flat-funded” through the years from September 2005 through May 2018. Such budget limitations provide context for describing and interpreting the data relevant to the research question: “What decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and

restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children?" The following description and interpretation focused on how the Agency navigated resources for the purpose of remaining a sustainable and viable program to serve Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children. The description and interpretation indicated the school board's desire to maintain opportunities in spite of the external challenges. As the school board worked to maintain opportunities, it faced numerous challenges.

External challenges to funding

One challenge involved a change in the funding structure. Prior to becoming MECDHH, school districts paid tuition to the school (GBSD), and the state paid for the upkeep of the buildings and grounds. When the school became MECDHH/GBSD and officially became known as an agency serving students statewide, the funding structure changed. The school board was faced with running both a statewide agency and the GBSD school as the center school with lump-sum funding from the legislature. Upkeep for the school and dormitory buildings, the causeway to the island, staff salaries, and all other expenses came out of one pot of money (School Board Minutes, April 2005). Thus, the school board of MECDHH/GBSD had to deal with new governance and regulatory rules (Scott, 2005) after becoming the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Board Chairperson reported:

We are a quasi-state organization. What does that mean? Before [when we were just Governor Baxter School for the Deaf], the State ran the school with the Department of Education (DOE). . . . It is part of a state-wide system. The state decided to give up control but to help us run it as a supported school. It is run through the School Board. Our response goes to the Department of Financial Services rather than DOE. We are

required to meet the state regulations. We don't go to the town to collect money as other schools do; we go directly to the State Financial Services. That makes us different. We need to ensure that student services are never disrupted. That is our challenge. (CART Transcript, March 2008)

The description from the school board Chairperson captured the complexity of the funding structure for MECDHH/GBSD.

Another challenge within the budgeting process occurred when the Maine legislature mandated that MECDHH/GBSD had to open a satellite site in North Central Maine without additional funding or the ability to bill school districts (CART Transcript, August 2008).

Opening a satellite site was an expensive operation as it included hiring teachers and interpreters, outfitting a classroom with appropriate acoustical equipment for deaf and hard of hearing children, and providing transportation for students (CART Transcript, August 2008). The school board's response to this new responsibility was to approve the use of staff who were already working in that area of the state at that time and, therefore, not to open a classroom. Instead, teachers and interpreters worked with students within their district schools.

Another obstacle emerged unexpectedly in December 2009. The Commissioner of Education attended a school board meeting to discuss budgeting issues. The Commissioner advised the following:

It is important for you to think about the significant budget cuts now, next year, and 2012 is even harder because federal funds go away. The overall effect of cuts is 92 million dollars. We are looking at a low incidence sensory population. You have a budget of six million dollars, much of which will be cut. You need to form partnerships with other

agencies. I don't have a plan or solution. Nothing is safe. (CART transcript, December 2009)

Board members were under pressure to divide up limited money, which in the following years was to be further limited (CART transcript, December 2009). In so doing, the school board recognized the need to make decisions based on their knowledge of the Agency's programs and services and, in so doing, their decisions reflected recommendations from the literature (Green & Greisinger, 1996; Land, 2002).

The response of the MECDHH/GBSD school board to the Commissioner of Education's warning of budget cuts and call for partnerships was to create a long-term plan to close the campus school buildings and dormitories for high school students, beginning in 2009 and to send those students to Portland High School. Boarding services were contracted with outside agencies from 2009 to present day, another cost-saving decision. The financial savings from those actions helped the Agency to remain viable without disrupting programs and services for other students (CART Transcript, June 2009).

In subsequent years, the GBSD middle-school and elementary-school students were also sent into Portland Public Schools with MECDHH/GBSD providing educational services to students in those locations. By 2015, the only students served on Mackworth Island were those in the preschool. Additionally, the dormitories were all closed (CART Transcript, June 2015). Closing the school and dormitories, yet remaining a presence in schools throughout the state, was an innovative decision for the school board. The decision took months of discussion with board members discussing pros and cons, a regular decision-making approach.

Seeking multiple funding sources

In Maine, as in other states, deciding how state money is spent is the responsibility of legislators. Diminishing state appropriations in 2008 from a slowing economy nationwide also had an influence on schools. At that time, state tax revenues had not been able to provide stability in funding. MECDHH/GBSD had to scramble to meet the needs of growing student enrollments and their related costs, such as for transportation, interpreters, support staff, and changing technology. To make up for differences in revenues and expenditures, the Agency had to seek other revenue streams that could support programs and services.

An April 2015 letter from the Executive Director of MECDHH/GBSD to the Commissioner of Education provided an explanation of where the monies from the legislature actually went. The letter offered a plea to increase allocations to the Agency so that it could continue its level of programming by using education dollars for education and not for maintaining empty buildings on the island that belonged to the State. The Executive Director began the letter with an explanation of who he has worked with in the Department of Education around funding issues so that the Commissioner would understand that he sought support from the chain of command. GBSD at one time housed 200 deaf and hard of hearing students. At the time of the letter from the Executive Director, the Agency was serving over 400 students statewide, though the Agency was responsible for the upkeep of empty dormitories and classrooms on the island.

We are committed to serving the deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine, yet it seems unwise to be spending so many education dollars on the upkeep of buildings constructed in the 1950s. We have lacked the financial support and commitment of the

Bureau of General Services (BGS) to do necessary repairs and upgrades. As a result, monies needed for physical plant maintenance and upkeep come from our operating budget. To that end, I am asking if you would be willing to convene a meeting of those state agencies involved with our school and its grounds and physical plant maintenance. This could be the first step in arriving at a solution to the drain on education dollars used to support an infrastructure that MECDHH/GBSD no longer uses or needs. (Executive Director Letter, April 2015)

The meeting did not occur (CART Transcript, June 2015).

MECDHH/GBSD has continued to seek other agencies to rent unused space on the Mackworth Island Campus so that money for campus upkeep does not fully come from education funding. Examples of renters included: The Real School; The Friends School of Portland; Hear ME Now, an auditory-verbal program; Disability Rights of Maine; and other agencies that serve people with disabilities (CART Transcript, June 2015). These examples adhered to Governor Percival Baxter's will when he gave the island to the State to be used for educating children with disabilities.

The Agency has received other funding sources for creating and expanding new programs. The Percival P. Baxter Foundation, previously called The Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, has provided support for programs and services beyond those funded by the legislature. The chairperson of the Foundation reported the following to the school board:

The Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children is a charitable 501(c)3 corporation under the laws of the state of Maine. The Foundation, which is fiscally and

legally separate from MECDHH/GBSD, exists for the sole purpose of providing support for programs and activities that enhance the quality of education and expand the educational opportunities for students served by MECDHH/GBSD. (School Board Minutes, May 2007)

Examples of what the Percival P. Baxter Foundation did to help children included granting students' fees for camps for deaf and hard of hearing children, paying portions of the costs for students attending the Junior National Association for the Deaf conferences, and paying travel costs for parents taking their children to Boston for cochlear implant surgery and support (CART Transcript, May 2007).

Additionally, MECDHH/GBSD received additional funding because, as a local education agency, it could bill MaineCare [Maine's Medicaid] for direct services to students with disabilities. Examples of billable direct services to students included behavior support, occupational and physical therapy, and speech language therapy. All of these services were determined by a child's Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). IEPs were held throughout the year for each special education student. An essential element of the IEP was the identification of services that a child with a disability required to be supported in the general education environment. In Maine, new IEP services began no later than 10 days after an IEP meeting. If the IEP team determined that a child needed new technology or individual staff, it could create a financial burden on the school. The Executive Director reported the following to the school board:

We are focusing on the budget and trying to redirect more money for direct service to students. An exciting thing is, because of your approval, working on getting all

Educational Technicians trained so we can bill [MaineCare] will improve our ability to hire one-on-ones [staff] in [the] future rather than be stressed when that is in an IEP.

(CART Transcript, April 2012)

The intent of using services supported through MaineCare was to provide resources to meet needs identified by IEP teams.

Additional funds became available when the Agency won a grant to enhance parent training and support. The Director of Statewide Services at MECDHH/GBSD reported the following to the school board:

I am very pleased to report that MECDHH/GBSD has been selected as the winning RFP [request for proposal] for the Parent-to-Parent Pilot Program via DHHS [Department of Health and Human Services]. The purpose of this program is to hire and train parents to work with other parents. The “Guides by Your Side” program was designed by the National Hands and Voices Association. We are very excited about expanding our opportunities to educate parents and make a positive impact of deaf and hard of hearing young children in Maine. (CART Transcript, June 2014)

Guides by Your Side trained parents of older deaf and hard of hearing children to work with parents of deaf babies and of children who had been recently diagnosed with a hearing loss. Much of the Guides’ efforts focused on helping parents by providing language to their children. By approving the writing of the RFP, the school board recognized that early intervention and continual exposure to language is vital for deaf and hard of hearing children (Sanzo, 2019), despite the challenges of funding.

The first three typologies are frequently linked together. Because of the overlapping

nature of financial challenges, the school board's quick actions and adherence to the Agency's vision and mission, that is, serving deaf and hard of hearing children, as well as their desire to build capacity, demonstrated its responsiveness and adaptiveness and its ability to adjust and readjust (Ponomarov & Holcomb, 2009). Indeed, school board members' decisions kept MECDHH/GBSD viable by "effectively mobilizing its assets toward generating the ongoing resources necessary to maintain the mission and carry out high-quality work in an environment that reinforces the well-being and creativity of the individuals involved" (Puntenney, Grumm, Harlan, Mangual, & Battle, 2000, p. 44).

Typology #4: Responding to Stakeholders

The fourth typology to organize the description and interpretation of the data focused on the Agency's responses to stakeholders, both internal and external. Smoley (1999) addressed school board connections with internal community stakeholders by stressing the importance of encouraging participation, obtaining feedback and information, explaining and clarifying actions taken by the school board, and facilitating communications with teachers and other staff.

Responding to internal stakeholders

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) board had regular discussions about communicating with internal stakeholders. The school board members reached out to every staff member of the Agency to obtain input regarding possible cost savings in each department during a time of external challenges regarding finances. In 2011, when the school board faced either cutting complete programs or laying off staff, a board member at one meeting commented:

It would be a good idea to have input from administration and staff, so we know the feelings of theirs regarding cost savings. We have to remember that this is unique. It is unique communication and environment. There are different qualifications needed here so we must include all staff, including educational technicians and maintenance. We need to know what the staff could suggest for areas that may be cost savings areas.

(CART Transcript, February 2011)

The action of seeking staff input was a strategic move on the part of the board because it demonstrated respect for staff and served to gain support for the final reductions to the budget (NSBA, 2015).

Responding to external stakeholders

Smoley (1999) also acknowledged the importance of having a process for regular communication with external stakeholders because such communication is one key to effective board governance. He described examples of board behavior regarding communication to the outside community and stakeholders:

The board provides for an open flow of relevant information to and from the community. Board members included in their examples of effective board action the way in which they promote the flow of information and understanding between community and board. (pp. 58-59)

Indeed, the Agency school board had regular communication with their stakeholders (CART Transcripts, June 2005 through May 2018). Several examples of regular communication with external stakeholders began in 2007. The school board used video-conferencing technology for meetings with the Statewide Educational Services, as well as for meetings with the Department

of Education, District Special Education Directors, and Child Development Services (CART Transcript, June 2007).

Board communication with external community stakeholders also included a yearly stakeholder survey. In addition, yearly stakeholder meetings were held on the Mackworth Island campus from August 2008 to May 2018 (CART Transcripts, August 2008 through May 2018). A further example of communication with community stakeholders occurred when the Agency partnered with the Department of Education and the state Special Education Directors. The Executive Director described the changes in three services because of stakeholder input. The Executive Director described the first change:

American Sign Language (ASL) for Families: This program provides American Sign Language instruction for families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The ASL for Families program can *now* be accessed in person on Mackworth Island or through video technology so that more families have access to ASL lessons. (CART Transcript, June 2014)

ASL classes were only held on Mackworth Island. Families who lived far from MECDHH/GBSD who wanted to learn ASL had to travel to the school, a situation that limited classes to local families. Previous usage of the Advanced Telecommunications for Maine (ATM system) was to enhance student services (CART Transcript, December 2005). As a result of the August 2014 stakeholders' meeting, parents had access to video technology that enabled them to take advantage of ASL lessons for families using ATM.

The second and third changes to services, as a result of the stakeholders' meetings were explained by the Executive Director:

Early Childhood and Family Services (ECFS) provides services to families with children newborn to five years of age who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a suspected hearing loss. We *now* provide information to families and professionals statewide, supporting the choices that families make to benefit their children, and assist them with identifying the resources that will help them meet the individual needs of their infant or young child.

Services are provided at no cost to families.

[Further] Public School Outreach (PSO) provides consultative services to schools serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing, kindergarten through grade 12. This program supports students using all communication options. Expanded consultation for more in-depth support is also available with the PSO—Fee for Service program. (CART

Transcript, June 2014)

In 2018, stakeholder feedback also influenced the change of the fee-for-service part of the PSO program. Fee-for-service was eliminated so that more students would benefit from services. The Public School Outreach (PSO) program also changed its model to include specially designed instruction, that is, direct instruction for deaf and hard of hearing students. The changes were all board approved (CART Transcript, May 2018). By holding community stakeholder meetings and listening to feedback from them, the MECDHH/GBSD school board demonstrated that they were responsive to the changing needs of stakeholders. Thus, they were incorporating stakeholder knowledge for the improvement of services (CART Transcript, May 2018) to benefit deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine.

Communication between the Executive Director and the School Board

Communication between the school board and the Executive Director occurred in different ways: processes that promoted openness, shared discussion on important topics, and awareness of their respective roles in meeting the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. The MECDHH/GBSD school board conducted yearly surveys about board and staff perspectives on the performance of the executive director, including his or her ability to form positive relationships with staff and board members. From the September 2013 Board survey comments:

I truly love working on the board of MECDHH/GBSD. The Executive Director has created an environment of collaboration with the board. He is motivated to do the best for the students (dedicated). I love the transparency and regular contact I have with him.

(School Board Survey, September 2013)

This excerpt indicates how this executive director fostered communication. Thus, the survey provided a means for board members to communicate their views regarding board functioning with the Executive Director.

The MECDHH/GBSD also evaluated itself on a yearly basis. In so doing, it collected information about board activities including communication among board members. Comments from a board survey described how one board member viewed the topic of communication:

I believe that our board [members] communicate very well [with each other]. I never feel left out of any information or decisions. When we are not in session, the board chair frequently reaches out to let us know what is coming up or what we need to review. The Executive Director keeps the board chair well informed, and . . . [the board chairperson] relays the important parts to us. During board meetings, I really like having the CART

person because, if I miss something, I can also look at the screen [transcript] to see what has been said. And our board members are so patient with each other and respectful, too.

(CART Transcript, May 2018)

This excerpt revealed a school board member's thoughts about how well the school board members communicated with each other and, thus, provided a perspective relevant to communication among stakeholders.

Communication between the Executive Director and the school board focused on key topics associated with their shared responsibilities. For example, the MECDHH/GBSB Executive Director shared information on student achievement and academic outcomes with the school board. From the Executive Director:

I want to continue to update you on our shared vision for student success. Teachers have been developing units of study and lessons that are better targeted to learning standards, such as the Common Core, and individual student learning needs. We have developed a plan to progress-monitoring three times a year for reading Lexile scores and math levels. Additionally, working with E-Backpack to assist with data storage and resource organization has continued this fall and will progress throughout the year as we learn how to fully utilize its capabilities with data collection so that we can plot the academic growth of each student. (CART Transcript, January 2015)

Indeed, the quality of communication between the Executive Director and the school board involved not only clear communication processes, but also discussion of shared responsibilities among these stakeholders.

Further, to increase student achievement, the school board and Executive Director needed to collaborate to create policy and impact student achievement (CART Transcript, April 2012). Such collaboration required ongoing communication. However, even though the board and the Executive Director discussed strategies for increasing student achievement, the board did not engage in micromanaging the school. To effectively engage in implementing policy, a school board must rely on the leadership team to make informed decisions and recommendations for continued growth (Smoley, 1999). Indeed, the MECDHH/GBSD school board chairperson cautioned the board about their responsibilities with regard to the implementation of policies.

We cannot micromanage the school. Our job is to make and implement policies. Our Executive Director has systems in place to promote student achievement. He ensures that we have monthly reports showing growth and non-growth. The annual report to the Department of Education is very clear. I think that, while we need to know about student growth and achievement, we do not need to be looking over the shoulders of our teachers. (CART Transcript, October 2015)

Thus, the executive director of MECDHH/GBSD was the board's link to the everyday occurrences within the Agency.

Executive directors and school boards needed to create positive and lasting relationships with each other in order to promote effective decision-making (McGraw, 2003). When a school board develops positive and lasting relationships with the leaders, school stability can result (Danzberger, 1994).

These excerpts reflect efforts to keep open communication between the school board and the executive director that led to purposeful decision-making for the betterment of the school

agency. This commitment to open communication aligns with the literature supporting effective communication between school boards and school superintendents (Land, 2002).

Typology #5: Envisioning Opportunities

The fifth typology to organize the description and interpretation of the data focused on envisioning opportunities for improving and expanding programs and services for deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine. The vision statement of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) was “to continue to build upon our evidence-based educational experience that empowers families and provides all deaf and hard of hearing students with skills for lifelong learning and success” (CART Transcript, May 2018). Improvement implies direction, a sense of where an agency is going, and, hence, the vision to which the agency is committed. Thus, Barth’s (1990) definition of vision is relevant:

Vision is an all-encompassing driving force of organizations to express their unique purpose and philosophy. They depict an overall conception of what the educator wants the organization to stand for: what its primary mission is; what its basic core values are; a sense of how all the parts fit together; and above all, how the vision maker fits into the grand plan. (p. 148)

Vision provides direction and forward momentum; it inspires and reflects organizational values (Rothwell, Stavros, Sullivan, & Sullivan, 2010). Leadership uses vision to inspire and as a way to lead toward the future with clear action. Rothwell et al. (2010) believed that it was important not only to create a great vision statement, but also to communicate it in a way that the vision influences behavior and moves into the hearts of the people involved in the organization.

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) school board reviewed the vision statement yearly and established goals to strive toward that vision and thus to increase educational experiences for students and families during each school year (School Board Agenda, August 2005 through 2017). Yearly, each board member proposed goals and identified which were a priority to them as individuals. A group process of stating pros and cons about each goal led to consensus about the goals on which to focus. The board created committees to decide how to meet the goals, with committee membership determined by school board members' preferences (CART Transcript, August 2005).

Goals that are related to the vision keep school boards in the mode of forward thinking. They help to prioritize needs and to formalize action plans. Barth (1990) claimed that vision binds people to a common cause. Furthermore, goals help to transform vision into reality (Barth, 1990).

Vision, goals, and strategic plan have a synergistic relationship. One technique through which the Agency enacted goals toward their united vision was through the Strategic Plans (School Board Agenda, August 2005 through August 2017). The school board chairperson asserted the following to the school board:

The salient challenges we have right now are for us to: (a) Arrive at consensus pertaining to the future needs of our consumers; and (b) Formulate appropriate action steps to address the evolving and diverse education and communication needs of our future student population as they get older and move up through the school system. It is best to center discussions around the organizational strategic plan derived from the National

Agenda for Deaf Education to develop goals that will be executed within departments and enable interdepartmental coordination. We must also do this through the Language and Communication Planning Advisory Committee. (CART Transcript, November 2005)

The focus here involves attention to student needs and the role of a strategic plan to meet those needs. Indeed, a strategic plan requires attention to vision, core values, and targeted areas for improvement and growth, goals, objectives and purposes, strategies, resources, timelines, and ways to measure the results (Dawson & Quinn, 2004a). In the literature, common themes of strategic planning and decision-making have been related to school board practices focused on positively impacting student achievement (Dawson & Quinn, 2004b; McGraw, 2003; National School Boards Association, 2015; Smoley, 1999).

The MECDHH/GBSD school board acknowledged that strategic planning regarding language and communication were primary considerations for the students because, as described in Typology 1, language and communication were central to their vision.

To accomplish this vision, MECDHH/GBSD provides a broad range of quality services tailored to the diverse linguistic and cognitive needs of Maine's deaf and hard of hearing students. The needs of [the] population we serve . . . often cannot be adequately addressed in any one setting. We must continue to expand and modify service options while meeting Maine's high expectations for student outcomes on an annual basis.

(CART Transcript, August 2008)

Thus, the school board recognized that modification and expansion of services were necessary to achieve their central vision regarding language and communication. They thus emphasized the

need for program improvement. In addition, the school board kept abreast of progress on strategic plan goals by requesting monthly progress reports from the leadership team members (CART Transcripts, December 2005 – May 2017).

Another example of the board's commitment to recognizing opportunities for improving programs and services was evident in the presentations of the Strategic Plans of 2005, 2008, and 2012. Those plans included goals to reach out to local, statewide, and national schools for the deaf and agencies that serve the deaf and hard of hearing. Outreach efforts to connect with stakeholders in Maine and entities in other states served two purposes. They included the sharing and promotion of programs and served as an opportunity to learn from other experts in the field.

The 2012 Strategic Plan described an effort to connect with stakeholders throughout Maine and agencies serving the deaf and hard of hearing in other states in an effort for statewide and national stakeholders to become aware of the valuable services and programs that MECDHH/GBSD had developed (CART Transcript, November 2012). This example was reported to the school board by the Executive Director:

The [MECDHH/GBSD] Early Childhood and Family Services director and I have been invited as key representatives from Maine to attend a round-table meeting [with] Children's Hospital Boston (CHB) [that took place] at Waltham's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program in Massachusetts. CHB is invested in assuring early identification of hearing loss so that families receive timely supports and delivery of appropriate intervention measures. This will, in turn, foster development of effective communication

skills and language acquisition for babies identified with hearing loss. We will be with other renown national leaders in Deaf Education. (CART Transcript, October 2008)

This event sponsored by Children's Hospital provided an opportunity for MECDHH/GBSD to share their efforts in serving deaf babies in Maine.

This example from the data further illustrates how efforts described in one specific typology can relate to the other four typologies and how Scott's (2008) three pillars—normative, regulatory, and cognitive-cultural—worked in synergy to describe the data. Here, the example of the round-table meeting with Children's Hospital Boston represented not only an effort to seek opportunities for improvement of programs and services but also an effort to emphasize: the importance of language and communication, as discussed in Typology 1; to build board capacity, as in Typology 2; and to respond to stakeholders, as discussed in Typology 4.

Likewise, the Strategic Plans of 2005, 2008, and 2012 each had a goal toward maintaining fiscal responsibility (CART Transcript, November 2012). The school board and leadership team determined that GBSD needed a new school building for its increasing enrollment on the Mackworth Island campus. They discussed the need for an energy efficient building, a state-of-the art science lab, a large and expansive library, and a building that was deaf friendly, that is, space with appropriate lighting. The new building was to be the first building on the campus since 1955 (CART Transcript, January 2005). One example of taking advantage of fiscal stewardship occurred during that time period. The Executive Director reported the following to the school board:

The Leadership Team and I, along with Head of Facilities, attended a facilities summit, which we thought would give us ideas about the new building. At this summit we

reviewed strategies for alternative energy sources used at school facilities and the need for retrofitting schools to be Energy-Smart schools. These would allow us to implement cost savings to the school and would afford the Academic Department to use some lesson plans and activities from the Get Smart About Energy Program. Both are aligned to the fiscal and literacy standards here at our facility. (CART Transcript, January 2005)

The building was designed by a company, unanimously approved by the school board, that had extensive experience building other spaces for schools and universities that served deaf and hard of hearing students. It had a system of lighting and roof monitors that allowed natural lighting into typically deep interior areas of rooms, yet minimized glare, thus allowing deaf and hard of hearing students to access American Sign Language unimpeded. The building's artwork was donated by two internationally famous deaf artists. The building was later designated a "School of the Twenty-First Century" by *Architectural Record* and *GreenSource* publications (CART Transcript, September 2005). The Director of Finance reported that savings in energy dollars were at the 11 percent mark by March of the following year (CART Transcript, March 2006). The campus needed a building, and the school board took the opportunity to assure that the building design would be state-of-the-art and thus serve deaf and hard of hearing students optimally, as well as be a facility that met high environmental and economic standards.

In addition, the school board adhered to the vision and goals set for the Strategic Plan while envisioning new opportunities for the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf to serve its students on the main campus. The building came to fruition through like-minded, strategic thinking on the part of the school board members.

Evaluation

Initial analysis of the data produced the five typologies that organized the previous section of this chapter. That section focused on the processes of description within the first and second dimensions of Eisner's (1998) educational criticism. Beyond description and interpretation of the data, Eisner (2002) also emphasized that value judgments must be made with respect to the data's educational significance. This process of evaluation, the third dimension of educational criticism (Eisner, 1998), is "vital" (p. 99) to determine if the phenomena studied contribute to the attainment of what Dewey (1938) termed "educative" rather than "miseducative" experiences. School board decision-making, the focus of the present study should, therefore, enhance the attainment of those ends.

Each of the three sections which follows presents excerpts from the data which support a value statement regarding processes the MECDHH/GBSD school board used in their decision-making. The literature from educational leadership and deaf education then provides arguments that such processes have educational merit.

Allowing voices to be heard

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf School Board CART Transcripts revealed that the school board supported voice in three ways (CART Transcripts, January 2005 through May 2018). First, although the MECDHH/GBSD school board had a chairperson to lead meetings, every board member had a voice in the decisions that were made (CART Transcript, August 2005 through May 2018). Board members were open-minded and respectful (CART Transcript, May 2007) of each

other even when there were disagreements about how to deal with a challenge. As stated by a deaf board member:

I do not agree with the recommendation that we become Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. We need to keep the name Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. GBSD is the school's identity and deaf students' home away from home. We have many traditions and memories that started here. And we need to honor those as well as the Governor's will. I propose that we, at least, put the two names together. (CART Transcript, April 2005)

This excerpt shows an example of the importance of organizational memory. As a result of the discussion following the board member's proposal, the official name became Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf.

Second, the school board used various techniques for drawing in everyone's voices, including board homework that was then shared when the group met (CART Transcript, June 2012), listing pros and cons for ideas and decisions (CART Transcript, January 2017), rank ordering of goals (CART Transcript, August 2012), and board surveys of members' perceptions that were then discussed (School Board Minutes, January 2005 through May 2018).

Additionally, the school board allowed potential new board members the opportunity to attend meetings for three months before they officially joined the board. While waiting for the governor's appointment to become members of the board, the individuals had the opportunity to learn about the school board and to be prepared to use their own voices, thus building capacity and knowledge (CART Transcript, May 2018).

Finally, in order to provide space for individual voices to be heard, the school board did not rush decision-making. The school board chairperson explained:

We are not here to rush decisions around policies, procedures, and goals. It is important that we all contribute to the discussion, that we all make proposals about what we believe is in the best interest of serving deaf and hard of hearing students in Maine. We each have different perspectives, and we must share them to reach the correct plans of action.

(CART Transcript, April 2005)

Here is an explicit statement regarding how decisions were to be made.

The school board members respectfully sought to understand each other's points of view, a practice that the literature regarding healthy school board behavior supports (NSBA, 2015; Smoley, 1999). CART transcripts (May 2007) showed respectful dissent, and, within the dissent, there were many examples of consensus building (CART Transcripts, June 2005, August 2006, May 2007, February 2017). The consensus building discussions led to decisions made with unity. The school board's respect for voice during the process of decision-making shaped their consensus building. Within the 13 years of school board minutes, there was only one vote, taken by the board in October 2008, that was not unanimous (School Board Minutes, October 2008).

The data within the present study present evidence that the MECDHH/GBSD school board demonstrated processes recommended by the literature for effective school board functioning. Effective boards operate with integrity (Smoley, 1999). They treat each other with respect, patience, and tolerance, even though they may disagree with each other or share vastly different backgrounds and experiences. They are honest with each other, even when conflicts arise. They work hard to establish and maintain norms that encourage all board members to

share their opinions openly and to ask questions to add to their own understanding of the issues they face. They are open-minded and willing to actively listen to fellow board members and seek to understand their various viewpoints. Effective boards communicate truthfully, respectfully, and directly with one another (NSAB, 2015; Smoley, 1999).

Anchoring decisions in the vision and mission

Data analysis of the MECDHH/GBSD school board documents indicated that the MECDHH/GBSD school board developed a new strategic plan every three to five years in order to establish a vision, mission, core values and measurable goals (CART Transcripts, April 2005, October 2008, June 2013, June 2017). Development of these strategic plans explicitly focused the board on the importance of the vision and mission as central in making decisions for the Agency.

Further, school board policies were made to serve Maine's deaf and hard of hearing students. From a board member:

We need to keep in mind that our policies have to benefit our students and the services we provide. We need to focus on ensuring that language and communication are included in the policies that specifically address the children, as serving them is our mission. Even policies that are about staff procedures must be carefully crafted to benefit the students. (CART Transcript, August 2006)

This excerpt provides an example of how school board members viewed the relevance of the vision and the mission of the Agency to their decision-making. Further, when creating policies that specifically addressed student services, the school board also acknowledged the need to

ensure that language and communication in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students remain the focus of their decision-making (Dawson & Quinn, 2004).

Of prime importance was for the board to review policies each month in light of the vision and mission (School Board Minutes, August 2005 through August 2017). To that end, the MECDHH/GBSD School Board created a yearly calendar of policy topics to ensure that they were all reviewed.

Developing policies to support the vision and mission

The policy-making role of the school board is included in Chapter 101 of Title 20-A in Maine Law. Policy making is a responsibility of the board. Indeed, effective board governance means acting as policy-making boards by establishing, updating, and following policies that guide a school agency's operations (NSBA, 2015). The National School Boards Association (2015) lists policy making as one of its five key activities of an effective school board:

Policy is how a board sustainably exercises power to serve students. Through policy, school boards establish a set of cohesive guidelines to transform vision into reality.

Effective policy and board operations are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time establishing the infrastructure and operations required to drive student achievement. (p. 4)

When the literature focuses on serving students, it is acknowledging the importance of the vision and mission of a particular organization. In this case, the MECDHH/GBSD school board developed policy with an eye toward the vision and mission (CART Transcript, August 2008).

Policies may need to be examined in light of the current context (NSBA, 2015). An example occurred when the GBSD dormitories were closed due to a reduction in state funding.

This change in context necessitated a change in policy. The school board needed to find other resources and reallocate current resources to maintain housing services for deaf and hard of hearing children. As a result, the school board examined other opportunities for boarding in order to keep high school students together, a policy in their mission statement to serve the needs of high school students (See Typology 5). They were ultimately housed in another location that kept them together while saving school resources (CART Transcript, June 2009). Thus, even though the policies regarding dormitories changed, the school board remained anchored in the school's vision and mission while adjusting the policies to fit the new context.

Another example occurred when the school board changed its program, Kids Like Me (KLM). Kids Like Me had been a program in which area deaf and hard of hearing students came together for social gatherings and the opportunity to enlarge their peer groups. Initially, only students within a "reasonable" geographic area could be brought together for an afternoon (CART Transcript, 2005). Over the years, between 2005 and 2018, KLM expanded to hosting weekend adventures on Mackworth Island, the location of Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. These adventures included fishing, skiing, and movie nights, along with opportunities for students to share frustrations and concerns about deafness and opportunities for students to learn how to advocate for themselves (CART Transcripts, May 2007 through January 2018). Given the vision and mission of MECDHH/GBSD and parent requests, the school board revised policies about KLM and the students they served. These revised policies emphasized the provision of language and communication opportunities for students (Executive Director Report, January 2018).

The decision-making processes of the school board reflected what the literature has described—that the social and political context of school boards constantly changes, and such changes, in turn, lead to challenges in practice (Smylie, 2010). School leadership must be able to manage changes in the social and political context (Harris, 2010), as the school board of MECDHH/GBSD demonstrated in the examples provided above. The strategic plan of a school board, including its vision and mission (McGraw, 2003), should reflect the voices of the board members and stakeholders and identify the resources necessary to address these challenges. Further, the decision-making processes of a school board need to be anchored in the vision and mission of the board (McGraw, 2003), as the school board of MECDHH/GBSD also demonstrated.

From another perspective, the concept of evaluation might include the recognition of what might have been expected in the data based on the review of the literature but was not evident in the data. For example, the literature noted that conflict among board members was not unusual (Sell, 2005). However, the data from MECDHH/GBSD school board minutes and related documents provided no evidence of conflict even though disagreements were recorded.

Thematics

The fourth dimension of Eisner's (1998) process of educational criticism is thematics. "The formulation of themes within an educational criticism means identifying the recurring messages that pervade the situation, . . . [that is,] the dominant features of the situation. In a sense, a theme is like a pervasive quality" (p. 104). Analysis of data in the present study led to the development of several themes: (a) The board focused on striving for legitimacy; (b) The board valued stakeholders; and (c) The school board fostered a reciprocal relationship with other

agencies. The following sections describe these themes and justify how they are grounded in the data.

Theme 1: The school board focused on striving for legitimacy through adherence to its vision and mission.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the literature has noted that conformity to rules, policies, practices, and procedures has been necessary for schools to achieve legitimacy and, thus, for schools to survive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 2008). Legitimacy is, in part, earned by schools and programs through meeting external accreditation standards, as in meeting the standards of the New England Association of Colleges and Schools, or adherence to a particular educational philosophy valued by the stakeholders whom the schools serve, such as support for ASL or the Auditory Verbal approach in deaf education. Schools can also gain legitimacy to the extent that they satisfy the needs of other organizations and obtain necessary resources that, in turn, sustain their programs and services (Meyer & Rowan, 2008). Further, beyond valuing external standards and a philosophical position, legitimacy for a school is also achieved through acknowledging how it uses research knowledge and adheres to best educational practices. (Meyer & Rowan, 2008).

The MECDHH/GBSD school board earned legitimacy in several ways as demonstrated by the following three examples. They developed a policy stating that all professional staff had to be credentialed as required by the Maine Department of Education (CART Transcript, January 2005). They supported the leadership team in achieving preschool accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC; CART Transcript, October 2016). In addition, the board supported the leadership team in researching, promoting, and

evaluating best practices in Deaf Education. School legitimacy is necessary for program sustainability (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). These three examples illustrate how the MECDHH/GBSD school board sought legitimacy.

Theme 2: The school board valued stakeholders.

Smoley (1999) found that “effective boards exhibit the characteristics of well-functioning groups; a feeling of cohesiveness and of sharing goals and values” (p. xvii). The school board of MECDHH/GBSD valued stakeholders, both internal and external, not as rhetoric, but as an action to use stakeholder knowledge to help the board as they focused on the vision and mission to better serve deaf and hard of hearing students (see Typology 4).

For example, the MECDHH/GBSD school board shared goals and values with stakeholders. The Executive Director reported to the board:

At our most recent stakeholders’ meeting that included members from the Department of Education, our school board, as well as school district special education directors, our goal was to arrive at a consensus pertaining to the future needs of our consumers. What I see is encouraging. More people are coming together as collaborative thinkers and problem solvers as we share our goals. There are clear signs that we are more inclined to constructively discuss organizational issues. (CART Transcript, November 2005)

This excerpt refers to the efforts of the MECDHH/GBSD school board to collaborate with and share goals with stakeholders in identifying the future needs of Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing students.

Another example of collaboration with stakeholders demonstrated the school board's efforts to focus on their vision in better serving deaf and hard of hearing students. The Executive Director reported:

[Our outreach director] was part of a presentation with the Maine Newborn Hearing Program on what we are doing toward the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) . . . process. This process was developed with our stakeholders to ensure that families get the support they need throughout the EHDI process in Maine. We have achieved our vision of being the first contact after a hospital has identified a baby with hearing loss, and we want to help families during their time of decision-making for their baby and family. (CART Transcript, May 2014)

The MECDHH/GBSD school board partnered with other agencies and stakeholders to achieve their vision. Such collaboration and partnerships indicate efforts to value stakeholders beyond the immediate school community.

A third example is evident in the decision of the MECDHH/GBSD school board to approve the leadership team's efforts to share nationally knowledge of how deaf and hard of hearing students were being served in Maine. This decision to share knowledge with other schools reflects efforts to legitimize the work of the profession for the good of the profession. As reported by the school's Director of Statewide and Family Services:

I have had a number of individuals that want to come see our programs, especially the preschool, from six different states: Colorado, Indiana, California, and Utah. I can't remember the other two. They were very interested in our vision and mission. They will

replicate our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that we have with Child Development Services. (CART Transcript, January 2010)

Although the MECDHH/GBSD frequently looked at the programs of other schools for the deaf, they also hosted schools and programs for the deaf to share innovative ideas because they valued their relationships with those stakeholders.

Theme 3: The school board valued the sharing of new programs and procedures with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Along with adherence to vision and mission and valuing stakeholders, the school board defined the services they offered, not just to the benefit of their immediate group of students, but also in serving the broader profession of deaf educators serving other groups of students. For example, the school board and leadership team worked with other schools for the deaf and agencies that serve deaf and hard of hearing students to understand how they made decisions and to share ideas about programming. The MECDHH/GBSD staff, with approval from the school board, often visited other schools for the deaf to learn about new ideas, programming, and service delivery models.

The school board also supported the leadership team's efforts in sharing with professional colleagues, that is, sharing how deaf and hard of hearing students were being served in Maine. They received staff from other schools for the deaf to share with them service delivery models used at GBSD, such as the preschool bilingual and bimodal model (see Typology 1). Those interactions resulted in reciprocal relationships with other professionals, giving further legitimacy to the profession (Senge, 2006, p. 75).

This sharing of ideas among programs and replication, where appropriate, of practices is called isomorphism. Isomorphism is defined as “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 66), that is, places they perceive as more successful than they are. Isomorphism has three forms. Coercive isomorphism, for example, comes from the regulatory role of Departments of Education. Normative isomorphism occurs within teacher certification requirements. A third form is mimetic isomorphism, which results, for example, when a school for the deaf tries to model itself after another school for the deaf that appears to have more success. Success, for example, can look like increased enrollment, higher standing in the Deaf Community, and more stable finances (Hanson, 2001). Isomorphism, however, does not always benefit an agency because the process of emulating or copying a form does not always recognize how the parts fit together, or what the overall strategy and vision were when the original agency designed the part. Isomorphism can only show the possibilities (Senge, 2006).

An example of the concept of isomorphism operating at MECDHH/GBSD occurred in 2004. The school board examined educational practices at another school for the deaf. The school board approved a team of administrators and teachers to visit the Austine School for the Deaf in Vermont. The Austine School had developed a comprehensive transition program for its students, including an independent living opportunity, as well as a full range of on-the-job experiences. The MECDHH/GBSD team worked with the Austine School for the Deaf to try and replicate the program in Maine (CART Transcript, April 2005). In this case, however, the school board of MECDHH/GBSD successfully replicated only parts of the Austine School for the Deaf transition program, specifically the use of a local technology high school and the

development of student internship opportunities. The school board's efforts to adopt the transition practices at the Austine School for the Deaf had limits, thus reflecting Senge's caution (2006) about the need to understand the context of practice within other schools' programs.

Sharing what has been learned is another element of a learning organization.

Professional interaction among participants at conferences provided another avenue for the MECDHH/GBSD school to share ideas, concerns, and solutions in an effort to further best practices. The Executive Director reported the following to the school board:

Thank you for approving my attendance at the Conference for Executive Directors of Private Schools Serving Deaf Children. At this conference, there were six deaf schools represented. I found it helpful to know that these schools are facing many of the same issues that we are: changing demographics, challenges with funding, and difficulty recruiting staff. We shared ideas and expertise, agreed to share resumé's, and other tools to help keep us all alive. (CART Transcript, March 2015)

In addition to emulating programming of other schools for the deaf, the leadership of MECDBB/GBSD sought opportunities to learn from others about their efforts to remain viable in serving students who are deaf and hard of hearing. They nurtured their relationships, thus building a foundation for leaders to work together to address shared challenges (Penuel & Gallagher, 2017) facing schools for the deaf.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Four described the process of data analysis used in the present study to understand the decision-making processes of the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) school board.

Eisner's (1998) four dimensions of educational criticism served as the overall structure for data analysis. The discussion of the data was organized according to description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. The processes of description and interpretation were structured using typological analysis (Hatch, 2002). Five typologies relevant to decision-making were developed. Those typologies were: (a) attending to the centrality of language and communication; (b) building capacity; (c) navigating resources; (d) responding to stakeholders; and (e) envisioning opportunities.

Data analysis then supported how the work of the MECDHH/GBSD school board reflected important educational values during decision-making. Those educational values were (a) allowing voices to be heard; (b) anchoring decisions in the vision and mission; and (c) developing policies to support the vision and mission. Thematics, the fourth dimension of educational criticism, offered three themes: (a) the school board focused on striving for legitimacy through adherence to the vision and mission; (b) the school board valued stakeholders; and (c) the schoolboard valued the sharing of new programs and procedure with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing. These educational values and themes offered general principles or naturalistic generalizations derived from data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Chapter Five presents a summary of the present study and discussion of its limitations, its generalizability, and recommendations for school board decision-making practice. The study's credibility is also addressed, along with research recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the present study was to understand the practices and processes used by the school board of the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) to keep their program viable for serving Maine's deaf and hard of hearing students. Chapter Five presents a summary of the present study, its limitations, and a discussion of its credibility and warrant. Discussion also includes the study's generalizability, implications from the study regarding school boards' decision-making processes, recommendations for further research, and conclusions reached.

Summary of the Present Study

Chapter One presented an introduction to the present study and a brief overview the challenges school boards face both internally and externally (Cotton, 2003; Fullan, 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Owens & Valesky, 2015; Trombly, 2014). The discussion also included the particular challenges that schools for the deaf face which have resulted in several schools for the deaf and hard of hearing being forced to close their doors. Thus, fewer schooling options are available for deaf and hard of hearing students that adequately address deaf children's language development, critical for social and academic success. The focus on how one school board had developed strategies to continually serve deaf and hard of hearing children occurred in order to develop knowledge about the decision-making processes that may be of service to other schools for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Chapter One then described the theoretical framework that included school board governance theory, institutional theory, and organizational resilience theory to inform the present study in understanding the decision-making processes used by the school board of the Governor

Baxter School for the Deaf (GBSD) and, subsequently, the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MECDHH). The three theories influenced both the development of the research question and the review of the literature for the present study.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the decision-making processes of the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf as they redesigned their school program to address the challenges they faced in order to remain a viable educational option for deaf and hard of children. The purpose led to the research question: “What organizational practices and decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children?” To understand how the GBSD school board arrived at decisions, content analysis as a research design focused on school board meeting minutes from January 2005 through May 2018, real-time captioning of members’ comments, the executive director’s reports, and other related documents.

Chapter One also described the significance of this study and its possible benefits to school board members. Results of the study focusing on school board decision-making processes could benefit other school boards of schools for the deaf when they face internal and external challenges, as well as other school boards when faced with similar challenges. The description of specific processes that the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf used to redesign their programs could also contribute to the knowledge and theory regarding school reform and governance procedures.

Chapter Two provided a review of the literature related to school board governance. It examined theories and research supporting school boards in their decision making, school board

governance theory, institutional theory, and organizational resilience theory. A history of deaf education in the United States provided context for understanding the marginalization of deaf and hard of hearing children and the need for schools for the deaf and hard of hearing in spite of the challenges faced by those school boards as they provide options for their students. The chapter also examined literature related to the right to language for deaf and hard of hearing children.

The conceptual framework for the present study also included theories of school board governance and the role of organizational memory in organizational decision-making. The conceptual framework also included the role of institutional theory, that is, how structures, rules, norms, and routines guide public organizations so that they can increase their ability to survive. Organizational resilience theory, the third part of the conceptual framework, informed how school boards “learn the lessons of the change process by feeding the experience back into organizational memory and learning” (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017, p. 660).

Chapter Three described the research design for this qualitative study, in addition to the choice to focus on school board minutes and other documents from one school for the deaf and hard of hearing as they made decisions to remain viable. Chapter Three also included discussion of the “Researcher as Tool,” that described my professional and personal experiences as a teacher of the deaf and school administrator at schools for the deaf where I expanded my expertise regarding how deaf and hard of hearing children acquire language and developed programs specifically for those students. Researcher as Tool thus described how these experiences led to the development of my connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998) regarding deaf

education at schools for the deaf and how these experiences contributed to shaping the research process.

Strategies from qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) shaped the process of data collection from school board minutes and related documents. Categories, gleaned from the literature, led to the development of ten questions to guide the process of collecting relevant data.

Ethical considerations governing the present study noted that all documents are in the public record. Even though no IRB approval was necessary to protect individuals' identities and the security of the data, no individual names were used in referring to the data during data analysis.

Chapter Three also included discussion of how the research design and research strategies of the present study led to procedures to support its credibility and warrant for its conclusions. Howe and Eisenhart's (1990) five standards for qualitative research and Eisner's (1998) tenets of transparency, and referential adequacy were selected to guide arguments in support of credibility and warrant.

Chapter Four presented the analysis of the data gathered from the Maine Education Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) school board minutes and related documents, such as directors' reports and CART transcripts, in order to understand the decision-making practices and procedures used by the school board. Hatch's (2002) typological analysis provided guidelines for developing five typologies to organize the data collected from the documents: (a) attending to the centrality of language; (b) building capacity; (c) navigating resources; (d) responding to stakeholders; and (e) envisioning opportunities.

Eisner's (1998) concepts of educational connoisseurship and the four dimensions of educational criticism provided the overall framework for data analysis, with the literature of the field facilitating the interpretation of the data. The five typologies organized the use of the first two dimensions of Eisner's educational criticism, description and interpretation. In this latter dimension, "the critic uses what he or she sees and interprets it in order to arrive at some conclusions about the character of educational practice and to its improvement" (Eisner, 1976, p. 146). The third dimension of educational criticism, evaluation, focused on the values that the school board used when making decisions: (a) allowing voices to be heard; (b) anchoring decisions in the vision and mission; and (c) developing policies to support the vision and mission. Eisner's fourth dimension of educational criticism, thematics, identified three recurring messages, or themes, embedded in the analysis of the data: (a) The school board focused on striving for legitimacy through adherence to its vision and mission; (b) The school board valued stakeholders; and (c) The school board valued the sharing of new programs and procedures with other schools and programs for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the processes and practices used by the school board of MECDHH/GBSD in decision-making. For qualitative research studies, three types of qualitative data are available: (a) interview data; (b) observational data; and (c) data provided by documents (Patton, 2002). The present study was limited to documents, that is, to the school board minutes and related documents of the one school for the deaf and hard of hearing in Maine. However, the present study did not include minutes from Executive Sessions of the school board because they are not considered public record. Another limitation of the

study occurred when limiting the timeframe for the selection of documents to those from January 2005 through May 2018. These documents provided rich data representing what occurred during those meetings. Examining documents only through May 2018 eliminated documents after that date, given that I joined the staff of MECDHH/GBSD and attended school board meetings, potentially introducing a conflict of interest within the research design.

Research limitations also recognize those conditions in the present study that cannot be controlled by the researcher (Patton, 2002). In the present study, the data set examined was incomplete. Though the majority of school board minutes were balanced with CART transcripts, that is, real-time captioning of the school board members' comments, several months of school board minutes did not have the accompanying CART transcripts, a possible limitation to understanding more fully meeting events. Another limitation was inherent in the school board minutes because they were authored by different staff members who may have introduced their own points of view in distilling discussions and decisions made. However, the school board minutes were augmented by the CART transcripts. Directors' reports and other documents referenced during school board meetings contributed further material to the data set in order to understand the decision-making strategies of the MECDHH/GBSD school board.

Generalizability of the Present Study

The process of generalization in qualitative research differs from the process typically encountered in quantitative research (e.g., Eisner, 1998; Patton, 2002). Qualitative studies focus on the particular (Eisner, 1998). The present study focused on the particular within the school board minutes and related documents in a natural setting of one school for the deaf and hard of hearing in Maine during one expanded period of time. This naturalistic inquiry, that is, the

“capturing [of] naturally occurring activity in natural settings” (Hatch, 2002, p. 26) assumed that the process of generalization must proceed inductively. Furthermore,

If the term generalization is to have any meaning at all, it must be with reference to particular audiences. It is up to each audience to determine what, if anything, the information means and to determine for itself the information’s applicability. The principal burden of synthesis always lies with the recipient of an evaluation report; it cannot lie with the evaluator. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 116-117)

Thus, the responsibility for generalizing lies with readers (Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner, 1998). The present study presents an opportunity for readers to engage with and understand the text to determine its transferability (Eisner, 1998). Thus, it is the readers who will determine if the present study has any lessons to be applied to their situations, as no two situations are alike (Eisner, 1998).

The researcher can also make suggestions, that is, identify lessons that are relevant to the study at hand and are of possible relevance beyond the study at hand and invite the reader to consider the nature of such transferability. In the present study, three major lessons to be learned are: (a) school boards of schools for the deaf should repeatedly refer to their vision and mission when making decisions; (b) they should cultivate and value their internal and external stakeholders; and (c) they should engage in reciprocal sharing of procedures and programs with other schools and programs for the deaf.

Recommendations for School Boards

Without the influence of “effective leadership” (Northouse, 2016, p. 361), organizational success may be ephemeral. The root of success for school boards lies in effective decision-

making (Smoley, 1999). Decisions must be made about policies, personnel, funding, facilities, the development of programs, and more. Results from the present study parallel dominant themes present in the literature.

First, developing a shared vision is paramount. According to Barth (1990), visions are inspiring. They illustrate:

an overall conception of what the educator wants the organization to stand for: what its primary mission is; what its basic core values are; a sense of how all the parts fit together; and above all, how the vision maker fits into the grand plan. (p. 148)

The vision is the starting point for developing strategic plans and the policies and goals that derive from them. Furthermore, board members and leadership should be cognizant that all decisions should be aligned with the vision of the school. The present study underscored the primary importance of such alignment to vision in the decision-making of the MECDHH/GBSD school board which contributed to the viability of the school and, therefore, the value of such efforts for decision-making in other educational contexts.

Second, strong school board leadership allows school board members' voices to be heard. They develop avenues so that they will be able to participate in discussions and decision-making. Norms for resolving communication challenges among themselves are developed to advance improvement from within (Barth, 1990). Evidence from data analysis in the present study indicate that this school board did that. In the present study, all school board members participated in decision-making. Norms were established to enhance communication of members with each other.

Third, school board members and educational leaders should value their internal and external stakeholders. Collaboration promotes ways of working together to achieve goals, commitment to improving the school, and learning that is inclusive of all stakeholders. It allows for the sharing of ideas and expertise. Cultivating such relationships with stakeholders should be at the core of effective leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Literature suggests that school improvement relies on inclusive decision-making (Carver & Carver, 2006; Day, 2000; Smylie, 2010). Smoley (1999) also acknowledged the importance of the flow of communications connecting to the community. In this study, the community indicates stakeholders. Referring to the outside community, Smoley noted:

The board provides for an open flow of relevant information to and from the community. Board members included in their examples of effective board action the way in which they promote the flow of information and understanding between community and board. (pp. 58-59).

He also addressed connecting with the internal stakeholders by stressing the importance of transparency in obtaining input, explaining actions, and facilitating communication.

In the present study, stakeholders were invited to share ideas that offered support to the school board's decision-making. Data analysis of the MECDHH/GBSD school board minutes and related documents substantiated that stakeholder relationships were valued and considered during school board decision-making.

The above recommendations apply to school leaders in many educational settings as they work with stakeholders. School leaders would be well advised to maintain open communication,

value their staff, and use the vision, mission and strategic plan as a road map for the school's educational journey.

Although the literature over many years has recommended school board decision-making processes, school boards often have not followed those recommendations. The present study affirms that the MECDHH/GBSD school board, indeed, followed those recommendations in their decision-making processes. The study, therefore, reminds school board members that those recommendations are worthy of serious consideration.

Credibility and Warrant

As discussed in Chapter Three, there are strategies for judging the merits of the research design, data collection, and data analysis. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) offered five standards for assessing credibility. As “studies must be judged against a background of existent knowledge” (p. 7), the adequacy of the review of related literature is necessary for credibility to be supported. In the present study, Chapter Two, the Review of Related Literature, focused on the challenges faced by school boards and how school board decision-making processes can support a school. The literature review of Chapter Two also included a history of deaf education in the United States that reveals the marginalization of deaf and hard of hearing children which exists to this day due to reduced educational opportunities, such as those that occur when many schools for the deaf close. Indeed, the research question—“What organizational practices and decision-making processes did the school board of the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf adopt while redesigning and restructuring the school to be a viable educational option for Maine's deaf and hard of hearing children”—was developed from the review of related literature.

Another standard from Howe and Eisenhart (1990) required disclosure of the researcher

as tool. Chapter Three included a section, the Researcher as Tool, where I acknowledged my connoisseurship and positionality as an advocate for schools for the deaf. Howe and Eisenhart (1990) addressed the researcher's stance in terms of transparency and potential research bias. My stance comes from 5 years studying pedagogy with a focus on language and literacy and 46 years of professional experience teaching deaf and hard of hearing students and administrating schools for the deaf and hard of hearing. These professional experiences influenced my point of view with regard to the present study.

Two other standards offered by Howe and Eisenhart (1990) emphasized the need for fit between the research question and the procedures for data collection and data analysis and the need for rigor in the use of those procedures. Chapter One connected the research question to the need for qualitative research using directed content analysis, and Chapter Three provided detail about the research design and specific data collecting techniques. Chapter Four explained the data collection and data analysis in detail. Thus, the research process provided transparency about the research procedures and the rationale for using them, thereby supporting the claim that the research was conducted rigorously.

A final standard for assessing the credibility of a qualitative research study focuses on ethics in research. The Institutional Review Board at the University of North Florida approved the conducting of this study even though formal examination was not necessary, given that no human subjects were involved and that the documents examined are in the public record (see Appendix A). However, in data analysis, no individual names were used, only the roles that the participants held.

Eisner also provided a standard for judging the credibility of a study. “An educational critic’s work is referentially adequate when readers are able to see what they would have missed without the critic’s observation” (Eisner, 1998, p. 114). Indeed, throughout the data analysis discussion in Chapter Four, excerpts from the school board minutes, CART transcripts, and related documents were cited to provide evidence of referential adequacy and thus to contribute to the study’s credibility. Eisner also stressed the importance of transparency with regard to the process of data interpretation. Throughout data analysis, in the present study, data interpretation was explicitly supported by references to the literature and by the use of my professional connoisseurship.

Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further research recognize the limitations of the present study. Indeed, no one study can examine all dimensions of a given topic. The present study focused on examining the decision-making practices of one school board for the deaf and hard of hearing in the United States, the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (MECDHH/GBSD) school board, as they sought to keep the school as a viable option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children. The present study focused on one Agency, their school board minutes, CART transcripts, and related documents that were analyzed to understand the practices of the MECDHH/GBSD school board from January 2005 through May 2018. Content analysis using these several types of documents yielded perspective and understanding regarding how the MECDHH/GBSD school board made decisions in order to provide a viable educational option for Maine’s deaf and hard of hearing children.

Other research approaches could be used to understand the processes this school board and others use in their decision-making. For example, school board members could be interviewed and in order to provide their perspectives on how their board interacts to make decisions. Board meetings could be observed over time to identify the patterns of decision-making processes. Other sources of document data, such as hand-outs and videos, may be relevant to researchers working in other contexts where school boards operate. Finally, for a quantitative study on school board decision-making practices, a survey could be developed based on recommendations from the literature. The survey could be used to have school boards of schools for the deaf and hard of hearing self-report their behaviors. Such surveys could also be part of research efforts investigating school boards in other settings.

Conclusions

The literature suggests that school boards have two primary roles. They are to be the policymakers, and they are to provide leadership that strives to create a safe, trusting, and stable climate in which students and staff can best learn and grow (Lorentzen & McCaw, 2015; Smoley, 1999; Togneri & Anderson, 2006). The present study provided evidence of decision-making strategies used by the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing/Governor Baxter School for the Deaf school board to keep their program viable in order to serve well the deaf and hard of hearing children in Maine.

The following conclusions were derived from data analysis. The MECDDHH/GBSD school board supported the importance of vision and mission. Decision-making and policy development aligned with the vision and mission. Such decisions also adhered to the importance of the language and culture of deaf and hard of hearing students. Further, the school board

supported the role of stakeholders in providing appropriate and viable options for the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. The actions of the school board supported the view that the reciprocal sharing of educational knowledge matters because it benefits the profession in its service to deaf and hard of hearing students and because it promotes the learning of all. The school board also honored the school's traditions and organizational memory in their decision-making.

Furthermore, data analysis revealed that the three pillars of Institutional Theory (Scott, 2008) that is, the normative, the regulatory, and the cognitive-cultural pillars and practices worked in synergy with each other during the decision-making processes of the MECDHH/GBSD school board. Analysis also showed that the influence of organizational memory supported decision-making, such as when the school board created the umbrella organization of MECDHH so that deaf and hard of hearing students could still be served statewide, even as the state was facing financial challenges. Finally, this school board was resilient (Mamouni Limnios, et al., 2012). For example, in choosing to honor their past practices, they resisted some change while at the same time becoming innovative and proactive by creating MECDHH. The decision-making processes of the MECDHH/GBSD school board worked to keep the school viable in meeting the needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, and, thus, to "stay alive" as an educational option.

This final chapter of the present study summarized its purpose and context, the review of the literature supporting the need for research and the conceptual framework guiding the study, the design and research methodology used in data collection and data analysis, limitations, the arguments for the credibility of the present study, and its support for the study's conclusions

being warranted. The chapter also included a discussion of generalizability, recommendations for school boards and leadership, recommendations for further research, and final conclusions from the present study.

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508.

APPENDIX A: NOTICE OF EXEMPT STATUS

IRB# 1475216-1 Notice of Exempt Status

Inbox



IRB (ORSP) <irb@unf.edu>

Tue, Sep 10, 2019, 1:26 PM

to Redacted

Elinor, me

Hi Ms. Hilding and Dr. Scheirer,

I'm writing with regard to your project IRB# 1475216-1 "The Decision Making Processes for redesigning the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf: A Content Analysis of School Board Minutes." Based on the documents you submitted, the UNF IRB declared your project exempt from further review. You should have received an IRBNet notice when that board document was published. Please log in to IRBNet to view and download the Declaration of Exempt Status Memo for your project (directions below).

The Declaration of Exempt Status Memo contains details about IRB requirements for exempt projects. As outlined in the memo, if you consider making an amendment to this project only substantive changes require formal amendments, please see III B 1.5 within the [UNF IRB SOPs](#) or contact your IRB administrator.

The Declaration of Exempt Status Memo and other board documents can be found within IRBNet by following these directions:

1. Log on to IRBNet (www.irbnet.org).
2. Select the project for which you have a board document waiting. You can select the project by clicking on the blue project title from the list of projects listed on the first page you see after logging in to IRBNet.
3. On the left-hand side of the page, click the Reviews button. You should now be able to see all Board Documents published in IRBNet for this project (see the Item 12 of the [Common IRBNet Functions](#) document for more information).
4. Click on either the document icon or the document type in order to download a copy of the board document to your local computer.

As always, let us know if you have any questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Eva

Eva Espique-Bueno

University of North Florida

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE GBSD SCHOOL BOARD

Anna Purna, School Board Chairperson
Owen Logue, Executive Director
MECDHH/GBSD
1 Mackworth Island
Falmouth, ME 04105

Dear Ms. Purna and Dr. Logue:

As you know, I am pursuing my doctorate in Educational Leadership. For my dissertation topic, I am interested in studying the school board practices of GBSD and, subsequently, MECDHH. My initial thought is to begin just prior to the creation of MECDHH and continue to May 2018, prior to my employment here.

I am respectfully requesting that you grant me permission to review all school board-related documents, such as minutes, CART transcripts, and board packets. As they are all in the public domain, I understand that I can access them through the Maine Freedom of Information Act, but I want you to know what my plan is so that I am transparent with you. I have received Internal Review Board approval to conduct this study. Once completed, it would be my honor to share the results with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Falbo

APPENDIX C: SCHOOL BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



One Mackworth Island, Falmouth, ME 04105
(207) 781-3165
(207) 781-6246 Fax
www.mecdhh.org

December 10, 2018

Dear Rebecca Falbo,

The MECDHH/GBSD school board is honored to have you study our school board minutes and related documents. We look forward to reading the results of your study.

All the best,

Anna Purna, Board Chair/ss

VITA

Rebecca Falbo, Ed. D**EDUCATION**

<i>Bloomsburg University</i> , Bloomsburg, PA	Degree: MS	1977	Deaf Education
	Degree: BS	1975	Elementary Education
<i>University of North Florida</i> , Jacksonville, FL	Degree: Ed. D	2020	Educational Leadership

ADMINISTRATIVE and PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**Leadership, Curriculum and Staff Development, Program Management**

Director of Mainstream and Deaf Education Programs – 2018—2020
Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Falmouth, ME

Principal – Deaf Department, 8/2009 - Present
Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind, St. Augustine, FL

Director, 4/2004 – 7/2009
The Charter School at National Deaf Academy, Mount Dora, FL

Director of Regional Programs, 8/2000 – 4/2004
Director of Academic, Residential and Regional Programs, 8/1996 – 8/2000
Director of Academic and Residential Programs, 8/1993 – 8/1996
Director of Vocation and Guidance, 8/1991 – 8/1993
Director of Wheeler Community Project (Supported Employment Program), 8/1991 – 8/1993
Principal K-12, 8/1989 – 8/1991
Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc./Austine School for the Deaf, Brattleboro, VT

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Team Leader, Delaware School for the Deaf, Newark, DE, 1988-89
Middle/High School Teacher, Reading, Math, English, Sex Education, Science, Gifted education, to Deaf and Deaf-Blind Students, Delaware School for the Deaf, Newark, DE, 1981—1989
Teacher, Birth to Age Five, Speech-, Language-, Visually Impaired, and Deaf children, Project CONNECT, Schnecksville, PA, 1977, 1980—1981
Elementary Teacher, Autism Spectrum Disorder, New York State School for the Deaf, Rome, NY, 1979—1980
Fellowship, Parent-Infant Training, Lexington School for the Deaf, NY 1980
Program Developer, Community Homes, Exton, PA 1979
Middle School Teacher of the Deaf, All Subjects, Rose Tree Media School District, Media, PA, 1977—1978

RELATED EXPERIENCES

Video Relay Interpreter, Sorenson Communications

Certified Trainer in *Time to Teach* and *Differentiated Instruction*, Center for Teacher Effectiveness

Montessori Training – Primary Level, Seacoast Montessori at Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.

Interpreter Training, Rural New England Interpreter Preparation Program, Northeastern University, MA

Special Education Independent Schools Standards Board, Chairperson, VT

Vermont Independent Schools Regional Standards Board, Vice Chair

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf Conference, (yearly) 1989—2018
- ESOL for Administrators, 2011
- Florida Leadership Conference, 2013
- Positive Behavior Support, FSDB 2009, National Deaf Academy 2005
- Administrators Management Meeting, Tampa, FL 2013
- Florida Continuous Improvement Model, 2009, 2006
- Response to Intervention, 2008, 2009
- FISH Training, National Deaf Academy 2007
- National Charter School Conference 2007
- Reading Competencies, 2006
- Florida Educators of the Deaf Conference, (yearly) 2004—2013
- Florida Charter School Conference, (yearly) 2004—2009
- Teaching and Learning Assessment/Instruction, ASCD, 1997

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- Presenter, “Differentiated Instruction across content areas”, FSDB, 2011
- Presenter, “Increasing Classroom Teaching Time”, Mount Dora, 2009
- Presenter, “The Charter School at National Deaf Academy”, Mount Dora Rotary, 2009
- Presenter, “Team Building with DiSC”, Mount Dora, 2004
- Presenter, “Strategic Planning”, Mount Dora, 2005
- Panel, “Beyond the Bandage” Case Study, National Deaf Academy National Conference, 2005
- Presenter, “Ecological Accommodations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”, Cave Spring, GA, 2007
- Presenter, “Testing Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”, Montpelier, VT, 2001
- Presenter, “2-Column Notes”, Brattleboro, VT, 2000
- Presenter, “Rules of Thumb for Excellent Teaching”, Brattleboro, VT 1999
- Presenter, “Meeting the Needs of a Diverse Population”, Brattleboro, VT 1999
- Presenter, “Using Writing to Teach Reading”, Brattleboro, VT, 1998
- Presenter, “Creating a Model Deaf School”, Williston, VT 1997
- Presenter, “Functional Behavior Assessment”, Brattleboro, VT 1996
- Presenter, “Building a Life Skills Curriculum”, Brattleboro, VT 1996, Newark, DE 1987
- Presenter, “Strategic Planning for Independent Schools”, Brattleboro, VT 1988
- Presenter, “Team Building”, Brattleboro, VT 1987, 1990
- Presenter, “Talking to Your Deaf Child about Sex”, Brattleboro, VT 1990; Newark, DE 1986
- Presenter, “How to Read to Your Deaf Child”, Newark, DE 1985
- Presenter, “How to Read to Your Deaf Blind Child”, Newark, DE 1985

- Presenter. "Evaluating Writing", Newark, DE 1984
- Presenter, "Competency-Based Teaching", Newark, DE 1984

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

- Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Maine Directors of Special Education

CERTIFICATIONS

Maine: Teacher of the Deaf (292); Special Education Administration (030)

PREVIOUS CERTIFICATIONS

Pennsylvania: Teacher of the Deaf (Instructional I), Elementary Education Teacher

Colorado: Teacher of the Deaf, Special Education Teacher, Elementary Education Teacher

Delaware: Teacher of the Deaf, Special Education Teacher, Elementary Education Teacher

Vermont: Teacher of the Deaf, Special Education Teacher, Elementary Education Teacher,
Principal, Special Education Administrator

Florida: Teacher of the Deaf, Elementary Education Teacher, Educational Leader, Special Education
Administrator