


Summer 7-2017

# Superintendent Turnover in Guam

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Superintendent Turnover in Guam

by

Alvin Sanga

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree

Doctor of Education

2017

Superintendent Turnover in Guam

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by

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## Superintendent Turnover in Guam

by

Alvin Sanga

Superintendent turnover has been rampant in the public school district in Guam, an unincorporated United States territory; there have been 18 superintendents since the 1981. This qualitative study aimed to identify and analyze potential factors affecting the superintendency in Guam. Social systems theory proposes a number of factors about the dynamics that define the relationship between an individual and a social system to help us understand the behavior of the individual within an organization. To triangulate the data, this study was comprised of individual interviews with Guam superintendents and content analysis of the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to board policies after the audit. Based on social systems theory, major findings suggest that superintendent turnover in Guam is influenced by the following: the Guam Education Board did not understand its roles and responsibilities and often micromanaged the superintendents; the budgetary process for the Guam Department of Education was stressful and problematic; and political pressures from the legislature and the



governor encouraged superintendents to take other roles. Suggestions for improving stability within the superintendency of Guam were offered by former superintendents.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background to the Problem**

During my first four years as an educator in Guam, I experienced firsthand how quickly leadership can change within an organization. I am a native of Guam and began teaching in 2010 at George Washington High School in Mangilao, Guam. Within four years, I taught several high school mathematics courses from pre-algebra to precalculus. While teaching at the high school, I earned my master's degree at the University of Guam and prepared elementary school teachers for the mathematics portion of the praxis examination as an adjunct instructor for the university.

From 2010 to 2014, the Department of Education hired two superintendents and appointed an interim superintendent to lead the school district of Guam for a total of three superintendents within four years. I began to question whether Guam's Department of Education was effective and able to run efficiently with such rapid changes in leadership. From my observations, Guam's students consistently ranked below their mainland counterparts in the United States in academic achievement. As reported in the superintendent's Annual State of Performance Education Report (ASPER), for the previous five years for students K-12 taking the SAT 10, Guam had scored below the 40th percentile with the 50th percentile being the average for the United States. Additional results from the SAT 10 show Guam's students performing at or below the 40th percentile for reading, 30th percentile for mathematics, and 36th percentile for language. Guam's public school high school graduation rate is at 70%, which is 10% below the 80% graduation rate in the United States. Could this problem be partially the result of the short tenure of the superintendent?

In 2009, Evergreen Solutions LLC identified and assessed deficiencies in the Guam Public School System (GPSS) based on its organizational structure, compliance with federal and local laws, compliance with board policies, and other operations, and then released the Management and Curriculum Audit for the Public School System report (Evergreen Solutions LLC, 2009). Evergreen Solutions made many recommendations for the operational area of the Department of Education in Guam; two were particularly applicable to this research. One of its findings was that the turnover rate of superintendents in the GPSS was too high: from 1991 to 2008, there had been 20 school superintendents. Evergreen Solutions concluded that a school system cannot function in an effective and efficient manner with such a high turnover of its superintendent. The final recommendation was to stabilize the central office administration of the GPSS.

While there is very little research about the superintendent on Guam, public school superintendent turnover in the nation has become a popular research topic for a number of years. Several studies have been conducted to tackle questions about mobility rate and the lack of candidates for the superintendent position (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Dlugosh, 1994; Yee & Cuban, 1996). Since 2006, more than 30 dissertations have been written about the superintendency and the longevity within the position in the United States (Atherton, 2008; Berryhill, 2009; Chee, 2008; Freeman, 2011; Gestson, 2009; Kamrath, 2007; Sorgi, 2006; Wheeler, 2012).

The superintendent is the most visible school leader within any school district. The superintendency is a position loaded with high demand from the community and one that contains a great deal of stress. To succeed within the position, an individual must be able to

adapt to a difficult, stressful, and politicized job (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1985; Metzger, 1997). A superintendent must take on several tasks, including serving as the business manager, personnel director, curriculum coordinator, professional development coordinator, and more while balancing communication between the Board of Education and the community (Kamrath, 2007; Sharp & Walter, 1997).

Effective leadership usually determines the success of an organization (Dlott, 2006). School districts run by an effective superintendent should create success for its students (Dlott, 2007; Kowalski, Ellerson, McCord, Petersen, & Young, 2011). Several authors have claimed that the superintendent is an important position for the improvement of schools, but given the difficulty with school boards, political battles, stress, and increasing demands from the community, the job may be far too complex or difficult for any one individual to perform (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Dlugosh, 1994; Kowalski, 1995).

Educational leadership is about relationships, collaboration, and cooperation within the entire community. One of the primary responsibilities of the superintendent is “to play a leading role in building and maintaining strategically significant relationships” (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. iii). Through effective educational leadership, a superintendent could strengthen school board relations, provide stability within the educational system to allow for systematic change, and possibly lead to increased student achievement (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Hansen & Marburger, 1988).

School districts find that constant turnover usually impedes the organization’s ability to create and sustain positive change (Price, 1977). Before discussing the purpose of the study,

attention is given to organizational turnover, the context of the study, and how organizational turnover can inhibit organizational success.

### **Organizational Turnover**

Price (1977) studied organizational turnover and presented a compilation of research on the types of turnover and the effects of turnover. Price discussed two types of turnover—voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary turnover is defined as “individual movement across the membership boundary of a social system that is initiated by the individual” (Price, 1977, p. 9). Voluntary turnover, more commonly, is due to an individual resigning or leaving a position. Involuntary turnover is when an individual is moved out of a social system usually due to being fired or laid off.

Price (1977) noted that voluntary turnover is studied more often than involuntary turnover because (a) most turnover is voluntary, (b) information about the dismissal or firing of an employee can be suppressed to protect the employer or employee from public scrutiny, and (c) involuntary turnover is more subject to control by managers. In further analysis of turnover research, Price revealed that most believe turnover has a negative consequence in relation to organizational effectiveness, yet he also found that there may be positive effects of turnover, such as increased innovation and possible relief from a bothersome supervisor or colleague. Price concluded: “There is certainly an impressive amount of data supporting the idea that successively higher amounts of turnover probably produce successively lower amounts of effectiveness” (p. 111). In the end, turnover may have few positive effects on organizations, while negative effects are seen and felt more. Although Price distinguished between voluntary and involuntary turnover in his studies, for the purposes of this study, *turnover* is defined as a

change from one to another individual in the position of district superintendent, either voluntary or involuntary.

### **Setting of the Study**

The setting of the study is the only public school district of Guam. Guam is an unincorporated United States territory in the Pacific Ocean. At the time of this study, the Department of Education served about 32,000 students within its 41 schools throughout the island. According to the last Annual State of the Public Education Report (ASPER) SY 2013–2014, 97% of public school children on Guam qualified for free or reduced lunches. All the schools on Guam were recognized as low income by the federal government (Guam Department of Education, 2014). The school population on Guam is diverse. A majority of the students are Chamorro, or the indigenous people of Guam (49%). The remaining 51% were Filipino (23%), Pacific Islander (23%), and a mix of Caucasian, African American, and other Asian decent (Fee, Snowden, Stuart, & Baumgartner, 2012). These percentages closely reflect the general population in Guam. A brief description of Guam is presented to build a foundation for this study.

### **Location**

As an unincorporated territory, the United States controls Guam, with its residents having certain fundamental rights as a matter of law, such as First Amendment freedoms. Other constitutional rights, such as the right to vote for the U.S. President, are not available. Guam has 19 villages, and its capital is Hagåtña. Guam is the largest of the Marianas Islands and is located about 3,700 miles West-Southwest of Hawaii, and 1,500 miles east of the Philippines. Guam is a small island—approximately 27 miles long, about five to eight miles wide, and about 210 square

miles in area. It is known for its strategic military and economic purposes under the U.S. government.

The island of Guam experiences a tropical marine climate that is warm and humid moderated by seasonal trade winds and a wet and dry season. The dry season lasts from January to June, while the rainy months are from July to December. Annual rainfall totals 84–116 inches, of which two-thirds falls during the rainy season. Seasonal temperatures and precipitation are also affected by the El-Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and tropical cyclones or typhoons, which cause the largest deviations from average precipitation. An average of three tropical storms and one typhoon pass within 80 nautical miles of Guam each year, and both flooding and drought can impact freshwater supply management and associated infrastructure.

### **Government**

In 1565, Guam was officially claimed by Spain when Miguel Lopez de Legazpi visited the island. The Spaniards brought Jesuit missionaries to Guam to spread Christianity and to develop trade. Guam became a trading port between Mexico and the Philippines. After the Spanish-American War of 1898, control for Guam shifted to the United States. under the Treaty of Paris, and Guam became a U.S. naval station. In World War II (WWII), during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 8, 1941, Guam was captured and colonized by the Imperial Japanese army until 1944. Finally, in 1944, the United States regained control of Guam and used it as a strategic military location for U.S. air and naval forces (Johnson, 1959; Rogers, 1995).

Following WWII, Guam was provided a civilian government under the Guam Organic Act of 1950, which made Guam an unincorporated territory of the United States. In the following years, citizens of Guam were granted U.S. citizenship under the Immigration and Nationality Act

of 1952 and, in 1986, under the Elective Governor Act, citizens were allowed to elect their own governor, lieutenant governor, and other public officials (Johnson, 1959; Rogers, 1995).

Currently, Guam's governance structure includes an elected governor and lieutenant governor. This governance structure houses a unicameral legislature consisting of 15 members, presently consisting of four female and 11 male members, a nonvoting representative in the U.S. Congress, and a judicial court system parallel to the 50 states. A majority of the various government department board members are appointed by the governor with legislative approval.

### **Community**

At the time of this study, the community in Guam included a range of diverse ethnic groups and a population of approximately 165,000, including 12,000 military personnel and their families. Ethnic backgrounds on Guam from the 2010 census included 37% Chamorro, 26% Filipino, 7% Caucasian, and 7% Chuukese and other Asian and Pacific Islanders identities.

The Spanish occupation (1521–1898) greatly influenced the social and religious customs on the island. Roman Catholicism (85%) is the predominant religion, alongside other Christian denominations and a small Jewish community. There are villages, or small cities, that are divided by parishes named after different patron saints of the Roman Catholic Church. Celebrations of patron saints through fiestas, which include novenas and processions, are still practiced.

English and Chamorro, the indigenous language, are the official languages in Guam. English is spoken by a majority of the population and is used within the government and educational operations of the island. In most homes, the first language learned is English, although the Chamorro language is slowly being revived as the first language in Chamorro homes. The Chamorro language is currently taught as a subject in the school system, and the



course is a graduation requirement. The Chamorro language borrows several words from Spanish such as book (*libro*), numbers (*uno, dos, tres, etc.*), and several others.

## **Education**

As this study was being undertaken, the Guam Department of Education (GDOE) operated all the public schools on Guam. The Guam Education Board (GEB) consisted of 11 members, which included six publicly elected members who served a term of two years, three governor-appointed members who served a term of three years, a nonvoting student member elected by the Island-Wide Board of Governing Students (IBOGS), and a nonvoting member appointed by the exclusive bargaining unit that represented teachers and other employees within the GDOE. Currently, the board is responsible for hiring the superintendent, who supervises the operations of the district and sets and oversees policies and regulations (Evergreen, 2009).

The Guam Public School System (GPSS) was similar in structure to the school system on the U.S. mainland, but the power to make decisions on policy or control over the district was held by the GEB. The GEB was the policymaking body of GPSS, while the governor had the legal control of the education system. In recent years, Guam had adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to align its students with what most of the nation used as standards. The adoption of CCSS was rolled out in three phases: (a) unpacking the CCSS to determine the parallels with the adopted curriculum standards of Guam; (b) developing leadership teams within the administration, principals, and teachers to plan and create a strategy to assess Guam's progress; and (c) adopting the CCSS.

The GEB was charged with formulating policies to perform planning and evaluation of public elementary and secondary education in Guam. The GEB's duties and responsibilities

included the following: to establish curriculum goals and policy, to develop graduation policy, to direct the superintendent, and to ensure that other jobs are completed.

The previous title for the position of the superintendent was the Director of Education; from 1981 to 1995, the position was appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature. Several efforts were made to lessen the political influence on the education system and pass the authority to the GEB (Aguon, 1988). The superintendent was appointed and employed by the GEB based on recommendations by the search committee. The superintendent served as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the GPPS under the policies and supervision of the GEB (GEB, 2012). Understanding the relationship between Guam's government and the development of the head of education requires more depth and insight into the GPSS operations and procedures.

The public school system consisted of 41 schools—27 elementary schools (grades K–5), eight middle schools (grades six-eight), and six high schools (grades nine–12). In 2014, the GDOE reported that the total enrollment was 30,955 students within the public school system. There was also a small network of Catholic schools (15), Christian schools (14), and a Japanese school. Each of the public schools was accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which ensures the similarities of the structure of the other United States schools to the Guam schools.

### **History of the Superintendent in Guam**

Prior to 1939, the Director of Education, a Protestant Navy chaplain, was responsible for the educational policy and funding in Guam. The chaplain, who received six weeks of pedagogy training prior to his arrival on Guam, worked under the governor. Thompson (1944), in his study

of Guam's education administration, referred to the chaplain as a well-educated native Filipino with the function of supervising teachers and doing the work of Superintendent. In 1939, the chaplain was formally titled Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In 1950, the Organic Act established Guam's civilian government, which in turn initiated the organization of the education system. Under this act, the governor could appoint the Director of Education or superintendent for a two-year term. The Director of Education had to be approved by the legislature of Guam prior to the appointment being finalized.

Currently, the superintendent is appointed and hired by the board that established a committee to determine the criteria for the selection of the position. Once appointed and hired by the board, the superintendent serves under a contract for usually three years, unless the appointment is for a shorter or longer tenure as determined by the board. The Superintendent of Education has several responsibilities, including advising the board on policies and procedures concerning the administration of personnel matters, staying informed of all federal programs in which Guam might participate, presenting reports periodically at board meetings, and making presentations for action by the board.

Since the 1980s, 18 individuals had led the education system of Guam under the title of Director of Education or superintendent including those in the interim or acting positions. One individual served for two weeks, but the average was about 18 months, and the longest tenure was 12 years, from 1981 to 1993.

Table 1

*List of Superintendents of the Guam Public School System (Chronologically from 1981–2009)*

Tenure	Sex	Ethnicity	Appointed by the governor or board	Native to Guam or Non-native
12 years	Female	Chamorro	Governor	Native
4 years	Female	Chamorro	Governor	Native
1 year	Female	Chamorro	Governor	Native
2 years	Female	Chamorro	Governor	Native
2 years	Male	Chamorro	Governor	Native
11 months	Male	Chamorro	Governor	Native
1 year	Male	Caucasian	Governor	Non-native
2.5 years	Male	Chamorro	Governor	Non-native
4 months	Female	Caucasian	Board	Non-native
8 months	Male	Chamorro	Governor	Native
5 months	Male	Chamorro	Governor	Native
4 months	Male	Chamorro	Board	Native
2 years	Female	Chamorro	Governor	Native
5 years	Female	Filipino	Board	Non-native
3 years	Male	Pacific Islander	Board	Non-native
2 months	Male	Chamorro	Board	Native
2 weeks	Male	Chamorro	Board	Native
3 years	Male	Chamorro	Board	Non-native

(Evergreen Solutions, 2009)

### Statement of the Problem

Stability of school leadership is a major concern for Guam, as instability can have a negative effect on all operations. Frequent change within any organization will eventually cause a breakdown in efficiency and productivity (Price, 1977). When superintendent turnover is rampant, there is little possibility to accomplish sufficient change. Lastly, frequent turnover suggests there may be a systematic problem that needs to be addressed (Price, 1977).

In the 25 years previous to this study, the GDOE had faced several ongoing controversies. Major challenges included intense political involvement, a severe decline in student academic performance, the hiring of teachers lacking sufficient skills or qualifications,

and rapid turnover of superintendents, which is the most serious problem (Hendricks, 1990; San Nicolas, 2003; Santos, 2003). The typical time of superintendent service has become an average of two years or less. The number of superintendents in the last decade speaks to the high rate of turnover in leadership that has raised concerns within the community about the lack of consistency and stability of leadership at GDOE (Evergreen, 2009).

There is an assumption within Price's (1977) study that inconsistent leadership—constant turnover—causes ineffective schools. Price and Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) agreed that frequent superintendent succession leads to instability that influences the organization's processes and overall performance. Also, involuntary superintendent turnover usually results in turmoil for most school districts (Metzger, 1997).

In a national study of superintendents and school boards, Glass (2001) surveyed 175 superintendents who were seen as outstanding leaders by their peers. The study showed that 52% had more than 14 years of experience serving as the superintendent and carried an average of nine years of service in their current district. These findings indicated that those who are able to maintain their position beyond that national average are usually judged as effective educational leaders based on their ability to create and sustain positive school improvement (Glass, 2001). Additionally, Waters and Marzano (2006), who studied the effects of superintendent leadership on student achievement, found a positive correlation between longer tenures and higher student test scores.

Conversely, shorter tenures create a perception of instability, lower morale, and loss of organizational vision (Alsbury, 2003; Chance & Capps, 1992; Metzger, 1997; Yee & Cuban, 1996). Metzger interviewed 39 California superintendents who were involved in an involuntary

turnover situation. Their research showed that in districts with frequent turnover, teachers and staff members employed a strategy to deal with the situation. The coping strategy was defined as a “this too will pass” mentality (Metzger, 1997, p. 3). The results of the study presented a negative impact on district improvement efforts when involuntary turnover happened (Metzger, 1997).

Additionally, superintendent turnover can have negative effects on a district in several ways. Often, programs of ex-superintendents are abandoned, making the staff resistant to future change efforts (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Carter and Cunningham also suggested that the financial and organizational costs of high turnover weigh heavily on school districts and the staff who are trying to hold the districts together. Metzger’s (1997) study of superintendent turnover showed the legal involvement that resulted in high costs for the school districts. Districts often experience other financial consequences associated with superintendent turnover, including financial settlements to fulfill contract obligations as well as the costs associated with searching for a successor (Metzger, 1997).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the factors influencing the tenure of the superintendency in Guam from the perceptions of the superintendents, the Guam Public School Audit of 2009, and subsequent amendments made to board policies after the audit. The study of superintendents and documents will inform educators, school boards, and the community in Guam—and elsewhere—to extend their knowledge so as to improve superintendent longevity. Such knowledge should be helpful in dealing with superintendent longevity and developing strategies to improve the stability of superintendents in school districts.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions were generated through the review of pertinent literature:

1. What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam, and were they reinforced by the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to Guam Department of Education policies after the Audit?
2. What recommendations do the current and past superintendents have for professional development or other support to increase longevity in the Guam superintendency?

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was an adaptation of Getzels, Lipham, and Campbell's (1968) social systems theory. The framework proposes a number of factors about how the dynamics that define the relationship between an individual and a social system that help us understand the behavior of the individual within the social system. The social system within this study was the public school district in Guam, while the individual was the superintendent. The precise focus of the social system theory was on the social behavior of a single individual—the superintendent—and how his or her actions may be perceived to contribute to a concern that has been described—tenure in the position (Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968).

Superintendents often experience considerable levels of stress in the position (Glass, Björk, & Brunner 2000). Gaynor (1998) suggested that when analyzing problems using a social systems model, the researcher should identify the sources and types of pressures that exist as

well as the sources of role stress for the individual. In this case, the participants from the role sets involved were: (a) the superintendents—current and past, (b) the school board and its members, and (c) the school district—including school district finances and political influences. While not directly associated with a role set, district demography and geography were also considered as areas that may contribute to role stress, and were included in the conceptual framework.

Within the analysis of social systems theory, the researcher must examine the problem systematically in terms of each element and the relationship among each element. Social systems theory describes the behavior of the individual as a manifestation of the relationship between the organization, or “institution,” and the individual. Getzels et al. (1968) used two Greek-rooted terms: *nomothetic*, which refers to the organizational component of the social system, and *idiographic*, which refers to the individual. The *nomothetic* dimension is shown in terms of the cross-pressures between the organization and the culture in which it exists. The *idiographic* dimension is represented by the cross-pressures with the individual’s own identity, including his or her personality, physical capability, and the complex subcultures with which they identify (Getzels et al., 1968). Hence, the individual and the organization are part of a larger environment to which both must adapt (Gaynor, 1998; Getzels et al., 1968).

The theoretical position aims to understand the behavior of the individual and the organization in terms of the dynamics of interaction among each element:

1. The culture of the organization as characterized by its ethos (i.e., its dominant, competing, and shifting values over time).
2. The organization as a structure of roles and expectations.



3. Individuals as reflected in their personalities (i.e., their needs and their dispositions to act in ways that satisfy their needs).
4. Individuals as gifted and constrained by the various dimensions of their physical constitutions, conditions that define their potentialities.
5. Individuals as socialized by and carrying the values of whatever subcultures with which they identify to one degree or another. (Getzels et al., 1968)

A component of Gaynor's (1998) work on role stress was added to the social systems theory to create the framework to examine the superintendency in Guam. Using Getzels et al.'s (1968) ideas around social systems theory, Gaynor suggested that researchers using this theory consider several sources of role stress for the individual. Gaynor suggested that stress may stem from the discrepancies that may exist between the individual's own needs (and disposition to behave in certain ways to meet those needs) and the expectations others hold (Gaynor, 1998). Stress commonly derives from the following sources, and affects organizational performance:

1. Competing demands for time and energy to meet expectations related to different roles in which the individual serves (e.g., spouse, parent, multiple job holders), ("multiple role conflict").
2. Conflicting demands among role-senders in the organization ("intra-role conflict").
3. Lack of ability to meet the role expectations of self and others.
4. Lack of time to meet the role expectations of self and others ("role overload").
5. Lack of clarity about the role expectations of others or lack of insight into one's self-expectations ("role ambiguity").
6. Value differences between the values implicit in the role expectations of others, one's

own values, and the values of important personal reference groups (“value conflict”).  
(Gaynor, 1998, p. 64)

The study looked at the characteristics of the school district and the superintendents in terms of superintendent turnover, which means the study used a combination of the concepts of Getzel et al.’s (1968) framework and part of Gaynor’s (1998) outline on role stress. The study used the conceptual framework to examine the link between characteristics in the district that impacted the role of the superintendent’s stress that, in turn, may have influenced the specific social behavior of turnover. Social systems theory focuses on the social behavior of a single individual (e.g., the superintendent) whose actions are perceived as contributing to a problem of concern (turnover) (Gaynor, 1998). Therefore, an adaptation of Getzels et al.’s model that included components of Gaynor’s (1998) suggests that sources of individual role stress provided the conceptual framework for this study design and data generation.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This study of Guam utilized a qualitative research method. The qualitative study used data from interviews with seven previous superintendents and the current superintendent—for a total of eight superintendents, findings from the GPSS Audit of 2009, and amendments made to GDOE policy after the audit from materials found on the Guam Education Board (GEB) website. The GPSS had had a total of 18 superintendents since 1981. Participants of the study were determined from this list of previous superintendents in Guam. The interviews explored factors impacting the superintendency and turnover in the position in terms of school board, political, personal, financial, environmental factors, and additional factors identified by those interviewed. An interview protocol was created based on guidance from the research questions and review of

the literature. The researcher collected data through face-to-face interviews in Guam, which were then compared to findings in the literature from earlier studies to determine the viability of factors affecting superintendent turnover. Interview data were analyzed from an adapted multiple-step process that involved (a) organizing the interviews into raw text, (b) identifying raw text, (c) finding repeating ideas, and (d) organizing those recurrent ideas into themes. Following the analysis of the interview data, a content analysis of the audit and GEB policy amendments was used to triangulate the findings from the interview data. The methodology is explained further in Chapter 3.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study foregrounded the perceptions of the superintendent. The former and current superintendents who were interviewed discussed why Guam public school superintendents left their positions. This insight may contribute to the literature on the turnover rate of superintendents. The study is significant because of the importance of the superintendent—the main leader of a school district who provides vision and drive to every aspect of the school district. With every change in superintendent in the Guam school system, I tracked a decline in continuity of learning across all grade levels and a rise in administrator, teacher, and staff turnover.

For Guam, the additional significance of the study is twofold. First, the study provides recommendations for better retention practices within the public school district of Guam, creating the potential for stability in the educational system. Second, with stability, the positive production of a K–12 education system on Guam can provide the island with well-educated students.

## **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of the study was the willingness or unwillingness of the previous superintendents or current superintendent to participate in the interviews. Since all the superintendents could not be contacted due to death or illness prior to the study, perceptions of some key participants may be excluded. Furthermore, confidentiality was not ensured because the participants were public officials; so some superintendents may not have shared information willingly due to their possible identification and even potential unwanted responses from the community or government.

An additional limitation was with the accuracy of participants' recall of the historical data or events. Most of the superintendents interviewed were no longer serving as superintendents, and several had been away from administrative roles for five years or more. Recollecting certain trends, events, or data may have been difficult for them.

Further, a limitation was that the audit and board policies were purely descriptive, which provided content but might not have revealed underlying motives for the observed patterns. The analysis of the content is limited based on the availability of the material; observed trends may not have been covered in the documents.

Another limitation created by the researcher may have resulted since the researcher was previously employed by the public school district being studied. Although the researcher may not have personally known the previous superintendents, the current superintendent employed the researcher as a teacher within the district. Consequently, the bias of the researcher could have played a factor in the analysis of the data.

## **Definition of Terms**

*Environmental factors* are defined as the factors of climate and weather as well as the added responsibility of caring for the facilities and campuses within the Department of Education

*Financial factors* are defined as the superintendent dealing with the budgetary process of the department.

*Personal factors* are any aspect the superintendent such as sex, race, or financial gain that may have influenced the outcome or performance of the superintendent (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).

*Political factors* are described as factors related to the relationship between the superintendent and political forces such as the governor of Guam, the legislature, or the laws in Guam and in the United States.

*School board factors* are any aspect of influence from the school board relationship that may have influenced the outcome or performance of the superintendent (Glass et al., 2000).

*Turnover* refers to any change from one individual to another individual in the position of public school district superintendent. This change may be voluntary or involuntary on the part of the leaving superintendent. Turnover may be due to movement to another field in education or into retirement (Price, 1977).

## **Conclusion**

From my observations as an educator on Guam, the rampant turnover of superintendents has affected the public school system in Guam. As a social justice leader, I aimed for this study to identify the causes of superintendent turnover in an effort to possibly affect change for the students in Guam. This project allowed me to “pay it forward” for the support that the University

of Guam has provided me to further my education and may deliver change to the policies and structures at the Department of Education in Guam.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 introduced the background of the study, the setting of the study in Guam, the conceptual framework for the study, and guiding research questions. Additionally, the research methods, limitations, purpose of the study, and the significance of the study were discussed.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review, which includes the historical perspective of the superintendent and discusses the findings related to superintendent turnover.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology for the qualitative study. A detailed description of the survey and interview protocol, target population, and analysis, including the content analysis are explained.

Chapter 4 presents and analyzes the demographic survey, interview data, the Guam Public School Audit of 2009, and the amendments made to board policies after the audit.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of the findings, including the relationship between the findings and factors in the conceptual framework, a discussion of themes identified, implications for educational leaders and educational programs, and recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Educational leadership has long been about relationships and collaboration within an entire community consisting of teachers, leaders, students, communities, the school board, and the superintendent (Houston & Eadie, 2002). The main job of the superintendent since 1910 has been:

to play a leading role in building and maintaining strategically significant relationships, and the one that has been at the heart of the district's strategic and policy level leadership—and most critical to the effectiveness of the district—has been between the superintendent and the school board. (Houston & Eadie, 2002, p. iii)

The first section of this literature review looks at the history and development of the superintendency role. Next is an extensive review of effective superintendent leadership and how tenure in the job relates to effective leadership. Then superintendent turnover is reviewed, revealing four major themes: (a) turnover as a result of superintendent and board relations, (b) turnover as a result of financial factors, (c) turnover as a result of political factors, and (d) turnover as a result of personal factors. Each theme is discussed separately. Finally, the framework that will be used in this study is discussed.

#### **History of the Superintendency**

The description of the superintendent today is unlike that of the first superintendents in the United States; the role has changed several times through history, and will continue to do so. In the early 1800s, as the United States began to evolve commercially and industrially, cities and their school systems began to grow, and the need for more supervision within the school system

was required. With this growth, several cities decided to add an educator as the head of the entire school system of any particular city (Candoli, 1995). Specifically, in 1820, school board members retained clerks who were tasked with day-to-day operations that led to the birth of the position of district superintendent. Therefore, the first official superintendent was appointed on June 9, 1837, in Buffalo, New York (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). The role was given little authority, and often the superintendent spent his time doing errands or ensuring that the board met state requirements (Kowalski, 2005).

According to Candoli (1995), two major events shaped the development of the superintendency in the United States. The first event was in 1874, when the Michigan Supreme Court decision in the famous Kalamazoo case established the right of local school board leaders to tax property for support of secondary schools (Russo, 2008). The Kalamazoo case boosted both the establishment of public schools across the nation and the need for a single head of the unified school system. The second event was the invention of the motor vehicle, which provided a means for populations to shift from one place to another. The motor vehicle impacted the superintendency because schools now needed to create programs to serve diverse needs, and the school bus fleet emerged as a feature for the massive consolidation of school systems. This growth was happening during the industrial age, which needed skilled vocational workers. The position of superintendent grew in responsibility, in parallel to the growth of public schools, and linked to the evolution of the school board (Candoli, 1995).

State education agencies were established later than local school boards. Up until 1890, the average size of each state's Department of Education was two people, usually including the superintendent (Kirst, 1994; Land, 2002). In 1837, Massachusetts established the first state



Board of Education to create a greater role in education for the state, although local school boards still held more control of their districts. The local school districts believed that they could satisfy local needs better than the state leaders (Danzberger, 1992). As school districts began to grow, Massachusetts passed legislation in 1891 granting each local district financial and administrative responsibilities over their schools (Danzberger, 1992). The Massachusetts law became the model for the governance of public schools by local school boards to this day. School board members were elected by local wards, which led the board members to be entangled in local politics (Danzberger, 1992).

Callahan (1966) stated that by 1895 the superintendent of schools was established as part of the American public school system, but questions concerning the power of the superintendent, the role, and the relationship to the school board would continually be raised moving forward in history. The development of high schools solidified the position of the superintendent (Hinsdale, 1894). When a city had only an elementary school, the school board could manage the operations of the school. Once a high school was established, which had students enrolled from all over the city, a unified direction was needed for the school system.

Superintendents appointed in the early 1900s were chosen for various reasons. According to Carter and Cunningham (1997) and Kowalski (2005), superintendents were appointed because they looked like leaders, were effective teachers, or were politically connected. Superintendents were exclusively male businessmen or male teachers, reflecting a contemporary bias about organizational management (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Kowalski, 2003). Most of the first superintendents did not receive formal training in financial management, personnel management, or resource allocation. Most were chosen because they had the potential for leadership; but due

to the lack of formal training, school boards lacked confidence in the position, ultimately making the position a clerical role. Superintendents were limited to assisting the school board with day-to-day management of the schools (Kowalski, 1999).

### **Evolution of the Superintendent Role**

The role of the superintendent has evolved to require the person serving in the position to be both political and professional. According to research on the evolution of the superintendency, five specific roles have emerged since the inception of the superintendency. Kowalski (2003) defined the first four conceptual roles of the superintendent as: teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist. Kowalski (2005) added the fifth role of communicator. Each role can be discussed separately, but in practice, each role overlaps due to the complexity of the position and the knowledge and skills needed for effective district leadership.

#### **Teacher-Scholar**

Kowalski (2005) found that the primary focus of a district superintendent is to implement a state curriculum and supervise teachers. Many early superintendents were curriculum writers for their districts, and scholars of education. The first role as teacher-scholar “was designed to integrate students into American culture by having public schools produce a set of uniform subjects and courses—a strategy that required centralized control and standardization” (Kowalski, 2005, p. 25). After the Civil War, developing urban school systems provided standards of best practice, or normative standards for public elementary and secondary education, and superintendents were viewed as master teachers (Callahan, 1962; Kowalski, 2005). As master teachers, they provided models for rural and developing school district

superintendents (Callahan, 1962; Petersen & Barnett, 2005). Additionally, superintendents were frequently writers of articles for professional journals, and some became state superintendents, professors, or college presidents (Peterson & Barnett, 2005).

Circa 1910, the role as teacher-scholar for the superintendent began to fade due to the fluctuation of emphasis on instructional leadership. Petersen and Barnett (2003) claimed that the concept of teacher-scholar has been challenged for several reasons, ranging from politics to position instability because of board member expectations. They concluded that superintendents “can influence the views of school board members and others by articulating and demonstrating involvement, a sincere interest in the technical core of curriculum and instruction and viewing it as their primary responsibility” (p. 15).

Today, the perception of superintendents as instructional leaders is based on their professional preparation and licensure (Kowalski, 2005). Nearly a third of the states have eliminated the superintendent’s license or allow alternate routes to attain it. The current trend is the belief that being a professional educator is inconsequential to being an effective superintendent (Meyer & Feistritzer, 2003). Conversely, the deregulation of the superintendent’s license comes when national and state reform initiatives increase accountability standards for student performance. Superintendents indirectly influence instruction through functions such as controlling the budget and supervising principals that often lessen their overall effectiveness as instructional leaders (Bjork, 1993). As state deregulation and district decentralization continue to increase, there is potential for superintendents to recommend policy and develop rules that will increase educational efficiency (Kowalski, 2002). The rules at the local level would likely increase efficiency because the superintendent is closer to the students, most knowledgeable

about a district, and best equipped to make important decisions about its operation, leadership, staffing, academics, teaching, and improvement. This idea of governance is always distinguished from state or federal policies intended to influence the structure, operation, or academic programs in public schools, given that level of control granted to local governing bodies is directly related to the level of direction articulated in state education laws, regulations, and related compliance rules and requirements (Abbott, 2014).

### **Communicator**

Kowalski (2001) stated that the conceptualization of the role of the superintendent as communicator arose with America's transition from a manufacturing society into the Information Age. In this age, administrators were expected to discuss school improvement plans with stakeholders—school faculty, staff, teachers, students, and the community (Bjork, 2001). To find success, administrators had to build and maintain positive relationships with these many stakeholder groups (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2009). Burgoon and Hale (1984) stated that the role provided the minimization of formal authority and actual power differences, and focused on communication (as cited by Kowalski et al., 2011).

According to Kowalski (2005), "Communication is a process through which organizational members express their collective inclination to coordinate beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. In schools, communication gives meaning to work and forges perceptions of reality" (p. 11). Since the early 1980s, the role of communicator is outlined by the following expectations: engaging others in open dialogue, portraying shared visions, building a positive district image, garnering community support for change, providing an essential framework to manage information, and keeping the public informed with the changes in education (Kowalski,

2005). Lastly, as communities grow in diversity, superintendents have the responsibility of building more comprehensive cultures.

### **Business Manager**

Kowalski et al. (2011) believed that the conceptualization of the superintendent as business manager came after 1910 and endured for almost 30 years. The major factors shaping this role were the Industrial Revolution and principles of scientific management. By 1920, superintendents were thought to be individuals who could improve operations by concentrating on time and efficiency (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Political elites began to demand that school administrators apply the use of scientific management. This prompted universities to develop courses in educational administration to create a specialization that was above teaching (Kowalski et al., 2011). Callahan (1962) added, “How and why the infusion of business values into educational philosophy aided the role transformation of the superintendent became inextricably intertwined” (as cited by Kowalski, 2005, p. 6).

During the 1920s, this role conceptualization view of the superintendent was broad because responsibilities extended further into personnel and financial management (Glass, 2003). Callahan (1962) concluded that they lacked conviction and courage, and their only intent was to appease the Board of Education, which valued efficiency. Other scholars such as Bullough (1974), Eaton (1990), and Tyack (1972) did not share Callahan’s view; rather, they viewed the superintendents as “cunning, intelligent, political pragmatists who responded to social realities” (as cited by Kowalski et al., 2011, p. 3). Disagreements aside, historians have believed that as the management role became dominant, the superintendency grew as an authoritative, impersonal, and task-oriented role. Although the emphasis on management has varied, the importance of the

role has not been questioned. Accomplished practitioners agree that their leadership attributes become insignificant when budgets are unbalanced, schools are unsafe, and staff problems develop into lawsuits (Callahan, 1962). Superintendents must find equilibrium between their roles as effective educational leaders and effective managers to continue being efficient and productive (Kowalski, 2003).

### **Democratic Leader**

Kowalski (2005) stated that the superintendent role conceptualization as democratic leader, or statesman, was born at the time of the Great Depression. The crash in the stock market in 1929 diminished the role of industrial management, and citizens were reluctant to allow the superintendent to have more power at the cost of local citizen control (Kowalski, 2005). The role of democratic leader was developed most by Ernest Melby (1955), a former dean of education at Northwestern University and New York University (Callahan, 1966). Melby determined that the mixture of business values had led the superintendent to become less dependent on the community (as cited by Kowalski, 2005, p. 8). He advised administrators against isolating themselves from the public, but rather to “release the creative capacities of individuals” and “mobilize the educational resources of the communities” (Melby, 1955, p. 250). Ultimately, democratic leaders were expected to stimulate policymakers, employees, and other taxpayers to back the district’s initiatives (Kowalski, 2005).

In the mid-1950s, the role of statesmen met opposition; critics believed that the democratic administration always produced problems for organizations and those who followed it (Kowalski, 1999). Subsequently, they believed that the superintendent’s problems were social, political, and economic, and that knowledge and skills were needed to solve them—not

philosophy (Bjork & Gurley, 2005; Kowalski, 1999). In recent years, the role of democratic leader has resurfaced, recognizing that the best education policies are usually ineffective when met with opposition from the public. Policy and politics are intertwined with democracy in which moral differences, ideological and moral, require facilitation and management (Keedy & Bjork, 2002).

### **Applied Social Scientist**

Callahan (1966), Johnson, and Fusarelli (2003), and Bjork and Kowalski (2005) determined that four occurrences, based on social and professional context, developed the superintendent role of applied social scientist. The growing dissatisfaction with democratic leadership after World War II, the rapid development of the social sciences in the late 1940s and early 1950s, financial support from the Kellogg Foundation, and a resurgence of criticisms of public education in the 1950s, influenced the role conceptualization of social scientist for the superintendency. The intention for the role of applied social scientist was to create superintendents who possessed “a greater sensitivity to large social problems through an interdisciplinary approach involving most of the social sciences” (Kellogg Foundation, 1961, p. 13). Superintendents were expected to solve education problems prevalent in a multicultural, democratic society based on empiricism, predictability, and scientific certainty (Cooper & Boyd, 1987).

Fusarelli and Fusarelli (2003) acknowledged that school reform and social justice started gaining relevance in the 1960s. Superintendents were now additionally tasked with facing social and institutional issues such as reducing poverty, racism, sex discrimination, crime, and violence. Using knowledge from fields of study such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics,

and criminology, superintendents were expected to evaluate and use research in dealing with these issues (Kowalski, 2005). As the role was more accepted, the professional preparation of the superintendent became more extensive, less practice-based and more driven by theory (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2009). It became common to require doctoral students in educational administration to register and complete classes in behavior sciences, such as economics, political science, psychology, or sociology (Kowalski et al., 2009). By the 1960s, superintendents, as applied social scientists, were intended to be “high-level technicians, expert at keeping their organization going but not equipped to see or understand where they are going” (Callahan, 1966, p. 227).

### **Synthesis of Role Conceptualizations**

The five distinct role conceptualizations—teacher-scholar, communicator, business manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist have been developed and described. The historical perspective provides a conceptual framework that affects the preparation and licensure of school superintendents. The roles have fluctuated throughout history, but all remain connected to the current superintendency. Kowalski et al. (2011) wrote: “The contemporary superintendent is expected to wear five different hats, and she or he is expected to know when to transition among the roles” (p. 5).

The five role conceptualizations can be mirrored in the superintendency in Guam. Although each role can be seen in the practice of the superintendent today, the roles may not have been conceived similarly due to the late development of education in Guam.



## **Superintendent Professional Development**

Providing superintendent professional development is a difficult, yet rewarding, undertaking. In the United States, individual state programs and national programs offer professional development for superintendents.

To illustrate the offerings in one state, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) offers a new superintendent support package. The package includes a program titled Leading the Leaders, 15 hours of Executive Leadership Coaching, the New Superintendent's Workshop, and the Superintendent's Symposium. Leading the Leaders is an opportunity for first- and second-year superintendents to meet four times a year for two days to examine issues such as learning and teaching, curriculum evaluation, instruction and student achievement data, evaluating and developing employee performance, building positive and productive superintendent-board relations, visioning and planning, as well as finance, negotiations, and facilities. Successful veteran superintendents facilitate the sessions.

The executive leadership coaching focuses on achievement of the board's goals for the superintendent, as well as other needs and desires of the superintendent. It is designed to deliver highly individualized leadership development through consultation, collaboration, reflection, and building capacity. The coaches for this program are recently retired superintendents whose strengths are matched to the needs of the person being coached. The coaches have been trained and certified in blended coaching strategies and resources.

The executive leadership coaching program includes on-site coaching approximately once every two weeks, e-mail or telephone availability between sessions, information searches and contacts upon request, and individualized goal orientation achieved in collaboration.

Coaching tools used include collaborative logs, reflective self-assessments, 360-degree instruments, and observations in appropriate settings.

The New Superintendent's Workshop is a day-and-a-half preconference before the Superintendent's Symposium. Veteran and recently hired superintendents who can relate to the challenges of new superintendents present the course. This workshop provides a time for networking and building supportive relationships. The Superintendent's Symposium is held in Monterey, California, for three days in January each year. Superintendents come together to share ideas, network, and engage in professional learning. The program is a balance of workshops and interactive sessions focusing on the most important topics facing the superintendency, including leadership, legislation, legal issues, budget, diversity, and accountability.

Illustrative of a national professional development effort is the Broad Institute created by Eli Broad. Eli Broad, a billionaire who has contributed more than \$280 million dollars to educational causes, created the Broad Institute. He uses a business approach to guide his philanthropic efforts. The Broad Superintendent's Academy is a 10-month executive management program designed to prepare CEOs and senior executives from business, nonprofit, military, government, and education backgrounds to lead urban public school systems. Broad's belief is that leading a large urban district is in many ways more difficult and complex than leading a Fortune 500 company. Broad is aware that noneducators are rarely specialists in curriculum; however, he believes that enough people in education are experts in that arena. His academy focuses on the leadership skills necessary to run a large enterprise.

Academy Fellows keep their current jobs while they attend the seven extended weekend sessions that cover CEO-level skills in the best practices in education reform and leadership. The fellows participate in analyzing case studies, visiting major urban districts, and discussing observations with the best minds in the field.

The importance of superintendent professional development cannot be overstated. Johnson and Uline (2005) said: “Our children’s future should not depend on their family’s luck in finding a neighborhood that has the right school leaders. We must work to create pre-service and in-service systems that prepare every school leader” (p. 51). The responsibility to improve America’s public schools rests squarely with the leaders—the superintendents. Providing professional development for the leaders will help to ensure they have the tools to accomplish the task.

### **Superintendent Turnover and Tenure**

Several events throughout the U.S. history have constructed the role of the superintendent. Each role developed in the previous section has caused the position to become more complex and difficult. As a result, the longevity of a superintendent’s tenure has also been affected. In a study of over 2,000 school board members, almost half (45.7%) felt that the ideal tenure for the superintendent is six to 10 years with 6.7% feeling that two to five years is ideal (Yock, 1990). The average length of tenure in the American Association of School Administrator’s (AASA) 1992 study was 6.47 years, which declined to about five years in a 2000 study (Glass et al., 2000). Fusarelli et al. (2003) confirmed the AASA study found that the average tenure was almost seven years. Chance and Capps (1992) found that “high turnover districts” had three or more superintendents serve in five years. They also grouped long-term

superintendents as those who have held the position in the same district for a minimum of 12 years.

Superintendent turnover in any district in the United States creates difficulty. Metzger's (1997) study interviewed 39 superintendents in California from both small and large districts, which included over 28% minority superintendents and over 10% women superintendents. Metzger determined that the dominant factor of superintendent turnover was the adoption of an attitude among staff members to maintain the status quo and resist change efforts, and that turnover was associated with financial burdens on the district.

There are several factors that lead to superintendent turnover in the United States. Major reasons for involuntary turnover mentioned by Metzger (1997) are disagreements with board members and their political agenda, and personnel issues in which the superintendent often felt undermined by the school board. Metzger listed other factors of turnover such as financial problems in the district, union-related problems and collective bargaining issues, racial or ethnic issues that often cause board conflict, and student achievement concerns.

Buchanan (2004) conducted a study, and 90% of the urban superintendents stated that one of the reasons for urban turnover is the lack of "legitimate power held in the position to hire and fire employees, reconfigure struggling schools, and making curriculum changes" (Buchanan, 2004, p. 36). Sixty percent of interviewed superintendents in the study stated that politics and interaction with school board members contributed to urban superintendent turnover (Buchanan, 2004).

## **Turnover Due to School Board Relations**

The most important responsibility of the school board is the selection, retention, and evaluation of the superintendent (Glass, 2001). The methods of hiring the superintendent vary from district to district; the most common method is the formation of search committees by the school board. The search committees work with representatives from the district to manage the selection process (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). These districts usually advertise widely, and applicants are screened extensively prior to the school board making a decision.

Tallerico (2000a) found that search consultants were able to advertise to the broader public more than local districts in search of a superintendent. Search consultants develop profiles of desirable candidates that can be an important factor in identifying and addressing board member biases. Tallerico (2000a) reported that many search consultants are previous superintendents. No matter how the search for the superintendent is conducted, filling superintendent positions is a critical responsibility of the school board.

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board has influenced tenure in the position of the superintendent more than any other factor. Mountford (2004) stated in a study that the relationship between the school board and the superintendent has often been negative. Additionally, if school board members practiced oppressive powers over the superintendent's decision-making process or relationship, then turnover was high (Mountford, 2004).

Alsbery (2008) reemphasized that the number one reason why superintendent tenure is shortened is due to superintendent and board relations going sour. There are cases where superintendents remain in the position but are unable to make changes due to the poor relations.

Without the board empowering the superintendent, very little or no change can be made in the educational system (Alsbury, 1997). Larry Zenke, former superintendent of the Duval County public schools in Florida, stated:

One of the most important responsibilities that superintendent has, if one is to survive beyond the average tenure of two and one-half years, is to know your board members “individually” as board members and “collectively” as a school board. Superintendents who fail to give the necessary time required for such knowing usually will find themselves experiencing relatively short tenures. The superintendent must allocate sufficient time to develop open channels of communication with board members both individually and collectively, and also work to raise levels of trust between the superintendent and the board members and among board members themselves. (as cited in Alsbury, 1997, p. 96)

In the 2010 State of the Superintendency survey (Kowalski et al. 2011), the relationship between the superintendent and the school boards was primarily healthy. The study found that 72% of superintendents reported evaluations from their boards as “excellent” or “above average.” Also, Kowalski et al. determined that only 15% of superintendents left their position because of conflicts with the school board. The relationship built with the board is a crucial factor to survive in the superintendency. The misunderstanding of the separation of powers between the school board and the superintendent has been an obstacle in fostering better relationships (Mountford, 2004).

## **Turnover Due to Other Political Factors**

In addition to other board-related political factors are those involving educational laws passed or interactions with the legislature, which also impact superintendent turnover. In recent years, legislative mandates left little freedom for the school board or superintendents to change rules when it has come to implementing new laws and policies.

Byrd, Drews, and Johnson (2006) studied the factors impacting superintendent turnover and found that average tenure among superintendents decreased as political pressures increased. Some superintendents felt frustrated with the politics and bureaucracy of the job. Instability in the superintendency stemmed from the legislature making educational decisions along party lines. Lastly, superintendents were apathetic in the legislative process and reported it as frustrating (Byrd et al., 2006).

From 2001 to 2015, the superintendent was influenced by increasing demands from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Jennings, 2003), which required school districts to test children from grades three to eight in reading/language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics. Once the students are tested, the data are disaggregated by school, district, and state for several factors such as (a) family income, ethnicity, race; (b) limited English-proficient children; and (c) children with disabilities. Districts are entrusted to set targets or benchmarks that all schools must raise their test scores each year so that students attain proficiency in reading and mathematics. Schools receiving federal Title I funds are subject to certain consequences if their test scores are not raised. Additionally, schools must fill their classrooms with highly qualified teachers or face the loss of federal assistance (Fonseca, 2008).

Superintendents met increasing demands of the NCLB requirements by focusing on student achievement and by demonstrating improvements in student outcomes represented by benchmark assessments. Researchers today suggest that superintendents must focus on student instruction and achievement (Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has replaced the NCLB Act and provides federal guidelines for states. ESSA tries to preserve the spirit of NCLB, while modifying the previous cookie-cutter reform. ESSA provides states greater flexibility in testing, curriculum standards, and school district accountability (Weiss & McGuinn, 2016).

### **Turnover Due to Personal Factors**

**Compensation and mobility.** Personal factors, such as upward mobility and insufficient compensation have contributed to superintendent turnover in recent years. Upward mobility can suggest a move to a position in a larger school district in order to increase status or salary. These factors are usually voluntary turnover and are from novice superintendents trying to advance their careers and earn a larger salary (Dlugosh, 1994; Ehrenberg, Chaykowski, & Ehrenberg, 1988; Glass et al., 2000).

In a study of factors affecting turnover in Nebraska, Dlugosh (1994) confirmed that administrators searched for positions with greater compensation or higher status in the profession, which was usually found in larger, urban districts. It is understandable that more experienced superintendents earn higher salaries in larger districts where their responsibilities are greater and more complex (Ehrenberg et al., 1988). The general trend of the mobility of superintendents is that they move early in their careers from smaller and/or poorer districts to larger and/or wealthier ones (Ehrenberg et al., 1988).



According to Cunningham and Burdick (1999), a serious case can be made for the 31% of public school superintendents who are woefully underpaid when compared to business executives, who have more job security and less public scrutiny. In describing the reality of the salary picture for superintendents, Glass et al. (2000) shared the following information:

Compensation packages are public information, and many boards try to keep superintendents' salaries in line with what they perceive to be the public's acceptance level. Often, this kind of caution operates to drive good candidates to better-paying districts. At other times, it deters well-paid central-office administrators and principals from applying. (p. 2)

When compared to top leadership positions in businesses, superintendents earn a relatively low salary (Jones, 2000). The problem of low salary has compounded issues with upward mobility. Esparo and Radar (2001) emphasized the realities of superintendent pay and compensation:

Consider addressing the superintendent's salary and benefits. There is strong concern for the economics of the superintendency. The dilemma it presents is clear: Why would one aspire to a higher-pressured, more demanding, higher-profile position, requiring a longer work day and year, where the salary and benefits are disproportionate to those paid to teachers and building level administrators? The decrease in the pay of administrators and, in some states, salary capping, are major deterrents in the minds of superintendents and superintendent aspirants. (p. 48)

An increase in salary may be necessary to counter turnover. Most potential applicants have expressed that they expected larger compensation. Soberhart & Schellar (2001) have observed

that with the expectation that stress and demand for the superintendency will increase, an increase in salary should be addressed in order to appeal to highly qualified applicants.

**Gender.** Throughout the history of public education, women have held a small percentage of district administrative positions compared to their relative participation in the teaching force and their proportion of the general population (Blackmore, 1993; Riehl & Byrd, 1997). Blount (1998) reported that in 1910, 8.9% of superintendents in the United States were women, and that women did not reach 11% until 1930. However, the representation of women in the profession found itself in a downward spiral in the years to come. Blount reported that, by 1950, women represented only 9% of the American superintendents; two years later, their representation fell to just 6.7%. In 1971, women comprised just 1.3% of superintendents, and in 1982 they reached a low of 1.2% nationally (Blount, 1998).

Several studies have supported the claim that, although the percentage of women superintendents doubled between 1992 and 1999 (Glass et al., 2000), they remained underrepresented in the position of superintendent. In the AASA study by Glass et al., 2,262 superintendents responded to a survey; of these respondents, only 297 were women, and 114 were minorities, meaning that 1,953 (roughly 86%) were White men. In a report presented to the National School Boards Association (NSBA), Hess (2002) similarly found that the vast majority of superintendent respondents nationally were White men. Consistent across districts of all sizes, Hess observed that women represented 15.8% of the superintendent workforce. Recent research by Brunner and Grogan (in press) suggests that women now represent 18% of all superintendents nationwide.

Explanations for the sex disparity vary, but frequently include discriminatory hiring processes and unfair search practices (Tallerico, 2000b). School boards and search consultant firms, which often are responsible for hiring superintendent successors, are generally White males (Chase & Bell, 1990; Ortiz, 2000; Tallerico, 2000b). Inasmuch as gatekeepers can be positively disposed to the idea of women superintendents, Tallerico suggested that search consultants might tend to use hiring practices that favor attributes similar to their own.

Women and men differ in their career experiences that lead to their superintendencies (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Women more often reported that their career paths included roles such as elementary teacher, district coordinators, assistant superintendents, and high school teachers, whereas men usually spent time as a high school teacher, junior high or middle school teacher, assistant superintendents, and directors or coordinators (Bell & Chase, 1995; Bjork et al., 2005). However, sometimes individuals moved into superintendent positions directly from teaching positions. Skrla (1999) pointed out that it is 40 times more likely for men than women to move directly into the superintendency from a teaching position. When women do become superintendents, they usually stay longer in the teaching profession before advancing to a higher-ranking position. Generally, women superintendents have 10 more years of teaching experience than their counterparts who are men (Glass et al., 2000; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1987).

Women are well represented in the field of education. In 1997, 74.4% of the educational workforce was comprised of women (Skrla, Ryes & Scheurich 2000). However, women's upward mobility is often seen as suppressed in school systems, as, like many other formal organizations, schools are structured in ways that have a tendency to exclude women from the higher-level jobs (Blackmore, 1993). Yet, the number of women in administration preparatory

programs has eclipsed the number of men in the same programs since the 1990s (Bjork, 2000), and women are awarded over half of the advanced administrative degrees (Shakeshaft, 1987). These data suggest that reasons for the small number of practicing women superintendents may be less associated with the education and training for the position, and more likely associated with other factors that contribute to their absence in district leadership positions. Although there is scant research on how sex affects turnover in the superintendency, it might be assumed that some of the same factors keeping women from being hired in top roles in the first place might lead to their short tenure once employed as superintendents.

**Race and ethnic background.** Ethnic and racial minorities are substantially underrepresented in the superintendency in the United States. Recent literature clearly demonstrated the lack of minority school leaders. In one study, 175 superintendents (who were viewed by their peers as outstanding educational leaders) were surveyed; 95% were White (Glass, 2001). In the 2000 Study of the American School Superintendency (Glass et al., 2000), of the 2,262 superintendents who responded, only 117 were minorities, with 5.3% of the sample being African American, and 2.7% being Hispanic.

When examining who controls succession as it pertains to Hispanic women superintendents, Ortiz (2000) found that doors were often unopened to minorities by White male school board members and search consultants. Ortiz suggested that when Hispanic women were hired, it was generally for one of two reasons: (a) a perception that the Hispanic community is causing the unrest in the district, and (b) after a long period of superintendent turnover, and the district is in a state of crisis.

According to data presented by Bjork et al. (2005), people of color accounted for only 2% of the superintendents in 1980, a little more than 3% in 1990, and, as shown in Glass et al. (2000), just over 5% in the next 10 years. Over half of the minority superintendents (51.4%) were serving in districts with more than 3,000 students (Glass et al., 2000). A majority of the largest districts had African American leaders, with 46% of African American superintendents serving in large urban districts of more than 50,000 students (Glass et al., 2000). In a report presented to the NSBA, Hess (2002) found that 20% of the minority superintendents served in the nation's largest districts. Hess noted that this number decreased as district size decreased, and that only 7% of smaller districts reported having a superintendent who was not White.

Although the percentage of minority superintendents has shown continual growth over the past 20 years, the few individuals of color on track to become superintendents is a concern (Bjork et al., 2005). Hodgkinson and Montenegro (1999) suggested that the future representation of minority superintendents will depend on whether the field can successfully compete with other higher-paying professions and increase the number of minority teachers, principals, and central office personnel who may aspire to the position. Similar to sex, how ethnic and minority backgrounds affects turnover in the superintendency has been the subject of little research; it might be assumed that some of the same factors keeping ethnic and minority backgrounds from being hired in top roles in the first place might lead to their short tenure once employed as superintendents.

### **Turnover Due to Financial Factors**

Since the role was conceived, district superintendents have always had to do more with less. Glass and Franchesini (2007) found that superintendents perceived funding problems as the

main difficulty their district faces. All superintendents face the almost impossible task of finding and securing the resources necessary to meet federal and state mandates in an era of economic downturn. Resources have been scarce in response to demand. Houston (2001) stated “expectations and resources are mismatched” (p. 429). In the current state of economic instability and downturn, the issue of inadequate funding is seen as a crisis in education.

Superintendents, district board members, principals, teachers, and all instructional leaders have always found the job of increasing student achievement to be a difficult and daunting task. The federal government has provided minimal support to the state and local burden (Glass & Franchesini, 2007). An argument can be made that due to the yearly budget cuts in K–12 education, possible applicants for the superintendency have reason to pause when considering the time and conditions of their application. Glass (2000) commented that “States need to engage in research studies to ‘find’ levels of ‘adequacy of funding’ sufficient for districts to meet present state education standards” (p. 3).

### **Turnover Due to Stress and Isolation**

Several superintendents felt that their jobs were complex and difficult due to a large number of issues and problems that cause stress (Glass et al., 2000). Although stress is natural in any leadership position, more than 50% of those who responded to a 2000 study (Glass et al., 2000) felt that stress within the role of the superintendent was very great or high. In one study, nearly 7% of respondents who completed a survey included an additional note on stressful working conditions as a factor that helped them decide to move to a different district (Dlugosh, 1994). Stress in the superintendency often comes from pressures emanating from the district and community, each having its own expectations for the superintendent (Ornstein & Levin, 2003).

Several reasons contribute to an increased amount of stress placed on a superintendent. Stress varies contextually. Stephens and Turner (1988) listed eight broad categories of pressures that superintendents' face:

1. Changes in enrollment patterns and district demographics
2. New fiscal constraints associated with reduced funding
3. New realities and methods of staffing
4. New federal and state improvement initiatives
5. Acceleration of state control of public education
6. Pressure for change in structure of state systems of education
7. Adoption of some form of family choice in education
8. Dramatic changes in the traditional school support interest groups (p. 60).

Researchers have found that stress in school districts has increased greatly due to the continuing demands for new programs, and by the state and federal mandates that come with no provisions for funding (Bjork, 2001; Stephens & Turner, 1988). Several of these factors are unpredictable. Paired with increased involvement and pressure from the community, school board micromanagement, and the expectations of achieving specific academic goals, superintendents are often left wondering if they should remain superintendents.

Other stress contributors are isolation, the complexity of the position, and faulty board politics. Superintendents are usually alone and lonely in their role, as they are technically supervisors for district staff members (Dlugosh, 1994).

## **Summary**

Chapter 2 discussed the literature as it relates to the topic of superintendent turnover. A summary of the evolution of the superintendency was introduced, highlighting the five role conceptions: teacher-scholar, business manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist, and communicator. Superintendent tenure and the factors that contribute to turnover were discussed. The factors addressed in the literature as affecting the superintendency were school board factors, personal factors, financial factors, and stress factors. The turnover factors identified in the literature were used as a foundation for the study to determine if the same turnover factors were present in Guam.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the factors influencing the tenure of the superintendency in Guam's school system from the perceptions of the Guam superintendents and the content analysis of the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and amendments made to board policies after the audit. Additionally, the study should inform superintendents, school boards, and the community about how to deal with the problem of turnover by improving practices that encourage superintendent longevity, thus providing greater stability for school districts.

#### **Research Questions**

The following two questions were generated through a thorough literature review:

1. What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam, and were they reinforced by the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to Guam Department of Education policies after the audit?
2. What recommendations do the current and past superintendents have for professional development or other support to increase longevity in the Guam superintendency?

#### **Design and Procedures**

The was a qualitative study comprised of individual interviews to enable the researcher to obtain information that could not be observed (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). A content analysis

of the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to board policies after the audit were added to triangulate the data.

### **Interviews**

The interviews were structured to include open-ended questions divided into several sections developed from the literature reviewed. Before each interview began, a short demographic survey was given that included questions about sex, age, ethnicity, and years served as superintendent. The interview protocol then continued with questions that allowed the participants to describe their professional experience in more detail and in their own words. The next section included questions based on the literature regarding school board factors, financial factors, personal factors, environmental factors, and other factors related to superintendent turnover. Lastly, the participants were given the opportunity to share any additional details they felt were necessary to the study. These questions were all open-ended and were developed to provide a wider lens into the factors that may have affected the tenure of the superintendent. The interviews were conducted in June 2016. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Following the interviews, a copy of the transcriptions was sent to each of the participants to review with a request to add any details without restriction.

The interview protocol was piloted to ensure that bias was limited and that validity of the protocol was sound. The interview protocol was piloted on four subjects that met the requirements similar to those selected for the study participants, related to their experiences as practicing superintendents in a school setting. Both the questions asked and participants' recorded answers were then submitted to a panel of professors for content analysis. Within the pilot study, I reviewed the methods and protocol for any flaws and made any necessary changes

in the areas needed. The pilot participants were selected within the State of California to avoid any overlap with participants in the study.

As suggested by Seidman (1998), the primary way a researcher can investigate an organization, institution, or process is through the experiences of the individual people. According to Patton (1990), qualitative data consist of quotations from people and descriptions of events, activities, interactions, and situations in order to gain insight into a phenomenon by understanding the points of view of those involved. To gain input from key participants in a study, interviewing is one technique that allows the researcher to get close to the people and situations being studied and to understand the details in order to richly describe the case.

The purpose of in-depth interview is not necessarily to test hypotheses or answer questions; rather, interviewing is a way of “understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 1998, p. 3). Interviewing, as a basic mode of inquiry, allows for the interviewee to give the details of an experience. By providing a set of interview questions, interviewing is a process of providing a framework for reflection, selecting details of an experience, and making sense of the details within a given context (Seidman, 1998). To gain insights into perceived characteristics that contribute to superintendent turnover, each participant in this study was asked to respond to a series of interview questions designed to inform the study based on the conceptual framework of social systems theory adapted from Getzels et al. (1968) and augmented by components from Gaynor’s (1998) role stress theory.

### **Interview Protocol**

The interview was divided into seven sections. Section 1 gave the participants the opportunity to introduce themselves, including their length of tenure, circumstances surrounding

their hiring, and the circumstances of their predecessor's departure. Section 2 dealt with tenure and turnover where the superintendents described the reasons they had become a superintendent, why they left the position, and what personal and professional characteristics may lengthen or shorten the tenure of a superintendent. Section 3 had questions about the relationship between the superintendents and their boards during their tenure and asked for suggestions on how to strengthen board relations. Section 4 explored the environmental factors that may have affected their term. Section 5 asked the superintendents about the major causes of stress during their tenure. Section 6 asked participants about recommendations for the superintendency.

Specifically, the researcher asked what recommendations they could make about superintendent development in Guam that could include superintendent preparation programs, superintendent mentorship, and professional development. Section 7 allowed the participants to expand on any questions that were asked or to add any information that they deemed necessary to the study. All the interviews were recorded using a digital recorder; notes were taken as well. The researcher transcribed the voice recordings. Pseudonyms for each participant were created online by a random name generator.

### **Participant Selection**

The population was limited to the current and previous superintendents in Guam. Participants were all the superintendents of Guam who answered affirmatively to an email asking if they would agree to be interviewed for the study. Of the 18 superintendents listed, two had passed away, one was ill, and four were unreachable, leaving 11 possible superintendents to interview. Once the interview protocol was refined, these 11 superintendents from the list of all superintendents in Guam were contacted via email or telephone by the researcher to request their

participation in the interview. Three declined to participate. Once the eight accepted, the process was explained and interview appointments were established. Interviews were conducted in person. Prior to the beginning of the interview process, participants were asked to sign a consent form approved by LMU's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Consent forms were collected and stored with the researcher.

### **Profile of Participants**

A brief description of each participant is provided in this section. The participating superintendents were assigned a random pseudonym, then their ethnicity, length of tenure, and their professional background is highlighted.

Linday, a Chamorro woman, was appointed to the superintendency by the governor and served for two years when she was in her late 30s. The governor felt that Linday was a highly experienced and capable superintendent who led the Department of Education in Guam. At the time of her appointment, Linday had been a high school teacher for several years—teaching social studies courses. She had earned her master's degree in School Administration and Supervision, and was also an attorney. After serving as superintendent, Linday returned to her career in law and taught criminal justice classes at the University of Guam. Today, she sits as a judge in the Superior Court of Guam.

Webster, a Chamorro man, was recruited from Washington, DC, to fill the position of superintendent following an interim superintendent. His background was in public administration and public policy, but he earned the opportunity to serve in education when the board expanded its search for the superintendent beyond individuals in education. Webster's educational background included a bachelor's in philosophy, a master's in public policy, and a juris doctorate

in administrative law and business regulation. His academic background was paired with a professional career that included positions such as Director of Policy Research and Development, Regional Chair of the United Way, several board member positions, and serving as a Commissioner of Western Associations of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

The governor promoted Kasey, a Caucasian non-native woman, from the associate superintendent for secondary schools to the superintendency. She served for a few months while the board began a superintendent search. Once a new superintendent was hired, she returned to her position as associate superintendent. Currently, she works at the University of Guam and has two primary responsibilities—field experience coordinator for teacher preparation programs and program coordinator for physical education in Guam public schools.

Vera, a Chamorro woman, was appointed superintendent during a change in governors. Vera had worked as a classroom teacher, curriculum developer, school program consultant, project director of the Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program, and tenured assistant professor of Chamorro language in the Division of Humanities, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Guam. She served as a member of the Board of Education. At the time of this study, she was an adjunct professor at the university teaching courses that related to Chamorro language development.

Kalista, a Filipino woman, served as the superintendent for two-terms initially as an interim, and then she was hired by the board. Prior to her superintendency, she was a special education teacher, a consulting research teacher, and a program evaluator for the special education department. After her tenure as superintendent, she has served as a senator for the island, whose key focus was educational policy and law.

Loida, a Chamorro woman, became superintendent after being appointed by the governor of Guam. Before the superintendency, her professional experience began as a substitute teacher, then a full-time teacher, and associate superintendent of administrative services. Along the way, she also served as the chair of the hospital board and worked at the legislature. After she served as the superintendent, she became a member of the Guam Education Board.

Ernest, a Caucasian male, served as the superintendent of Guam for one year and was appointed as an emergency hire. Prior to his appointment, he served Guam as a teacher, a lawyer, and then director of the Department of Corrections. Additionally, he has held positions within the legislative and judicial branches in Guam as a senator, legislative counsel to the 14th and 15th Guam Legislatures, minority counsel in the 20th Guam Legislature, and Clerk of the Superior Court of Guam. At the time of this study, Ernest was retired and still living in Guam.

Otten, an Asian male, was appointed to the superintendency and served for three years. Before he was hired, he was working on his doctoral degree and teaching full-time at a university off-island. Following his tenure as superintendent, he remained within education, taking positions as Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Vice President of Academics and Advancement, and was currently an educational consultant for Guam.

Table 2

*Summary of Demographic Survey - Profile of Participants*

Pseudonym	Tenure	Sex	Education	Ethnicity	Appointed by the governor or board	Native to Guam or Non-native	Educator or Non-Educator
Ernest	1 year	Male	Doctoral	Caucasian	Governor	Non-native	Educator
Kalista	5 years	Female	Doctoral	Filipino	Board	Non-native	Educator
Kasey	4 months	Female	Doctoral	Caucasian	Board	Non-native	Educator
Lindsay	2 years	Female	Doctoral	Chamorro	Governor	Native	Educator
Loida	2 years	Female	Bachelors	Chamorro	Governor	Native	Educator
Otten	3 years	Male	Masters	Pacific Islander	Board	Non-native	Educator
Vera	1 year	Female	Bachelors	Chamorro	Governor	Native	Educator
Webster	3 years	Male	Doctoral	Chamorro	Board	Native	Non-educator



## **Demographics of Participants**

Of the eight superintendents who participated in the study, the majority of respondents were female (63%), Chamorro (50%), and held a doctorate or its equivalent (63%). The tenure of each superintendent varied from as little as four months, to one year (2), *two years* (2), *three years* (2), and *five years* (2). Other descriptors were whether the superintendent was appointed by the governor of Guam or appointed by the Board of Education, and whether the participant was native to the island of Guam or a non-native. Interestingly, all but one superintendent had experience as an educator prior to serving as the superintendent. The board hired the lone superintendent without classroom experience when the policy on hiring superintendent expanded beyond educators. The majority of superintendents to serve Guam were Chamorro (88%). The number of women superintendents to serve Guam was seven (39%), and the number of native superintendents was 14 of 18 (78%). In the study, the percentage of Chamorro participants was 50%, female participants was 63%, and native superintendents was 50%. The profile of the participants was representative of the list of Guam superintendents on every dimension except for sex.

## **Interview Procedures**

Prior to the researcher traveling to Guam to administer the interviews, eight participants agreed to be part of the study. Each participant scheduled an exact date and time for the interview via email. The interviews were usually conducted in public venues such as coffee shops or libraries, or at the participant's office. The interviews were conducted from June 21, 2015, to July 6, 2015. All the interviews were completed in person on Guam. Both research questions were covered in the interviews. All interviews were recorded with taped responses

used for analysis and to identify themes. The researcher then transcribed all the interviews and, once they were transcribed, emailed the transcriptions to the participants for review for any changes or clarifying questions. Of the eight participants, only two had comments. One sent back a few comments while the other confirmed that the document was received and accurate.

In addition to the interview protocol, each participant received a demographic survey. The demographic survey had questions pertaining to sex, age, ethnicity, education, length of tenure, and what their current position was. The data from the demographic survey were used to create a profile of the respondents and so their responses could be analyzed regarding differing perspectives based on sex, age, ethnicity, education, and length of tenure.

### **Interview Data Analysis**

Four of six steps outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) were used in this study. Step 1 was organizing the interviews into raw text, or text in its complete form. The raw texts were cut down into manageable proportions in Step 2 and consisted of identifying the relevant text, or text that was related to the specific research concerns. Thus, the interview data were coded under the five predetermined categories of School Board factors, personal factors, political factors, financial factors, and environmental factors that were identified in the literature as relevant. Step 3 called for finding repeated ideas within the relevant text. Step 4 involved finding groups of repeated ideas that had something in common and called what they had a common theme. A theme was an implicit topic that organized a group of repeated ideas. The themes were derived from the five pr-determined categories.

Dedoose, an online application for qualitative research, was used to organize and code the interviews. Within Dedoose, each interview was uploaded as raw text, and then the

researcher analyzed each interview and identified the relevant text from the interview protocol. From the relevant text, the researcher used the predetermined categories of School Board factors, political factors, personal factors, financial factors, and environmental factors to look for repeated ideas. The major repeated ideas were grouped into the two research questions that entailed perceived factors affecting superintendent tenure and recommendations to increase tenure. Once the list of repeated ideas was created, the researcher derived themes from the major repeated ideas.

### **Document Analysis**

A document analysis was conducted to triangulate the data with the demographic survey and interviews. The first document was the Guam Public School Systems (GPSS) Audit of 2009 by Evergreen Solutions. Since 2003, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) had designated the GDOE as a “high-risk” grantee because of GDOE’s lack of fiscal and programmatic accountability in the administration of department funds. In 2007, USDOE required GDOE to develop a Comprehensive Corrective Action Plan that featured plans to significantly improve its financial management of USDOE grant funds. In January 2008, August 2008, and January 2009, based on USDOE site visits, it found that GDOE had not made significant progress. In April 2009, this audit was completed to identify and assess the deficiencies of GPSS regarding its governance and control of the department, direction and learner expectation based on standards, connectivity and consistency of educational programs, assessment and feedback of data use, productivity and efficiency of teachers and staff, and adequacy of facilities. The audit summarized over 100 documents from the GPSS, including: board policies and administrative procedures, organizational charts, program and compliance

reports, technology plan, annual performance reports, independent financial audits, curriculum and instruction plans, annual budget and expenditure reports, job descriptions, salary schedules, and an employee handbook. The audit also included a diagnostic review that interviewed central office administrators, board members, and community leaders regarding management and operations. Then employee surveys of administrators and teachers were prepared and disseminated to assess their views of management and operations of GPSS. Finally, to complete the audit, an on-site efficiency review was conducted to review and assess the structure and operations of GPSS. At the end of the 400-page report, Evergreen Solutions provided major commendations and recommendations to GPSS in governance, management and communications, educational services delivery and curriculum review, human resources and personnel management, financial services, facilities or safety and security, and technology management.

### **Audit Analysis**

To analyze the audit, the researcher used content analysis that involved five steps (Stempel, 1989). The five steps involved (a) formulation of the research questions, (b) selection of communication content, (c) developing content categories, (d) finalizing units of analysis, and (e) analyzing the collected data. The first step involved the first research question: What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam and were they reinforced the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made after the audit? In developing the content categories to analyze the audit, the turnover factors identified in

the literature were used. Within the audit, the document contained sections about school board relations, financial factors, and environmental factors that were used for analysis.

### **Subsequent Amendments Analysis**

Since the audit had been written eight years previously, documents with subsequent amendments made following the audit were analyzed. These subsequent documents were board policies, board resolutions, board contracts, board meeting agendas and minutes, and GEB Standards Procedure Manual. Similar steps as used to analyze the audit were used to analyze the documents showcasing subsequent amendments made to GDOE policies after the audit. The documents chosen for analysis were dated after the 2009 audit that dealt with school board factors, financial factors and environmental factors. From those amendments made to board policy were observed in two identified factors affecting superintendent turnover: school board factors and financial factors.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Study Background**

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze possible factors affecting turnover in the Guam superintendency. Data were gathered from interviews with former Guam superintendents and from the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and amendments made to Board of Education policies after the audit. This study should be instructive to those interested in increasing the longevity of the superintendents in Guam and elsewhere.

From the demographic survey, a profile of the subjects is presented, followed by the results of the study that are organized by the following research questions:

1. What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam, and were they reinforced by the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to Guam Department of Education policies after the audit?
2. What recommendations do the current and past superintendents have for professional development or other support to increase longevity in the Guam superintendency?

For the purposes of this study, the researcher interviewed eight superintendents of Guam from a list printed in the Management and Curriculum Audit for the Guam Public School (Evergreen Solutions, 2009). From the list of 18 superintendents, eight agreed to participate in the study via email while two had passed away, one was ill, and five were unreachable. The eight

superintendents agreed to a scheduled face-to-face appointment in Guam. The researcher flew to Guam and interviewed the participants from June 21, 2016, to July 6, 2016.

The researcher provided the participants with a copy of the interview questions prior to their interviews. The researcher led the interview and allowed the participants to complete their answers without interruption. The interviews were divided into seven sections, starting with a brief description of each superintendent's tenure followed by questions that may have affected the longevity in the position of the superintendency.

The demographic survey was summarized to create a profile of the participants in the study. The results from this survey were used in conjunction with the interview data to determine whether responses differed on various dimensions. The dimensions reviewed were perceptions of superintendents by sex, age, education level, ethnicity, and length of tenure. Responses differed on only three dimensions: superintendents who were native to Guam versus non-native, superintendents appointed by the governor versus those hired by the board, and female superintendents versus male superintendents.

The interview transcripts were analyzed by adapting a method developed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Four of the six steps were used by the researcher. Step 1 was organizing the interviews into raw text, or text in its complete form. Step 2 consisted of identifying the relevant text, or text that was related to the specific research concerns. Thus, the interview data were coded under the five categories of school board factors, personal factors, political factors, financial factors, and environmental factors that were identified in the literature as relevant. Step 3 called for finding repeated ideas within the relevant text. Step 4 involved finding groups of repeated ideas that had something in common, calling what they had in common a theme.

The interview data were coded with the online program Dedoose, an online application for qualitative research. Within Dedoose, each interview was uploaded as raw text and then the researcher analyzed each interview and identified the relevant text from the interview protocol. With the relevant text, the researcher highlighted key quotes and ideas, and through Dedoose repeated ideas were isolated from each interview. The major repeated ideas were grouped under the two research questions that entailed factors affecting tenure and recommendations to increase tenure. As prompted by the literature, the factors affecting tenure categories were grouped into school board factors, financial factors, environmental factors, personal factors, and political factors. Then responses to the second research question regarding recommendations were split into those pertaining superintendent preparation and superintendent professional development.

A content analysis of the Guam Public School System (GPSS) Audit of 2009 (Evergreen Solutions, 2009) and documents with subsequent amendments to GDOE policies after the audit were analyzed to triangulate the findings from the superintendent interviews. The audit and documents with subsequent amendments to GDOE policies after the audit were analyzed using a content analysis method. These documents were analyzed using the predetermined categories in the literature and conceptual framework. The content analysis involved the following steps: (a) formulation of the research questions, (b) selection of communication content, (c) developing content categories, (d) finalizing units of analysis, and (e) analyzing the collected data. The only categories discussed and analyzed from the two documents sources were School Board factors, financial factors, and environmental factors. The following section will describe each interview participant.



## Interview Data

### Research Question 1

Because research on superintendent turnover in Guam is limited, the researcher wanted to glean from the current and previous superintendents their perceptions of why turnover for the position had been rampant. As such, my first research question was: What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam and were they reinforced by the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to Guam Department of Education policies after the audit?

The following data revealed what the current and previous superintendents responded to interview questions that related to the factors that may have affected turnover in Guam. The researcher decided that a repeated idea was by definition one that was shared by a minimum of three superintendents. After each repeated idea is discussed, some outliers or counterexamples are shared. The themes were placed into the categories of School Board factors, financial factors, personal factors, political, and environmental factors. The categories were defined from the literature review as the major causes for turnover, and the interviews were conducted with questions following the same categories. During the interview, the superintendents also responded to a question on what were the major causes of stress during their tenure. Therefore, the role of stress as it affected the superintendents was woven into each category. Below are repeated ideas that were highlighted by interview participants.

**School board factors.** Factors pertaining to school board relations were defined as the relationship between the superintendent and the board. For the Department of Education in

Guam, the board is comprised of 14 members. The 14 members were split into nine voting and five nonvoting members. The voting members are the decision-making body of the board. The voting members were comprised of six publicly elected members who served for two years; the remaining three were appointed by the governor of Guam and served for three years. The nonvoting members were the superintendent, an administrative officer, a representative from the mayor's council, a representative from the Guam Teacher's Federation, and the President of the Island-Wide board of Governing Students. Within this factor affecting turnover, six superintendents discussed having a positive relationship with their board, while the remaining two had a positive relationship with their first board and difficulty with their second board. Although positive comments were shared about their relationship, several mentioned that the board members either did not understand their individual roles or did not understand the function of the board as a whole. Specifically, Vera shared that at times the board tried to handle day-to-day problems instead of being "policy oriented and not managerial." Otten echoed this sentiment: "The board needs to know its place. The board needs to know its responsibility only on policy and not in the management of the department." Lastly, Kasey provided some insight on the power of the board and how the superintendent's relationship could be affected, saying that the tenure of the superintendent is "going to depend on the make up of the board, because now it has sole control over the hiring and firing of the superintendent which is under the law." Kasey shared that, on two occasions, the board fired superintendents because "the superintendent stood up to the board."

Otten shared examples of the board adding stress to the superintendency or overstepping its role. He shared an occasion when a board member with a child attending one of the schools

mentioned: “I’m on the board and you are not treating my son correctly; change what you’re doing.” Otten mentioned that similar requests were made from board members with family members within the public school system during his tenure. An example of the board overstepping its policy role was during the hiring process of principals. The board members questioned if the superintendent was using the approved criteria to hire principals. Otten discussed that the board had set the policies to hire principals and exceeded its responsibility by questioning his decision after hiring certain principals.

Within school board factors, several superintendents discussed the difficulty of managing a large department of education and the Board of Education. Linday shared that there were “too many chiefs” at the table. The board at its current size had 14 members; nine of the 14 included six elected members who served a term of two years and three governor-appointed members who served a term of three years.

Each superintendent mentioned in some form that the composition of the board would determine the tenure of the superintendent. Ernest, Kalista, and Otten shared that one of the two boards they served proved difficult to collaborate with and that it strayed away from the goals of the Department of Education. Kalista said, “There were a couple of board members who were not going to let me have the support and if you look at my evaluations there were always those outliers who would just give you the lowest mark.” Ernest shared that “board members felt like they had something to prove to somebody,” adding that the board “didn’t have a problem with my performance except that it was my performance and not theirs.” Otten’s comment on his new board was that

they are actually people who specifically got on the board in opposition to my being superintendent. I don't know that for a fact but that was the impression and so the clashes came when I tried to stand for something and they did not support that because we did not have a common set of values.

The board's control over the superintendency can be difficult for individual to navigate and remain in the position.

Webster added a critique on the constant change of the composition of the board and its tenure. He said:

I think the issue is more around the timing of the elections. I think it would be easier if we did not have everybody on the board re-elected all at once and then making sure they were synchronized with the appointment of the governor's appointees... When the election happens all six-governor appointees go in or out. When elections happen all their attention might shift towards the election and that shifts their priorities and it would help to not have everyone elected at once.

He expressed that it was difficult to deal with the installment of new board members and their training. The tenure of publicly elected and governor appointed board members differed. As noted, publicly elected board members served for two years while governor appointed board members had a three-year term. The transition was tough because continuity with the board was disrupted and the new board may have new agendas or priorities dissimilar from the previous board.

Aside from the composition of the board, along with the timing of its elections, superintendents mentioned that the constant turnover of the board was problematic. Both Otten

and Ernest served two boards while they were superintendents. Otten shared that once the second board was installed, he had difficulty maintaining the current missions of the department because the new board wanted to go in a new direction or had different motives. Ernest commented that

The second board felt like it had something to prove to somebody. So it didn't work as well for me. The law at that time was the election in November and when the votes came in the new board was seated, so one day I had a new board.

The term of each board member prior to 2008 was two years, but their terms had been modified to allow for staggered terms of members of two and four years that created longer tenures for members. The staggered terms created stability rather than the possibility of having a new board every two years.

Superintendents considered it an enormous task to oversee the entire department of education of 40 schools, about 30,000 students, and more than 4,000 employees, since each school reports to the superintendent. Having to manage that many people was difficult and stressful because of all the different needs and concerns by all the individuals. Kalista, Otten, and Webster shared their sentiments that the only other leader in Guam who managed that large of an organization was the governor.

**Financial factors.** Financial factors were defined as the superintendent dealing with the budget of the department. All eight superintendents agreed that dealing with the budget of the department of education was difficult. They all agreed that the budget provided was not large enough to run the department and that, when developing the budget, several strategies had to be employed in order to run efficiently. Some superintendents mentioned they had to cut some educational programs, hire fewer student aides, or postpone upgrades to some schools to meet

budget requirements. With regard to developing the budget, a few superintendents expressed similar concerns that principals were asking for more money with little justification. Vera shared that principals would request new books for the following school year, but when the department of education visited their schools, storage closets were found full of new, unused books.

Otten and Loida felt that dealing with the budget for all the schools added stress to the superintendency. Otten found the possibility of having a pay-less payday for the entire department of education to be very stressful. Pay-less paydays were when teachers and staff would not receive their paychecks for a period of time due to the lack of finances or the delayed distribution of funds by the government in Guam. He also expressed difficulty maintaining healthy relationships with vendors who were in charge of the maintenance and upgrading of schools because they were not paid, and the Department of Education's debt was increasing. Loida communicated the same stress, saying that from year to year, the school may have had enough money budgeted for repairs but little to upgrade the infrastructure or technology within the schools.

Vera, Kasey, and Webster expressed that there were several items to address—such as principals requesting additional funds, decisions on whether to cut educational programs, or approving plans to upgrade school infrastructure in order to come up with a balanced budget for the Department of Education. They also noted the added stress of having the legislature approve the budget. Linday highlighted the enormous tasks of reviewing each school's budget prior to getting approval from the legislature. Reviewing and revising the budget request of 40 schools plus the department's budget was stressful. Lastly, Linday advised, "If you want to be superintendent you need to know your budget. Know your budget inside and out."

Planning and managing the budget were difficult tasks to accomplish, but having to present the budget to the legislature for approval proved to be complicated. It was difficult dealing with the political negotiations from several sources like the legislature, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE), and Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA). Linday shared that some senators pressured her into selecting certain vendors to provide services for the public schools such as air-conditioning or plumbing contracts. During Kalista's tenure she dealt with the U.S. DOE when GDOE was under an audit and labeled as a federal high-risk grantee. A third-party fiduciary was given oversight to monitor the U.S. DOE's financial statements until its problems of compliance with federal grant requirements were resolved. Lastly, during Vera's term, DODEA evaluated the performance of the teachers in the public schools and deemed most of them unfit to teach. DODEA pressured her to fire all those teachers or require that the department pay for additional teacher training. Vera stated to DODEA that the department did not have the finances to meet their expectations, and she felt that they overstepped their jurisdiction. In the end, DODEA supplied grant funding to provide professional development for the teachers and, in a few years, opened its own school on the island.

**Political factors.** Political factors were described as factors that dealt with the relationship between the superintendent and political forces, such as the governor of Guam, the legislature, or the laws in Guam and in the United States. Each superintendent mentioned positive and negative factors that may affect the tenure of the superintendent. All the superintendents agreed that prior to the board hiring the superintendent, the tenure of each superintendent was dependent on the election of governors. Usually, when a new governor was

elected, a new superintendent was appointed almost immediately. Several superintendents discussed how the governor's involvement with the department of education affected the superintendency. Kalista perceived that the governor used the Department of Education to appoint individuals to leadership positions as favors. During her term, she removed several governor appointees from their positions since they did not carry any professional or educational background in education, and this that resulted in some tension during her superintendency. Otten, Kalista, and Webster all developed a positive relationship with the governor and the governor's directors of other departments. They all had an open line of communication with the governor, which allowed them to develop plans together that would raise student achievement in Guam.

Several superintendents also mentioned how the legislature or individual senators brought stress to the superintendency. Most of the superintendents discussed the stress of addressing the legislature when the budget was due. The legislature was presented the budget and would decide if it would be passed into law along with the budgets of the other departments within the government, such as the power, water, and public works. Some senators abused their position by asking the superintendents for personal favors. For example, Linday faced a senator who requested that a procurement contract be given to a certain vendor. On a separate occasion, another senator asked Linday to hire individuals as a favor. In both cases, she told the senators that she could not grant them personal favors and that procurement contracts or hiring of individuals had to follow certain protocol.



Aside from financial and personnel matters the legislature tried to push the superintendent to make changes to the educational policy in Guam. Otten remembered a senator who wanted to raise the national test scores within the district. Otten's stated:

The senator said: "You know we are all concerned about how we are going raise those test scores." And I said, "You know senator, you have to be careful about asking for that." The senator said, "No, that's all we, the senators, want. We got to raise the test scores." I said, "Then that's easy." He looked at me and said, "What do you mean that's easy?" I said, "Well, a week before the test, we give the test to the teachers and we will ask them to take the test, come up with the right answers, and then we'll give those answers to the kids, we'll have them memorize those answers and test scores will go up." And he said, "That's ridiculous!" And I said, "That's my point senator, we don't want the test scores to increase, we want student learning to increase. We have got to find a system where the students are really learning."

One superintendent mentioned the effects of legislation on the superintendency during his interview. Ernest shared the effects of the Adequate Public Education Act of 2005 on the superintendency. He mentioned:

The superintendent is not paying enough attention to it, it not only has requirements but also gives him some power that he is apparently not using. I would use the Adequate Public Education Act as both a shield and a sword.

The Adequate Public Education Act provides that resources of the whole government must first be directed toward providing an adequate public educational system. The legislation managed

Guam governmental agencies that were directly and indirectly involved in providing education to children, to be responsible for providing an adequate public educational system.

The act recognizes that education on Guam is a civil right and provides school children the right to initiate litigation against a government of Guam agency or agencies failing to provide the student with an adequate education. Under the act, the minimal definition of an adequate education system includes a certified teacher for every class; adopted and required textbooks and workbooks issued to each public school student for the classes in which he or she is enrolled; and a healthy, safe, and sanitary learning environment. Ernest shared that the act had not been implemented but, due to the lack of funding approved from the legislature, the Adequate Education Act was negated. Although the superintendency is a highly political position, several superintendents agreed that the political agenda of the department should not overshadow the needs of every student within the department. Otten said, “Remove the politics, it’s all about the students.”

**Personal factors.** Personal factors were those affecting the superintendent’s salary, family life, sex, and health. A couple of superintendents highlighted personal factors that could affect the tenure of a superintendent. The major personal factor that some superintendents shared was retirement from the department. Ernest, Kalista, and Loida claimed to have retire after their terms as superintendent from the Department of Education. Although each of them retired from the department, he or she all assumed new careers within the government of Guam and began a double income. A double income earner is someone who has retired from the government of Guam but is rehired as an unclassified employee, receiving a retirement check as well as a

paycheck. Ernest and Kalista became senators in Guam's legislature, while Loida stayed in education and served as a board member.

Linday, during her tenure, mentioned that her salary was lower than the salaries of associate superintendents and principals within the department. Her salary was largely the reason she did not continue another term as superintendent.

Kasey, Otten, and Webster addressed how taxing the position of superintendent was both mentally and physically. They shared that most days they worked late, the position was similar to an on-call position, and several problems of the department weighed heavy on their minds.

As evident in the description of the participants, five of eight were women. From the entire list of Guam superintendents provided by the Management and Curriculum Audit for the Guam Public Schools (Evergreen Solutions, 2009), seven of the 18 superintendents were women. Interestingly, the respondents did not mention their sex as a factor in their longevity in the superintendency.

The superintendents talked about their personal style of leadership and how they managed the department of education during their tenure. All of them mentioned that their motivation was to serve the children of Guam and that the task to serve every student was difficult. Some of the words they used to describe themselves were "transparent" (Kalista), "learner" (Otten), "accessible" (Webster), "diplomatic" (Linday), "open-minded" (Kasey), "collaborative" (Loida), "no nonsense" (Ernest), and "service-oriented" (Vera). The superintendents' descriptions varied and drew out the many skills a superintendent must possess in order to run the department. They chose words to describe themselves that depicted a desire to work with others in a meaningful way to serve the children of Guam.

Several superintendents shared that during their tenure they developed and negotiated the budget, handled the maintenance and planned the improvements of each school, and met with various groups regularly such as the board, principals, teachers, parents, and community members. The overwhelming number of roles and responsibilities caused an enormous amount of stress for certain superintendents. Kasey stated, “Dealing with the day-to-day operations did not allow her to plan for the ‘big picture’ for the students in Guam.” She continued, stating that there was a different problem everyday such as “working with principals on the budget,” “dealing with the cafeteria,” or addressing “the maintenance of each school.” Otten added, “The other thing is the department is still doing things and having to deal with things that have nothing to do with education. I mean an example of that is fixing the buildings,” or “sometimes after board meetings, I would go back to my office and answer parent phone calls.” Stress from the superintendent’s multiple roles and responsibilities may be viewed as a personal factor affecting turnover.

**Environmental factors.** Environmental factors were defined as the factors of climate and weather as well as the added responsibility of caring for the facilities and campuses within the Department of Education. Due to Guam’s geographical location, it is prone to typhoons and earthquakes. Kasey, who served for one year, mentioned two instances when the island was hit by a typhoon. During her tenure, the island had been battered by several natural calamities that required the schools to become typhoon and earthquake shelters. Kasey spoke of instances after a typhoon where she had to manage the school grounds once they were converted into typhoon shelters. The superintendent sent orders to each principal. The first order was to assess the damage inflicted by the typhoon, then convert school sites to shelters, open their doors to the

public, and, once the island is cleared from the typhoon, convert it back to a school and prepare to open for the next school day. Kalista noted that there was an added stress of managing the public schools because the deterioration caused by the tropical climate in Guam made them unhealthy and unsafe for students.

**Summary.** In summary, the Guam superintendents cited several factors they believed affected tenure for the superintendency. Most superintendents agreed that tenure was greatly affected by the composition of the board and the board's understanding of its roles and responsibilities. Guam superintendents perceived financial and political factors as intertwined. The budgetary process caused stress within the superintendency due to the lack of adequate funding and the political method for the budget to receive approval and disbursement. Several personal factors related to turnover were superintendent retirement and the ability to receive both retirement funds and a second salary. Finally, the frequency of typhoons hitting the island of Guam could affect the tenure of the superintendent.

## **Research Question 2**

After interviewing the participants about the possible reasons for turnover in the superintendency in Guam, I asked them for recommendations about how to strengthen the position of the superintendent. My second research question was: What recommendations do past and current superintendents have for professional development or other support to increase longevity in the superintendency?

The eight superintendents were asked to provide recommendations on how to improve the length of tenure of the superintendents in Guam. First, they responded to recommendations for superintendent preparation and then shared suggestions on superintendent mentorship and

superintendent professional development. Again, the researcher decided that a repeated idea was one shared by a minimum of three superintendents.

**Superintendent preparation.** Four superintendents emphasized the importance of having experience within the educational system prior to becoming the superintendent. Webster said, having “an educational background and the curricular expertise were important” and added that, “familiarity with educational issues and in one way or another knowing the importance of what’s being done in the department of education were also important.” Kalista and Loida agreed that prior knowledge of the education system was crucial. Kalista said, “Knowledge about educational systems and developed leadership skills is going to be very key.” Loida echoed that, “before you become superintendent you really need to try teaching in the classroom.” She continued that she “believed being a teacher, a principal, an assistant to the superintendent is important” prior to becoming the superintendent. Vera emphasized that the superintendent must understand “the culture in Guam—it’s heritage, rituals, and practices in order to differentiate the teaching methods to fit the students in Guam.” The superintendents all shared that prior to serving as the superintendent having a professional background was crucial in Guam. None stated that a superintendent preparation program should be created or maintained on the island.

**Professional development.** Three of the superintendents agreed that continuing to be a member of the Council of Chief School State Officers (CCSSO) was beneficial. The CCSSO is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The council seeks member

consensus on major educational issues and expresses its views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. Otten, Kalista, and Kasey reiterated the importance of being part of a leadership organization that afforded the opportunity to have conversations with leaders who could share insights on problem solving and the ability to collaborate on changes for the future of education within their different districts.

Another idea for professional development was participation in conferences outside of Guam. Ernest and Loida shared that conferences are a great place to meet leaders in similar situations and have a dialogue on how they are solving their own problems. Attending conferences allows superintendents to hear about new ideas, studies, or policies that could affect Guam. Participating in retreats with the board was a suggestion made by Kalista, Kasey, and Webster. Kalista mentioned that retreats would allow the superintendent and the board to get to know each other better while creating a space to revisit their mission for the department of education. Webster recommended that superintendents should be allowed to create a personalized professional development schedule, dependent upon the professional needs of the individual. For example, if the superintendent felt that he or she was weak in budgeting, then the department could provide professional development in that area. Lastly, Kasey suggested that once a superintendent was hired, he or she would first shadow a tenured superintendent off-island prior to serving. Most of the suggestions for professional development were external, meeting with educational leaders off the island of Guam.

Webster strayed from the external recommendations for professional development and recommended, “regular, explicit, tailored professional development should be built into the contract.” He also suggested:

There ought to be time or a certain amount and really structured around the needs of the superintendent. I mean there are some basic things, but you could see some superintendents are going to want more training and development on how to run budgets or how to develop budgets or different ways to budget.

He also mentioned professional development pertaining to operational management or how you organize teams in your workforce. Webster also suggested having “retreats that include the board, top management, and the deputies. To have the retreats be positive in regards to collaborating and planning on projects together.”

### **Differing Perceptions**

From a comparison of the demographic profile with the interview data, the researcher analyzed whether perceptions differed along several dimensions. The dimensions analyzed were sex, ethnicity, education, and length of tenure. The superintendents’ perceptions differed on only three dimensions: whether they were appointed by the governor in Guam versus those that were appointed by the board, for those born and raised in Guam versus those from other locales, and by sex.

**Appointed by the governor vs. appointed by the board.** The perceptions of superintendents appointed by the governor differed from those who were appointed by the board under categories of school board, financial, and political factors. Two of the four governor-appointed superintendents did not report to a board because it did not exist; rather, they met with the governor. The remaining governor-appointed superintendents viewed the relationship with their board as highly collaborative since the governor also appointed each board member. Lindsay spoke highly of her boards, mentioning that their meetings were productive and efficient, which



allowed the board members to tackle problems with curriculum, finances, and personnel quickly and effectively. She added that there were fewer board members during her tenure, which made it easier to manage differing ideas and come to a decision. The governor-appointed superintendents agreed that developing the budget for the department of education was a difficult and stressful task but once the superintendent and the board agreed upon the budget it was easier to get approval from the legislature. Loida and Ernest concurred that once the superintendent and the board came to a compromise, the legislature followed and approved their budgetary plans. Even with the collaborative relationship between the superintendent and the board or the governor, the governor-appointed superintendent's tenure was shorter than those elected. Ernest, Linday, and Loida mentioned that their tenures were not controlled by a contract but as an agreement with the current governor who appointed them. Usually, a new superintendent would be appointed when a new governor was elected.

Conversely, the superintendents who were hired by the Board of Education cited having had difficulty collaborating with their board. The four hired superintendents agreed that their respective boards did not understand their roles or responsibilities as board members. Kasey highlighted that the roles and responsibilities of the board had been unstable for some years. At times, board members would only deal with educational policy, while other times they would have additional powers in managing the department of education. Kalista, Otten, and Webster voiced concerns over board members abusing their titles to serve their self-interest and sometimes micromanaging the superintendent. They each mentioned cases where a board member requested that a certain school site receive more financial assistance over others. Despite

the lack of understanding between the superintendents and their boards, the tenures of Kalista and Webster lasted more than three years.

**Native vs. non-native.** All the superintendents agreed to some degree that any leader in Guam had to understand the culture in Guam or interpersonal relationships in order to be successful. Loida shared her observation of hiring from off-island, explaining, “If they did not understand the culture in Guam, the politics or how the island operates, those persons did not last.” Vera echoed the same observation and added that one does not have to be Chamorro to understand the interpersonal connections in Guam but recommended that a person have spent some time in Guam or grown up there.

The views of Chamorro—the native people of Guam—and the views of the non-natives differed only in terms of the impact of personal relationships on the island. The benefits of strong interpersonal relationships in Guam did not benefit the natives as much as one might anticipate. Most of the Chamorro superintendents shared that senators and board members sometimes used their personal relationship with the superintendent to request favors. Linday accounted that a board member requested that she hire a family member as a favor and not based on her professional experience. Vera shared how her personal connections within the department of education made it difficult for her to manage the schools. After she became the superintendent, some of her previous principals and teachers became her employees, since she was a product of the public school system. During her tenure, she decided to move principals to different school sites, changes were not easily accepted. She felt that those personal connections made it difficult for her to initiate change.

On the other hand, the non-natives found it easier to navigate the department of education. Webster, although a Chamorro, did not grow up in Guam. He found it beneficial that he had a “lack of institutional baggage in Guam,” so coming from outside of Guam was helpful. He was able to grow his relationships within the department professionally by stating his mission and vision clearly to the board. Kasey and Ernest agreed that having no personal ties within the department of education or politics in Guam benefitted the superintendency. Kasey recommended that sometimes an outsider’s perspective is needed in order to refresh the mission and goals of the department of education.

**Female vs. male.** From the demographic information, the tenure of female superintendents was generally shorter than those of male superintendents. Four of the five female superintendents served for two years or less, with Kalista being the exception by serving five years. Two of the three male superintendents served for three years, and Ernest served for one year.

The views of the female superintendents differed from the men on two factors: political and financial. The women shared that favors were requested of them from political influences to either hire selected individuals or to bypass the procurement process in order to grant a company a Department of Education contract. Vera identified occasions when senators would ask her to hire friends or family members as a personal favor. During her tenure, Vera faced instances when the board disagreed with her decisions to dismiss principals or teachers. The men, on the other hand, did not cite any request for political favors.

Female superintendents more likely identified the major cause of stress as coming from the budget. Loida strongly expressed her stress with the budget and how it affected her. She said:

The biggest stress was the budget or lack of money. I think it still continues with the stress that we have right today. There are a lot of laws that are being implemented that they want us comply with but without no money to comply with. And it is difficult to operate the schools smoothly for our kids without enough money.

Kasey mentioned that developing the budget and presenting it to the legislature for approval caused her stress. Kalista did not explicitly mention the budget, but stated that not having enough money to repair or upgrade schools caused her stress. Vera's stress with the budget came from principals requesting more funding for their schools with little or no justification for their requests. Conversely, the male superintendents in the study mentioned that their stress was caused by either the political nature of the position or the size of the department of education.

### **Reinforcement of the Interview Data through Document Analysis**

The Guam Public School System (GPSS) Audit of 2009 was conducted by Evergreen Solutions LLC to identify and assess the deficiencies of GPSS. The scope of the audit reviewed the following functions of GPSS: (a) governance, management and communications; (b) educational services delivery and curriculum review; (c) human resources and personnel management; (d) financial services; (e) facilities or safety and security; and (e) technology and management. The GPSS Audit recommendations made by Evergreen Solutions addressed and reinforced three of the five factors addressed by the interview participants. The similarities were identified for school board factors, financial factors, and environmental factors.

### **Guam Public School System Audit**

**School board factors.** For school board factors, the audit found that the number of standing committees of the GEB was excessive. There were 14 standing committees.

Committees are a way of allowing board members to focus in-depth on topics important to the school district. By dividing the labor, board members who served on committees covered more ground than they could possibly cover in a regularly scheduled board meeting. Committees allowed board members to develop expertise in certain areas, and committees were an important vehicle for ensuring that action items and informational reports presented to the board were rational and defensible. Evergreen Solutions found in a national survey that school boards mostly have four committees: (a) finance/budget, (b) legislation/policy, (c) audit, and (d) curriculum. It recommended that the Guam Education Policy board consider four committees: an executive committee, a planning and policy development committee, a performance monitoring committee, and a public relations committee. Having board committees cover issues that cross the district would allow the board to focus in-depth on policy (rather than management) matters that cut across several operations. A Planning and Policy Committee would be future-oriented, focusing not only on the adoption of a budget and policy development, but also on strategic planning. The Performance Monitoring Committee would monitor educational, administrative, and financial reports.

The large number of committees supported the superintendents' perception of the excessive number of board members. The number of committees was parallel to the number of board members. There were 14 committees listed in the audit; nine of the voting board members led one or two of those committees.

Evergreen Solutions recommended that UOG increase training opportunities for board members. The audit found that, under Public Law 26-26, the University of Guam was required to provide training to new board members upon their appointment. The University of Guam had

complied with this law, and other workshops had been held, but the Guam Education Policy board had not participated. For example, in October 2008, a board membership training was hosted by the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council. The workshop covered accreditation; board duties and responsibilities; chief executive duties; educational policies and laws; ethics, accountability, transparency and liability; board-CEO relationships; board self-evaluation; and current issues in U.S. Law.

The audit concluded that the University of Guam training (which is mandatory for new board members) was beneficial, but not sufficient. The Guam Education Policy board should take advantage of additional training opportunities. Because of the expense involved, the audit suggested that an expert facilitator come to Guam as opposed to sending members off island. Also, retreats with the superintendent and senior staff should also be considered.

Additionally, the audit determined that the Guam Education Policy Board had adopted no protocols of professional conduct or code of ethics. The primary reasons for such protocols is to set a standard for the way a school board will undertake its work and to acknowledge the differentiation of duties between the board and district administration. In addition, the policy should promote a practice of civility during its meetings. GPSS principals and other administrators shared that they were frequently criticized and belittled by board members during both regular board meetings and committee meetings. The audit cited lack of trust among board members and the board's ongoing involvement in administrative matters. It recommended that the new superintendent be given the opportunity to perform as chief executive officer without board interference. With this in mind, the audit suggested that protocols of professional conduct should prove useful to the Guam Education Policy board. Climate is an outward sign of an

organization's culture. The audit concluded that climate and culture were viewed as critical aspects of improving school performance. Indeed, researchers who have studied climate and culture view them as keys to the success of urban school districts (Cooper et al., 2000). The climate and culture in a school district are set at the top.

The audit also reinforced that the board members lacked the training to perform their roles and responsibilities mentioned in the superintendent interviews. Also, the audit found a lack of professionalism between the board and other parties within the Department of Education such as principals or teachers. Although the superintendents in their interviews did not specify that the board was unprofessional, it could be gleaned that negative experiences with the board could have been for unprofessional conduct.

**Financial factors.** The financial factors discussed in the audit all related to the budget and the budgetary process. The audit's findings were that GPSS lacked a user-friendly budget document for communicating the district's spending priorities and results of operations. The board was provided a budget digest, which contained technical financial information. The 2009 Budget Digest was a series of appropriations and full-time equivalents (FTEs) outlined by an overall summary; divisional summary; elementary, middle, and high school summaries; and individual cost centers. The budgets prior to 2009 were comprised of numbers on spreadsheets with no mention of a mission, vision, or guided principles. The audit concluded that the budget document was structured in technical terms and accounting format, and lacked user-friendly charts or graphs to depict GPSS budget priorities or direction to a lay reader. The GPSS lacked a consistently utilized structure for involvement in the budgetary process. Principals had never been involved in the budget process; principal involvement in the budgetary process had not

been considered a priority. Audit interviews indicated that many school administrators felt disenfranchised and frustrated with the lack of accountability for fiscal irregularities. The audit interviews found that principals and school faculty and staff submitted budget requests, but such requests were neither encouraged or heard. The GPSS budget development process was largely unstructured and not understood.

The recommendations to revamp the budgetary process mentioned in the audit echoed the stress described by the superintendents in the interviews. Several superintendents mentioned that the budget was a difficult task, and the audit shared that the budget was not user-friendly. Although the audit recommended changes in the budgetary process subsequent amendments to board policy indicated that none had been made.

As for the procurement of essential supplies and services for schools and the central office, the audit found that GPSS lacked an effective accountability system over procurement. The school system experienced frustration with inconsistency and lack of responsiveness relative to procurement. A major deficiency identified in the accountability system for procurement was the lack of a current comprehensive procedures manual. While the staff had inserts, memos, and certain updated procedures attached to the Procedures Manual, the overall manual had not undergone a comprehensive update for several years. Lack of a current, comprehensive procedures manual made effective communication of GPSS laws, rules, and regulations difficult to follow. Audit interviews indicated several comments regarding the lack of consistency, responsiveness, and accountability of the system. These comments included:

- the rules are always changing;
- orders are placed that never come;



- emergency declarations are used as a way to avoid bids; and
- processes take too long and create a high level of frustration with purchasing.

Based on the superintendent interviews, the participants mentioned that they were pressured by senators to grant procurement contracts as personal favors. With the comments made in the audit of the rules changing or possible emergency declarations, personal favors could simply be requested of the superintendent.

**Environmental factors.** For the environmental factors found within the GPSS Audit, facilities and safety of the schools were discussed. During the audit, a high school was closed, condemned, and slated for demolition, while various additions, expansions, and demolitions to other school had occurred since 1999. All the schools were of concrete masonry construction, and most had been built over 40 years ago. The audit survey results, research by Evergreen staff, and information provided during on-site interviews indicated strongly that the maintenance function of the Facilities and Maintenance Department had, over many years, been neither sufficiently preventive nor immediately responsive to meeting the needs of GPSS facilities. In addition, a significant deferred maintenance backlog seems to have built-up, leaving most of the 37 schools in poor to fair condition. The audit made a strong recommendation to overhaul the maintenance operation at GPSS thoroughly, radically, and completely. Two major options presented themselves for a drastic renewal of the maintenance function to switch to a completely outsourced maintenance component at GPSS or to a complete and thorough inspection and reorganization of the in-house maintenance function.

Although typhoons were not mentioned in the audit as a cause for schools becoming unsafe, the superintendents in the interviews noted the prevalence of typhoons during their

tenure. The amount of damage caused by several typhoons throughout the years had caused the maintenance department within DOE to fall behind with repairs.

### **Amendments made to GDOE Policies after the Audit**

After the audit was analyzed, documents on the Guam Education Board website were studied to determine if any subsequent amendments were made in the Department of Education in regards to the recommendations made in the audit. Post-audit documents included: (a) board policies, (b) board resolutions, (c) board contracts, (d) board meeting agendas and minutes, (e) GEB standards procedure manual, and (f) procurement. Amendments made to board policy were observed in two identified factors affecting superintendent turnover: school board factors and financial factors.

**School board factors.** Amendments made to board policies following the audit were the number of board committees was reduced to four: (a) executive, (b) instructional and academic support, (c) safe and healthy schools, (d) and organizational health efficiency committees (Guam Education Board, 2013). Added in the amendment were powers given to the Chairman of the Board of Education, such as the ability to create special committees and determine their tenure. The number of board members had not be reduced.

Since the audit, the University of Guam continued to comply with professional development training for new board members within 30 days of their appointment. There had been no creation of additional professional development for the Board of Education (Guam Education Board, 2009).

**Financial factors.** Board policy changes to fiscal management after the audit were only made in two documents: Food and Nutrition Service Management (Guam Education Board,

2016) and Student Instructional Fees (Guam Education Board, 2010). The documents on budget preparation procedures had not been revised since 1979.

Following the audit, the procurement process had been improved. Information about procurement was available on the website (Guam Courts, 2016). Although the information was available, it could not be determined if emergency declarations were still being made to avoid bids for procurement or if the process was still inefficient.

### **Themes**

The repeated ideas within the factors for turnover were analyzed based on the relationship between the individual and the organization from Getzel and Guba's social system theory (1968) and Gaynor's role stress theory (1998). Each theme emerged based on the perceptions of the participants and how they responded to the organization, such as the culture of the organization, the roles and expectations of the organization, and the stress felt from the superintendency. Themes that could affect superintendent turnover were identified based on the repeated ideas from those interviewed and from the audit and subsequent amendments.

The first theme was a *positive, collaborative relationship between the superintendent and the board* was required for longevity for the superintendency. When asked questions surrounding the relationship between the board and the superintendent, the interview participants responded with a variety of responses. The responses given by a majority of the superintendents were that they had had a positive relationship with their board. The superintendents who mentioned having had a negative relationship with their board stated that there needed to be a clear understanding of the board's roles and responsibilities. The audit reinforced that the board did not understand

its role and responsibility; the audit found that the board did not recognize the differentiation of duties between the board and superintendent (Evergreen Solutions, 2009).

The second theme was that a *large board creates conflict* for the superintendent. The Board of Education consisted of 14 members—nine voting members and five nonvoting members. Further, the nine voting members were a hybrid of three governor-appointed members and six elected by the public members. One superintendent said that there are “too many chiefs” at the board meetings and that it was difficult to have efficient meetings with several opinions. The audit discovered that the number of board committees was too numerous at 14 committees with an elected board member leading two or more committees. Although the number of board committees had been reduced from 14 to four, the number of board members remained at fourteen (Guam Education Board, 2013).

The third theme was that *the public school budget and releasing of the funds creates stress for the superintendent*. This theme emerged when the participants were asked what the major causes of stress in the superintendency were. All the superintendents mentioned that developing and requesting the budget for public schools in Guam was difficult. The audit determined that the GPSS budget process was ineffective and suggested major revision. Once the budgets were developed, the superintendent had to present the budget to the legislature and request that the budget be passed into law. In several interviews, the superintendents shared that senators abused their powers and asked for personal favors from the superintendents such as hiring friends or family members into the DOE. One superintendent highlighted that even when the budget was approved, the disbursement of the funds from the government of Guam was not done in a timely manner, which sometimes resulted in pay-less paydays.

The fourth theme was that *the ability to receive a double income fuels retirement* from the superintendency. Three of the superintendents in the study retired as superintendents, but attained another job within the government of Guam. Those superintendents received their retirement funds and a second paycheck in their new positions. Retirement was mentioned as a cause for turnover within the Department of Education, but most did not actually retire. Some of the participants who stepped down from the superintendency became members of the Board of Education or senators for the legislature in Guam. The availability of a second paycheck was an incentive to retire from the superintendency.

The fifth theme was that *frequency of natural disasters as an additional stressor* for the superintendent. A couple of superintendents mentioned the added stress of managing Guam's school sites when a typhoon hits. Due to Guam's geographic location in the Pacific Ocean and along the equator, the island is a hot spot for natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes. For superintendents in Guam, these conditions added the responsibility of managing the schools when they were converted into shelters after a natural disaster strikes Guam. One superintendent mentioned that it was stressful to convert the schools to shelters and back.

The sixth theme was that there is a *lack of formal superintendent preparation* in Guam. Based on the survey given to participants, their level of education and professional experience varied. Most superintendents had received a postgraduate degree in either education or law while two superintendents had only earned their bachelor's degree. None of them mentioned entering into a formal superintendent preparation program. From the interview question about their recommendations for improving superintendent development, they answered that any future superintendent had to have knowledge of educational systems and leadership skills.

Finally, the seventh theme was that *professional development was more external* for the current and previous superintendents in Guam. From the interview protocol, the superintendents were asked to provide recommendations for on ongoing professional developments for superintendents. Several participants mentioned professional development activities that were off the island and were about networking with other superintendents or leaders elsewhere. None of the superintendents mentioned professional development sessions that were specific to the position, such as curriculum or budget training. These themes are discussed in relation to the literature in Chapter 5.

### **Conclusion**

In an effort to answer the two research questions, this chapter presented a summary of the findings from the short demographic survey, coded interviews, and analysis of the GPSS audit and subsequent policy changes made after the audit. The eight participating superintendents provided perceptions of governance, personal, political, and environmental factors that may affect superintendent tenure in Guam, and provided recommendations to increase tenure. Additionally, superintendents' differing perspectives along three dimensions were discussed for superintendents who were appointed or elected and superintendents who were native or non-native to Guam. Analysis of the interviews yielded seven themes that showed participants voiced several reasons for superintendent turnover. They noted concerns in the areas of weak superintendent and board relationships, complex and unclear financial process, frequency of natural disasters, and lack of professional preparation and ongoing professional development. The content analysis of the audit and subsequent amendments made to GDOE policies after the

audit reinforced the findings from the superintendents' interviews within school board factors, financial factors, and environmental factors.

In the next chapter, conclusions based on significant findings are discussed. Additionally, recommendations and suggestions for future research are outlined.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The study's purpose was to identify factors perceived by Guam superintendents, and reinforced by the audit and amendments made to board policies after the audit, as influencing superintendent turnover. Additionally, the study analyzed the superintendents' suggestions for possible means to increase superintendent tenure such as professional development or mentorship. The literature review provided the study with a foundation about the history of the superintendency and school boards. Relevant research about superintendent turnover and factors affecting turnover were also reviewed.

The conceptual framework for the study was an adaptation of Getzel et al.'s (1968) and Gaynor's (1998) work in social systems theory. By combining concepts from Getzel et al.'s (1968) model of social systems and social behaviors and Gaynor's (1998) insights into role stress, a conceptual framework was developed. The conceptual framework provided a lens through which to view the organizational and personal characteristics that were explored in the study. Then through a comprehensive literature review, factors that influenced superintendent turnover were identified.

The following research questions drove the study:

1. What school board, financial, personal, political, and environmental factors were perceived by former and current superintendents to affect the tenure of the superintendents in Guam, and were they reinforced by the Guam Public School Audit of 2009 and subsequent amendments made to Guam Department of Education policies after the audit?



2. What recommendations do past and current superintendents have for professional development or other support to increase longevity in the superintendency?

From the list of 18 superintendents listed in the audit, seven previous superintendents and the current superintendent in Guam were identified as available for the study. The eight superintendents were contacted and interviewed for the study. Interviews occurred on the island of Guam and were scheduled by the researcher prior to his arrival. All participants answered the questions from the interview protocol. Interviews were taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were emailed back to the participants for review. After being reviewed, the interview data were coded using an internet-based program.

Once all the interview data were coded, data were examined by breaking down coded responses. Data were first examined from the individual and organizational factors predetermined from the conceptual framework and the literature. These were (a) school board factors, (b) personal factors, (c) political factors, (d) financial factors, and (e) environmental factors. Next, the researcher checked for recommendations for increased superintendent tenure based on the second research question.

After the analysis of the interview data, the researcher did a content analysis of the GPSS audit and documents with subsequent amendments made to GDOE policies after the audit. The content analysis was used to strengthen the findings from the superintendents' interview data. The audit and amendments to GDOE policy after the audit reinforced the interview data within three factors—school board, financial, and environmental.

The findings of this study are not meant to be generalized to any school districts in the United States or globally; yet, knowledge gained could lead aspiring superintendents to a better understanding of their possible experiences in Guam.

Table 3

*Factors Perceived as Related to Superintendent Turnover from Participant Interviews, Audit, and Amendments*

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**School Board Factors**

- Lack of positive and collaborative relationship needed with the board
- Too many members on the Board of Education (14 members)
- Lack of role understanding by the Board of Education
- Frequent school board turnover

**Financial Factors**

- Lack of funding
- Difficult budget process

**Personal Factors**

- Retirement and double income
- Inadequate salary
- Multiple responsibilities

**Political Factors**

- Budget tied to political influences
- Governor and legislature involvement in Department of Education

**Environmental Factors**

- Frequent natural disasters
  - Isolation due to geographic location
- 

**Summary of Findings**

As depicted in Table 3, above, the findings from the interviews, audit, and subsequent amendments clustered within the five categories that influenced superintendent tenure identified in the literature. Across data sources, seven themes emerged as significant in terms of superintendent turnover. These themes are addressed in the next section.

## **Discussion of Themes**

### **Lack of Positive and Collaborative Relationship Needed with the Board**

Relationship with the school board was perceived as a factor affecting superintendent tenure. The interview transcripts show that most superintendents viewed their relationship with the board as positive, which makes sense given that four superintendents were appointed by the governor and so were their boards. These governor appointees possibly shared insights and goals with the governor of Guam, so there should have been minimal disputes. The remaining superintendents shared a positive relationship with the board that hired them in the superintendency, but two stated that once a new board was elected that relationship turned sour. Such findings reinforce findings reported by Alsbury (2008), who studied superintendent tenure in Florida and found that a positive, working relationship between the superintendent and board was related to longer tenures. Mountford (2004) found that turnover was high when superintendent and board relations were negative, while Kowalski et al. (2011) determined that superintendent tenures were longer due to healthy relationships with the board. Both findings emphasized that the relationship built between the board and the superintendent is crucial for the survival in the superintendency.

### **The Board's Misunderstanding of Roles and Responsibilities**

The second item in governance that was repeated several times was role ambiguity (Gaynor, 1998) between the superintendent and the school board. Role ambiguity can be defined as either superintendents or Boards of Education not knowing what their job is or of what aspects of their job they control. The delineation of power came as an important function to lessen role conflict between the school board and the superintendent. When the roles and responsibilities of

each part are not clearly defined, conflict can ensue and the relationship can deteriorate quickly. Five of eight participants in the study shared that the board micromanaged the superintendent. The board overstepped its responsibilities and dealt with day-to-day matters rather than handling issues with educational policy. The Guam Education Board (GEB) contract specified that:

The role of the board, as with any legislative body, is to act collectively, not individually. Any board member shall report to I Liheslaturan Guåhan any potential or alleged violation of this Subsection. The board shall not: (1) interfere in or micro-manage discipline cases, unless expressly authorized by public law, and only to the extent authorized by public law. (GCA Education, 2009, p. 4)

In multiple interviews, superintendents were concerned that the board's power extended beyond its contract. The Guam Public School Audit echoed the superintendents' comments. The audit found that the board misunderstood the duties between the board and the superintendent. The audit recommended that the board policies be updated and to enforce the operating procedures. The study reinforced Mountford's (2004) study that the effective collaboration between both parties is crucial and can determine the length of tenure for the superintendent.

### **Problem with the Large Board**

From the Guam Public School Audit, it was noted that the size of the board was too large. The GEB was composed of 14 members—nine voting members and five nonvoting members. From the voting members, six were publicly elected, and the remaining appointed by the governor. Traditionally, there have been between five and seven education board members in U.S. public school districts (Eadie, 2006). Eisenberg, Sundgren, and Wells (1998), in their study of large-sized boards within businesses, found that boards larger than nine members began to

decrease the profitability and efficiency of a company. One superintendent said that there were, “too many chiefs at the table,” which could hamper the board’s ability to make quick, decisive decisions.

### **Difficulty with the Budget**

Handling the budget was seen as a factor that could influence superintendent tenure. Budget awareness was a skill mentioned repeatedly as one required to navigate the superintendency. The Department of Education in Guam was in a unique situation in which the budget must be approved by the legislature before it is enacted into law and passed. As Guam is a U.S. territory, and the country itself is currently under an economic crisis, the effect on the funding of public education is not only drastic but also very concerning, because the funding levels of schools are much lower but still need to provide indispensable opportunities for student learning. As the stress of the budget continues, the lack of resources and the need for budget creativity for superintendents will continue to impact superintendent turnover.

Glass and Franchesini (2007) recognized budget and funding problems in their study that were similar to the findings pertaining to Guam. While the budget approval process is unique in Guam, finding and securing the necessary funds to meet federal and island mandates are difficult. Financial expectations to provide ample resources have led to the stress of role-overload for the superintendent (Gaynor, 1998). Role-overload is the lack of resources to meet the expectations of others. Houston (2001) commented from his study of the evolving role of the superintendent that “expectations and resources are mismatched.” Similar findings were evident in the current study. Frequently mentioned by the superintendents was that the budgetary process

with the Department of Education was stressful because there seemed to be several individuals involved in developing and approving the budget.

### **Double Income Proving to be Detrimental**

Personal factors that affected superintendent turnover in Guam included retirement from the superintendency that resulted in individuals receiving double income. Superintendents in Guam tend to retire from the superintendency and find employment elsewhere. The retirement allows the superintendent to receive their benefits and then the new position adds another source of income or the superintendent double-dips. A double income is detrimental to the state government's budget in which the individual collects from an untaxed retirement fund and a second salary that does not add into the state's retirement fund (Milligan & Schirle, 2008; Morgan, 2012).

The prospect of receiving a double income reduces the incentive to stay in the superintendency. In the United States, large numbers of superintendents are retiring and projected to retire in the near future (Cooper et al., 2000), so finding the next superintendent and retaining him or her will become difficult for the superintendent search committees of public school districts. There have been a lower number of superintendent candidates due to retirements, board politics, and stress within the position from inadequate funding and pressures from state mandates (Chance & Capps, 1992). Superintendents have been hired to push the district forward in what the board, staff, and communities see are necessary for the superintendent to meet the needs of the students. So hiring and retaining highly qualified superintendents has become a challenge.

In states such as Ohio (Zurick, 2014), Minnesota (Steward, 2014), and California (Neuman, 2014) superintendents have retired from their position then later be rehired by the same district or hired by a new district. Superintendents who have worked for decades can collect a public pension and a salary at the same time, a practice known as “double dipping.” Public officials—from city finance clerks to teachers to state legislators—can put in the required number of years in public jobs, then retire with a public pension and be rehired into a public job. Proponents say retired administrators cost the public less, because they often return for a lower salary and no benefits. But critics point out that more years receiving benefits costs the retirement system more. They say double-dipping keeps younger officials from moving up the ladder (Zurick, 2014).

### **Higher Compensation Expected**

Interestingly, only one superintendent mentioned salary as her reason for leaving the position. A comparison to other superintendents’ compensation could have been added to this study. Aside from retirement, administrators have searched for positions with greater compensation or higher status (Dlugosh, 1994). In comparison to CEOs of large businesses, superintendents earn a relatively low salary (Jones, 2000). An increase in salary could deter turnover. With the amount of stress and expectation to succeed within the superintendency likely to increase, an increase in salary should also be discussed for highly qualified applicants (Soberhart & Schellar, 2001).

### **Political Pressure Strangles the Budget**

The superintendents in Guam have expressed the negative impact the legislature has had on the superintendency. They have shared how the budget of the Department of Education is

heavily tied to the motives of the legislature. Some superintendents mentioned senators abusing their powers and requesting personal favors such as immediate hiring individuals or granting procurement contracts without proper approval protocol. Similarly, Byrd et al. (2006) found the superintendents were frustrated with the politics and bureaucracy within the position.

Superintendents in their study found the legislative process frustrating, and the political pressures usually led to a decrease in tenure (Byrd et al., 2006). The budgetary process in the Department of Education involves political pressure at every phase. The budget's planning phase involves the superintendent meeting with the principals in each school and the Board of Education, then the budget's approval phase is managed by the legislature. Finally, the superintendent must wait for the governor to disburse the funds.

### **Frequency of Disasters Impacts the Budget**

Guam's geographic location and tropical climate have affected the superintendency. Typhoons and earthquakes consistently hitting the island have turned the public school in Guam into shelters for the public. The occupancy, monitoring, and maintenance of the school-shelters are an added responsibility for the superintendent. Several superintendents have shared stories that portray the stress of providing both a safe shelter for victims of these nature calamities and safe learning environment for the students. Superintendents in New Orleans have similar responsibilities of converting their schools into shelters (Polier, 2006; Newmark & De Ruyg, 2006) after a natural disaster strikes their districts. Hurricane Katrina changed the nature of public schools in New Orleans and paved the way for new schools to open because several schools were destroyed (Gouwens & Lander, 2008). Guam has been devastated by several



disasters but many of the public schools remain damaged by the calamity and constant conversion from school to shelter.

### **Lack of Formal Preparation Programs**

From the interview data, participants consistently shared that superintendents hired for the position should come with prior experience and an educational background in leadership. None of the superintendents received formal training for the role of superintendent and did not mention the need for a formal preparation program in Guam. Most states offer leadership preparation programs as well as professional development. As illustrated in California, there are several programs for the preparation and continued professional development for superintendents (Johnson & Uline, 2005).

### **Lack of Internal Professional Development**

Professional development recommendations for the superintendency in Guam were mostly external. Several superintendents mentioned that they had attended educational conferences off-island or met with superintendents from other districts. Yet each superintendent mentioned a need for an individual to understand the budget, know the culture in Guam, or have background knowledge in educational systems.

### **Future Research**

Future studies should supplement this work to include the perceptions of several members of former and current board members, senators, school administrators, teachers, students, and community members. A comparison study can be done comparing the factors affecting tenure with Guam and districts that are similar to Guam. The districts to consider would be those similar in size with one superintendent for an entire population, such as an island, or a

district that has had mostly women superintendents. To further develop the differing views of native and non-native superintendents, research can be done to elaborate on the practices of the superintendent search committees as they decide on hiring superintendents that are native or non-native to Guam. A deeper study on sex, educational background, and professional training could elaborate the discussion of differing perceptions between superintendents.

### **Implications for Practices in Guam**

Several implications were found as a result of this study that could have an impact on current educational leadership as well as those who are aspiring to gain positions in Guam.

The following recommendations for practice in Guam were derived from the themes identified in this study as seen in Table 4, below.

Table 4

*Links to Themes and Implications for Guam*

Themes	Implications for Guam
Lack of positive and collaborative relationship needed with the Board	Provide additional board member training
The Board's misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities	
Problem with a large board	Reduce the number of board members
Difficulty with the budget	Restructure who controls the budget
Political pressure strangles the budget	
Frequency of disasters impacts the budget	Allocate funds for repairs or new schools
Double dipping proving to be detrimental	Revise or remove ability to receive double compensation
Higher compensation expected	Ensure proper compensation
Lack of formal preparation programs	Expand ProTech programs to include superintendent preparation
Lack of internal professional development	Develop on-island professional development

1. All the superintendents indicated that members of the Board of Education did not understand their roles and responsibilities. Based on these findings, expansion of mandatory training for board members should go beyond their first training to increase understanding of their role, focusing on such subjects as curriculum, finance, and board member to superintendent relations.
2. A reduction in the number of members of the Board of Education should be considered because some superintendents and the audit stated that the size of the board was too large and navigating all the different opinions was stressful and time consuming.
3. The overall control of the budget should transition away from the legislature and the governor but be passed to the superintendent and the Board of Education. The number of individuals involved in the adoption and disbursement of the budget should be reduced.
4. Consistent typhoons damage schools in Guam, so the safety and maintenance of each school site has deteriorated. In addition to the recommendation for budget control, funds should be allocated toward the repair of schools or construction of new schools.
5. Although only one superintendent mentioned her salary as her reason for leaving the position of superintendent, a comparison to other superintendents' compensation should be reviewed and taken under advisement prior to hiring a new superintendent.
6. The practice of receiving a double income should be revisited and revised or even removed.
7. While the superintendents in the study mentioned several opportunities for professional development off the island of Guam, the Department of Education should develop on-island professional development for both the superintendent and the Board of Education.

The findings in this study revealed a need to understand the governance of a social system and to develop a budget are types of professional developments that could be offered. Since Guam is isolated, professional development sessions should expand to an online format.

8. The University of Guam and the Government of Guam have developed the ProTech fund to pay for individuals to advance their education to earn masters and doctoral degrees, the ProTech program should be expanded or the creation of a superintendent preparation program should be considered.
9. Additional research to develop a measure that links superintendent leadership to student outcomes. This measure could be developed on Guam and possibly implemented in districts nationally.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the superintendency in Guam continues to evolve, from its early stages when a Naval officer lead the department, to the governor appointing superintendents, to the board appointing superintendents. This study aimed to understand the constant turnover in the Guam superintendency based on the perceptions of the current and previous superintendents and an analysis of various documents. The increased stress on the position based on the multiple responsibilities leads to the shortened tenure of the superintendent. The major factor gleaned from the interviews and the document analysis pertained to the superintendent's relationship with the Board of Education. The way that boards are selected and function deserves attention in Guam and elsewhere. Specific to the Guam superintendent's tenure were the complicated budgetary process and political pressure from the legislature and governor.

The suggestions to increase the longevity of Guam superintendents have implications for social justice. With more stable leaders, the health of the school system and of its employees and students will be enhanced. Research indicates that student learning is correlated with stable district leadership (Kowalski, 2005; Waters & Marzano, 2006). If some of the political and budget pressures on the Guam superintendent can be reduced, the superintendent can focus on student social and academic growth. Also important from a social justice perspective, the Guam superintendents need to know the island's culture and to respect the indigenous Chamorro heritage. This understanding can lead to a more culturally responsive school environment for Guam's student population.

## Appendix A

### *Superintendent Demographic Survey*

Please circle the correct response:

1. What is your age?
  - a. 25 – 34 years old
  - b. 35 – 44 years old
  - c. 45 – 54 years old
  - d. 55 – 64 years old
  - e. 65 – 74 years old
  - f. 65 – 74 years old
  - g. 75 years or older
  
2. Please specify your ethnicity:
  - a. White
  - b. Hispanic or Latino
  - c. Black or African American
  - d. Native American or American Indian
  - e. Asian
  - f. Pacific Islander
  - g. Other
  
3. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
  - a. Associate degree
  - b. Bachelor's degree

- c. Master's degree
  - d. Doctorate degree
4. Employment Status: Are you currently:
- a. Currently the superintendent
  - b. School administrator
  - c. College professor
  - d. Military
  - e. Retired
  - f. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
5. How long was your tenure as superintendent in Guam?
- a. Less than a month
  - b. 1 month to 5 months
  - c. 6 months to 11 months
  - d. 1 – 2 years
  - e. 3 – 4 years
  - f. 5 – 6 years
  - g. 7 – 8 years
  - h. 8 or more years



## Appendix B

### *Superintendent Turnover Interview Protocol*

- I. Introduction
  - A. Please describe your previous position as superintendent:
    1. Length of tenure
    2. Circumstances surrounding your hiring
    3. Predecessor's departure
  - B. Please describe your current position
- II. Tenure and Turnover
  - A. What were the main reasons you became superintendent?
  - B. What personal characteristics affected your performance as superintendent? In your experience as superintendent, have you seen personal traits or skills possessed by superintendents that may have extended or shortened their tenure?
  - C. What was your main reason for leaving the position?
- III. Describe the relationship you had with your school board while serving as superintendent.
  - A. Was the relationship initially positive or negative?
  - B. Did it change? And is so how?
  - C. Are there any suggestions that you could make that could enhance the school board's ability to function with cohesion with the superintendent?
- IV. In your experience, what were the primary reasons that superintendents leave their positions?

- A. Do you believe that those reasons have changed or evolved in your time in education? If so, how?
- B. What is your prediction of superintendent turnover in Guam?
- V. What were the major causes of stress in your position?
- VI. Recommendations
  - A. What recommendations do you have to improve the development of superintendent candidates in Guam?
  - B. What recommendations do you have for professional development or superintendent mentorship for potential superintendent candidates?
- VII. End

My interview protocol is complete now. Do you have anything else you would like to add about the superintendent position that may be a factor of shorter or longer tenure? Or, if there is anything you would like to share that I may have forgotten that you would like to talk about?

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