NCPEA
International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation

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The International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation is NCPEA's contribution to the Open Education Resources (OER) movement. This contribution to OER will be permanent.

In August, 2005, NCPEA partnered with Rice University and the Connexions Project, to publish our IJELP as open and free to all who had access to the Internet. Currently, there are over 400 peer-reviewed research manuscripts in the NCPEA/Connexions database. The purpose of the NCPEA/Knowledge Base Connexions Project is to "add to the knowledge base of the educational administration profession" and "aid in the improvement of administrative theory and practice, as well as administrative preparation programs." Our partnership continues but a new door has opened for NCPEA Publications to join the OER movement in a more substantive and direct way. In March 2013, NCPEA Publications and the NCPEA Executive Board committed the IJELP to the OER movement.

What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that you may freely use, adapt and reuse, without charge. Open Educational Resources are different from other resources an educator may use in that OER have been given limited licensing rights. That means they have been authored or created by an individual or organization that chooses to provide access to all, at no charge. NCPEA Publications is committed to providing access to all, while assuring author/s of full attribution as others use the material.

The worldwide OER movement is rooted in the idea that equitable access to high-quality education is a global imperative. To NCPEA, this is a moral/ethical responsibility and issue of social justice. Open Educational Resources offer opportunities for systemic change in teaching and learning through accessible content, and importantly, through embedding participatory processes and effective technologies for engaging with learning. The OER Commons project aims to grow a sustainable culture of sharing among educators at all levels.

What is the OER Commons?

The Institute for the Study of Knowledge in Education (ISKME) created OER Commons, publicly launched in February 2007, to provide support for, build, and make available to all, a knowledge base around the use and reuse of open educational resources (OER). As a network for teaching and learning materials, the web site offers engagement with resources in the form of social bookmarking, tagging, rating, and reviewing. OER Commons has forged alliances with over 120 major content partners to provide a single point of access through which educators and learners can search across collections to access thousands of items, find and provide descriptive information about each resource,

and retrieve the ones they need. By being "open," these resources are publicly available for all to use.

What NCPEA OER is Not!

NCPEA open educational resources are not an open door at the NCPEA Publications submission and review stages. We have always insisted on and will continue to require very thorough peer reviews (double-blind). NCPEA Publications is fortunate to have a cadre of professional reviewers (university professors), numbering over 300. Editors first consider a submitted manuscript, and if appropriate, selects/assigns two reviewers who also have the expertise/interest in the manuscript's specific topic. This process assures that reviewers will read an author's manuscript with expertise/experience in that area.

The "openness" of the IJELP OER comes at publication stage. Once the issues are published, they are formatted/published in an open access website, indexed by Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), catalogued as a "commendable journal" in the Cabell's Directory, and provided to the Open Educational Resource database. The IJELP is currently viewed and read by educators from over 72 countries (many 3rd World) and all 50 U.S. States (data provided by Google Analytics).

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Read More at: http://www.oercommons.org

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The manuscripts in Volume 11, Number 1 (Spring 2016) have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration as significant contributions to the scholarship and practice of school administration and PK-12 education.

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A CLEAR AND PRESENT CHOICE: GLOBAL OR PROVINCIAL SCHOLAR?

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Globalization provides rich opportunities to educational administration professors for teach and learn. This position paper explores globalization realities and role options for educational leadership professors: (1) to understand globalization implications for education, (2) collaborate at multiple levels with like minded educational experts, and (3) to engage in international program offerings. Educational leadership is an agent of reform on a global rather than national scale. Preparation and career-long development of school leaders throughout the world are integral to the well being of societies everywhere (English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012). The American knowledge base on educational leadership is valued worldwide and American educational leadership scholars have rich opportunities to engage in processes of creating future school leaders capable of addressing challenges of globalization.

Background

There are rich opportunities for the American educational administration professorate to extend leadership knowledge, expertise, and experience acquired over the years to school leaders outside the United States. Benefits to American students and educational administration faculty include opportunities to gain broader perspectives of school leadership. "Faculty currently in leadership preparation programs can simply try to keep up with and respond to the rapid technological advances in the external environment, or they can be at the forefront in anticipating issues that need to be addressed in a thoughtful manner" (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011, p. 284). The opportunity to thoughtfully consider ways to share knowledge and expertise of effective school leadership on a global scale and just as importantly, to learn from others awaits American educational leadership faculty.

In the United States, university-based school leader preparation programs no longer enjoy the relative monopoly experienced in the past. Other entities seek to prepare a proportion of future school leaders (English, et al, 2012; Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011). In some cases, those "competitors" operate outside of boundaries prescribed by both national and state accrediting bodies for school leadership programs. There is no doubt that conditions for educational leadership programs are changing at the local (national) level. However, opportunities exist in other venues internationally for educational leadership programs and professors who understand changing contexts.

Internationally, others are interested in learning more about leadership and effective administration (Edwards, 2007; Leithwood & Levin, 2008, Crow, Lumby & Pashiardis, 2008). Fortunately, there is an increasing body of evidence on what constitutes effective school leadership. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) summarize evidence about effective school leadership.
With all this confusion about the concept of leadership in our environment, we might be persuaded to think that hard evidence about what is good or successful or effective leadership in education organizations is lacking – or at least contradictory – but we would be wrong. We actually know a great deal about the leadership behaviors, practices, or actions that are helpful in improving the impact of schools on the pupil outcomes that we value" (p. 8).

International organizations are coming to appreciate the key role of school leaders. Education ministers of countries participating in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have emphasized the need to improve school leadership (Crow et al, 2008). Currently, scant attention has been given to international perspectives on school leadership development and preparation. As of 2008, three international professional organizations (the University Council for Educational Administration; the British Educational Leadership, Management, and Administrative Society; and the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management) have acknowledged the lack of sufficient international research on leadership development (Crow, et al, 2008). More recently, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) adopted guidelines for working with international programs in educational leadership (NCPEA News, 2014). Opportunities to share leadership expertise and to learn from others who prepare and develop school leaders are abundant for those willing to seek them.

English et al (2012) persuasively argue that programming in educational administration is an instrument of reform" (p.ix). The remainder of their work develops further the case that

leadership preparation programs need to reconsider content, delivery, and focus of leading for learning in ways that move away from 20th century emphasis on "managerial efficiency, bureaucratic expediency, and student and adult accountability" (p.x) towards school leadership focused on the core technology of education – teaching and learning. School leaders as chief executives and general managers are expected to have capacities to see the big picture. They should look beyond their own background, experience, and specialization to understand the various components of their organization or constituency, to think systematically about what is and is not working, and what needs to change to achieve ends that are beneficial to all (Gardner, 2008). Howard Gardner writes, " The world will not be saved by high test scores" (Gardner in Mansilla, V. & Jackson, A. (2011, p. xi), which seems only more evident when stated so simply.

The term educational leadership rather than administration is used throughout this paper to express agreement with English et al. (2012) that school leadership preparation in the past focused primarily on bureaucratic administrative ideas based upon 20th century Industrial Age conceptualizations. The term leadership/development is used to acknowledge differences between methods used by American schools to <u>prepare</u> school leaders prior to assumption of actual leadership roles. Much of the rest of the world taps teachers to become school leaders and then provide <u>training and support</u>. In either case, whether school leaders are prepared prior to or during service, school leaders of the future must focus on the core technologies of their organizations. The core technology of schools is teaching and learning (Crow et al., 2008; English et al., 2012; Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011). School leaders of the future will also need to understand how those technologies are changing in rapidly shifting environments.

During the last century, American educational administration professors trained aspiring educational leaders to "manage an expanding educational enterprise that went from rural to suburban, small to large, organizationally simple to organizationally complex" (English, et al., 2012, p. viii). Given rapidly changing conditions of globalization where progress is always measured by and dependent upon education, American school leadership professors have the possibility to engage on a global scale. Recognizing cultural and organizational differences between American and schools in other parts of the world, the dynamics of human behavior and organization issues of power, respect, hierarchy, and acceptance require ongoing management and understanding (Leithwood and Levin, 2008; Crow et al, 2008). The core knowledge of leadership possessed by American educational administration professors is valued as one voice in global initiatives to strengthen schools and those who lead them.

Review of the Literature

Globalization and Internationalization

Friedman & Mandelbaum (2012) explain "the merger of globalization and the Information Technology (IT) revolution that coincided with the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century is changing everything- every job, every industry, every service, every hierarchical institution….this merger has raised the level of skill a person needs to obtain and retain any good job, while at the same time increasing the global competition for every one of those jobs" (p. 121). Their prediction is as relevant for schools, school leadership preparation/development, and universities as it is for other segments of society. Figuring out effects upon a particular profession, in this case school leadership preparation/development, require understanding the

fundamental restructuring that is occurring in global economies, communication, the environment, and so on.

Friedman & Mandelbaum (2012) go on to categorize workers of the future into creators and servers and they subdivide each of those two labels into creative or routine creators and creative or routine servers. The challenge for individuals charged to lead education and successfully navigate unforeseen forces of globalization is enormous. While American society does not necessarily hold educators in high regard, anyone who understands the challenges and complexities of school leadership can identify that the best school leaders and the professors who prepare them must strive to fit into the creative creator category.

Apple (2011) explains education's role in internationalization this way:
It has become ever more clear that education cannot be understood without recognizing that nearly all educational policies and practices are strongly influenced by an increasingly integrated international economy that is subject to severe crisis..... all of these social and ideological dynamics and many more are now fundamentally restructuring what education does, how it is controlled, and who benefits from it throughout the world. (pp. 222-223)

Altbach & Knight (2007) make an important distinction between the interrelated terms internationalization and globalization. Globalization is the context of economic and academic trends of the 21st century. Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaking by academic systems and institutions, including individuals as part of the global academic environment. Government, state, and local entities all have a vested interest in internationalization due to the increased interdependence whether in the realm of education, politics, business, or non-profits of globalization factors (Begalla, 2007).

Howard Gardner (2008), the American psychologist who revolutionized thinking about human intelligence, identified four unprecedented trends of globalization: (1) movement of capital and other market instrument around the globe, (2) movement of human beings across borders, (3) movement of information across cyberspace to anyone with access to a computer, and (4) movement of popular cultures. Gardner speculates that human beings are engaged in what may be the "ultimate, all-encompassing episode of globalization." (p.16). He contends that education worldwide prepares students more for the world of the past rather than for the potential worlds of the future.

While university business programs may be more conscious of globalization than education programs because of the global nature of their work, much of the preparation in those disciplines focuses on learning skills. Educators should avoid making the mistakes made by some business programs of simply passing along technical knowledge acquired over the last century based upon the assumption that these skills are needed in other parts of the world. Gardner (2008) asserts, "We do not think deeply enough about the human qualities that we want to cultivate at the workplace, so that individuals of diverse appearance and background can interact effectively with one another" (p. 17).

Several years later, Gardner identified important obstacles to global ways of thinking (Gardner foreward in Mansilla & Jackson, 2011). First, the vast majority of educators and policymakers concerned with education have not thought about the implications of education on global terms, nor have educators engaged in the necessary preparation for effective action. The second point Gardner makes is that a lack of deep motivation, whether individually or on a societal level, to understand how innovative education differs from past practice. At most, innovations are tolerated as long as they lead to adequate performance on traditional measures.

Assessments are almost all geared for classical subject matter and rarely offer the means to assess the flexible, cooperative thinking required for interdisciplinary thought. Finally, Gardner identifies what he terms a "pernicious" and deep distrust towards education particularly in the United States. "Cosmopolitanism, internationalism, and globalism are often considered dangerous concepts or even "fighting words" (p. x). "What is needed more than ever is a laser-like focus on the kinds of human beings that we are raising and the kinds of societies—indeed, in a global era, the kind of world society— that we are fashioning" (p. xi). In other words, American and other educational leaders are likely "stuck" in mindsets of the past that do little to allow for effective engagement for the future. Educators engaged in school leadership preparation/development, then need to consciously shift thinking involved in planning future programs and delivery. Gardner poses a powerful question, "What kinds of school leaders do schools throughout the world need" (as cited in Mansilla & Jackson, 2011, p. xi). The answer will require simultaneous local and global consideration of conditions likely to be faced by future school leaders.

Educators can anticipate that _effective_ schools for the future will abandon preoccupation with test scores that purport to improve schools, but actually measure classical subject matter. In fact, countries whose students score highest on international standardized test scores such as Finland, Korea, and Singapore devote _no_ resources to examination systems prior to college entrance (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Effective or innovative schools of the future will turn instead to focus on the flexible, interdisciplinary thinking that global societies so desperately need.

American school leadership preparation faculty interested in providing coursework internationally must understand the limitations of the American educational system pk-12 through graduate school. Darling-Hammond (2010) contends that innovative reform efforts, even those proven to be successful, are rarely sustained in the United States due to various factors. Former Seattle teacher union leader, Roger Erskine has dubbed such endeavors as "random acts of innovation" (p. 265). The United States lacks and desperately needs a systemic approach to developing and distributing expert teachers and school leaders to improve schools. Such change will require a new policy environment that recognizes and encourages successful innovation.

There are different ways to describe the type of individuals societies need right now, and into the future. Noddings (2005) terms a global citizen as one "who can live and work effectively anywhere in the world. A global way of life would both describe and support the functioning of global citizenship" (p. 2-3). Global citizens then display affection, respect, care, curiosity, and concern with the well being of _all_ human kind (McIntosh, 2005). Universal well-being, or progress towards it, includes the elimination of poverty, concern for the environment, and world peace (Noddings, 2005). Other conceptions of global competency include the ability to work effectively in international settings; awareness and adaptability to diverse cultures, perceptions, and approaches; familiarity with the major currents of global change and the issues they raise; and capacity for effective communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Brustein, 2007). All students need to understand the worldwide circulation of ideas, products, fashions, media, ideologies, and human beings on a much deeper level than is currently included in most curriculums worldwide. These phenomena are real, powerful, and ubiquitous. School leaders coming up through the ranks today need preparation to tackle the range of pervasive problems from human conflict, climate change, poverty, the spread of disease,and the control of nuclear energy (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

In order to think and act differently, individuals and societies must come to grips with the attitudes, perceptions, indeed culture, that may inhibit learning. Hunter, White, & Godbey (2007) caution that while there may be some similarities in the definitions or conceptions of global competence, there is limited commonality and, in almost all cases, these definitions are American derived. Walker, Bridges, & Chan, 1996 (as cited in Crow et al., 2010) contend that preparation and development of educational leaders be constructed and delivered within knowledge and understanding that embrace both local and global considerations. Americans in general are not as familiar with other cultures and so have a need to intentionally develop more globally focused perspectives. College-bound students in other countries know far more about the wider world, including the United States, than American students. Stearns (2009) commented, "Our parochial gap is not only striking, but dangerous, depriving us (Americans) of the knowledge we should have to operate effectively" (p. 9). Americans may tend to assume other professionals eagerly await opportunities to learn from our practices, when indeed, that may not be the case. Americans who are open to learning practices from other cultures will in many cases gain far more knowledge and understanding than they impart.

Edwards (2007) observes that education systems around the world have leaned recently towards adopting the American educational model. Coupled with an increase in the use of English language globally, places American universities in a position of significant importance and influence in international exchanges of knowledge and expertise. Major changes brought about through the Bologna Agreement (essentially a European higher education initiative to coordinate higher education among participating countries), radical changes in education in China, the growth of for-profit ventures throughout the developing world, and other globalization shifts, contribute to a model of higher education that resembles the modular, flexible, incremental form associated with the American system. Understanding implications of globalization and the roles American educational leadership preparation professorate should play in the radical changes worldwide, several options for active participation are presented with advantages and what's involved.

Consistent with Gardner's observations, Altbach and Knight (2007) note that global capital has, for the first time, heavily invested in knowledge industries worldwide, including higher education and advanced training. This investment reflects the emergence of the knowledge society, the rise of the service sector, and the dependence of many societies on knowledge products and highly educated personnel for economic growth.

Alternative courses of action involve intentionally acquiring broader level of awareness of globalization. American professors may elect to seek ways to more fully understand the implications of globalization and include new knowledge and skills in coursework. Another option might be to seek out collaborations with school leadership preparation/development scholars in other parts of the world. A third and admittedly the most ambitious course of action would be to create educational leadership course or program delivery to international students.

Alternative 1: Understanding Implications of Globalization

As in almost every human endeavor in the early decades of the 21ˢᵗ century, education is changing rapidly, everywhere. Leadership programs will not prepare leaders as they did in the recent past, for homogenous communities existing in the relatively stable environments (Crow et al., 2008). Rather educational leadership programs are preparing leaders as part of global

knowledge or learning communities committed to local cultures, issues and practice that are at the same time engaged in global problems and solutions (Crow et al, 2008). In the United States, reform efforts intended to address shifting conditions come from multiple directions including revision of administrator licensure requirements by state education departments, modification of program standards by national accreditation agencies, and from recommendations from national task forces (Hackman & McCarthy, 2011). "The increasing emphasis on accountability is one instance of global flow of policy that appears to have been caught as a quasi disease" (Crow et al, 2008, p. 8). Confusion or complexity appear to reign.

Admiral Carlisle Trost, former chief of naval operations who knows something about leadership opined, "The first responsibility of a leader is to figure out what's going on…That is never easy to do because situations are rarely black or white, they are a pale shade of gray…they are seldom neatly packaged" (as cited in Bolman and Deal, p. 36, 2013). At a very basic level, then it is incumbent upon American school leadership preparation faculty to more fully understand what is going on in a rapidly changing environment in order to more adequately prepare future school leaders for the roles they will accept upon completing our programs.

Alternative 2: Actively Seek International Collaborations with School Leaders

Collaboration can take many forms from investigating more thoroughly the existing international opportunities on one's campus, investigating educational leadership professional organizations' international endeavors, attending international conferences where other educational leaders will be present, engaging in collaborative projects, and seeking opportunities to actually go to another culture for an extended length of time to work and study in educational leadership. "If the good news is that there are many exciting examples of collaboration from which to learn and the bad news is that we have a very long way to go, the challenging news is that there is little choice anymore" (Linden, 2010, p.8).

Cultural differences require consideration. Self-knowledge about American cultural values is important. Not all, but much of the research on leadership in organization has been conducted in a Western context (Bolman and Deal, 2013). Self-knowledge about how one's own culture influences perspectives is critical. Globalization creates a need to better understand the dynamics when individuals of different cultures agree to collaborate on issues of mutual importance (Bolman and Deal, 2013; Linden, 2010; Mansilla, V. & Jackson, A., 2010). Michael Rawling (as cited in Linden, 2010) offers important observations about intercultural collaborations. Relationships are critical, learn the other culture, check assumptions regularly, develop sensitivity to others' paradigms, be humble, be patient, focus on mid and long term progress, remain in a learning mode, if possible find someone native to the culture and also familiar with American (higher education) culture for coaching, and finally be authentic (p. 153).

There are likely multiple opportunities already available on university campuses to connect with international school leaders. Educational leadership faculty should explore these local opportunities for international connections.

Globalization offers multiple opportunities to network professionally. LinkedIn (2015), a business-oriented social networking service is a good place to begin to find professionals with common interests. LinkedIn is only one of many avenues for international collaboration. If you are already on LinkedIn, then revisit your profile to see how you can communicate to others worldwide your professional areas of expertise. See what happens.

Professional organizations play an increasingly critical role in professions of every kind because the rapid changes in all professions. Two American school leadership preparation professional organizations, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), have international initiatives that address international school leadership. These organizations are a natural place to begin for American faculty seeking international collaborations. Those interested in learning more can go to the NCPEA Educational Leaders without Borders site at http://www.educationalleaderswithoutborders.com/who-we-are.html or the UCEA Center for International Study of School Leadership site at www.ucea.org/ucea-center-international-study-school-leadership/ .

After devoting some time to understand how international networking works, the next step is to review key strategies for successful collaborations. Keep in mind the importance of shared interests or purpose, willingness of others to contribute to collaborative solutions, finding the right people (this likely will take some trial and error), creation of an open credible process, establishing trust, and the skills of collaboration (Linden, 2010).

While in Ukraine for four months in 2012, I learned that what Americans often mean when they speak of honoring diversity is helping others to become more like us. The most vivid realization remains with me today. I taught in a Foreign Language program (English, not so tricky for me). While my students admired my fluency, I was humbled to recognize that I speak my native language reasonably well. My students on the other hand, were learning their fourth language (Ukrainian, Russian, English, German). In other part of the world, learning a foreign language is the mark of a well-educated person. In the United States, too often, children of immigrants are regarded as deficient until their language skills are adequate to score well on our accountability tests. Americans have much to learn from other cultures. This cultural insight into American mindsets troubles me even now.

My collaborative writing experiences with Ukrainian colleagues, whom I know well has taught me the importance of self-knowledge about my American tendencies regarding project organization, development of mutual understanding related to the topic, standards for professional writing and research, and the importance of clarification of differences in educational systems. These collaborations started with colleagues where mutual trust and respect was clearly established, but even so, the process was at times challenging. The results were worth the obstacles. I offer this personal experience as advice in case progress isn't going along as smoothly as you might have predicted. Cultural differences can be challenging, but they are not insurmountable.

Alternative 3: International Educational Leadership Program Planning and Delivery

The final and most challenging response to globalization would be to create a middle manager leadership program for school and other non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders. Business, engineering, and IT programs at many universities already have in place some version of programs designed for international students. International students are also present in educational leadership doctoral programs. What are less common are course delivery systems that result in a degree at the master's level. This makes sense when the connection between state educational bodies that certify school leaders and preparation programs is considered. So at the program level, designers must figure out how to determine knowledge needed by targeted

international audiences and from there uncouple existing program delivery with state requirements for school leader roles that define curriculum and delivery for school leadership programs.

At the program planning level, designers must be aware that internationally there are two basically different approaches to school leadership preparation and development (Huber, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2010). The American system focuses on the individual. Graduate programs aim to impart relevant competencies to future school leaders. Other models link school leader development closely to school development and developing the leader is regarded within the context of school improvement. Uncoupling school leadership knowledge, skills, and understanding from American highly prescribed systems of standards, standardized testing, and alignment is a critical stage in order to offer coursework or training to others internationally.

Edwards (2007) analyzed contrasting approaches towards internationalization taken by two leading American universities, Harvard and Yale. Termed opportunistic and planned, the analysis provides implications for each approach including negotiations in other countries. The relevance of the analysis for educational leadership professors is to simply identify what seems to be the prevailing strategy (or happenstance) towards internationalization currently employed by a university.

Yale employed the planned approach that involved strategic initiatives by the university president. The advantage of this approach is that planning and implementation gives a high degree of control. The disadvantage is that strengths of faculty and existing curricular opportunities may be overlooked in the quest to achieve university-wide goals.

Harvard on the other hand, employed an institution-wide but opportunistic mode of response. Harvard's president, Laurence Sommers, pledged that Harvard would exploit its global reach and reputation to develop leaders and create knowledge that would serve the world beyond the nation's borders. This focus was intended to create particular kinds of international interactions. Coordination was elusive and given the high degree of decentralization and autonomy of faculty and of divisions at Harvard meant that there was almost no work done to maximize anything. Relationships developed with institutions abroad were local and many opportunities were lost that could have led to multifaceted relationships with partner institutions abroad that could have been productive for both sides. Faculty buy-in led to initiatives with some likelihood for endurance, all things being equal. The vast majority of American universities have faculty with international research collaborations that are very stable, and most have faculty-led programs abroad that function well for decades. The disadvantage of this model is a lack of coherence.

There are multiple issues to consider in planning an international program. Altbach and Knight (2007) identify challenges related to quality assurance and the national and international recognition of providers, programs, credits, and qualifications warrant close attention. Quality assurance starts with the program deliverer—domestic or international. Many higher education institutions have adequate quality-assurance processes for domestic delivery. But these processes do not cover the challenges inherent in working cross-culturally, in a foreign regulatory environment and with a foreign partner. In order to establish and maintain credibility, priority needs to be given to define roles and responsibilities of all players involved in quality assurance. These include individual institutions and providers, national quality assurance systems, nongovernmental and independent accreditation bodies, professional organizations, and regional or international organizations. Once roles are defined, individual players must collaborate to

build a quality system that ensures cross-border education.

At the point when prospective students apply, Altbach and Knight (2007) identify issues to resolve including academic entry requirements. These include, proficiency, entrance assessment processes, faculty workload, delivery modes, curricular adaptations, instructional quality assurance, and academic and sociocultural student support. Higher education providers should consider intellectual property ownership, choice of partners, division of responsibilities, academic and business risk assessments, and internal/external approval processes. In most cases, already established university approval processes for program, course, and certificate deliveries will address these issues.

After or more likely while all the aforementioned issues are determined, program design will require significant consideration given to learning needs of potential students, the development of global competencies, and course delivery options. The greatest challenge will involve culture. Lumby & Foskeet, 2010 lay out the challenge this way. "The implication that if leadership preparation and development is to aspire to cultural fit, a high degree of sophistication is required" (p. 50). "Culture at the macro and micro levels is a foundational skill, which positions educational leadership as critical contributors to shaping society and not just the school" (p. 44). Even within the United States, the predominant cultural conceptions of leadership are flawed for Native American populations or to some religious groups. Leadership preparation programs face a twofold challenge by deciding which cultural assumptions to embed in the design and delivery of a course or program and deciding how to best equip leaders with intercultural competence so they can in turn determine which cultural assumptions to embed in their own school leadership.

Every program that seeks to offer knowledge to international school or other NGO leaders will take a different path depending upon existing positions on internationalization at the university level, other institutional conditions and opportunities, international connections, technology support, and many other factors. As experts in the fields relevant to these programs, educational leadership professors can play a critical role to develop curriculum and course delivery methods that prepare the kinds of leaders that schools and other NGOs need worldwide.

Conclusions

American universities have several advantages in the internationalization process. They include the convergence of formerly diverse systems internationally towards the American education model and the rapid spread of English as the language of instruction and publication worldwide (Edwards, 2007). American school leadership professors have a knowledge base that can contribute to resolution in solving some of the most critical issues of globalization.

Professors who have considered the problems of globalization even lightly may understand that challenges of the American educational system that require inordinate energy on the part of all educators to simply keep up with the next new plan devised by policymakers whose primary qualification regarding education may be that they went to school at some point. That does not stop our system from churning out yet more initiatives that will require driving around to listen to scripted power point presentations that insist American schools are doing it all wrong, this new initiative will solve all that. Other educators may also have noticed that just about the time all the standards, assessments, and delivery issues of one initiative are neatly aligned and sensible implementation seems nearly possible sometime soon, then it's time to drive

around to learn about the next one. Such is the reality of American education.

The larger international world desperately needs the knowledge and skills about effective school leadership possessed by American educational leadership professors. We need to better understand what we know by examining American school practices through the lenses of other cultures. We know much more about school leadership than our system acknowledges and we have the opportunity to share what we know with others around the world and in the process learn so much.

The choice is before American educational administration faculty. We can remain in our provinces, so to speak, waiting for the requirements of the next reform to come in the e-mail or we can intentionally seek to learn more about globalization, the role of educational leaders in globalization, and determine a course of action. Returning to Admiral Carlisle Trost's observations about leadership cited earlier, the first task of a leader is to figure out what's going on. Globalization is going on, now, worldwide. American educational leadership scholars are highly qualified to engage with educators throughout the world to respond to Gardner's query about the kinds of school leaders school throughout the world need. Educational leadership faculty has opportunities at multiple levels to engage proactively. The challenge is not simple, but for those who see the potential to learn more deeply about school leadership and contribute to globalization, it is worth doing. The choice is clear, do you seek to be a provincial or global scholar?

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Principal Perceptions of the Effectiveness of University Educational Leadership Preparation and Professional Learning

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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Principals and assistant principals currently serving in Florida and Georgia school districts were surveyed about their perceptions of university educational leadership preparation and professional learning. The results revealed that many principals and assistant principals agreed that university educational leadership preparation programs enhanced their overall preparation, school leadership, and school law. However, participants disagreed that leadership preparation programs assisted them in managing school budget, data analysis, and human resources. Participants overwhelmingly indicated that school districts provide meaningful professional learning opportunities and that they prefer job-embedded learning experiences over university preparation.

Introduction

Several factors impact the manner in which university educational leadership programs prepare school leaders, including state certification requirements, university accreditation criteria, and the need to prepare students for a role that changes based on location and school district. Local needs and partnerships may also impact how universities prepare school leaders.

University educational leadership curricula must be aligned with state certification requirements. States have the autonomy to require certification for school administrators, and nearly all states have established criteria (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Manasse, 1985). Typically, these include attaining a degree, passing a state examination, and receiving professional training. These requirements derive from state-developed and adopted educational leadership standards. State certification applicants must demonstrate mastery of these standards through university educational leadership preparation or alternative programs. In addition, states can develop several levels of principal certification that correspond to individual administrative appointments. For example, Georgia has multiple levels of educational leadership certification, and each level identifies the type of leadership position the applicants can hold. Florida also has multiple levels of certification with different criteria for attainment. University educational leadership curricula must prepare students to meet state requirements for certification.

States require that educational leadership programs be accredited by appropriate institutions (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Accredited universities must adhere to guidelines established by these bodies. Some universities are accredited by agencies such as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), AdvancED, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Institutions that grant accreditation require that universities meet and maintain specific criteria. As a result, accreditation criteria impacts university educational leadership curriculum.

University educational leadership programs prepare students to take on the complex and demanding responsibilities of today's school principal (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Successful principals must master human resources planning and supervision, school budget, facilities, and especially instructional leadership (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Lynch, 2012; Valentine & Prater, 2011). University leadership preparation programs have reassessed themselves due to the increased roles and responsibilities of the principal (Orr, 2006). In response these changes, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) revised Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards. The revised standards were designed to reflect the litany of changing expectations in the role of the principal (Superville, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

This study was designed to contribute to the existing knowledge base on the effectiveness of university educational leadership programs. Based on the perspectives of current school administrators, I sought to inform the knowledge base and provide recommendations to educational leadership faculty. Several overarching concepts served as the theoretical basis for this research. Each concept provides a unique context for this study.

The effectiveness of educational leadership preparation programs is being debated. Some research supports the conclusion that these programs are ineffective in preparing principals

(Farkas, Johnson, & Duffet 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Levine, 2005; Orr, 2006). Other research concludes that these programs are necessary and adequate in preparing students to become principals (Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011; Isik, 2003). Empirical research and evaluations of university educational leadership programs can contribute to the knowledge base on program effectiveness.

Both landmark and current research support the idea that well-developed principals have a significant impact on student achievement (Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2010, Cowie & Crawford, 2007; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Mortimore & Sammons, 1987; Odden & Odden, 1995; Pina, Cabrel, & Alves, 2015; Valentine & Prater, 2011; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, 2004). Empirical research suggests that principals have, at minimum, an indirect impact on student outcomes (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Liethwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). The impact that principals can have on student achievement warrants further research into the effectiveness of principal preparation.

A body of research suggests that current school administrators are qualified to provide input on university educational leadership program effectiveness (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Baxter, Thessin, & Clayton, 2014; Cowie & Crawford, 2007; Duncan et al., 2011). This study examines perceptions of current school administrators to answer research questions about the effectiveness of university educational leadership programs in Florida and Georgia. School administrator perceptions provide an appropriate lens through which to view the effectiveness of principal preparation programs.

University educational leadership programs are necessary and can impact principal behavior (Isik, 2003). These programs provide applicants the necessary coursework to obtain state certification. In addition, they offer curriculums that help prepare applicants for the state certification examinations. States sanction universities with principal preparation programs to offer curriculums that are aligned to administrative certification (Gumus, 2015; Roberts, 2008). Successful principal preparation is a shared concern among universities, states, and local school districts (Browne-Ferrigno, 2011). These concepts accentuate the need for continued research to help university educational leadership programs meet the preparatory needs of 21st-century principals.

Purpose

This research examined existing principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of their university educational leadership preparation programs. It also sought to examine principals' perceptions of their professional learning needs based on the demands of their role. Many university educational leadership professors are unaware of the day-to-day experiences of principals (Farkas et al., 2003; Levine, 2005). As a result, an ancillary purpose of this research was to provide current principals the opportunity to share their insights of the educational leadership research field. For the purpose of this research, the term "administrator" refers to both principals and assistant principals.

Literature Review

A myriad of research on various aspects of principal preparation exists. This literature review focused on studies that contribute to the general knowledge base regarding principal preparation,

suggest overall university principal preparation is inadequate, spotlight specific university principal preparation programs providing adequate preparation, and promote novel and innovative principal preparation programs.

General Knowledge Base

Backor and Gordon (2015) conducted research to examine the perceptions of principals, professors, and leaders in teaching regarding the needs of principal preparation programs. They grounded their research in the premise that instructional leadership and student achievement are connected. In this qualitative research, researchers interviewed three groups of participants to gather their perceptions on how university principal preparation programs should ready candidates for instructional leadership. All three groups of participants revealed that the following should be included in principal preparation programs: a comprehensive applicant screening, functions of instructional leadership, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions best suited for principals, teaching and learning strategies, field experiences, and induction plans. The researchers provided suggestions for implementation of each recommendation. In addition, they made recommendations for future research to improve principal preparation programs.

One way to assess the effectiveness of educational leadership preparation programs is to seek input from those who participated in them. Baxter et al. (2014) explored how school leaders employed effective leadership practices developed during preparation programs in their current administrative roles. The researchers wanted to understand how to best prepare school leaders for success, so they sampled 19 school leaders in a qualitative research study. They defined communitarian leadership as assuming the responsibility of decision-making with others in mind. Using the premise that communitarian leadership may be associated with improved student outcomes, the researchers sought input from school leaders, asking them to discuss how their preparation programs affected their engagement with communitarian leadership. The researchers examined the prevalent themes that were most valuable to participants. The most frequent communitarian themes included communication, relationships, values, and beliefs. The researchers recommended educational leadership programs accentuate community-based learning, cohort models, field experiences, aligned curriculums, and program recruitment.

Orphanos and Orr (2014) conducted research to understand the influence of leadership preparation and practice on teacher satisfaction. The sample included 175 teachers whose principals completed exemplary university educational leadership preparation programs and 589 teachers who completed traditional leadership preparation programs. The results revealed that the exemplary programs had statistically significant, direct effects on those principals' practices and indirect effects on teacher collaboration and satisfaction. The results from this research suggested that the quality of educational leadership preparation can influence the effect principals have on teachers, who have the largest impact on student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Hallinger and Lu (2013) conducted research to examine educational leadership preparation in schools of business management and publication administration. They conducted online research to analyze 31 MBA, MPA, and MBA programs with concentrations in education. They also examined curricula, instructional strategies, and the structure of these programs and identified any value-added components that potentially could improve university educational leadership programs. The results revealed that educational leadership programs generally did not include components of MBA and MPA programs that may deserve closer examination. These

areas included project management, data-based decision-making, customer orientation, strategic management/planning, and attaining global perspectives. These areas are aligned with some of the expanding roles of the principal (Murphy, 2001).

Inadequate Preparation

Hess and Kelly (2007) researched what was specifically being taught in university principal preparation programs. The researchers examined 210 syllabi from 31 elite, nonelite, small, and large programs. They investigated how much time was devoted to seven major leadership strands: managing results, personnel, and classroom instruction, developing technical knowledge, leading both in school culture and externally, and maintaining norms and values. The results revealed that little time was spent on accountability, managing school improvement, instructional management, hiring and retention practices, and public relations. In addition, empirical research rarely informed practice. A large portion of time was spent on technical processes such as law, finance, and operation, but with no assessment of learning. Programs used a limited number of textbooks and did not take advantage of the most influential educational and management thinkers. The results of this study suggested that university educational leadership programs did not address many entrepreneurial skills that are paramount to principal success. The researchers recommended reformation of educational leadership programs to meet the needs of 21st-century principals.

Levine (2005) published a report that further supported the need for university educational leadership program reform. Levine asserted that "the majority of the programs that prepare school leaders range in quality from inadequate to poor" (Levine, 2005, p. 1). These results derived from a four-year study of U.S. schools of education. In his report, Levine identified nine points by which schools of education must be evaluated: purpose, curricular coherence, curricular balance, faculty composition, admissions, degrees, research, finances, and assessment. His research revealed that most administrators are trained in the educational leadership departments of schools of education and that the poor quality of many of these programs has led to scrutiny. The study found six major flaws in university educational leadership preparation programs: curricular disarray, low admission and graduation standards, weak faculty, inadequate clinical instruction, inappropriate degrees, and poor research. Levine offered three recommendations for university educational leadership departments: eliminate incentives that favor low quality programs, set and enforce minimum standards of quality, and redesign educational leadership programs (2005).

Some researchers have identified specific curriculum needs that are not included in university educational leadership programs. Blasé and Blasé (2004) conducted qualitative research to explore the importance of preparing leaders for the negative aspects of leadership. The researchers believed that most studies on university educational leadership programs focused on effective leadership and did not address the negatives. Fifty teachers who were mistreated by their principals were interviewed, and results revealed that their principals engaged in similar behaviors. The researchers analyzed questionnaire data from over 400 administrators and teachers and responses confirmed that participants would like preparation and development in the negative aspects of leadership, finding that "what not to do as an educational leader, is as important as just studying the positive, effective things" (Blasé & Blasé, 2004, p. 261). The

results suggested the need to caution against the negative aspects of leadership in university educational leadership curriculums.

Many principals do not believe that their university educational leadership programs properly prepared them for their roles as principal. Farkas et al. (2003) revealed several disturbing themes from survey results of 900 principals and 1,000 superintendents. Over 95% of the surveyed principals believed that peer assistance was more beneficial than their university leadership preparation programs. In addition, over 65% of surveyed principals believed that their university preparation programs were disconnected from the realities of the job. The surveys suggested that principals do not have confidence in university educational leadership programs. These data were collected from individuals undergoing the daily demands of the principal position, and they contribute to the demand for a reexamination and reform of university educational leadership programs.

Elmore (2000) wrote about the need to restructure public schools and school systems to meet the demands of standards-based reform. He asserted that if school systems continue status quo reform efforts, failure is inevitable and public trust will continue to erode. Elmore declared that the solution to this problem is "dramatic changes in the way public schools define and practice leadership" (2000, p. 2). He stated that public school leaders are not equipped to successfully assume the responsibilities that the job requires. Elmore's notions align with the idea that university educational leadership programs and school districts are not preparing students for administrative roles adequately. He offered several external solutions for improving school leadership preparation. In his paper, Elmore (2000) recommended and elaborated on five principles that could yield comprehensive improvements to school systems: maintaining a tight instructional focus sustained over time, routinizing accountability for practice and performance in face-to-face relationships, reducing isolation, allowing direct observation, analysis, and criticism of practice, exercising differential treatment based on performance and capacity, not on volunteerism, and decreasing discretion of practice performance.

Adequate Preparation

Boyland, Lehman, and Sriver (2015) conducted research on new principal performance based on the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) and state-level content standards for principal preparation. Superintendents were asked to rate new principals who recently completed university educational leadership training programs. The results demonstrated that superintendents rated new principals proficient in most categories and highest in the integrity category. The lowest-rated category was financial management. In all other categories, new principals were rated as proficient. Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, the results suggested that based on the ELCC and Indiana Content standards, some university educational leadership programs are preparing students to become effective principals.

Duncan et al. (2011) designed a study to obtain input from principals that would influence the content and practice of the educational leadership preparation program at the University of Wyoming. They surveyed 286 Wyoming principals to analyze their perceptions of preparation program strengths and weaknesses, new principal professional development needs, and district-provided professional learning. The researchers wanted the collected data to fill gaps in their university principal preparation program. Participants identified more overall strengths than weaknesses in their principal preparation programs. However, the results yielded many

inconsistencies in perceptions of strengths and weaknesses. This variation may be attributed to differing content at participants' preparation institutions. Principals valued the internship because it exposed them to the routine practices of the job. The results also suggested that principals believed that school districts did not provide adequate professional learning opportunities in building relationships and solving conflicts.

The concept of university educational leadership preparation programs preparing principals is supported by the research of Isik (2003), who wrote, "There is no special principal certification program in Turkey" (Isik, 2003, p. 2). Isik conducted research evaluating the effectiveness of principals who completed administrative preparation and those who did not using a direct effects model. Using a researcher-developed, 24-item instrument, data were collected from 240 teachers who had worked with principals trained in an administrative preparation program and former principals who were not. Results revealed that administrative preparation had substantial impact on principal behavior. The results also supported the idea that university educational leadership programs can impact principal practice. The debate is generally not about whether there is a need for university educational leadership programs, but the effectiveness of new and existing programs.

Innovative Preparation

Some researchers have examined in-depth perspectives of innovative university principal preparation programs. Kearney and Valadez (2015) conducted research at a public university in Southwestern United States. The researchers examined three classifications of innovation: enhanced entry criteria, increased field-based experiences, and support after graduation. In an effort to redesign a traditional university educational leadership preparation program, professors sought the input of local key stakeholders. These stakeholders included program graduates who were currently school administrators; university faculty and administration; educational leadership faculty from different universities; school district leaders; and school leaders from 11 surrounding districts. Based on the feedback from the local stakeholders, three primary features were recommended and implemented: co-teaching, district course locations, and in-service training for current leaders. The next step is to evaluate reforms by hiring external evaluators, monitoring graduation and state certification pass rates, distributing self-assessments, and examining hiring rates data, longevity, value-added measures of graduates, and student success rates. The full effects of the redesigned program can be measured fully in a few years. However, the redesign adds to the knowledge base of current models of innovative efforts in improving university educational leadership preparation programs.

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) conducted short case studies and cross-case analysis of five innovative principal preparation programs. These programs shared several characteristics that warrant closer examination: a strong focus on instructional leadership as a core element, a blend of practical application and empirical research, a highly selective matriculation process, an included internship, collaboration with local school districts, a cohort model of students, and authentic problem-solving investigations. In addition, all the programs have endured the challenges of university educational leadership preparation programs over long periods of time. Survey results revealed that graduates of these programs have strong confidence in their preparation, are highly effective principals, and have impacted their schools. More developed research on the outcomes of these programs is needed to extend this research.

Methodology

This research examined current administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of their university educational leadership preparation program. These administrators operate in the present age of accountability. The rationale for targeting this population is that they are among the most qualified to answer the posed research questions:

a) What are existing principals' perceptions of university educational leadership preparation?
b) What do principals perceive as the most valuable knowledge gained from university educational leadership preparation?
c) What do principals perceive as the least valuable knowledge from university educational leadership preparation?

The researcher developed an online survey using Qualtrics to ascertain administrators' perceptions of the overall and specific aspects of the effectiveness of their university educational leadership programs. The survey was delivered digitally to a convenience sample of 168 principals and assistant principals in Florida and Georgia. An informed letter of consent attached to each email provided a description of the importance and purpose of the study, researchers' contact information, procedures, time required to complete the survey, and other important information related to the study (Creswell, 2013). Of the delivered online surveys, 38% ($n = 64$) were completed by principals and assistant principals, yielding an acceptable researcher response rate (Cook, Heath, & Thomson, 2000) and surpassing the average web-based survey response rate of 34.6%, based on a meta-analysis by Cook, Heath, & Thomson (2000).

Participants

After the Institutional Review Board approved the study, principals and assistant principals (administrators) listed as members of a professional educational organization in Florida or Georgia were invited to participate. The researcher also gathered names and email addresses of existing administrators in various school settings (urban, suburban, rural, and independent/charter) from several school district websites in Georgia. These administrators were sent informed consent cover letters, the survey link, and were asked to complete the survey.

Instrument

The researcher designed a 25-item survey to gather demographic and perception data from participants. The survey was vetted for validity and recommendations by university and school-based educational experts in Florida and Georgia. The survey consisted of three sections. The first section (items 1-11) was designed to obtain demographic information from participants. The second section (items 12-22) assessed participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of their university preparation programs via Likert scale items (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). The second section also addressed the following perceptions of participants' university preparation programs: a) overall preparation for administrative role; b) preparation in the area of school law; c) preparation in the area of school data analysis; d) preparation in the area of school finance and budget; e) preparation in the area

of school leadership; f) preparation in the area of human resources; g) the usefulness of preparation; h) the type of field experience included in preparation; i) job-embedded learning experiences; and j) the assistance of district-level professional development. Reliability of these eight items was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded an acceptable rate, α = .795 (n = 8), (Cronbach, 1951; Hatcher, 1994). Cronbach's Alpha estimates how well a set of items consistently measures the same construct to demonstrate internal reliability.

The third section solicited responses to three open-ended questions related to: 1) perception of skills that participants did not learn but would have liked to have learned in their university training; 2) skills learned that they frequently use; and 3) skills learned that they rarely use.

Analysis of Data

Participant data from the leadership preparation surveys were analyzed in three ways. The initial section that assessed the demographics of the administrators is reported in the demographics section. These data were analyzed using Qualtrics and describe the descriptive statistics of the administrators, the school settings in which they work, and where they obtained their university preparation. The second two sections asked questions regarding participant perceptions of specific areas of leadership via a Likert scale. These data were analyzed and reported using quantitative reports prepared in Qualtrics. The third section asked administrators to answer open-ended questions on their perceptions of their university preparation. These data were analyzed to identify any commonalities in administrator responses.

Findings

Sixty-four (n = 64) administrators responded to the surveys, and their responses were recorded into Qualtrics. Of the 64 participants, 33 (51.56%) were principals and 31 (48.44%) were assistant principals. Thirty-nine (60.94%) were male and 25 (39.06%) were female. Thirty-two (50%) of the participants were African American and 32 (50%) were Caucasion. Of the 64 respondents, all were employed by public school districts; 19 (29.69%) worked in elementary schools, 19 (29.69%) in middle schools, and 26 (40.63%) in high schools. Twenty-six (41.27%) listed working in an urban school setting, 28 (44.44%) listed suburban, and 9 (14.29%) listed rural. One participant did not respond to the school setting question. The average years of experience were eight for principals and five for assistant principals. The average number of years spent with current school was five years. Principal preparation ranged from 24 universities in 10 states, with the most from Florida (28) and Georgia (20). The years in which principal preparation programs were completed ranged from 1969 to 2015, with the mode being 2004.

Perceptions of University Leadership Preparation Programs

Table 1 displays administrators' perceptions of specific areas of university preparation.

Table 1

Response Number/Percentage to University Administrative Preparation Questions

Questions	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Overall Preparation	1	1.59	5	7.94	45	71.43	12	19.05
School Leadership	0	0	4	6.35	39	61.90	20	31.75
School Law	0	0	9	14.29	40	63.49	14	22.22
School Budget	2	3.17	29	46.03	27	42.86	5	7.94
School Data Analysis	2	3.17	22	34.92	32	50.79	7	11.11
Human Resources	0	0	19	30.16	37	58.73	7	11.11
Routine Use of Learned Skills	1	1.61	10	16.13	41	66.13	10	16.13
Application of Theories Learned	3	4.76	12	19.05	34	53.97	14	22.22
Prefer Job-Embedded Learning	0	0	5	8.33	23	38.33	32	53.33
Dis./Sch. Professional Learning	2	3.17	6	9.52	39	61.90	16	25.40

As indicated in Table 2, over 85% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that overall, their university leadership preparation programs prepared them for their current roles as school administrators in overall preparation, school leadership, and school law. However, over 30% of administrators disagreed or strongly disagreed that their university leadership preparation programs prepared them in the areas of data analysis, human resources, and school finance/budget. In addition, over 76.19% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that they routinely use skills learned in their university leadership preparation and that they apply the

theories learned in their university leadership preparation program. Fifty-five of 60 (91.66%) administrators agreed or strongly agreed that job-embedded learning experiences have been more meaningful than university preparation leadership preparation. Fifty-five of 63 (87.3%) administrators agreed or strongly agreed that their districts provide professional learning that helps them in their roles as administrators.

Table 2

Percentage of Combined Responses to University Administrative Preparation Questions

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
Overall Preparation	90.48%	>10%
School Leadership	93.65%	>10%
School Law	85.71%	14.29%
School Budget	50.8%	49.2%
School Data Analysis	61.90%	38.10%
Human Resources	69.84%	30.16%
Routine	82.26%	17.74%
Use of Learned Skills		
Application of Theories Learned	76.19%	23.81%
Prefer Job-Embedded Learning	91.66%	<10%
Dis./Sch. Professional Learning	87.3%	12.7%
School Law	85.71%	14.29%

Types of Field Experience

Fifty-three of 63 (84.13%) administrators reported that they completed field experience as part of their leadership preparation. Practical application courses were the most reported, with 33 (52.38%) administrators reporting this type of course completion. This was followed by internships, which were reported to have been completed by 19 (30.16%) administrators.

Administrator Preferential Areas of Preparation

Administrators identified 57 areas in which they would have liked to have received more preparation in their university leadership preparation programs. Among the skills listed, two emerged in multiple responses: budget, which was listed 19 times, and achievement data analysis, which was listed 10 times. Other areas identified included parental involvement, dealing with difficult parents, professional learning, stakeholder relationship, and human resources.

Most Frequently Used Areas of Preparation

Administrators identified 58 areas that they learned in their university leadership preparation programs and used most frequently in their careers. Law and leadership were the most consistently identified skills. Law was listed 20 times, more than any other skill, and forms of leadership were identified 16 times. These included transformational, multi-cultural, general, instructional, ethical, and organizational leadership. Other areas identified as frequently used included curriculum design and data analysis.

Least Frequently Used Areas of Preparation

Administrators identified 53 areas that they learned in university leadership preparation programs and do not use frequently in their careers. The three areas most consistently identified included: N/A, budget, and theory. Administrators listed none, or N/A, 17 times and budget 11 times. Listed 17 times, theory was also consistently identified as an area not used frequently.

Implications

Data from the literature review yielded a noteworthy revelation in regards to the time period of the empirical studies reviewed. General studies included data ranging from 2013 to 2015; innovative studies ranged from 2012 to 2015; adequate studies ranged from 2003 to 2015; and inadequate studies 2000 to 2007. While studies do not represent an exhaustive synthesis of principal preparation literature, these data demonstrate variation in findings. The noted studies that proposed overall inadequate principal preparation at the university level were older than the studies that revealed adequate or innovative preparation. The findings in this study point to overall perceptions of effectiveness of university principal preparation rather than ineffectiveness. This aligns with the findings of research conducted by Duncan et al. (2011).

A diverse group of current principals and assistant principals working in public schools in Florida and Georgia perceived that the leadership training they received from 24 universities in 10 states overall prepared them for their existing roles as administrators. The data suggest that these same universities are adequately preparing leadership candidates for their roles as assistant principals and principals based on the perceptions of the administrators in this study. Despite administrators' perceptions that university leadership preparation programs prepared them for existing administrative roles, the results of this study provide some considerations for faculty within university leadership preparation programs and the field of educational leadership. These data warrant consideration since every participant in the study is a current public school administrator with direct knowledge of the skills and abilities they need and use on the job.

This study found several promising themes for school districts and university leadership preparation programs. Administrators perceived that overall university leadership preparation programs prepared them for their roles. In addition, administrators perceived university leadership preparation programs prepared them in the areas of school law and leadership. Eighty-two percent of administrators surveyed reported that they routinely use the skills learned in university leadership preparation programs. School law and leadership were areas in which administrators agreed university leadership programs prepared them and were also areas that administrators stated they frequently use. This suggests that there is alignment in some areas of university leadership preparation and the skills that administrators report to use frequently.

Eighty-seven percent of administrators agree or strongly agree that schools and districts are providing professional development that helps them in their roles. This finding is important because the role of the principal is influenced by local needs (Isik, 2000), accentuating the need for collaborative relationships between university leadership preparation faculty and local school district officials (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Fifty-three administrators (84%) reported that they had some type of field experience during university leadership preparation. This finding suggests that some universities are providing field experiences as part of their leadership preparation programs, which is supported by several studies (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Dobson, 2014; Kearney & Valadez, 2015). Another important finding was the frequency in which administrators responded N/A to the question about the least frequently used skill learned in university preparation. This suggested that administrators generally are using the skills gained during university preparation.

While administrators who participated in this study overall believe that university preparation programs effectively readied them for administrative roles, data from the study suggested other noteworthy considerations. Data clearly and consistently suggested that a considerable percentage of administrators do not agree that university leadership programs prepared them in school finance/budgeting, data analysis, and human resources. These findings were consistent with administrators' perceptions of areas in which they would have liked to have more preparation and areas that they used less frequently.

In addition, an overwhelming percent (92%) of the administrators in this study believed that job-embedded learning experiences have been more meaningful than university preparation programs. This is not a negative reflection on university leadership programs but a reality of the evolving roles and needs of the administrators (Murphy, 2001). In addition, it aligns with ideas of on-the-job development (Duncan et al., 2011). A significant number of administrators (87%) agreed or strongly agreed that their schools and districts are providing professional learning opportunities that help them as administrators. Participants may prefer job-embedded learning over university preparation because many principal duties are learned in the process of gaining experience. This preference underscores the notion that university programs cannot fully prepare students for the roles they will play as principals, and on-the-job training is an ongoing requirement (Duncan et al., 2011).

Theory was listed among the least-used areas taught in university leadership preparation programs. This finding supports the belief that preparation programs are based too heavily in theory and, not in practice (Martin & Papa, 2008). However, this finding cannot explain why participants heavily agreed that university educational leadership programs prepared them both overall and in school leadership, which is based in theory. For principals to have a comprehensive understanding of leadership and their work, theory cannot be separated from practice. This finding may suggest that participants simply are not connecting practice to theory, which could warrant further consideration by university educational leadership preparation programs.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included the use of convenience sampling to collect data from participants, which limits generalizability to the population (Creswell, 2014). The return rate and sample size were acceptable but limited, considering the number of school administrators across

the country. In addition, the participants were public school administrators currently practicing in Florida and Georgia only.

Conclusion

University leadership programs play a critical role in the process of preparing leadership candidates for administrative roles. Meaningful leadership preparation is a process, and universities are not the sole dispensers of preparation for leader candidates. Foundational preparation should begin at the university level. However, adequate preparation will require a continuum of aligned professional learning experiences collaboratively delivered through universities, state boards of education, local school districts, individual leaders in candidate needs, and community stakeholders. As administrator roles and needs change continually, it is incumbent upon university leadership preparation faculty to continue exploring realistic and aligned preparation practices. University educational leadership curriculum should require (1) strategic alignment to state mandates and university accrediting bodies; (2) alignment with the needs of local school districts; and (3) alignment with the needs of individual leaders and community stakeholders. This alignment will require collaboration, research, and a willingness to periodically revise university leadership preparation programs as the dynamics of the principals' role continues to change. University faculty must embrace the idea that the responsibility of effectively preparing leadership candidates rests on alignment in these areas and that the preparation process is fluid. Studies on university leadership programs yield inconsistent results, as reported in this study's literature review. Accordingly, university leadership programs cannot be meaningfully examined with general evaluations. Instead, local variables must be measured when evaluating the needs and effectiveness of university leadership programs.

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Roles & Responsibilities of the Women Leading American Islamic Schools

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

Amaarah DeCuir

Literature of educational leadership often fails to represent the experiences of faith-based school leaders, particularly women. This study seeks to position the experiences of American Islamic school leaders in a larger context of educational leadership roles, responsibilities, and practices. This national, qualitative study utilized an Islamic and feminist methodology, prioritizing the constructed lived experiences and narratives of 13 women leading American Islamic schools. Through semi-structured interviews the participants described their leadership experiences and priorities, drawn from their daily tasks, professional expectations, and community relationships that impact the nature of their leadership. The findings indicate unique routes to school leadership, a multiplicity of assumed and assigned school roles, and overbearing relationships with their independent school boards. The participants described leadership practices consistent with the principles of collaborative leadership styles as seen in their interactions with other school administrators, staff and faculty, and community members. The results of this study contribute to a comprehensive description of faith-based school leadership which incorporates the lived realities of American Islamic school leaders.

Introduction

Educational leadership research is often conducted in the sphere of public education (Oplatka, 2014), and white men are often the primary subjects of leadership studies (Blackmore, 2010). This leaves female, faith-based school leaders with leadership definitions rooted in an alternate school context with diverging experiences and priorities. Attempts to produce faith-based educational research is often limited to small studies in Christian or Catholic school settings. Grace (2003) reviewed previous studies conducted in faith-based schools and found that there is a "general absence of large-scale and sophisticated investigation of faith-based schooling" (p. 150).

American Islamic schools are theologically unique (al Zeera, 2001), they operate in a landscape of Islamophobia (Esposito, 2011), and they are young, decentralized organizations with organizational policies modeled after public school contexts (Rashid & Muhammad, 1992; Merry, 2005). Across faith-based institutions, women don't often assume positions of leadership possibly due to religious traditions or gender bias. This researcher suggests that women who lead American Islamic schools possess unique educational leadership experiences, due to the contexts and priorities of faith-based schools. In the absence of any defining research on American Islamic school leadership, the single question directing this study is: *How do women leading American Islamic schools describe their roles and responsibilities?*

Background

Islamic schools are located across the nation in both large and small Islamic communities, for the purposes of providing a religious educational experience grounded in the understanding of Islamic principles. Islamic schools began in the late 1970s as a movement to offer a curricula and pedagogy based upon the teachings within the Nation of Islam. Years later, in the mid-1980s, immigrant Muslim communities began to build Islamic schools to teach Islam as they practiced it in their home countries. Some schools were founded in areas by families who opposed public education, and others were formed by those who wanted to promote an Islamic worldview within the education context. To date, Islamic schools are located across the nation in urban, suburban, and rural Muslim communities to provide a religiously grounded education experience.

Literature Review

Faith-Based School Leadership

The roles and responsibilities of school leadership have been well documented in studies centered in public school contexts. Camburn *et al* (2010) identified nine domains of responsibility from their mixed methods study of educational leaders in urban schools. But research demonstrates that private school leaders differ in their roles and responsibilities compared to public school leaders (Jorgensen, 2006). Faith-based principals need to achieve their schools' primary mission of maintaining and elevating their schools' spiritual nature. Boerema (2006) described such mission statements as individualized and focused upon character excellence, beyond academic achievement. Sullivan (2006) documented the need for community

service, interfaith relations, community building, and the role of prayer and worship. Sayani (2005) published an essay to expand the role of a school leader as one who "creates dialogical spaces in schools for students to explore their spiritualities". Those who are leading American Islamic schools must build their leadership practices on models that emphasize character development and spiritual obligations, more so than increasing academic achievement.

Faith-based school leaders often live, work, and worship with the members of their school community. These school leaders "have the additional challenge of leading a faith-based school community in which their personal lives, faith commitment, and religious practices are placed under scrutiny by [Church] authorities" (Dorman & D'Arbon, [eds.], 2003). School leaders must be leaders of their faith community and practice the faith in a "traditional, overt fashion", often establishing high behavioral expectations beyond what a typical public school leader would bear (Dorman and D'Arbon [eds.], 2003). Faith-based school leaders are charged with the responsibility of creating a sense of community within their schools (Houston, 2008). These additional responsibilities impact faith-based school leadership. Capper *et al* (2002) explored how the "intertwining of spirituality and community support can constrain leadership for equity and justice" (p. 77) in the context of a faith-based school.

Studies conducted to describe the impact of social culture on school leadership, suggest that today's school leaders incorporate the forms and shapes of local cultural contexts (Hallinger & Leithwood,1998; Shah, 2005; and Hofstede, 2005). Eagly and Chin (2010) wrote "the growing diversity of [*sic*] among followers challenges all leaders to take into account the perspectives of people representing backgrounds, beliefs, and mores different from their own" (p. 216). Leithwood *et al* (2004) identified elements of successful school leadership associated with the school's context. Their study articulated the ways in which leadership practices influence student achievement, often underestimated in research literature. Leithwood *et al* (2004) wrote "research about the forms and effects of leadership is becoming increasingly sensitive to the contexts in which leaders work and how, in order to be successful, leaders need to respond flexibly to their contexts" (p. 22).

Researchers have conducted studies of a variety of leadership styles as they are practiced in faith-based schools (Williams, 2006). Spiritual expertise, often housed in faith-based schools, may be manifest through a leadership style known as servant leadership, coined by Robert Greenleaf (1991) as those who are "servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 7). Because these principals are charged with the responsibility of promoting the school's vision, Greenleaf (1991) wrote "a mark of a leader, an attribute that puts him in a position to show the way for others, is that he is better than most at pointing the direction" (p. 9). Sergiovanni (2005) extended this concept of leadership as one "in which leaders strengthen the heartbeat of their schools when they have faith in their cause, change hopefulness into reality, are trustworthy, and show love through servant leadership".

Women in educational leadership

Ahmed's (2011) innovative study of Muslim American women's leadership furthered our understanding of a different leadership style, that of a scholar-activist. By centering a study on women who are in positions of community-based leadership, Ahmed (2011) was able to identify key processes for forming leadership decisions rooted in their female, Muslim American identity. This extended our knowledge that the practice of school leadership is influenced by the leaders'

gender (Eagly and Chin, 2010). To date, educational leadership remains a male dominated profession (Litmanovitz, 2011), with a weak pipeline (Lemasters and Roach, 2012), and few administrative role models (Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010) contributing to the low number of women in positions of school leadership.

The literature points to the conclusion that those responsible for leading America's faith-based schools have a unique set of roles and responsibilities, attributed to their school culture and spiritual obligations. These obligations impact the manner by which they make their leadership decisions, as such influencing their leadership styles.

Methodology

Hallinger and Leithwood (1996) wrote that educational leadership can only be strengthened through academic research studies when culture is incorporated within the research design. Al Zeera (2001) detailed an Islamic methodology that will be incorporated into this study design, essentially stating that research, conducted from an Islamic perspective, is an act of worship when its purpose is to gather knowledge to serve humanity. This study places an Islamic research design as the central component of its methodology.

A basic qualitative design organized the research using semi-structured conversations with a national set of 13 participants. Each participant reflected upon her leadership experiences in an American Islamic school. The process of reflection can assist a research participant in their ability to understand their past, simply by retelling the experiences to another listener. The Islamic research design includes "reflection on personal experiences…, as learners, to understand past experiences and reconstruct them in the light of new knowledge or experiences" (Al Zeera, 2001, p. 85).

This study incorporates a feminist theoretical and methodological design that is centered in women's experiences of their socially constructed realities. Blackmore (2010) described the key function of feminist research as one to capture women's individual experiences. "While studying women is not new, studying them from the perspective of their own experiences so that women can understand themselves and the world can claim virtually no history at all" (Harding, 1987, p. 8). The research question that shapes this project is neither seeking to add women to an existing framework, nor is it taking an oppositional look at a previous study focused on male Islamic school leadership. Instead, in keeping with feminist research studies, this research seeks to be grounded in a feminist epistemology, studying the ways in which the female participants raise issues and gain insights from their socially constructed reality (Crotty, 1998).

Conceptual Framework

Three distinct concepts are represented in this study: faith-based school leadership, Islamic leadership, and Islamic education. The first component is defined as faith- based school leadership, those charged with the authority to lead religious schools. The second one is termed Islamic leadership. It is rooted in the principles of the Quran and modeled by the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. There is a traditional view of Islamic leadership which is recognized as a "shared influence process," highlighting the importance of shared decision making, consultation, and collaboration as required acts of worship for leaders (Ali, 2009). The third conceptual area to be connected is termed Islamic education. This is a

philosophy of education in which the pursuit of knowledge is a divine process, in both secular and religious studies. Islamic education is centered in using knowledge gained from the world to better understand mankind's relationship to The Divine.

Epistemology

The foundation of this study is based on a perspective that knowledge will be constructed from the experiences of the participants. The research design is informed from a social constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative inquiry can be a tool to collect and represent data in a manner that is consistent with social constructionism, because it is a design that is rooted in individual's connections to their own experiences. The data that are produced through this design represent knowledge that is formed from the participants' interactions with the world around themselves through social constructionism.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study will confine itself to interviewing a small number of women currently leading American Islamic schools. Some feminist methodologies support this type of delimitation in social science research to help highlight the roles and responsibilities of female leaders. The goal is to create a clear opportunity to bring forth the voices of women in positions of power and influence. This purposeful sample procedure decreases the generalizability of this study to other faith-based school leadership populations, or other female school leadership populations. Limiting this study to the perspectives of female school leaders also reduces the likelihood that this study can result in a full description of American Islamic school leadership. This study will be limited to an American perspective with the results incorporated into a larger body of European, Asian, and Middle Eastern research findings of Islamic school leaders.

Results

The participants contributed to a full and complete description of leadership in the context of an American Islamic school. Some of the roles and responsibilities they represented are consistent with a public school context: facility management, student supervision, academic achievement, curriculum and instruction, and staff support. But there were four key results that diverged from the experiences of public school leaders, these are their routes to school leadership, professional expectations, multiplicity of roles, and their relationships with their school boards. What follows is a presentation of the data that supports these findings.

Thirteen women contributed their time, energy, reflections, and sentiments to document their experiences as American Islamic school leaders. Together, these women reflect the geographic, racial/ethnic, age, and professional diversity of the Muslim community. To mask the personal identifiers of the participants, I reference them using self-selected pseudonyms and summarized their demographics in the following table.

Table 1
Participant Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Category	Results (Total 13 participants)
Geographic	North (1) Mid-Atlantic (3) Southeast (1) Midwest (7) Not identified (1)
Racial / Ethnic	White (6) Asian (5) Other (1) Not identified (1)
Country of Origin	USA (3) Pakistan (3) Afghanistan (3) Egypt (1) Hyderabad (1) India (1) Not identified (3)
Age	60-69 years (2) 50-59 years (3) 40-49 years (6) 30-39 years (1) Not identified (1)
Educational Background (highest earned degree)	Doctorate (1) Masters of Education (5) Masters (2) BA / BS degree (2) High school / college credits (1) Not identified (1) * Masters of Education in progress (1)
Years in current position	11-15 years (2) 6 - 10 years (4) 0 - 5 years (7)
Participant Job Title	Director / Headmaster (1) Principal (6) Assistant Principal / Vice Principal (3) Division Head (1) Administrator (1) School Board member (1)

Routes to Leadership

American Islamic school leaders rose to their positions through either promotions or professional appointments. Some ascended from the teaching staff through a promotion as an effective instructor. The transition to the administrative team was a bit challenging for Aim since she was previously a teacher at the same school. She said,

> It was more difficult for me in the sense, that people who were my colleagues first, now I'm supervising them. Now I'm evaluating them, now I'm advising them. So that took some time, and I gave it some time, I did, this is what I read, and this is what I found out, I was trained, through my academics that, you're not supposed to make any changes all of a sudden if you are in a certain position.

Another study participant stated that she joined her school as "just a parent." She narrated, "So I guess I got there because I went from being the lunch lady, to being a substitute, and then I was also teaching classes here, and I was on the school board, and then an administrator." One of the participants was among the few school leaders that planned to enter school administration as a leader. She wanted to move out of the classroom so that she could have a greater impact, and more power to change her school. She theorized,

> Because I worked in an Islamic school as a teacher, and I knew that the power of changing an Islamic school, or an Islamic environment in the school, or making it a better school, really was in the hands of the administration. A teacher can only influence what's in their circle. An administrator has more power behind them to influence a larger circle, which would be a total school.

Several schools recruited these women to join the school administration out of sheer necessity, borne out of a school-related crisis. One leader was at a professional teachers' conference and she told how the school board chair recruited her directly over the phone.

> The way I was selected to be the principal of the school, it was very unexpected because I was a teacher and I was the team leader at that time, and actually I was on vacation and the Board Chair calls me and said, 'Sister, you need to help us out cause our principal has resigned.' And I think that there was something political going on which I was not aware of because my job was just to teach and lead my team.

Without any administrative preparation, or time built in for a transition period, she recalled, "So that was extremely challenging for me to switch roles from a teacher to administrative role."

Professional Expectations

Typical school leaders enter a position with a clearly defined job description, outlining the professional expectations they are required to assume. Not all of the women in this study referenced a formal job description that defined their position at their specific school, many of the study participants described an unstated expectation that they were responsible for doing whatever was necessary to successfully run the school. Sumayyah attempted to summarize this expectation, "And so, really more so than ever, everything seems to fall on the principal."

The women who are leading American Islamic schools epitomize the idiom "the early bird catches the worm." Each one starts her school day with an early and immediate start to her

administrative responsibilities. Aim said, "A typical day starts around, I'm usually here around 7, 7:30. And the work starts right there, you know." Sakina summarized this when she said, "I'm the last one to leave and I'm the first one to come."

Many of the participants described their personal pursuits of higher education as a form of fulfilling professional expectations. Six participants earned a Masters of Education degree during their tenure as a school leader, to solidify their leadership skills and increase their capacity as a school principal or assistant principal. Khadijah A. joked that she was earning the degree after gaining the job, and that this was not the standard order of actions. Asfar said,

> I decided to go back to school. So while I'm being a principal, I'm going back to school to get my Masters in Educational Leadership. So I have grown to be in a position that I would like somebody to be in. And, *alhumdulilah* [all praise to God]*,* I feel that right now I'm much more confident and I am where I want a school to have that kind of a leadership.

Multiplicity of Roles

American Islamic school leaders often function with a slim administrative staff and few support staff members. The absence of support personnel doesn't eliminate the additional responsibilities that need to be filled in their schools, it simply means that these women assume these responsibilities in addition to their role as a school leader. Sumayyah described the school as "short-handed."

> You know, but not so in here [Islamic schools]. It becomes your responsibility in the sense that there's multiple roles that we have to play, cause [*sic*] we don't have designated people for all those different roles to play with. (Aim)

Female Islamic school leaders often assume reception tasks. Aim described, "I'm in the front office, working as, working on the phones if a secretary or somebody is busy or not there." She also described times when she has to print or photocopy for the male school principal because the secretary is busy with another task. The participants said that they often substitute for staff and faculty positions during unexpected absences. Hafsa said,

> There are times when the cook calls and says, 'I can't come today' or 'I don't have a car" or something. And I'm thinking, okay, let's cook. And then there was a while, what happened? The cook gave us a short notice, 'I found another job, I'm not coming'. I'm like 'oooh!', so I covered until we found someone else.

Khadijah A. said, "So I couldn't get a sub for the whole day, so I could only get a sub for like three periods. So then I had to go in for silent reading at the end, I had to go in for lunch and recess duty that day." Although some perceive this as a burden, Hafsa enjoys this opportunity of temporarily returning to the classroom. She stated,

> This past year I really have not done a lot, myself, have not done a lot of substituting but I love that, I enjoy going to the classes and subbing for teachers once in a while. It really gives us a different perspective and it tells a lot. How a teacher is teaching and where they are, and how far they are, and are they covering everything and making sure that they are, with their line of the curriculum and all that. And only get that when you're in the classroom, when you see what the students tell you, I really enjoy that.

In the absence of a school counselor, the school leader often steps in to support parents, families, and students that require additional resources. Two of the participants were trained as counselors. Mariam said,

Because of my counseling background. . . I will help in that role. To guide the parent in obtaining other, what do you call it? Services to help their child, be a… school psychologist, or independent psychologist in the community.

Sweet Pea said, "Counselor. But that's a second passion, I have a minor in counseling. It's a, I can talk to people and, you know, just, I'm a very good listener."

There are some leaders that assumed financial responsibilities beyond budget oversight. Sumayyah stated the impact that this role has on her position as a school principal,

I wasn't asked to collect the money, but overseeing those who were collecting it, yeah. And it's a big distraction from the instructional leadership, all the way around, I think.

One of the study participants held a degree in accounting, she was one of the leaders who described the most extensive business management responsibilities, embedded within her principal role. She described her fiscal roles at her school,

I am also responsible for paying all the bills. I mean, this is a small school, I am responsible for collecting all the bills, I mean, literally, everything. The whole bill stack. Every month I take it, you know, basically, pay the bills online. And I'm also responsible for payables, for the teachers. . . All the accounting was done by me, even paying taxes, everything.

Hafsa solicited funds for struggling families by directly approaching members of the school community.

Then we went and asked around, I, myself, and a couple of other people in our school, asked around community members and see if they can afford just a few dollars here and there. So we talked to several people privately, not mentioning their names, there is a family who is, a community member, they are going through hardship, and would you like to pitch in? They said, yes, actually a couple of people said 'we will cover the whole fees all the way to the end of the year.' So, *Al humdulilah* [praise God], I try to find a sponsor for situations like this.

School Board

Each of the school leaders in the study described overbearing responsibilities they have in association with their school board. Many of the school principals are required to attend all board meetings to provide feedback about conditions at the school. Khadijah A., a former board member for 3 years, realized that she has "insight on the board. . . .of the 9 elected, there's no education members on the board." Because of the composition of the school board, Khadijah A. finds herself explaining educational issues or school concerns to the board members when they don't have their own first-hand knowledge of the particular situation. Sumayyah functioned in schools that have a more challenging board-administration relationship. She recalled that communication is not a simple process when directed to the school board, she finds that she must justify and defend her decisions before they are accepted by the members of the board.

Having to check all of the time and get permission for things is the thing that a lot of the principals have to deal with an issue four or five times because they deal with it when they, themselves are making a decision and then they have to explain their decision to a board member and another one, and another one. And they can't just take the decision and be done with it, and after everybody talks about it and mulls it over and maybe even argues about it and disagrees with the principal, why is it back in the principal's lap to do something about? And it should have just been there in the first place to be taken care of by the person in the role in the first place.

Sumayyah theorized that this type of miscommunication is rooted in the board members' misunderstanding of their role within the school organization, "Because boards don't understand their role so they confound and confuse the principal role." But, she also acknowledged that some of the miscommunication is rooted in resistance from board members, "You have a lot of resistance from the board, in some cases, to buy what is needed or do what is necessary, or hire the right person, because of control that was taken by the governing body." No matter what is causing the communication damages, Sumayyah recognized that she doesn't have control over situations with the board and she reflected, "It's just an example of a decision you have to live with, you can fight it and fight it and fight it, but you have to live with it." When commenting on her school board, Shanti said, "This is one of the biggest challenges that I've been facing for quite a few years now." Hawa, the only board member in the study, acknowledged that her school, like others across the nation, has a damaged board-administration relationship. She considered that this is rooted in the lack of trust between the school leaders, "So if there is no trust, so that's where we lack, there is no trust between board and the principal's office." She added that poor communication is also an internal conflict between board members.

I think it's just the personal relationships that is, that is more, the unprofessional behavior at every level. That kind of ticks me off a lot, because you're in a professional environment and you are expected to act professionally. That's the biggest, you know, you see the emails, you see the announcements, you see people behaving so unprofessionally, that's just is the most hardest [*sic*] thing for me. It affects, how do I teach them to be professional?

Most commonly, the women leading American Islamic schools considered an early resignation as a response to a poor working relationship with members of the school board. Sweet Pea left one school because of the school board. She said, "I loved the school, just loved it. But, it's usually a board conflict, something in the board, and it's not usually the community, usually the board, there's a very strong presence that doesn't agree with your philosophy." Khadija B. began to search for a new position after a frustrating situation with her school board, but after some time she simply resolved to remain in her position and work through the difficulties. Asfar smirked, with a bit of a chuckle, when she was asked about her working relationship with her school board. She said, "The school board is very, well, I, what should I say? The school board is there. [chuckles] And it's a support for me. And that's about it."

Summary of Leadership Roles

Aim stated that all recognized school leadership models are taken from a public school structure, but that structure does not apply to Islamic school leaders. The school leaders in this study

reflected on their roles and responsibilities through narratives, job descriptions, community expectations, and personal goals that drive their leadership activities. Their leadership roles and responsibilities demonstrate the complexity of strength, determination, and motivation that capture the uniqueness of their leadership experiences. Most remarkably, it represents the view that these women are responsible for *everything,* even if their schools struggle to obtain the resources to make *everything* happen.

Leadership Styles

In addition to defining the details of the roles and responsibilities, it was important to explore how these women carried out their leadership activities as leaders of American Islamic schools. The participants were asked to give extended reflections on their leadership experiences, their most celebrated moments as a leader, and the times they felt their decisions were not successful. They discussed ways in which the community perceived their leadership roles as well as their own self- reflections. The leaders described examples associated with visionary, research-based, assertive, and authoritative leadership in varying contexts. But, the prominent style of leadership represented across each of the participants was collaborative leadership which they claim has its roots in their Islamic faith.

Collaboration with other School Administrators

Several of the study participants shared leadership responsibilities with another school administrator. For those leaders, they provided examples of collaborative leadership practices across administrative roles. Aim, as an assistant principal, articulated numerous ways in which she collaborated with the school principal on leadership decisions. They meet together daily to discuss situations or upcoming parent meetings "to determine what we are going to do about it, about that certain situation." When Aim is working on a situation independently, she says,

> I brief him so that we're both, know whatever is going on within the thing. If I
> need advice on something, oh, this is the situation, what do you think I should do?
> Then we discuss some of those situations going on.

This enabled Aim and the school principal to implement collaborative leadership practices when resolving difficult situations. When Aim finds herself in a conflict between her and the school principal, she is comfortable stating her opinion and then allowing the decision making process to move forward. Aim described her typical response when collaborative leadership did not yield shared results with the school principal,

> So there are those situations where that conflict has happened, rather difference of
> opinion has happened. I wanted to do in a different way, but he wanted to say, you
> know, I want to deal in a different way. And that's what I said, I said, fine. You
> know, I just wanted you to know that this is what I wanted you to do with this
> situation.

Aim felt that her school has a strong system of teamwork that is shared by both her collaborative leadership practices with the school principal and their efforts to collaborate with other members of the school community.

> Jamilah, as the leader in her school community, also described collaboration among the
school administrative team. She stated that she deliberately established protocols for

collaboration so that her administration would be recognized as transparent and fair by all members of the school community. Together, when emailing parents, all administrators carbon copy one another so that they give a clear community statement that the email message conveys a shared, collaborative decision. Jamilah described why collaborative leadership is so important to her,

> The rule by one, I didn't really like because nobody knew what was going on and I worked for two principals who never gave you all the information. And you were always kind of in the dark, but they expected you'd know what to do. . . But it's usually collaborative. I very rarely pull rank, and say, you know what, I'm the head of school and it's going to be this way. [I] very rarely have to go to this point.

Jamilah proactively planned her leadership style in response to negative practices of leadership that she had previously experienced. She also felt strongly that a collaborative system of leadership benefits the school teachers who are empowered to make shared decisions with the school administration. She noted,

> So it makes very strong teachers, so if anything happens with administration, I would be very comfortable with having the teachers run the school, for a short term. It's not something you would use in the school forever, but it gives them that strength. Some administrators are intimidated by strong teachers and staff. But, for me, it makes my life easier if they know their job and they are taking care of business.

Both Aim and Jamilah offered descriptions of ways in which collaborative leadership shares authority among school leaders.

Collaboration with Teachers and Staff

Other school leaders described collaboration with teachers and staff as a regular leadership practice within their schools. In fulfillment of school policy, Samantha leads her school in a collaborative style. She works with the teachers at her school to resolve problems and initiate policies. Samantha recognized that collaborative leadership extends beyond consulting staff members on specific situations, it involves a back and forth to agree upon a plan, sufficient time to implement the plan, and reflective time to evaluate the success of the plan. Samantha described the give and take of collaborative leadership,

> And you can't make new decisions or new rules unless you've heard from all of them, it can't be top-down. So, one, yes, I take feedback from all my teachers, say, here's a problem, what do you think we should do? And they'll say something, and I'll say, well, we can't do that because this, this, and this, because I know this and you don't, and that's why we can't. Let's come up with something else. So, okay, this one, well, we'll try it. So we try it, we implement it, and I make sure to follow up to make sure that it's being implemented, we come back to a meeting and we discuss it. What went wrong, what didn't go wrong, should we give it more time, should we tweak it? Anyway, that's my philosophy on leadership.

When working with the other school administrators, Samantha recognized that collaboration may lead to negotiation and compromise when all participants do not readily agree. During these

times, she does not abandon her focus on collaboration, instead, she applies the Islamic principles of shared decision making as follows,

> We all, we all have our opinions, we discuss, we may have one person feel very strongly, we will listen, but the decision is made based on *shura'a* [mutual consultation]. So I have to say, okay, I really feel strongly about it, but this is what all of you think, we're going to do it that way.

When she reflected on her leadership practices, Samantha asserted, "it's very rewarding to work with a team."

Collaboration with Community Members

Some of the study participants mentioned that they use collaborative leadership when working with the various stakeholders within their school community. Shanti recognized that each group of stakeholders wanted to be included in the decision making process at a school, and the process of inclusion is essential to the greater success of the plan. She used this stakeholder interest to structure her own collaborative leadership practices.

> Each group of stakeholders, they know that they will be heard and they know that their feedback is very important. So, that's why I have this approach that I want to make sure that, yes, I want to have the idea that I have in mind. But I want them to be part of the idea, too. It's not that I said it and everybody do it. No. That's not who I am. I want it to come from everybody and then you're more successful when it's the feeling of ownership, you know, you give that feeling of ownership to everyone. . . . And the stakeholders don't take ownership, most likely you are going to fail. But when people have the sense of ownership that we all do it together, even if we fail together. Or we are successful together. So that is my personal opinion and *al humdulilah* [praise God], I have tried it and it has worked.

Khadija B. initiated a committee with school parents to address issues of curriculum and school culture collaboratively. Like Shanti, she felt that parent involvement in the decision making process would yield greater program results in the end. Khadija B. said,

> So I lead that committee, and it's an entirely parent committee, made up of parents who really focus on school culture and curriculum development. So they help us do that, we basically meet once a month and we work on initiatives to help improve the school's culture and curriculum. Parents always want to be involved with the curriculum to some extent. And so this is a way that it would bring in all types of diverse parents, as opposed to that one or two parent that wants to know how to this, and why don't you do it this way? So we invite them and say, well, why don't you join the committee? And see how serious are they in regards to this. And then help them see more of a global view that it's not about just their child.

Both Shanti and Khadija B. embed their schools with collaborative leadership practices that involve members of stakeholder groups in the decision making processes at their schools.

There are times in which difficult situations present themselves and some leaders may be reluctant to lead collaboratively. Sweet Pea is one who embraced collaboration, even in difficult times within the school community. She described herself this way,

I do like to listen to all sides. I'm a negotiator. I like to, or compromise, or I like to have win-win situations, not win-lose or lose-lose. And, I think being a mom and having to navigate kids' arguing about things, I've been pretty good about how to solve the little issues. With respect for everybody, and that's a big thing with me, everybody is respected.

Sweet Pea said when a difficult situation arises, an effective leader is one who moves towards the challenge with the intention to resolve it by bringing together all involved parties. She provided an example when she described a school crisis with several students violating school rules and local laws. In this situation, she made an assertive decision in a timely manner to restore order and safety to her school setting.

Challenges to collaboration

As some of the study participants placed a priority on collaborative leadership, they faced difficulties building relationships with different stakeholder groups. Hawa remained frustrated by the unprofessional behavior through the school organization. She complained,

I think it's just the personal relationships that is, that is more, the unprofessional behavior at every level. That kind of ticks me off a lot, because you're in a professional environment and you are expected to act professionally. That's the biggest, you know, you see the emails, you see the announcements, you see people behaving so unprofessionally, that's just is the most hardest thing for me. It effects, how do I teach them to be professional?

At the end of her complaint, Hawa questioned how she can lead her school organization to collaborate effectively. She stated this as her primary challenge to her school leadership effectiveness because it is a communication practice that is very important to her.

Shanti's biggest challenge is connected to her relationships with parents and board members. She finds that she has to convince others when she wants to initiate new ideas for the school organization. This causes her to struggle as a leader who seeks to lead collaboratively, wanting constructive feedback throughout the decision making process.

The biggest challenge that I had that I mentioned earlier was to educate the parents and the board. That anytime you want to implement a new idea or a new philosophy that is the most important part. That you have to educate yourself first, then your team, your, because we are stakeholders when it comes to parents, students, teachers, the community. That has been my biggest challenge. To sell any idea. . . . I think trust is the most important thing when it comes to any institution. It has to be there. You have to gain the trust of your stakeholders if you want to be successful as a leader of the school.

These are the challenges that weigh heavily on both Hawa and Shanti, and they consider themselves still in the process of resolving these difficulties as they persist in their efforts to lead their schools collaboratively.

Leadership Style Conclusion

The participants described their leadership practices as successful because of their ability to build effective relationships with the teachers, board members, staff, and parents at their schools.

Mariam illustrated the ways in which the people in her school work together in one direction, "The circle is complete when the teachers, students, the parents are all in sync and the children are learning and moving forward, and everyone's moving forward together." Samantha noted the positive relations with her staff that have developed under her leadership at the school. She said, "I think the most rewarding thing would be my relationship with my staff. I think I have a really good relationship with my staff. . . . I consult them. It's not a top-down kind of way of doing things." The practice of collaborative leadership was strongly regarded as a contributor of leadership success within their American Islamic schools.

Findings

Faith-Based School Leadership

Returning to the urban-centered findings of Camburn *et al* (2010), the data confirms that women leading American Islamic schools do share responsibilities of academic achievement, operational supervision, and instructional leadership with leaders in public school settings. But, the strongest findings of this study bring to light unique responsibilities that are not common in public school models of educational leadership. These leaders had circuitous routes to their leadership positions, rarely seeking employment and more often solicited by board members who needed an immediate solution to a leadership void. These participants described professional expectations beyond supervision and administration, more similar to the responsibility of sustaining the entire institution. And, once many of them entered graduate schools of education, they came to realize that they bore the responsibility of carrying multiple roles at the school, beyond which a public school leader is typically assigned. Finally, the participants described deteriorating conditions between themselves and their school boards. As school leaders, they each exerted efforts to improve the situations, but the mistrust, miscommunication, and misunderstandings that contaminated their working relationships impacted their leadership effectiveness.

Collaborative leadership style

The women in this study conveyed professional preferences for leadership styles through their individual narrations of their leadership activities and decisions. Many of the women within this study described their leadership practices as collaborative. When describing her leadership style, Jamilah said, "It's usually collaborative. I very rarely pull rank." Eagly and Chin (2010) found that women prefer collaborative leadership styles because assertive and authoritative practices are perceived as too masculine. Sumayyah alluded to this reality when she described the community's negative response to her assertiveness, "Oh, you're so aggressive!" Eagly and Chin (2010) also found that women prefer developing work relationships which is consistent with the way the study participants described their collaborative style.

Discussion

Academia

Current scholarly literature does not incorporate the experiences of women leading American Islamic schools in the development of educational leadership descriptions. Existing findings should be revisited to confirm that they include the unique perspective of this leadership population, housed in a faith-based school context. Although the experiences of American Islamic school leaders differ from the experiences of other faith-based school leaders, their roles and responsibilities should be incorporated into a complex description of faith-based school leadership as practiced in America.

Practitioners

It is recommended that the findings within this study shape the practice of American Islamic school leadership. The women in the study stated that they attend graduate schools of education to seek training in educational leadership practices, but the models presented in their coursework is not consistent with their realities in an American Islamic school.

Policy

The results of this study should help inform the policy development agendas of American Islamic school boards. The descriptions of school leadership in this study should contribute to an accurate evaluation tool to measure the effectiveness of their leadership staff, provide resources necessary for school operations, and help produce comprehensive job descriptions for today's American Islamic school leaders.

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Teacher Contract Non-Renewal:
What Matters to Principals?

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This quantitative study investigated the relationship between teacher dispositions, subject content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and reasons that school principals recommend non-renewal of teachers' contracts. Nearly 2,000 school principals in 13 states completed an emailed survey.

In deciding whether to non-renew a teacher contract, principals reported that they observed most a lack of pedagogical content knowledge from ineffective teachers and that they prioritized the importance of instructional skills. Ethical issues received greatest importance. Principals identified teacher integrity, honesty, and dependability as important teacher dispositions.

The study's findings are important for the planning of teacher and principal professional development initiatives and hiring selection decisions. Knowing how to accurately ascribe variance in student learning has potential for improving student outcomes, particularly with the emphasis on value-added teacher evaluations.

Quality teaching is the crucial component needed for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2007; Marzano, 2006). More specifically, both subject content knowledge (SCK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) are essential components of successful teaching. What is less clear, however, is the association among teacher contract non-renewals, teacher dispositions, subject content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge. In this quantitative study, nearly 2,000 school principals in thirteen states responded in three general areas: a) ineffective teacher behaviors, b) the importance of specific dispositions, and c) criteria for teacher contract non-renewal.

Teachers enter the teaching profession with at least four knowledge bases: their disposition, knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter knowledge, and context. One presumption is that teachers begin professional preparation with some level of subject content knowledge and as they learn to teach they transform and begin to develop pedagogical content knowledge. More than 50 years ago, James Conant (1963) argued that strong subject content knowledge with limited exposure to pedagogical knowledge constitutes a sufficient basis to prepare teachers. A search of the literature finds no shortage of supporters advocating the deregulation of teacher certification to allow college graduates who lack course work in the field of education to qualify for teaching certificates based on their content knowledge alone (Hess & Finn, 2004; Podgursky, 2005). Podgursky (2005) confidently reported, "the most basic academic requirement is knowledge of the relevant discipline" (p. 75).

Subject Content Knowledge

Subject content knowledge refers to the concepts and constructs within an academic field and the relationships among them. Subject content knowledge includes knowledge of a subject area or discipline as well as knowledge of the substantive and syntactic structures of the discipline (Schwab, 1964). Shulman (1986) stated that subject matter knowledge "is the comprehension of the subject appropriate to a content specialist" (p. 26). This view includes conceptualizations of how the field is organized and questions which guide inquiry. Without knowledge of the aforementioned structures within a field, teachers may misrepresent and impact the level of classroom discourse.

Arzi and White (2008) found that the "required school curriculum is the single most significant factor affecting teacher content knowledge" (p. 242). This impact manifests itself through the curriculum that teachers previously learned as school students and the curriculum that teachers currently teach. These factors determine priorities for new subject matter learning. Content knowledge does not begin or end in the university, but rather is a complex interactive process.

Subject content knowledge is often measured by the number of university subject-matter course credits for both pre and in-service teachers (Arzi & White, 2008). Yet, this characteristic of university-based teacher subject content learning has modest effects on student achievement (Wayne & Youngs, 2003). According to Arzi and White (2008), this view of earning subject matter credits "conceptualizes teacher knowledge as a unidimensional static entity, ignoring variety within and changes that it may undergo over time…beyond the boundaries of tertiary institutions" (p. 222). They noted that the school curriculum serves as both knowledge organizer and source of teacher subject content knowledge. They also suggested a three phase model which represents how teachers acquire subject content knowledge: "phase one includes the

acquisition of academic details, phase two is curricular aggregation, and phase three is characterized by intra and inter-disciplinary linking and pattern construction" (p. 245). They claimed that the lines between the phases are not sharp and that transitions are gradual. They suggested that phase two is probably a point where pedagogical content knowledge begins. It was Shulman (1986), who succeeded in linking SCK and PCK.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Shulman (1986) connected previously disparate views regarding subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge by noting that there are missing questions about the content of lessons taught. Related, more content knowledge is useless without the instructional skills (or pedagogical knowledge) to deploy it. Shulman (1986) drew attention to the value of both subject content knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy. Zeidler (2002) noted that the analysis of several studies leads to the inference that teacher subject content knowledge is a necessary but insufficient condition for the transfer of central ideas (p.31).

A prevailing view is that teachers must possess a level of general pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of teaching in areas such as knowledge and skills about learning, knowledge of general principals of instruction, and knowledge and skills about classroom management. All of these underscore the importance of teachers' pedagogical knowledge for student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Doyle, 1986). Shulman (1986) said that pedagogical knowledge "goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching" (p. 9). Content in this sense refers to its teachability. In essence, (PCK) relates to the idea that teachers must be aware of students' common misperceptions and subject specific difficulties and knowledge of useful representations and appropriate instructional techniques for teaching the content (Shulman, 1986).

Pedagogical content knowledge lacks a precise definition in the literature (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008). Attempts at definitions appear so broad that the concept seems to include nearly everything a teacher might know in teaching a concept. Many definitions, directly or indirectly, describe the attributes that PCK would encompass. Definitions include "the intersection of knowledge of the subject with knowledge of teaching and learning…" and "that domain of teachers' knowledge that combines subject matter knowledge and knowledge of pedagogy"… or "the product of transforming subject matter into a form that will facilitate student learning" (Ball et al., 2008, p. 394). Nilsson (2008) said that pedagogical content knowledge is a "way of understanding the complex relationship between teaching and content through the use of specific teaching approaches and is developed through a process rooted in classroom practice" (p. 1283). Geddis and Wood (1997) called PCK a "broad category of those kinds of knowledge involved in pedagogical transformations of subject matter" (p. 612). They included the learner's prior concepts, subject matter representations, instructional strategies, curriculum materials, and curricular saliency. Curricular saliency refers to the teacher's understanding of the role and place that the topic fits into the curriculum.

Pedagogical content knowledge application is the activity of a teacher shifting focus from a general conception of content to a more detailed level. This begins with some method of organizing content in a progressive or logical order. PCK has "become a way of understanding the complex relationship between teaching and content through the use of specific teaching approaches and is developed through a process rooted in classroom practice" (Nilsson, p. 1283).

Gess-Newsome (1999) reviewed studies on teachers' knowledge and beliefs about subject matter and the relationship to teaching. She took the position that there is a distinction between an integrative and transformative model of teacher cognition. With the integrative view, PCK does not exist and teacher knowledge is explained by the intersection of subject matter, pedagogy, and context. Knowledge from all three domains is integrated as needed. In the transformative model, PCK is a well-structured and easily accessible form through which something new and different in the way the three domains combine; consequently the new knowledge itself is transformed into PCK.

Grossman (1990) conceived of pedagogical content knowledge as composed of four central components: knowledge and beliefs about the purposes for teaching a subject at different grade levels; knowledge of the students' understanding, conceptions, and misconceptions of particular topics in a subject area; knowledge of curriculum materials available to teach a particular subject matter; and knowledge of instructional strategies and the skill to implement them. As Shulman noted (1986), teachers must also draw upon knowledge that is specific to teaching particular subject matters. In effect, this represents the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching. Within this realm we see the most useful forms of representation of concepts, analogies, illustrations, and demonstrations, among others (Shulman, 1986, pp. 9-10).

Torff and Sessions (2009) stated, "The test-score research suggests that teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge both appear to be positively associated with student outcomes, but which has the greater effect remains in dispute." (p. 129). Two studies by Torff and Sessions (2005; 2009) found that the most frequent causes of teacher ineffectiveness were deficiencies related to pedagogical knowledge. Deficiencies in subject content knowledge were the least common perceived cause. Results suggest that lack of pedagogical content knowledge is the most common underlying cause of problems of teacher quality.

Dispositions

Much current interest in dispositions stems from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2011) and Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Principles (INTASC, 2011) mandates to incorporate dispositions into teacher candidate assessment. Borko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007) claimed that NCATE standards have set the stage for a major debate about the role of dispositions in teacher preparation. The change from NCATE to the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) does not appear to have changed the emphasis on professional dispositions (CAEP, 2013).

For over seven decades, the importance of teacher candidate dispositions is evident in the literature (Albee & Piveral, 2003). A prevailing view is that effective teaching requires teacher knowledge, skills, and appropriate dispositions (Danielson, 2002). Due to the limitations of measurement tools, integrating dispositions into teacher education programs has lacked widespread systematic and intentional effort (Albee & Piveral, 2003). NCATE (2011) describes dispositions as "the values and commitments" that define teacher performance. NCATE standards call for dispositions that are consistent with the idea of "fairness" and "the belief that all students can learn." NCATE refers to dispositions as teacher behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth. When dispositions gained popularity in the 1990's, they were supposed to be a way to address the less tangible aspects of teaching (e.g.,

commitments, values, and beliefs). Inevitably, these aspects of teaching encompass moral sensibilities and inherently describe a moral activity (Schussler & Knarr, 2013). Importantly, dispositions embrace the why of teaching decisions, not just the what.

Character-related Dispositions

There are numerous and divergent efforts in the literature to describe teacher dispositions. Because definitions and conceptions of dispositions fall into several broad, general categories, it is useful to look at dispositions on a continuum that ranges from concepts that are not unique to teaching (character-related) to those that are essential components of effective teaching (competence-related).

Some researchers refer to dispositions as certain temperaments, attitudes, beliefs, and personality characteristics. These might best be described as character-related dispositions (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). This point of view tends to hold the personal characteristics of individuals as their dispositions rather than their competencies as professionals. This interpretation is furthest removed from the teacher's classroom dispositions, due to its general nature. The character-related viewpoint is of dispositions as values, beliefs, personalities, morals, and ethics contrasted by professional competencies which exist in areas such as technology, assessment, instruction, or leadership. The character-related dispositions include characteristics such as meeting deadlines, respecting differences, and good citizenship. None of the aforementioned characteristics are particularly unique to the teaching profession yet they are essential to effective teaching (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). Teacher education programs or school principals cannot likely help teachers become better people or to change their character-related dispositions, but they can influence awareness and promote a self-assessment reflective component of professionalism.

A similar character-related conception of dispositions often includes a moral or ethical aspect, characterized by descriptors such as "fairness, being democratic, empathy, enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and respectfulness" (Rike & Sharp, 2008, p. 151). Because dispositions are often viewed as beliefs, personal values, and commitments, they also may be conceptualized as components of a moral compass and ethical strand that provides direction to teacher decision-making over time. A similar view is to look at dispositions as a dimension of personality. According to Damon (2007), disposition development mirrors personality development. Damon calls dispositions a "deep-seated component of personality going back to the origins of our temperaments…" (p. 367). Although certain character-related dispositions are prerequisites of effective teaching, alone they still fall short of ensuring teacher competence in the disposition realm. Schussler and Knarr (2013) referred to dispositions as an element of "moral sensibilities" which encompass "the inclination to think through assumptions and ramifications behind one's values… and the responsibility one has to care for others as a teacher" (p. 75).

Another view is of dispositions as a pattern of behavior. Katz and Raths (1986) provided a useful explanation, calling dispositions "the trend of a teacher's actions across similar contexts" (p. 2). More than mere mindless habits, dispositions are viewed as employing a conscious pattern of behavior that is directed to a goal (Katz, 1993). Similarly, Borko, Liston, and Whitcomb (2007) said that dispositions are "predictive patterns of behavior" (p. 361). A related conception of teacher dispositions is of a reflective practitioner. Reflective practice falls into the realm of a disposition as an area of expected or desired teacher competence. A mechanically competent teacher falls short of the archetype expert who has developed the

desirable intellectual disposition to reflect (Goodlad, 1990). Dispositions are acts that are chosen in a particular context and at a specific time, that when called upon require skillful behavior. Or conversely, a disposition may include failure to act or to employ the knowledge or skills that the teacher possesses. Simply possessing a disposition does not ensure that it will be employed for the benefit of students. Although character-related teacher dispositions provide a necessary foundation for teacher success, they alone are insufficient. When viewed as competence-related framework, however, teacher dispositions have the potential to become useful and powerful.

Competence-related Dispositions

Competence-related dispositions, unlike character-related, can be more readily observed and influenced by school principals. Training and relevant educational experiences can be used to advance dispositional aspects in the practice of teaching. Rather than observing a teacher's personality to see if the person is collaborative, a teacher can be led to employ collaborative work in classroom settings through professional learning and principal expectations. In addition, describing dispositions in more of a competence-related framework provides a better opportunity to assess pre-service and in-service teacher performance (Jung & Rhodes, 2008). In addition, competence-related dispositions are likely more genuine and are less likely to be faked or contrived, whereas a character-related issues might be deliberately hidden.

A genuine benefit to viewing dispositions as competence-related is the improved opportunity to identify and evaluate specific desirable teacher dispositions. Competence related dispositions manifest themselves as teaching behaviors and strategies which are most often observable. Jung and Rhodes (2008) proposed that dispositions can be generalized toward any instructional strategy by the teacher's: 1) willingness and intention to embrace the recommended strategy, 2) belief in the value of the strategy including a positive attitude regarding its use, 3) intention to increase the capability of the strategy, and 4) confidence in using the strategy (p. 656). This framework moves from the mindset of dispositions as an abstract character of personality to dispositions as an element of effective teaching. Additionally, assessment of dispositions becomes more palatable as it progresses beyond a teacher's personality characteristics to the measurement of specific teacher competencies.

Schussler, Stooksberry, and Bercaw (2010) provided a useful structure for understanding dispositions in a classroom setting. They refer to intellectual, cultural, and moral dispositional domains. Intellectual dispositions entail the learning expectations that teachers establish for all students, including what and how to teach, beliefs about how students learn, and an understanding of one's role as a professional. This domain includes areas such as pedagogy and content. The intellectual framework requires continually reflecting on one's practice, a behavior which principals can observe and measure.

The cultural disposition domain refers to the teacher tendency and desire to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom. This includes the teachers' inclination to make necessary modifications to meet the needs of diverse learners and includes an awareness of their own culture and its effect on their teaching. Related, teachers also need to be aware of the students' culture and its effect on learning. This domain includes areas such as "knowing your students" and "meeting students where they are at" and motivating students by making the content relevant. Although not easy to measure, principals have a reasonable chance to gauge cultural dispositions.

Moral dispositions involve the inclination to think through one's moral values and how one relates to others. In practice, this domain may manifest itself in areas such as handling inappropriate behavior, motivating students, and grading fairly. As the teacher supervisor and leader of instruction, the school principal is best positioned to help teachers reflect on moral dispositions.

The school principal can practically and legally examine these competence dispositions in practice (as described by Schussler, Stooksberry, & Bercaw, 2010). A school principal who consistently monitors classroom instruction denotes each teacher's "dispositional trend" with respect to planning, interactions with students, collegiality, and interest in their own professional growth. This trend provides a window to the teacher's level of effectiveness with students, and affords a reasonable basis to determine, in part, teacher contract non-renewals (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010).

Teacher Contract Non-Renewal

Review of the literature regarding common elements related to teacher contract non-renewal quickly leads to criteria that are often designed in state legal systems and to concepts that bear some relationship to SCK, PCK, and dispositions. Teacher contract non-renewals are legal procedures that are defined in courts, by hearing examiners, through state statutes, and by means of master contracts and local policies and procedures. All states differentiate between the requirements for ending the employment of teachers depending on their tenure status. Most importantly, a tenured teacher must be afforded certain procedural rights prior to dismissal or termination. These rights generally include notice of the grounds for the action and the opportunity for a hearing. Depending on the statutory protections of the state granting tenure, tenured teachers often must be provided with names of witnesses, the power of subpoena to compel production of documents and testimony of witnesses, the right to counsel at all stages of the process, and the right to appeal. Non-tenured or probationary teachers are considered "at will employees" and not generally afforded the same due process rights as tenured teachers. They may have their contracts non-renewed without cause at the option of the employer, upon proper notice of the intent not to renew by the employing school board at the end of any contract year.

Even though probationary teachers may have their contracts non-renewed without cause, emblematic reasons exist for both tenured and probationary teachers. The most common legal reasons are defined in state statutes and often include incompetency, insubordination, immorality, good cause, reduction in force, and contract violations. The legal reasons manifest in behaviors such as excessive absenteeism and tardiness, neglect of duty, abusive language, administering corporal punishment, unethical conduct, sexual misconduct, abuse of a controlled substance, theft or fraud, misuse of a school computer, criminal misconduct outside the work setting, and conduct unbecoming a teacher (Lawrence, Vashon, Leake, & Leake, 2005). It's possible to link these legal reasons to PCK, SCK, and dispositions, but they appear most difficult to connect to SCK. Incompetency and good cause, however, could be for SCK reasons.

The first legal reason for contract non-renewal, teacher incompetence, is viewed as a pattern of behavior rather than a single event. Alexander and Alexander (2009) defined incompetence in the context of fitness to teach, noting that "fitness to teach is essential and contains a broad range of factors…lack of knowledge of subject matter, lack of discipline, unreasonable discipline, unprofessional conduct, and willful neglect of duty" (p. 796). McCarthy

and Cambron-McCabe (1987, p. 395) similarly defined incompetency as "lack of ability, legal qualifications, or fitness to discharge the required duty." Rossow and Parkinson (1992) noted that removing a teacher for incompetence requires repeated evaluations and attempts to remediate deficiencies. The courts view incompetence as needing a "multiple deficiencies requirement" which involves principal time and documentation.

Another legal reason for contract non-renewal is immorality. Immorality has been viewed as a course of conduct that offends the morals of the community (Van Berkum, Richardson, Broe, & Lane, 2008). The standards of dismissal for immorality are vague, often leaving a principal in the difficult position to evaluate whether teacher actions are immoral. Typically, a case of morality might involve teacher dishonesty or sexual misconduct. These may best be considered character-related dispositions.

Another common statutory reason cited for teacher contract non-renewal is insubordination. Insubordination is the willful disregard, or refusal to, obey reasonable directives. Often insubordination manifests itself in teacher behavior such as absenteeism and tardiness. Generally, teacher actions over a period of time that are not corrected may be interpreted as insubordination. This is frequently one of the easiest legal grounds to show to a court or hearing examiner, as insubordinate behavior might be more apparent than a more subjective instructional deficiency. Classifying insubordination as a character-related disposition is probably most valid.

Good or just cause means that there is a legitimate or real cause or basis to non-renew a contract. Good cause is distinguished from a whim or arbitrary decision—because the principal, acting in good faith, develops a defensible, reasonable ground for the action. Many state laws provide this general provision due to the reality that no statute can cover all possible reasons for a contract non-renewal. All three areas (SCK, PCK, & disposition) could fall under the good and just cause standard.

Reduction in force typically refers to "downsizing" and includes processes that lead to an overall reduced number of teaching positions. A teacher contract non-renewal as a result of a reduction in force is normally the result of either a decline in revenue or student enrollment. In these cases the school district is typically obligated to provide documentation regarding the financial hardship of the district.

A teacher contract non-renewal is an intricate legal process, which is understandable given the significance to the involved individuals and students. Several of the emblematic reasons have face value with respect to teacher dispositions, SCK, and PCK. Insubordinate behavior and immorality are two common reasons for contract non-renewal that might also be related to teacher character dispositions. In fact, in reviewing the list of common reasons for contract non-renewal it is relatively easy to conceive of both character-related and competence-related reasons that school principals recommend non-renewal of teacher contracts. As the understanding of dispositions continues to evolve to include competence rather than just character, additional relevance and the relationship of dispositions to contract non-renewal will likely be more evident.

Teacher Evaluation and Race to the Top

Any teacher contract non-renewal involves an evaluation process. In 2009, the Race to the Top (RTTT) legislation offered large federal financial grants to states that were willing to pursue

aggressive school reforms that included teacher evaluation (RTTT, 2009). The legislation calls for "recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals"… and "improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance…" (RTTT, 2009, pp. 2, 4). The legislation defines an effective teacher as one "whose students achieve acceptable rates (e.g., as least one grade level in an academic year) of student growth…teacher effectiveness is evaluated, in significant part, by student growth" (RTTT, 2009, p. 12).

Similarly, in 2011, the U.S. Department of Education created a flexibility program that offered states waivers from sanctions from No Child Left Behind (Popham & DeSander, 2014). In return for the waivers, states often promised to pursue new school reforms which included tougher teacher evaluation systems (Steinbrecher, Cosbey, & Thorstensen, 2014). Many of the recent reforms of teacher evaluation processes have included value-added modeling (VAM), which requires a substantial element of a teacher's evaluation be based on student performance scores (Paige, 2012). According to Scherrer (2012), VAM improves accountability systems by moving past status models as VAM has the potential to isolate teacher effects on student learning. Because the value-added modeling is relatively new to most teachers and principals, and has unproven reliability, an already complex and difficult task for school principals to determine methods for teacher contract non-renewals has become more cumbersome (Paige, 2012). In addition, other challenges with VAM include determining growth as all students start at different places on a scale, the term value-added does not have a universal definition, and states are using a variety of growth models (Franco & Seidel, 2014). In the present study, data were collected from school principals in the first years of implementation of RTTT; therefore we presume that the impact of the legislation had not yet been felt by school principals. We anticipate that the impact of teacher evaluations tied to value-added modeling and contract non-renewal will continue to grow over time.

The study answered three overarching questions:

1. Which behaviors do principals report observing most frequently from ineffective teachers?
2. Which teacher dispositions do principals report are most important to success in the classroom?
3. Which teacher criteria are most important to school principals in deciding whether to recommend contract non-renewal of a non-tenured teacher?

Research Methods

Participants

Principal email addresses were accessed in the 13 selected states using either state department of education websites or third party websites. Emails were sent by state and region in a 30 month period in several cycles from 2010 until 2012. The databases were imperfect, however, because they typically contained data a year or two old, leaving recently appointed principals out of the population. Additionally, school district filters and spam controls prevented some principals from receiving the email. Also, some school district policies forbid research participation without specific permission. Additionally, some of the email addresses were not accurate or had changed as 1,850 emails were returned to the researchers as undelivered. The response rate was just over 14%, as 13,500 emails were sent and 1,935 school principals from Alabama, Colorado, Georgia,

Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Montana, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington completed the survey. Participating states were selected based on several factors, including their regional proximity, demographic representation, and public availability of school principal email addresses.

Table 1
Participating Principals by State

State	Frequency	Percentage
Alabama	113	5.8
Colorado	156	8.1
Georgia	242	12.5
Idaho	71	3.7
Illinois	277	14.3
Indiana	238	12.3
Iowa	139	7.2
Montana	48	2.5
North Carolina	160	8.3
Ohio	265	13.7
South Carolina	67	3.5
Utah	89	4.6
Washington	70	3.6
Total	1935	100

Forty-eight percent of participants identified that they were located in a rural school, 33% in a suburban school, and 19% in an urban setting. Fifty-six percent said that they had less than 10 years of experience as a principal, 33% between 10 and 20 years of experience, and only 11% had more than 20 years' experience as a principal. Forty-nine percent reported that they were elementary principals, 16% middle school, 21% high school, and 15% other. Ninety-seven percent of the respondent principals work in public schools.

Instrumentation

The study's research questions and our interests led to the development of a descriptive survey (Mertens, 2005). The initial survey instrument was piloted as a paper mailed survey with 60 principals in four southeastern states. Revisions to the instrument were made after additional analysis and feedback. The instrument has been modified several times and builds upon eight related studies (Nixon, Dam, & Packard, 2010; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2011a; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2011b; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2012a; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2012b; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2013; Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2014; Nixon et al., 2010). Survey development was guided by the design considerations offered by Creswell (2005) and Mertens (2005). While the data are self-reported, respondents have nothing to gain by particular responses so bias has been removed or reduced.

Survey questions and answer choices were created after extensive review of the literature concerning teacher contract non-renewal, teacher dispositions, pedagogical content knowledge, and subject content knowledge. The survey includes 22 Likert-type questions plus an open-ended question. Each respondent provided demographic information regarding their years of experience as a principal, the size and level of school, state information, and whether their school was rural, urban, or suburban. Responses were collected in several cycles, primarily by geographic region. For example, data from the southeastern states were collected in fall of 2010 and winter of 2011, whereas data from the Rocky Mountain States were collected in winter of 2012. A web survey was used because it can achieve a comparable response rate to mailed surveys (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004), and it is substantially less expensive.

Four core survey questions are relevant to this study's research questions, which include 22 possible responses. One survey question asked, "Which behaviors do you observe most frequently from ineffective teachers?" The three answer choices included "lack of subject content knowledge," "lack of instructional skills," and "unacceptable disposition." In another question, principals rated the importance of subject content knowledge, instructional skills, and disposition to contract non-renewal decisions on a scale from 1 to 3. A third question was "Which teacher dispositions are important to success in the classroom;" and included the following answer choices "collaborative," "integrity," "reflective," "knowledgeable," "initiator," "flexible," "relationship-builder," "creative," "honest," "dependable," and "other (please specify)." Respondents were given four answer choices, including "highest importance," "very important," "some importance," and "no importance." A final question asked respondents to "rank order the following possible reasons that might lead you to recommend contract non-renewal of a non-tenured teacher."

Analysis Procedures

Survey results were analyzed and are reported descriptively. Analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 to generate the frequency of responses and the valid percentages for the reported survey questions.

Results

Ineffective Teacher Behaviors

Principals were asked to respond to a question, "Which behaviors do you observe most frequently from ineffective teachers?" Answer choices were "observe least frequently," "observe second most frequently," and "observe most frequently." The answer criteria were "lack of subject content knowledge," "lack of instructional skills," and "unacceptable disposition."

Table 2
Principal's Observations of Ineffective Teacher Behaviors

Teacher Behavior	Observe Least Frequently	Observe Second Most Frequently	Observe Most Frequently	Mean (SD)
Lack of subject content	955	822	126	1.56

knowledge	(49.3%)	(42.5%)	(6.5%)	(.615)
Lack of instructional skills	35 (1.8%)	407 (21.0%)	1477 (76.3%)	2.75 (.473)
Unacceptable disposition	905 (46.7%)	686 (35.4%)	318 (16.4%)	1.69 (.739)

The results demonstrate that principals place strong emphasis and importance on PCK. More than three-fourths of principals selected "lack of instructional skills" as the most observed behavior from ineffective teachers, while less than two percent identified it as least frequently observed. Principals seem torn regarding the frequency of lack of SCK, with a nearly even split between selecting "lack of SCK" and "unacceptable disposition." Interestingly, there was greater variability in responses (SD .739) within "unacceptable disposition" however, as principals responses ranged significantly.

Teacher Dispositions

Principals responded to a survey question which asked, "Which teacher dispositions are important to success in the classroom?" Answer responses included "no importance (1)," "some importance (2)," "very important (3)," and "highest importance (4)." Criteria listed included "collaborative," "integrity," "reflective," "knowledgeable," "initiator," "flexible," "relationship-builder," "creative," "honest," "dependable," and "other (please specify)." Eighty-six principals offered a response to the "other" category. Responses in the "other" category were wide ranging, however a couple of themes were evident. Ten respondents mentioned "attitude" as part of their response; while six mentioned "cares" about students. "Sense of humor" and "relates to people" were also mentioned four times each. Table 3 contains the responses to the identified dispositions (4.0=highest importance).

Table 3
Principal's Identification of Important Teacher Dispositions

Disposition	N	Mean	SD	Median	Range
Integrity	1922	3.60	.532	4.00	2
Honest	1924	3.54	.565	4.00	2
Dependable	1886	3.53	.538	4.00	3
Relationship-Builder	1924	3.45	.659	4.00	3
Knowledgeable	1926	3.33	.589	3.00	3
Collaboration	1925	3.22	.615	3.00	3
Reflective	1915	3.20	.668	3.00	3
Flexible	1916	3.20	.643	3.00	3
Creative	1915	2.82	.698	3.00	3
Initiator	1908	2.80	.680	3.00	3

Ranges in principal responses from the mean scores are relatively narrow, differing only by .80 from highest to lowest ranking of importance. Results from principal responses place the highest importance on "integrity," followed by "honesty" and "dependable." The low SD scores for "integrity" (.532), "honesty" (.565), and "dependable" (.538) further cement the consensus of the highest importance of these criteria. The lowest mean scores of "creative" (2.82) and initiator (2.80) also had the highest SD.

Teacher Criteria for Contract Non-Renewal

Two sets of questions were constructed to help identify teacher criteria for contract non-renewal. In the first question, principals ascribed the level of importance of certain criteria in deciding whether to recommend contract non-renewal of probationary teachers. Answer choices provided were "subject content knowledge," "instructional skills," and "disposition."

Table 4
Criteria for Teacher Contract Non-Renewal Identified by Principals

Criteria	Least Important	Important	Most Important	Mean (SD)
Subject content knowledge	602 (31.8%)	1011 (53.3%)	282 (14.9%)	1.83 (.662)
Instructional skills	53 (2.8%)	459 (24.0%)	1399 (72.2%)	2.70 (.514)
Disposition	1224 (63.9%)	448 (23.4%)	242 (12.6%)	1.49 (.709)

"Instructional skills" was the most often selected criterion reported in deciding whether to recommend contract non-renewal, as nearly three-fourths of principals identified the criterion as "most important." The comparably low SD (.514) for instructional skills further demonstrates a consensus regarding its place as highest importance. SCK was identified as important, with "dispositions" identified as least important by more than three-fifths of principals.

Results from a related second question are in Table 5, which includes the results from the rank order responses of principals. Respondents were asked to rank order seven criteria, ranging from "most likely" "second most likely" and so on as criteria which would lead them to recommend a contract non-renewal.

Table 5

Principal's Reasons Which Lead to Contract Non-Renewal by Number of Responses

Reasons	Mean and (SD)	Most unlikely	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely	Second most likely	Most Likely
Absenteeism/ tardiness	2.27 (1.4)	709 (36.6%)	404 (20.9%)	278 (14.4%)	194 (10.0%)	100 (5.2%)	30 (1.5%)	19 (1.0%)
Classroom management	3.80 (1.5)	101 (5.2%)	300 (15.5%)	363 (18.8%)	385 (19.9%)	369 (19.1%)	185 (9.6%)	61 (3.2%)
Ethical violations and inappropriate conduct	6.30 (1.3)	17 (0.9%)	34 (1.8%)	41 (2.1%)	85 (4.4%)	118 (6.1%)	318 (16.4%)	1172 (60.5%)
Incompetence	5.67 (1.2)	14 (0.7%)	36 (1.9%)	79 (4.1%)	133 (6.9%)	319 (16.5%)	796 (41.1%)	437 (22.6%)
Professional demeanor	2.77 (1.5)	413 (21.3%)	413 (21.3%)	357 (18.4%)	247 (12.8%)	175 (9.0%)	69 (3.6%)	10 (0.5%)
Insubordination	4.26 (1.6)	91 (4.7%)	204 (10.5%)	272 (14.0%)	372 (19.2 %)	469 (24.2%)	298 (15.4%)	122 (6.3%)
Lack of student achievement	3.61 (1.6)	229 (11.8%)	259 (13.4%)	344 (17.8%)	430 (22.2%)	313 (16.2%)	161 (8.3%)	71 (3.7%)

"Ethical violations and inappropriate conduct" was the strong consensus choice as "most likely" reason, with nearly 61% of principals selecting it. "Incompetence," which could be a function of SCK, PCK, or dispositions, was selected by 41% or principals as the "second most likely" reason. "Insubordination" was the third most likely response (24%). Interestingly, the criterion "lack of student achievement" (22%) was selected as the fourth most likely reason to recommend contract non-renewal.

Discussion

Teacher Behaviors

Principals selected lack of instructional skills as the most common behavior that they observe from ineffective teachers, as nearly 77% of principal respondents identified this criterion as the most frequently observed. This finding elevates the importance of teacher pedagogical knowledge and supports the findings of Torff and Sessions (2005; 2009) regarding the importance of PCK. Interestingly, principals seem torn regarding the importance of SCK. Perhaps the issue of SCK is somewhat bifurcated, meaning that for certain subjects, SCK is deemed more essential. Due to the well-known difficulty of selecting and hiring effective teachers in math and science areas, principals may well feel pressured about the importance of SCK. The results of our query into ineffective teacher behaviors clearly points to the fact that principals view pedagogical and instructional factors as the reasons for teacher ineffectiveness. However, when one breaks down the general criteria more specifically as we have done in research question three (survey question four), character-related dispositions assume a more prominent place in respondent selections. Seemingly a "flawed" character leads more quickly to a termination than a competence-related issue.

Teacher Dispositions

Principals identified a preference for those dispositions that can be readily branded as character-related. Integrity, honesty, and dependability, each arguably a character trait, were the highest rated dispositions. Each also had the lowest SD, leading us to conclude that there was a relatively strong consensus for these three criteria. This finding suggests that principals view dispositions as a characteristic of personality and that they tend to define their importance as a function of personality rather than professional competence. Conversely, we note the lower importance ascribed to the dispositions that are more performance related, such as knowledgeable, relationship builder, creative, and initiator. While not surprised, the relative low importance given to creativity and initiative, which arguably are important elements of effective teaching, perhaps expresses the current preference for teachers who can help students perform well on standardized tests and who can follow and implement structured curricular programs closely. It again seems to reinforce principals' preferences for character-related issues in contract non-renewal issues.

It should be noted that the relatively narrow range of mean scores (2.80 to 3.60) and the range of SD (.532 to.698) reflect principals lack of ability to strongly discriminate in their answer selections. Principals may be saying that there is some level of importance to each of the criteria, which leads us to question if we might find a better method of probing principal responses in this area.

Teacher Criteria for Contract Non-Renewal

Using results from Table 4, consistent with Torff and Sessions (2005; 2009) findings, principals selected instructional skills as the most central criterion in contract non-renewal considerations.

Almost 73% of principals selected the criterion as most important. Dispositions were the consensus choice as the least important criterion for teacher contract non-renewal.

Table 5 includes several interesting results. These results include a mixing of criteria, some of which might be best classified as a PCK area (e.g., classroom management), SCK (e.g., incompetence), and disposition (e.g., ethical violation). In previous questions, principal responses were less likely to select disposition and to a lesser extent principals minimized SCK. The forced rankings of specific criteria in survey question four led to more importance attributed to the criteria that are arguably more dispositions-like.

Conclusions

Issues related to teacher contract non-renewals, teacher behaviors, dispositions, subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are complex and interrelated. From the perspective of teacher contract non-renewals, this study affirms the literature that each is consequential. Expertise in both subject content and pedagogy must be woven together, yet overall, principals in this study selected pedagogical content knowledge as the most relevant criterion for teacher contract non-renewal issues. As noted by Torff and Sessions (2009), the only way to genuinely determine the most consequential criteria is to improve the teacher evaluation process to ascertain whether teacher effectiveness is best attributed to dispositions, subject-content knowledge, or pedagogical content knowledge. Attempts to better understand the variance in weight for criteria that impact student learning and teacher contract non-renewals are worthwhile pursuits. Given the recent introduction of value-added teacher evaluations, we cannot be certain whether the teacher evaluation process is valid or reliable. In fact, we must question the extent to which the instruments measure what is intended and whether principals are proficient in using them. These are potential areas for future investigation.

As found in this study, teacher deficiencies are most evident in pedagogical content knowledge. This finding suggests several important propositions. The implication of this finding for teacher preparation, teacher selection, and professional development suggests the need for pedagogical emphasis compared to subject content knowledge. It also calls into question alternative teacher certification programs which emphasize the importance of subject content knowledge at the expense of the pedagogical content knowledge. It seems logical to suppose that more alternative certification routes may lead to additional teacher contract non-renewals and further attrition in the profession. The finding also raises questions about teacher certification renewal requirements which reward teachers for additional courses in the subject content areas. Similarly, a legitimate question includes whether policies such as No Child Left Behind's definition of highly qualified teachers was on target.

Only 13% of principals reported that a teacher's disposition is the most important criterion in determining whether to recommend contract non-renewal. Given the importance of dispositions by NCATE (CAEP) and teacher preparation programs, this low percentage seems incongruous. The incongruity may be explained by the vague and murky understanding of dispositions, and the lack of precision of instruments designed to assess teacher dispositions. Ironically, when we offered principals specific choices to rank the importance of various criteria to the contract non-renewal process, disposition choices were given high importance. Digging deeper, there is evidence in this study that principals place more importance on dispositions (primarily character-related) than they may even know. Each principal who completed the

questionnaire had a unique understanding and denotation of dispositions, but evidently a preponderance of the respondent principals viewed dispositions through the eyes of a teacher trait or personality characteristic (character disposition), rather than as a competence-related criterion. The character view probably led to principals seeing less relationship between effective teaching and dispositions than for other answer choices (instructional skills and subject content knowledge). It seems apparent that the construct of teacher dispositions is less well developed than SCK and PCK; therefore much more investigation is needed in this area.

The need to continue to work to develop methods that validly and reliably assess teacher dispositions is evident. Following the suggestions of Jung and Rhodes (2008), to conceptualize dispositions as instructional strategies provides a useful starting place for that conversation. In time, teacher competence dispositions may be viewed very similarly to the body of skills and strategies that we expect from teachers, and may be viewed as something akin to "teacher professional responsibilities." Subject content, pedagogy, and teacher dispositions each contribute to the variance in student outcomes. Continuing to consider these relationships and attributing relative weights to their importance is a worthwhile endeavor, particularly as value-added teacher evaluations become more common. Finally, we expect the importance of "lack of student learning" to take a larger importance as RTTT and new teacher evaluation processes expand throughout the country. Because of the RTTT requirement to tie evaluations to student growth, we are confident that principal responses will be changing as will the principals' needs for support in the teacher evaluation and contract non-renewal process.

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Implementing a Project-Based Learning Model in A Pre-Service Leadership Program

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This paper describes two instructors' efforts to more authentically engage students in a pre-service leadership program's course called Program Planning and Evaluation by using a project-based learning approach. Markham, Larmer, and Ravitz (2003) describe project-based learning (PjBL) as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks" (p. 4). The instructors revised the course where students were required to conduct a formal, standards-based evaluation of a critical issue in their school settings that immersed students in integrating and applying knowledge using the PjBL approach. The instructors used the Buck Institute for Education's seven PjBL design principles for instructors (Larmer, 2015) to develop and analyze the course revisions. The process, challenges, and the results are discussed in this paper.

Introduction

This paper examines two instructors' efforts to use project-based learning methods in a pre-service leadership program. Markham, Larmer, and Ravitz (2003) describe project-based learning as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks" (p. 4). A review of the literature on progressive pedagogies finds problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL) are often discussed simultaneously. While quite similar, there are distinct differences, and for the purposes of this paper, it is necessary to note this difference. "The distinction between PBL and PjBL…according to the definition of Prince and Felder (2006) [is]…the emphasis in PjBL is on applying or integrating knowledge while PBL is on acquiring it" (as cited in Stefanou, Stolk, Prince, Chen, & Lord, 2013). The instructors revised a course where students were required to conduct a formal, standards-based evaluation of a critical issue in their school settings which immersed students in integrating and applying knowledge. Therefore, the PjBL method is a more logical approach.

With the adoption of Common Core State Standards in many states, more teachers in PK-12 settings are adopting a PjBL model to deliver instruction. However, instructors in higher education are somewhat slower to embrace PjBL methods (Lee, Blackwell, Drake, & Moran, 2014). Pre-service leadership students are constantly grappling with countless, complex problems in PK-12 settings and want to gain knowledge and experience in how best to resolve them. Leadership programs must develop authentic, real-world learning experiences for its emerging leaders to allow them opportunities for developing critical-thinking and problem-solving skills relevant to the work they are preparing to do in PK-12 schools.

This paper discusses how two instructors planned and facilitated a PjBL process in a graduate-level course delivered in an online learning environment. The Buck Institute for Education's seven PjBL design principles for instructors (Larmer, 2015) provided the frame for transforming a traditionally delivered course to one grounded in project methodology; they are (a) Design and Plan; (b) Align to Standards; (c) Build the Culture; (d) Manage Activities; (e) Scaffold Student Learning; (f) Assess Student Learning; and (g) Engage and Coach. The Buck Institutes' following eight Gold Standards were then used to assess the implementation of the revised course:

- Key Knowledge, Understandings, and Success Skills;
- Challenging Problem or Question;
- Sustained Inquiry;
- Authenticity;
- Student Voice and Choice;
- Reflection;
- Critique and Revision; and
- Public Product (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015).

The instructors include a reflection of the creative processes to plan and implement PjBL methods, the challenges that emerged with practice, and the improvements needed.

Review of the Literature

There is evidence project-based learning (PjBL) methods were being practiced in higher education in 16th century Europe (Hugg & Wurdinger, 2007). Four centuries later, PjBL was a cornerstone of Dewey's (1900) progressive education theory in early 20th century America. Adderley's, (1975) description of project-based methodology is appropriate to meeting learning needs in our 21st century educational settings. PjBL processes involve (a) identifying a problem and finding a solution; (b) taking initiative in a variety of educational activities either working individually or in a group; (c) producing an end product; (d) engaging in the work over an extended period of time; and (e) teaching shifts from lecturing to facilitating the learning process.

Engaging students in their learning process is challenging at all levels of education. Higher education is no exception and is often criticized for being out of touch with the "real" world (Hugg & Wurdinger, 2007). Many professors in college classrooms are familiar with a common complaint concerning the relevancy of a course's content. Further compounding this notion is "students and educators in the 21st century are challenged by evolving employer needs, needs that require diverse, real experience" (Hugg & Wurdinger, 2007, p. 192). Implementing Dewey's (1900) progressive pedagogies lead to a student-centered learning approach (Helle, Tynjala, & Olkinurora, 2006) supporting authenticity and relevancy of the learning processes.

Stolk and Harari's (2014) study of projects-based environments in higher education settings found motivation is a significant predictor of students' engagement in high-level cognitions. When students are able to connect theory to practice, they are better able to understand the relationship between theory and their actual 'lived' experiences and are more prone to sustain motivation throughout the learning process (Brown & Freeman, 2000; Hugg & Wurdinger, 2007; Pintrich, 2004; Pithers, 2000;). Cognitive benefits generated from engaged pedagogies (Edgerton, 2001), such as PjBL, includes deeper levels of student engagement, critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, elaboration strategies, metacognition strategies, and skill transfer (Chick, Karis, & Kernahan, 2009; Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005; Richmond & Hagan, 2011).

Redesigning a Course Using Project-based Learning Methodology

The fundamental goal of redesigning a course is to provide pre-service leadership students with a robust and rigorous learning experience, particularly considering the class that was chosen for the PjBL experiment is an online course. The course, Program Planning and Evaluation, is a requirement for earning the Educational Specialist degree. The instructors present the problem then discuss the creative process to resolve the problem using the Buck Institute for Education PjBL principles (Larmer, 2015) to frame the work.

The Problem

When the course was previously delivered, students were instructed to evaluate a program in their school. Oftentimes, the programs students were choosing to investigate were not ones to significantly contribute to the overall performance of the school. For example, some students would choose to evaluate a computer program their school had purchased. The evaluation results

often lacked depth and breadth for their investigation to have meaningful effect on overall school improvement. The newly revised Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL), formerly known as Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, places a strong focus on developing today's leaders with the capacity "to innovate and inspire staff to pursue new, creative approaches for improving schools and promoting student learning" (National Policy Board for Education Administration, p.1) The overall, low-level performance on the major assignment was an indication students lacked the kind of experiences with this important work to inspire and innovate. They often did not view the course relevant to their leadership growth. The major assignment was most often treated as simply a course requirement to earn a grade. The lack of depth in students' work necessitated the shift from a traditional method of teaching this course to a project-based approach.

The PjBL Method

One of the first things the instructors addressed was to broaden the scope of the evaluation target. The instructors changed the focus from evaluating a program to investigating a critical issue. The major project of this class involved students identifying a critical issue to be addressed in their schools. Once students identified the critical issue they wished to explore, they conducted a formal, standards-based evaluation, in which, the results informed decisions that led to better schooling experiences for student, families, educators, and/or communities.

Presented below are the Buck Institute for Education's seven principles for instructors to consider when designing a PjBL classroom (Larmer, 2015). The principles provided a frame for the creative processes in building and facilitating learning processes using PjBL methods. Each principle and its description is presented followed with how the instructors planned to apply the principle in a PjBL environment.

Design and Plan

Brief description. Create or adapt a project, plan it from start to finish while attending to the need for students to have their voice and choices throughout the project.

Planning to apply the principle. The instructors chose to adapt the delivery of the course, Program Planning and Evaluation, from traditional, teacher-centered methodologies (i.e., lecture, textbook, exams, essays, etc.) to student-centered, project-based methodologies. This shifted the focus from what the instructors would be preparing and doing for each class session to what students would be engaging in during and in between class meetings. In the planning phase, the instructors focused on providing students with as much voice and choices as possible with the project while balancing this with keeping students moving forward in a timely manner.

Principle 1—Align to Standards

Brief description: Draw from and include concepts contained in subject-, disposition-, and skills-based standards when planning the project.

Planning to apply the principle. Being a pre-service leadership preparation program, the course objectives are aligned with the ISLLC and Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards for disposition- and skills-based standards. Additionally, the focus of the course is on evaluating the educational programming. The subject standards of program evaluation established by the Joint Committee Standards for Program Evaluation (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011) is essential to evaluating the critical issue.

Principle 2—Build the Culture

Brief description. Facilitators of PjBL develop an environment of high expectations for students to practice autonomy, focus on developing their own learning, seek answers/solutions to question/problems, practice collegiality, and produce quality work.

Planning to apply the principle. Building a culture of high expectations is a challenge, particularly so in an online learning environment. The instructors used Blackboard (Bb) online learning systems to deliver instruction. Blackboard tools used were discussion forums, the virtual classroom, and group tools for planned activities which helped to create a learning community. Building community was a priority, therefore, the instructors set the stage with a welcome page containing the purpose of the course and directions to move to the Getting Started learning module. This module included expectations for learning, resources to begin the studies, and, most importantly, a link to a discussion forum called, Our Cyber Space to Get to Know One Another. In efforts to begin building the learning community, this forum was used for students to introduce themselves and to respond to and engage in conversation about themselves and what knowledge and skills they hoped to develop. Students engaged in a collective brainstorming session to compile a list of critical issues/needs in today's schools identified as barriers to effective teaching and learning. The purpose of this brainstorming activity was to assist students in (a) generating ideas around issues to investigate in their respective schools and (b) developing collaborative partnerships to complete the course requirements. Next, the instructors used Bb Collaborate, a virtual classroom (used throughout the course for all synchronous class meetings) for an orientation and group discussion of the coursework, expectations, and the identified critical issues. These preliminary efforts helped to set a tone of high expectations, established collegiality among students and instructors, and fostered a shared purpose and common language.

Principle 3—Manage Activities

Brief description. Instructors in PjBL environments provide structure where students are able to organize and manage their work, schedules, time, and other resources, creative processes, and publishing/sharing their products.

Planning to apply the principle. In addition to the typical class schedule, the instructors created a companion outline, the Written Report Checklist (see Appendix A). The outline was divided into two major tasks: Part 1: Planning Your Evaluation Design and Part 2: Conducting the Formal Evaluation and Producing the Report. The class schedule was developed to organize specific segments of the outline and the timeframes for when items were to be submitted for

formative feedback (checkpoints). Multiple resources (university library services, government reports, professional web sites, etc.) were made available in Bb Learning Modules. Students were expected to create a formal evaluation report to share with a targeted audience who could include administrators, teachers, parents, or students in their schools.

Principle 4—Scaffold Student Learning

Brief description. Facilitators of PjBL classrooms use an assortment of instructional lessons, strategies, and tools to support students in meeting the goals.

Planning to apply the principle. Scaffolding student learning has to take into consideration the density of course content and the various adult learning styles and needs. The instructors used selected Bb tools to support and maximize students' interaction with (a) the content, (b) with each other, and (c) with us, the facilitators. For students to interact with content, learning modules were used to organize written instructions, post reading materials and resources, and provide links to discussion forums, and assignment tools. To support students interacting with each other, guided, reflective discussion forums, group tools, and the virtual classroom were used throughout the semester. Tools used to facilitate interaction between students and the instructors were the assignment tool, discussion forums, the virtual classroom, email, and phone calls. The instructors created an open discussion forum for students to freely communicate and post links to sources they found. The Written Report Checklist was used, not only as a planning guide for a student's/teams' work as they progressed through the project, but was also used to continually inform lesson development for the synchronous class sessions. For example, when the instructors moved into dense content, they acknowledged the need to use lecture-based teaching methods for class sessions. However, these strategies were planned to capitalize on 'teachable moments' at a time it would have the most meaning for students. As the instructors planned, they developed steps and timelines along the way to help students move forward with their projects, as well as keeping the focus on the end product.

Principle 5—Assess Student Learning

Brief description. Facilitators of PjBL use formative and summative assessment in addition to integrating self- and/or peer-assessment of the work.

Planning to apply the principle. Ongoing formative assessment of the students'/teams' product in progress was provided in 'chunks;' that is, on the class schedule, individuals or teams would submit a draft of a section on the course outline for our feedback. The instructors developed a student survey based on the Joint Committee's Standards for Program Evaluation (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Students were asked to choose one of the following responses in regard to how they addressed the standards in their evaluation process: 1) was addressed, 2) partially addressed, 3) not addressed, or 4) not applicable. A rubric, based on the ELCC/ISLLC standards, was used for the summative assessment to provide feedback for disposition and skill development. Rubrics for discussion forums and for class participation, in addition to Bb student activity reports were used to keep students informed of their progress (See Appendix A). Steering papers were also provided as samples. These papers demonstrated higher-

to lower-levels of performance. Students were encouraged to use the steering papers to self-assess their work and make improvements as needed.

Principle 6—Engage and Coach

Brief description. Facilitators of PjBL learn and create with students in addition to building skills, encouraging progress, praising, redirecting, and celebrating with students as needed.

Planning to apply the principle. Because students and teams were addressing a variety of issues in multiple school settings, time was devoted during the virtual classroom sessions for engaging students and coaching purposes. Each live session started with students sharing what they accomplished, what they were learning, and questions that emerged. The sessions would end with a preview of what students would need to engage in before the next live session. Students served as coaches for each other in discussion forums as they shared their progress, problems, and findings. These experiences provided instructors and students opportunities to learn from one another as the evaluation of the critical issue developed over the semester.

Using the Buck Institute for Education's seven principles as a frame for designing a PjBL learning environment (Larmer, 2015) was the first step. Each instructor facilitated a section of the newly redesigned Program Planning and Evaluation course during the spring 2015 semester. The next section discusses how the PjBL model was implemented and the challenges encountered.

Implementing the PjBL Method and the Emerging Challenges

To frame our analysis and reflection of how we implemented the project-based learning experience, we drew from the Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Elements (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015) for this discussion. There are eight design elements; each are presented with a brief explanation, followed with a reflection and the challenges that were encountered.

Student Learning Goals

A well-designed project requires well-designed goals. At the center of the Gold Standard PBL model are student learning goals organized into two parts.

Key knowledge and understandings and key success skills. The goals for knowledge and understandings are developed from the subject matter's fundamental concepts and content standards. The goals for success skills, also referred to as '21st Century Skills,' (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015, Student Success Skills, 1) are goals to develop critical-thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-efficacy skills, as well as discipline-specific professional skills.

How the instructors addressed the design element. The purpose statement on the syllabus for the course served as the overarching goal for the class:

The purpose of the course is for candidates to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to conceptualize, design, and implement a formal evaluation of a critical issue that could be impeding teaching and learning in an educational setting. Candidates will use appropriate qualitative and quantitative tools to gather data to assess the effects of the critical issue on teaching and learning and to inform decisions for improving practices.

Although not perfect, the instructors consider the syllabus' purpose statement a reflection of what they aspire for their students to accomplish.

The challenge. The course objectives should be revised to address more directly key knowledge and understanding and key success skills. While the instructors can make an argument that the objectives in the syllabus contained the underlying concepts, the objectives should be more direct in guiding the work, feedback, and assessment processes. For example, most of the students' responses to their survey results in addressing the Joint Committee's Standards were not discussed in-depth in the final product. Revising the objectives to bring more focus to the standards will lead to better connections in the instructors' planning, implementation, and assessment practices.

Essential Project Design Elements

In addition to the first design element above, Setting the Learning Goals, there are seven remaining PjBL essential design elements. They include a challenging problem or question; sustained inquiry; authenticity; student voice and choice; reflection; critique and revision; and a public product (Larmer, Mergendoller, & Boss, 2015). Following is a brief description of each element and how the instructors addressed it.

Challenging problem or question. In essence, the challenging problem is what the project is all about. It is open-ended enough to challenge and engage students to investigate, explore, and search for solutions.

How the instructors addressed the design element. Adapting the delivery to use a PjBL method to deliver content in the Program Planning and Evaluation course required students to identify a critical issue in their schools that may be having a negative impact on student achievement. To begin the focus on identifying a critical issue to study, students were asked to engage in a brainstorming activity to identify critical issues present in their schools. Focusing on a critical issue leads to a broader view of schooling (as opposed to focusing on a single, and most often a purchased, program). Students began to shift their view of school and develop more of a systems-theory approach during the project. This in turn helped students gain a broader sense that their investigation was meaningful work and could make a difference in their schools. Once there was agreement between the student and his/her school leader on the critical issue to be studied, students were asked to articulate two overarching questions that would guide and focus the rest of their investigation.

The challenges. Part 1: Planning the Evaluation Design required students to design their evaluation. This would then serve as the blueprint for conducting the study (see Appendix A). The first step in the planning process was to develop the research questions, which is a complex exercise in and of itself. Several students found it difficult to create the overarching questions and continued to struggle as they progressed through the planning stage.

Sustained inquiry. A sustained inquiry implies not only a deeper look, it also implies the issue will be explored over an extended period of time. When presented with a challenging problem or question, engaging in sustained inquiry lends itself to continual, ever deepening questioning and subsequently a search for potential answers from a variety of traditional and non-traditional sources of information. These sources are most likely field-based, action-research oriented, and specific to the focus of inquiry.

How the instructors addressed the design element. As previously stated, students developed their overarching questions (typically two). To continue 'drilling down' to bring a narrower focus for their investigation, students also developed two sub-questions for each of their overarching questions. The sub-questions were then used to plan details for the investigation by completing information in the Evaluation Design table (see Appendices A). The design of the evaluation included activities for obtaining the data, the data sources, data collection methods, who would be responsible for gathering data, how the data would be analyzed, and who would use the results of the investigation.

The challenges. Not only did students struggle with developing their research questions, they continued to have difficulties keeping focused on their questions as they thought their way through each step of the Evaluation Design table (see Appendices A). For some students, there was a tendency for randomness across all the columns. For example, one student's sub-question was seeking teachers' perceptions of the issue being investigated, but plans for how to gather perceptions were not detailed in the remaining columns, clearly demonstrating a disconnect with what the student wanted to know and how they would get information.

Authenticity. Students are more motivated to be fully present in the learning process when experiences are perceived to be relevant to their needs and to the world in which they live and work. Authentic projects can be conducted in real-world contexts, use actual processes, tools, or performance standards present in a real-world setting, have an impact on others, result in some thing or service benefiting others, and/or contribute to a student's sense of personal relevancy when it addresses an aspect of their own identity in meaningful ways.

How the instructors addressed the design element. Students were asked to consult with their colleagues and leaders in their respective schools as they contemplated the critical issue they wished to study. This approach not only provided students with opportunities to have a strong voice and meaningful choices within the project, the critical issue they collaboratively chose to focus on brought a much deeper sense of relevancy to the process. As students' knowledge and skills grew, it only reinforced the authenticity and relevancy to their emerging leadership.

The challenges. Knowing they would be sharing their final product with their targeted audience, students gained a much stronger sense of purpose and accountability. The instructors considered this a good problem to have. However, this sense of purpose and accountability contributed to high anxiety for some students especially as the end of the semester neared. Students felt they would not have the time to complete the investigation. They were right to be anxious about finishing a formal evaluation in a single semester, and adjustments had to be made to the expectations for the final product. For example, students were asked to focus their efforts on exploring just one of the four sub-questions rather than trying to complete all four. This

would allow them to have the learning experience of taking one of the sub-questions through the entire evaluation process. Students would then have the skills needed to complete the rest of their evaluation plan beyond the semester.

Student voice and choice. Providing students with opportunities to have a say and choices in the learning process leads to an increased sense of ownership for their personal learning and growth. They acquire a sense that their thoughts are valued and this can lead to students seeking higher levels of learning; they want to learn more. When students are fully engaged in the learning process, they work harder and engage in higher levels of cognition. Additionally, students will tend to be more fully invested to persevere and complete the final product.

How the instructors addressed the design element. Not only were students provided a voice and choice in selecting their critical issue, they also were given a choice to work individually or in teams. They could decide what activities were needed to obtain data, who would be involved in collecting the data, how they would analyze and present their results, and decide on and suggest improvements to practices in their schools. Also, they had a voice in how they wanted their final product to be presented and with whom they would share the final report. Students were strongly encouraged to make a proposal to a state conference to share their investigation.

The challenges. The instructors made a conscious decision to not use textbooks as the main resource in the class (two textbooks were used as references only). Because of this decision, the Written Report Checklist (see Appendix A) was developed. One concern during both the PjBL planning and implementing phases was in creating a balance between students' freedom of choices and adhering to a structure for focusing the work and to make steady progress toward the end product. The instructors tried to leave the process open-ended enough where students could exercise their freedom to express their voice and choices and at the same time produce a final product that adhered to the Joint Committee's Standards (Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011) and the components that must be present in a professional, formal evaluation report.

Reflection. When one reflects, one is learning. Students and teachers should reflect continually on what, how, and why they are learning. Reflection can be informal and spontaneous or can be formalized through such processes as presenting at a conference. There are multiple ways to reflect: providing formative feedback, keeping learning journals, checkups and dialog in class, and engaging in dialog with colleagues. Reflection is a critical skill for self-efficacy (Dewey, 1933).

How the instructors addressed the design element. Opportunities for formal and informal reflection were built into the delivery of the course. The instructors began each live class session with a look back at what instructors and students had had done and learned since the previous time the class had met. In between live class meetings the discussion forums were used to respond to reading materials and reflect on how the information informed the practices with learning and conducting a formal evaluation. When students posted their final product in their electronic portfolio, they provided a reflection of the overall process, what they learned, and how the experience informed their growth as a school leader.

The challenges. This is one area the instructors believe to be a strength in the delivery of this course. The challenge, however, was to keep a record of reflections over time in order to

identify trends that can be used to inform their practices and to make improvements with the project-based processes.

Critique and Revision. Critical to the PjBL model is high-quality student work. To accomplish this goal, ongoing, constructive feedback given by both instructors and peers is necessary to realize high levels of work. Rubrics can be used for guiding and assessing performance, in addition to being used to assess overall knowledge and skill development. Formative feedback is critical for learning along the journey. Seeking outside sources to review and provide feedback brings real-world relevancy to the work.

  How the instructors addressed the design element. The instructors devoted scheduled time for students to talk about their evaluations in the live class sessions and collectively gave feedback. Students posted their work in both Bb assignment tool for instructor feedback and in the discussion forums for peer feedback. Instructors and students asked questions, encouraged each other, offered suggestions, and praised one another. Altogether, both students and the instructors collectively engaged, coached, and learned from and with one another. Steering papers were provided representing a highest-level score, a high-level score, a mid-level score, and a low-level score for students to use to gauge their level of work. Rubrics, Bb student activity reports, formative feedback, and summative assessments were used to support high-quality work. Also, the instructors encouraged students to submit proposals to state conferences for outside peer review of their work.

  The challenges: The tyranny of time was often a barrier for the instructors and students in providing the kind of detailed feedback needed for continuous development and growth. Students are supportive and encouraging to their peers, but they are not inclined to offer a critique. They left that to the instructors (understandably).

Public product. A product can be an artifact, a decision, or a solution. A public product is a powerful motivating factor for producing high-quality work. The product engages key shareholders in meaningful discussions that help create a learning community (as opposed to a dialog just between an instructor and student). A public product is an effective way to communicate to a broader audience throughout the community.

  How the instructors addressed the design element. From the beginning of the instructors' planning process with PjBL methods, the non-negotiable expectation was that the facilitator of the course would not be the intended audience for the final evaluation report. This was one of the primary purposes for why students were to identify their target audience at the beginning of their journey to investigate their critical issue. The facilitators' role was to serve as editors and critics along the way.

  The challenges. The instructors need to create a system for follow-up checks after the class ends. They need to know the impact the investigation has on the practices and outcomes in the school. If the process continues, it is important to know how the results informed leadership decision-making and problem-solving skills in school settings.

  In the next section, a discussion is provided to note improvements to the process that emerged after implementing the redesigned course after one semester. The needs are presented and the actions taken to improve the processes are given.

Improvements Needed in the PjBL Design and Delivery

After one semester of facilitating the learning in the revised course, the instructors identified the following initial improvements needed with each design element:

1. The first need was to revise the student learning objectives in the syllabus to reflect key knowledge and understandings and key success skills. The course syllabus objectives were reorganized to reflect these two key areas. This gave the instructors and students a better base for guiding and assessing students' performance and work. Additionally, a crosswalk analysis and alignment between the objectives and the 2015 PSEL will need to be conducted.

2. Students needed more support with developing their overarching questions. The instructors provided additional resources, samples, and guidance for students before they submitted their overarching and sub-questions for feedback.

3. The instructors needed to increase discussions and support to improve students' work with Part 1 planning processes. Knowing that the first three design elements (aligning content to goals, developing challenging problems or questions, and sustained inquiry) needed to be well supported in order for the evaluation to maintain its cohesiveness throughout the process.

4. Because the instructors had developed processes to maximize authenticity, students experienced added pressure to create a product that would be read by their peers and their identified key users. The instructors developed ongoing feedback check points before student submit sections for grading and before they share their work with school officials.

5. The instructors made the decision not to use a traditional textbook. In its place, they created a prescriptive outline, the Written Report Checklist (see Appendix A). This prescriptive outline caused the instructors concern about the balance between students' freedom of choice and adhering to a prescriptive structure. As the projects unfolded, the instructors gained feedback from students about the outline and the process. Students reported positively the Written Report Checklist kept them focused, helped to understand the process, and guided them in creating the final report.

6. Reflection was crucial to the evaluation of students' learning processes and also informed the changes needed in the course. The instructors collected and organized reflective conversations (mainly through discussion, online text chat and dialog during live class meetings). Collectively, these reflections helped them make data-informed decisions to revise the Written Report Checklist and to improve planning and implementation of the class.

7. Students tended to avoid critique when giving feedback to each other. They were very comfortable with cheerleading, but avoided comments that would have a negative message. The instructors plan to coach, model, and encourage students to develop their skills to give professional critique for their peers in ways that support and foster collegiality and community.

8. An area needing improvement is follow-up after the course to learn how the students' schools used the evaluation results. Many students were not able to complete the evaluation as planned within the semester. Knowing this would be an ongoing evaluation beyond the semester, the students were encouraged to continue

implementing their evaluation plan in other classes that require a field-based component. Students are asked to update instructors on their progress and how the schools are using the results.

Conclusion

The instructors have much to learn about the effects of a PjBL design on the students' acquisition of knowledge and skills and the impact students' investigations may have on their schools. Future leaders come to leadership programs wanting to make a difference in PK-12 settings. Higher education programs owe it to our emerging leadership students to develop and equip knowledge and skills to make a real difference in their schools. It is through PjBL methodologies we may better prepare emerging leaders to do well the work they aspire to accomplish. While the instructors engaged in this study have just started focusing on the PjBL delivery method, they believe they are moving in a direction to support better knowledge and skill development for pre-service leaders.

This paper ends with two student's final words. They were not in the same section; Student A. was in one facilitator's section and Student B. was in the other section. They shared the following reflections:

This has been a great experience working with B. Student. I am very thankful that you allowed us to do this project as a team. So far this has been my favorite assignment during this educational process.~ Student A.

This assignment was relevant and the benchmarks assigned were great for keeping me on task. I appreciate [the instructor's] willingness to continually look over my draft. This is the first class I have ever had where the instructor went that far above and beyond. This took the guess work out of the project and the worries of "Am I heading in the right direction." With that stress gone, I could focus more on the critical issue I was researching.~ Student B.

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Appendix A
Written Report Checklist

Your Program Planning and Evaluation work may be completed as either an individual project or as a team project. There is a great need and respect for those of you who wish to individually tackle/grapple with a program evaluation of a critical issue within your school setting for the purpose of meeting the teaching and learning needs unique to your school/district. Equally important is the need and respect for those of you who wish to engage in a collective effort to tackle, grapple, and evaluate the effects of a critical issue affecting your schools. In efforts to be equitable in assessing individual performances and when assessing team performance, we should acknowledge the expectation that a team's performance in evaluating a program should include more ***breadth*** (based on the principle that "many hands make light work") and more ***depth*** (from the perspective that "two heads are better than one").

For your consideration only (not a requirement): If some of you wish to engage in a collective evaluation of a common educational program or area of focus that is present in *all* of your schools (such as educator supervision and trust; implementation of common core; the process of developing living, breathing school improvement planning processes, etc.), we could engage in a collective study. At its conclusion (which could go beyond this semester) we could consider submitting a proposal to one (or more) of our state educational association meetings to present the findings. If interested, go to the Discussion board forum called Collective Evaluation, and let us know and share a specific program/area of focus of interest if you have one.

Written Report Checklist: Parts 1 & 2
Part 1. Planning Your Evaluation Design
First, go to Appendix A (see below), *Planning for Evaluation Design Sample*, replicate those tables, or replicate others you like better from the various samples we have explored thus far, and use them as your brainstorming tools to think through your evaluation design (see numbered list below). After you complete your tables, address the following items. You will submit your narrative and tables for feedback. Your design tables will be placed in your final report's appendices section. You must first have your evaluation plan approved by your instructor before you can begin implementing your plan.
   A. Introduction
       1. Give a brief overview (2-3 paragraphs-narrative) of the critical issue you will be exploring, its historical impact in your school setting, and the purpose for evaluating the issue.
   B. Big-Picture Questions (See Appendix A, Table 1)
       1. Determine two overarching questions that you wish to "answer" with the results of the evaluation.
       2. Develop objectives for each question.
   C. Design of the Evaluation (See Appendix A, Table 2 headings in the top row)
       1. Evaluation Questions: Develop two questions for each of the two Big Picture questions (total of four questions).

2. Activities to Observe: List the things you intend to do to get information that can lead to an answer for the each question.
3. Data Source: What data sources will be useful in getting the information on the things you want to do.
4. Population/Sample: Report the total population size (N) and the sample size (n) of participants in the study for each question.
5. Data Collection: Provide an overview of how data will be gathered and when.
6. Responsibility: Determine who will be instrumental in helping to gather data needed for each question.
7. Data Analysis: Once you have data, tell how you will be analyzing the results.
8. Audience-Key Users: Provide the list of key stakeholders who will be interested in using the results of the evaluation. (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 17; pp. 507-21)

Part 2: Conducting the Formal Evaluation Process and Producing the Report
Typical Evaluation Report Content
I.   Executive summary (it will be the last thing you complete)
II.   Introduction
    A.   Purpose of the evaluation
    B.   Key users (internal and/or external stakeholders) of the evaluation report (include a table similar to Appendix B, Table 1.)
    C.   Limitations of the evaluation and explanation of disclaimers (Based on Joint Commission Standards, connected to VII.A. meta-evaluation results below)
    D.   Brief overview of report contents
III.   Focus of the evaluation
    A.   Description of the critical issue
    B.   Big Picture questions (two)
IV.   Reporting the evaluation design
    A.   The leading evaluation approach (outcome-based, process-based, goals-based)
    B.   Method for gathering data for each question (Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed-methods)
    C.   Data elements, sources, and instruments for each question
    D.   Criteria and standards used to judge the program for each question
    E.   Description of data analysis strategies to determine findings (Descriptive data: percentages, normal distribution of means/standard deviations, correlational statistics to examine relationships, etc.)

V.   Analysis of results and presentation of evaluation findings
      A.   Summary of evaluation findings (use charts/figures/tables to supplement narrative as appropriate/needed)
      B.   Interpretation of evaluation findings

VI.   Conclusions and recommendations
      A.   Judgments about the program (based on each question's criteria and standards to judge strengths and weaknesses)
      B.   Recommendations

VII.   Appendices (requirements and examples)
      A.   Required-
          1. Appendix A: Planning for Evaluation Design
          2. Appendix B: Audience-Key Users: Needs and Uses
          3. Appendix C: Standards Checklist self-evaluation instrument-completed
      B.   Description (tables) of evaluation plan/design, instruments, and data analysis and interpretation
      C.   Detailed tabulations or analyses of quantitative data and transcripts or summaries of qualitative data
      D.   Other information as necessary (ex. a glossary/definitions/acronyms, etc.)
            (Worthen, et al., 2010, p. 383)

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Planning for Evaluation Design-Sample

Table 1. *Big Picture Questions*

Question	Objectives
1. Will the Math Intervention Program improve eighth grade students' attitudes toward math?	Students' attitudes toward math will increase and be more favorable as measured by a pre and post survey. Students will attempt to participate in daily classroom math activities and assignment and to answer all open response questions on the math benchmark. Scores of 0 on open response will decrease.
1. How will the Math Intervention Program for eighth grade students improve performance in eighth grade math?	Seventy-two percent of math students will score proficient or above on Benchmark and End of Course Math tests in order for the school to meet Annual Measurable Outcome (AMO) for performance and growth as required by the state of Arkansas. Students will be successful in scoring a passing score in Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry as they prepare for graduation from high school.

Table 2. *Evaluation Design: Eighth Grade Math Intervention Project Focus (includes formative & summative evaluation):*

Evaluation Question	Activities to Obtain Data	Data Source	Population Sample Design	Data Collection Methods	Responsibility	Data Analysis	Audience
In what ways will the Math Intervention Program improve students' attitudes about math?	Administer pre and post survey to students in eighth grade; Monitor student absences and attendance per nine weeks;	Qualitative Pre and Post Survey; Attendance Record; Classroom Observation	N= 212(7-12) n=36 (8th)	Students will be surveyed in September before the MIP program starts and then again in May after taking the Benchmark tests. Students	Curriculum Supervisor will prepare surveys; Eighth Grade Math Teacher will administer the surveys and collect the data; APSCN clerk and high school	Compare student responses on pre and posttest; Compare absences for the first nine weeks, the second nine weeks, third	Superintendent; School Board; High School Principal; Curriculum Supervisor; Teachers/Staff; Parents; Students

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	Observe students in math classes and in intervention classes			absences will be analyzed at the end of each nine weeks grading period to see if absences decrease. Students will be observed in math class and math intervention class.	secretary will record absences of students and run report for the Curriculum Supervisor; Curriculum supervisor will observe students in math class and in intervention class	nine weeks to see if absences decrease or increase; Observe students in math classes and in intervention class to see if active participation increases	Superintendent; School Board; High School Principal; Curriculum Supervisor; Teachers/Staff; Parents; Students
Did the percentage of 8th grade students scoring proficient on the eighth grade math benchmark increase because of the Math Intervention Program in comparison with math scores of students not in the sample	Analyze student scores on 7th grade augmented math benchmark test and compare those scores to student scores on 8th grade augmented math benchmark test. Compare the percentage of seventh grade,	Seventh Grade Math Augmented Benchmark Test-2011; Eighth Grade Math Augmented Benchmark Test-2012; Alg. I test—2012 and 2013; Geometry test—2012 and 2013	N=212 n=36	Students completed the 7th Augmented Benchmark Test in April 2011 and will complete the 8th grade Augmented Test in April, 2012. Results will not be here until May 31, 2012. Compare each students score to see if they	District Test Coordinator will analyze test scores and compare the number of students and the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on the 2012 seventh grade benchmark with the 2013 eighth grade benchmark to see if students showed growth	Students proficient divided by total tested and individual students' percentage of growth for each year	

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Research Question		Instrument	Sample	Analysis	Procedure	Variables / Stakeholders
group (seventh grade, Algebra I, Geometry? Did the students show growth in individual test scores from seventh grade math to eighth grade math?	algebra I, and geometry students scoring proficient or advanced in 2012 and those scoring proficient and advanced in 2013.			showed growth from Basic to Proficient to Advanced. Compare group percentage scores for 2012 and 2013 on seventh grade math, algebra I and geometry	from seventh to eighth grade. The DTC will compare the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in seventh grade math, algebra I, and geometry in 2012 and 2013.	Superintendent; School Board; High School Principal; Curriculum Supervisor; Teachers/Staff; Parents; Students
Did student mastery of 8th grade common core standards increase on TARGET tests from Pretest to Interim I to Interim II to Interim III and finally to the Posttest?	Compare Students' percentage score on each TARGET tests as well as mastery of common core standards. (The new TARGET PARRC assessment tests all common core standards for eighth grade math on each	TARGET test Pretest, Interim I, II, and III, Posttest	N=212 n=36	Students have completed the TARGET Pretest in September. They will complete the Interim Tests in October, January, March, and the posttest in May. Compare the students' percentage score on each test and also	Math Teachers will administer the test, score the open response question, and record the score on the computer; District Test Coordinator and Curriculum Supervisor will run reports and compare the percentage scores on each of the target	Students percentage score on TARGET tests, Students' mastery of Common Core Standards as tested by TARGET tests

test)				compare the number of standards mastered on each test.	tests; Math teacher and curriculum supervisor will analyze the reports to see if students mastery of common core standards increased or decreased with each test		Superintendent; School Board; High School Principal; Curriculum Supervisor; Teachers/Staff; Parents; Students
Did Classroom performance and grade point average increase because of the Math Intervention Program?	Compare Students average grades in Math at the end of each nine weeks grading period and at the end of each semester	Students' Quarterly Report Card Grades and semester grades in Math Attendance records Classroom observations	N=212 n=36	Students grades for classroom tests and assignment will be figured at the end of each nine weeks grading period (Oct., Jan., March., and May).	The APSCN Coordinator will run report grades and list of grades for the principal and curriculum supervisor; the principal and curriculum supervisor; the principal and the curriculum supervisor will compare grades from one nine weeks to the next to see if individual students improved their grade for math	Number of students whose grades in math showed gains from first nine weeks to second weeks to third nine weeks as well as number of students whose grades decline	

class; The APSCN clerk will run the attendance reports for each nine weeks; the principal and the curriculum supervisor will analyze data between each nine weeks. The principal and curriculum director will observe classrooms for increases or decreases in student participation.

Appendix B

Assessment Instruments

Class Participation during Bb Collaborate Sessions

Performance Levels:

Excellent 2 points	All or almost all requirements were met in excellence and with consistency.
Proficient 1.5 points	Most all elements were demonstrated with proficiency and consistency.
Basic 1 points	Some of the elements were exhibited.
Unsatisfactory 0 point	Most elements were not evident.

Elements	The extent to which the candidate demonstrates the following elements:
Attendance & Preparation	Candidate attended and was prepared for the session.
Dialogue & Participation	Initiated standards-based dialogue. Asked questions. Responded to questions posed by others. Participated in whole- and small-group discussions and activities.
Standards & Exemplary Leadership	Candidate maintained a focus on the respective standards and their role in exemplary leadership preparation.
Forward Thinking	Candidate was thoughtful; stretched and/or challenged the status quo of leadership conventions.
Personalization & Reflection	Candidate put forth unique and focused interpretations for his/her personal journey of 21st century leadership.
Total Possible Points = 2	

Blackboard Discussion Posts

Criteria	The extent to which the candidate demonstrates the following elements:
Analysis	Candidate analyzed the readings, not just reported. Candidate applied theory to practice.

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Quality	Candidate was thoughtful, demonstrating depth and breadth from reading materials and responded thoughtfully to at least one other student's post.
Personalization	The candidate offered personalization beyond conventional responses.
Support for Ideas	The candidate supported his/her ideas with course content or other widely-respected literature.
Written Communication	The post flowed with appropriate connections and transitions; information was presented in a logical, interesting sequence which the reader could readily follow; the post demonstrated correct structure, grammar, punctuation, and no spelling errors, run-on sentences or comma splices, etc.; the post conformed to standard academic discourse.
Total Possible Points = 2	

Program Planning and Evaluation Rubric

ELCC 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.2

Performance Levels

Distinguished 4	Candidate can clearly demonstrate performance skills contained in the rubric item that fully addresses all/almost all of the concepts contained in the ELCC Standard Element descriptors.
Proficient 3	Candidate can demonstrate performance skills contained in the rubric item that addresses most of the concepts contained in the ELCC Standard Element descriptors.
Basic 2	Candidate can somewhat demonstrate performance skills contained in the rubric item that addresses some of the concepts contained in the ELCC Standard Element descriptors.
Unsatisfactory 1	Candidate cannot demonstrate performance skills contained in the rubric item; not able to address most of the concepts contained in the ELCC Standard Element descriptors.

Standard Elements					
The candidate demonstrates the ability to …	Based on the descriptors below for each Standard Element, the candidate demonstrates his/her ability at the following level:	U	B	P	D
*ELCC Standard Element 1.2: … collect and use data to identify district goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and create and implement plans to achieve district	◆ develop and use evidence-centered research strategies and strategic planning processes; ◆ develop a district improvement plan to achieve identified goals.				

goals.

ELCC Standard Element	
ELCC Standard Element 1.3… promote continual and sustainable district improvement.	◆ identify strategies or practices to build organizational capacity that promote continuous and sustainable district improvement; ◆ design a transformational change plan at the district-district-level; ◆ design a comprehensive, district-level professional development program.
ELCC Standard Element 1.4: …evaluate district progress and revise district plans supported by district stakeholders.	◆ construct an evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of district plans and programs; ◆ interpret information and communicate progress toward achievement of district vision and goals for educators in the community and other stakeholders.
ELCC Standard Element 2.2: … create and evaluate a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional district program.	◆ collaborate with faculty to plan, implement, and evaluate a coordinated, aligned, and articulated curriculum; ◆ use evidence-centered research in making curricular and instructional decisions; ◆ interpret information and communicate progress toward achievement; ◆ design evaluation systems and make district plans based on multiple measures of teacher performance and student outcomes, and provide feedback based on evidence.
ELCC Standard Element 2.4… promote the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning in a district-level environment.	◆ use technologies for continuous district improvement; ◆ monitor instructional practices within the district and provide assistance to teachers; ◆ use technology and performance management systems to monitor, analyze, and evaluate district assessment data results for accountability reporting.
ELCC Standard Element 3.1: … monitor and evaluate district management and operational systems.	◆ analyze district processes and operations to identify and prioritize strategic and tactical challenges for the district; ◆ develop plans to implement and manage long-range plans for the district.
ELCC Standard Element 3.2: … efficiently use human, fiscal, and technological resources to manage	◆ project long-term resource needs of a district; ◆ use technology to manage district operational systems.

district operations.

ELCC Standard Element 4.1: … collaborate with faculty and community members by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to the improvement of the district's educational environment.	◆ use collaboration strategies to collect, analyze, and interpret district, student, faculty, and community information; ◆ communicate information about the district within the community.
ELCC Standard Element 4.2: … mobilize community resources by promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of the diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources within the district community.	◆ identify and use diverse community resources to improve district programs.
ELCC Standard Element 5.1: … act with integrity and fairness to ensure that districts are accountable for every student's academic and social success.	◆ act with integrity and fairness in supporting district policies and staff practices that ensure every students' academic and social success; ◆ create an infrastructure that helps to monitor and ensure equitable practices.
ELCC Standard Element 5.3: … safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity.	◆ develop, implement, and evaluate district policies and procedures that support democratic values, equity, and diversity issues; ◆ develop appropriate communication skills to advocate for democracy, equity, and diversity.
ELCC Standard Element 5.4: … evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the district.	◆ formulate sound district strategies to educational dilemmas; evaluate district strategies to prevent difficulties related to moral and legal issues.
ELCC Standard Element 5.5: … promote social justice within a district to ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling.	◆ review and critique district policies, programs, and practices to ensure that student needs inform all aspects of districting, including social justice, equity, confidentiality, acceptance, and respect between and among students and faculty within the district; ◆ develop the resiliency to uphold core values and persist in the face of

	adversity.
ELCC Standard Element 6.2: ... act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a district environment.	◆ advocate for district policies and programs that promote equitable learning opportunities and student success; ◆ communicate policies, laws, regulations, and procedures to appropriate district stakeholders.

*Educational Leadership Licensure Consortium

Self-Evaluation of *Program Evaluation Standards

The Standard:	was addressed	was partially addressed	was not addressed	was not applicable
U1 Stakeholder Identification				
U2 Evaluator Credibility				
U3 Information Scope and Selection				
U4 Values Identification				
U5 Report Clarity				
U6 Report Timeliness & Dissemination				
U7 Evaluation Impact				
F1 Practical Procedures				
F2 Political Viability				
F3 Cost Effectiveness				
P1 Service Orientation				
P2 Formal Agreements				
P3 Rights of Human Subjects				
P4 Human Interactions				

P5 Complete and Fair Assessment			
P6 Disclosure of Findings			
P7 Conflict of Interest			
P8 Fiscal Responsibility			
A1 Program Documentation			
A2 Context Analysis			
A3 Described Purposes and Procedures			
A4 Defensible Information Sources			
A5 Valid Information			
A6 Reliable Information			
A7 Systematic Information			
A8 Analysis of Quantitative Information			
A9 Analysis of Qualitative Information			
A10 Justified Conclusions			
A11 Impartial Reporting			
A12 Meta-evaluation			

*(Yarbrough, Shulha, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011)

The Effects of Student Engagement, Student Satisfaction, and Perceived Learning in Online Learning Environments

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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Studies have shown that course organization and structure, student engagement, learner interaction, and instructor presence have accounted for considerable variance in student satisfaction and perceived learning in online learning environments through a range of pathways, although no research to date has tested the mediational relationship identified. This study expanded upon the existing literature about online learning and the variables that influence student satisfaction and perceived learning. The researchers investigated the relationships among course structure/organization, learner interaction, student engagement, and instructor presence on student satisfaction and perceived learning. The results of this study were intended to inform practice related to increasing retention and improving the quality of online teaching and learning.

Introduction

"The landscape of distance education is changing" (Eom, Ashill, & Wen, 2006, p. 215). As more universities are offering online courses it is important for faculty to consider the changing aspects of online learning environments, including course structure, learner interaction, and instructor presence (Allen & Seaman, 2015). One study in particular provided a model upon which to develop and build this study (Eom et al., 2006), although our study varied in methodology. For this study we investigated the effects of each of these aspects in relation to student perceptions of their learning and satisfaction. We further hypothesized that student engagement would be a mediating variable. We hope the findings of this study will inform practices related to increasing retention and improving the quality of online teaching and learning.

There were four primary objectives of this research study. First, the researchers reviewed existing studies and surveys about online learning environments, student engagement, course structure, learner interaction, instructor presence, and student perceptions of their satisfaction and improved learning in such environments. Second, a new instrument, the Student Learning and Satisfaction in Online Learning Environments (SLS-OLE), was developed after a pilot study and factor analyses were conducted (DiLoreto & Gray, 2015). Once the data were determined to be valid and reliable, the SLS-OLE was shared with all students enrolled in an online graduate program at a regional comprehensive university in the southeast of the United States (Gray & DiLoreto, 2015). Next, the data collected from this questionnaire were interpreted to explore the relationships among course structure and organization, learner interaction, and instructor presence which have been reported to affect student satisfaction and perceived learning in online learning environments (Eom et al., 2006). Finally, the researchers investigated the mediating effects, if any, that student engagement had on student satisfaction and perceived learning (see Figure 1).

Review of the Literature

This study investigated the relationships of course structure, learner interaction (with each other and the instructor), and instructor presence, considering a previous study by Eom et al. (2006) as a model upon which to expand. Using structural equation modeling to examine the "determinants of students' satisfaction and their perceived learning outcomes" (p. 216), Eom et al. (2006) concluded that course structure, instructor feedback, self-motivation, learning style, interaction, and instructor facilitation significantly impacted student satisfaction. However, they concluded that only instructor feedback and learning style significantly affected perceived learning outcomes. They also determined that student satisfaction was a significant predictor of learning outcomes.

Similarly, Richardson and Swan (2003) concluded that students with high overall perceptions of social presence scored high in terms of perceived learning and perceived satisfaction with the instructor. They suggested that it is important to focus on the interaction that takes place between students and instructors. Thus, active learning and student engagement is imperative for increased student learning and ultimately retention. According to Swan (2001), clarity of design, interaction with instructors, and active discussion among course participants significantly influenced students' satisfaction and perceived learning.

While there have been many studies about student engagement in online learning environments, Kuh and his colleagues described student self-reported learning gains, improved social skills, and greater engagement in the learning process (Hu & Kuh, 2001; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh & Vesper, 2001). Chen, Lambert, and Guidy (2010) further explored the effects of student engagement based upon the items on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) instrument (2008). As students are expected to work more collaboratively with classmates, students' perception of their engagement in their learning and participation in courses increased (Duderstadt, Atkins, & Hoeweling, 2002; Thurmond & Wambach, 2004).

Course Structure and Organization

Course structure and organization include the development and design of the course resources, curriculum, instructional strategies and methodologies, course schedule, and overall planning of a course before, during, and after a course is taught (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000). Also known as instructional management, course development should establish the "explicit and implicit structural parameters and organizational guidelines" of the course (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 101). Instructors provide details about course expectations for assignments, due dates, guidelines, assessment rubrics, and resources in order to facilitate students' academic success and sustained learning (Author, 2015a).

Viewed as a critical variable that influences student perceptions about online courses, course structure includes the objectives and expectations of the course in order to accommodate and promote student learning (Moore, 1991). Course infrastructure should be logically organized, user-friendly, and detailed about the student learning objectives (Eom et al., 2006). "Teachers need the expertise to develop a class structure that stimulates social interaction and affirms rigorous academic standards, while fostering independent learning skills" (Muirhead, 2004, p. 50). If instructors lack the technological skills to develop engaging courses, then course designers may be considered to provide additional training, support, and guidance (Vargas, 2014).

Students' perceptions of the overall usability of the course are likely correlated to student satisfaction and learning. In other words, the more organized and logical the course layout, the more likely students will be satisfied with their learning in the course (Eom et al., 2006). Jaggars and Xu (2016) summarized the findings of several studies about online course quality. They found that quality courses contained the following characteristics: clearly written objectives, well-organized content, variety of opportunities for interpersonal interaction, and effective use of technology (Jaggars & Xu, 2016).

Learner Interaction

One of the challenges of online learning relates to students feeling disconnected to their classmates and instructor. By offering a variety of topics that are relevant to current issues in the field and allowing students to connect the practical, in this case their professional experience, to the theoretical, the course content, the learners become more invested in the course discussions and assignments, as well as their colleagues (Shearer, 2003).

Further, instructors can make connections with students by providing constructive feedback that affirms how they are performing well and details ways to improve (Muirhead, 2004).

By providing students with choices or some flexibility, students have a more personalized learning experience (Collis, 1998). In summary, "teachers need the expertise to develop a class structure that stimulates social interaction and affirms rigorous academic standards while fostering independent learning skills" (Muirhead, 2004, p. 50). Muirhead (2004) shares several strategies to promote student interaction in online courses including: encourage critical thinking, provide relevant and engaging lessons, share biographical posts (instructors and students alike), offering positive feedback about student work, integrate stories into discussions, and allow flexibility within the course schedule or organization. It is important to model metacognitive skills so that students are writing more in-depth comments and reflections in online discussions (Muirhead, 2004).

The instructor should encourage students to consider a variety of perspectives and research-based resources as they question their beliefs, assumptions, and ideas (Collision, Elbaum, Haavind, & Tinker, 2000; Muirhead, 2004). Learners should have the appropriate time to consider the topics of discussions, especially when critical reflection is expected, so that they can develop their thoughts and communicate such at a deeper level (Garrison et al., 2000). This type of consideration and time gives students more opportunity for sustained communication with classmates (Garrison et al., 2000). Another study found that "the course's level of interpersonal interaction was the most important factor in predicting student grades; students in low-interaction courses earned nearly one letter grade lower than students in high-interaction courses" (Jaggars, Edgecombe, & Stacey, 2013, p. 2).

Instructor Presence

Establishing instructor presence in online courses can be achieved by the way in which the course is designed, organized, facilitated, and taught through a variety of methods that promote positive interaction between the instructor and students (Jaggars et al., 2013; Karmin, O'Sullivan, Deterding, Younger, & Wade, 2006). Although slightly different in nature, social presence has been defined as the "degree of feeling, perception, and reaction of being connected by computer mediated communication" (Tu & McIsaac, 2002, p. 40). In online learning environments the instructor's most important role is establishing his presence and personality in the course content, discussions, and activities (Shea, Li, & Pickett, 2006). Instructors can improve online instruction and "engender a sense of caring by soliciting student feedback about the course and using that feedback to enhance the course" (Jaggars et al., 2013, p. 6).

Garrison et al. (2000) summarized three indicators of instructor presence: instructional management, building understanding, and direction instruction. Primarily, instructional management describes what we have referred to as course structure and organization, which has already been detailed in the literature review. Secondly, all teachers should be able to deepen their students' understanding of the subject area content. "Through active intervention, the teacher draws in less active participants, acknowledges individual contributions, reinforces appropriate contributions, focuses discussion, and generally facilitates an educational transaction" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 101). Finally, direct instruction involves any teaching provided directly or indirectly by the instructors in the form of lectures, video or audio lessons,

synchronous and asynchronous sessions, constructive and explanatory feedback provided, and the selection and inclusion of course references and resources (textbook, readings, supplemental materials, videos, etc.) (Garrison et al., 2000).

The development of instructor presence and a sense of a learning community within online courses seem to have a reciprocal relationship in which one influences the progress of the other and vice-versa (Shea et al., 2006). "When optimized, technological tools can help instructors to establish a knowledgeable and approachable presence, a vital element of strong online courses" (Jaggars et al., 2013, p. 3). While many online instructors understand the challenges of connecting virtually with their students, Jaggars et al. argue that it is even more important to "actively and visibly engage with students in the teaching and learning process – perhaps with even greater intentionality than in face-to-face courses" (2013, p. 1). Jaggars et al. (2013) discovered that "higher levels of interpersonal interaction were correlated with better student performance in their online courses" (p. 1). Garrison et al. (2000) concluded that teacher presence can be established by regular communication with students, consistent feedback, and critical discourse modeled by the instructor. Furthermore, by increasing their presence in online environments instructors can promote greater student academic performance and retention over the long term (Jaggars et al., 2013).

Providing direct instruction using video and audio in synchronous and asynchronous sessions allows students the opportunity to get to know their professors in a more personal way (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001). In 'live' sessions the instructor is able to share personal stories related to the course content or discussion and respond directly to student questions or concerns (Anderson et al., 2001). When instructors participate in discussions online by providing prompt responses, asking follow-up questions, and seeking student feedback about how to improve the course, their students perceive the teacher's presence to be greater (Jaggars et al., 2013). Students feel as though they are more acquainted or familiar with their classmates and professors when given the opportunity to participate in interactive sessions (Author, 2015a). The use of interactive technologies has been described as a powerful instructional strategy that can improve student learning outcomes and academic performance (Jaggars et al., 2013). Instructor presence "can be created and sustained in computer-conferencing environments, despite the absence of non-verbal and paralinguistic cues" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 96).

Ice, Curtis, Phillips, and Wells (2007) conducted a study in which they compared students' perceptions of community and teacher presence with asynchronous audio feedback in online courses in comparison to those with only text-based feedback. Their findings demonstrated higher student satisfaction with embedded asynchronous audio feedback than text only feedback (Ice et al., 2007). Students found that audio feedback was more effective because the nuance of the communication was clearer, their professors seemed to care more about them, and they were three times more likely to apply the content or suggested changes with audio feedback (Ice et al., 2007). By developing a supportive learning environment, instructors facilitate their online students by strategically combining audio, video, discussion, chat sessions, practical activities, and other online tools to engage students (Jaggars et al., 2013).

Student Engagement

Student engagement has been defined as "students' willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process" (Bomia, Beluzo, Demeester, Elander,

Johnson, & Sheldon, 1997, p. 294). Course delivery in online classes requires pedagogical strategies that will create as many learning and engagement opportunities as possible. Looking beyond cognitive skills learned or mastered, engagement focuses on individuals' dispositions or attitudes about classroom experiences and life-long learning (Mandernach, Donnelli-Sallee, & Dailey-Hebert, 2011). Student engagement has also been described as the level of interest demonstrated by students, how they interact with others in the course, and their motivation to learn about the topics (Briggs, 2015).

There are several affective factors related to student engagement which include attitude, personality, motivation, effort, and self-confidence (Mandernach et al., 2011). Jaggars and Xu (2016) found that the quality of interaction within the course parameters positively correlated to student grades in online courses. By evaluating the level of student engagement and considering these affective aspects, instructors can more effectively plan lessons and activities that will encourage students to be more active participants in their learning and coursework (Jennings & Angelo, 2006; Mandernach et al., 2011).

When students are motivated to do well in their courses, involved or invested in their desire to learn, and willing to exert the effort expected by their instructors, they are more likely to be engaged in their education (Mandernach et al., 2011). Course engagement extends beyond the traditional ways of measuring instructional effectiveness include student mastery of course learning objectives, retention, and students perceptions of satisfaction, whereas "consideration of the impact of instructional activities on student engagement provides a more complete picture of the teaching-learning dynamic" (Mandernach et al., 2011, p. 277). Measuring levels of student engagement allows instructors to adapt their instructional practices in response to changes in students' motivation, involvement, and attitude about their course and educational pursuits (Mandernach et al., 2011).

In online learning environments there are many tools available for instructors to gather informal data about student participation in the course. Instructors can review log-in data, number of minutes online, views of learning modules or course content, and self-reported information from students by using surveys, reflections, discussions, and other formative tools (Gray & DiLoreto, 2015). It is important to assess the level of academic challenge of each course based upon the effort exerted, time invested, opportunities for interaction with faculty and other students, active and collaborative learning, and enriching educational experiences for students (Langley, 2006). This can be achieved by surveying students informally or formally and analyzing the results in order to improve instructional practices for future students.

Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, and Towler (2005) developed an assessment of student engagement that investigates four types of engagement: skills, emotional, participation/ interaction, and performance. The Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ) includes items for each of the four kinds of engagement and provides self-reported results that extend what can be observed in classroom interactions (Handelsman et al., 2005). In reviewing both informal and formal assessments of student engagement faculty are able to more effectively evaluate student perceptions of their engagement and course effectiveness that "support and sustain learning across courses, programs, and beyond the collegiate experience" (Mandernach et al., 2011, p. 280).

Student Satisfaction

Several studies have been conducted to measure the level of student satisfaction in traditional and online environments. Dziuban, Wang, and Cook (2004) concluded that students were more likely to evaluate courses and instructors with satisfactory ratings if they believed their professors communicated effectively, facilitated or encouraged their learning, organized the course effectively, showed interest in students' learning and progress, demonstrated respect for students, and evaluated students' work accurately. Marsh and Roche (1997) developed a complex model for defining student perceptions of satisfaction in terms of several factors: learning value, instructor enthusiasm, rapport, organization, interaction, coverage, and assessment. Another study found that students who participated in cohorts with other colleagues and received detailed feedback from and interaction with faculty reported satisfaction with their learning experiences (Shea, Fredericksen, Pickett, & Pelz, 2003).

Bangert (2006) identified four factors related to student satisfaction in online courses, including: student and faculty interaction and communication, amount of time on task, active and engaged learning, and cooperation among classmates. Another study compared students' perceptions of a sense of community and teacher presence with asynchronous audio feedback in online courses (Ice et al., 2007). They contrasted their results based upon students who received text-based feedback rather than audio feedback. Students reported higher satisfaction with embedded asynchronous audio feedback rather than text only feedback (Ice et al., 2007). Students found that audio feedback was more effective because the nuance of the communication was clearer, their professors seemed to care more about them, and they were three times more likely to apply the content or suggested changes of this type of feedback (Ice et al., 2007).

Perceived Learning

The current study requested that students report their perceptions of their learning in a specific course from the spring 2015 semester. They were asked to reflect upon the benefits of course, its activities and assignments, and level of learning they achieved during the semester. Participants were also asked to consider if the course helped to prepare them as future leaders. Because there is an "increasing number of a university program, particularly at the graduate level . . . moving to an accelerated model, where time is compressed to help adult learners achieve necessary skills and credentials at a quicker pace", it is important that we ask our students to determine their level of learning (Trekles, 2013, p. 13). If students report that their learning is limited or minimal, then it is our responsibility to redesign online courses, improve instructional practices, and develop more effective assessment and evaluation tools (Author, 2015a).

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Research Questions

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What are the mediating effects of student engagement on student satisfaction and perceived learning? What impact do course structure and organization, learner interaction, instructor presence, and student engagement have on student perceptions about their satisfaction and learning upon completion of an online course? What is the relationship, if any, between student satisfaction and self-reported learning outcomes? Figure 1 demonstrates the hypothesized relationships of the independent variables with the mediating variable and outcome variables.
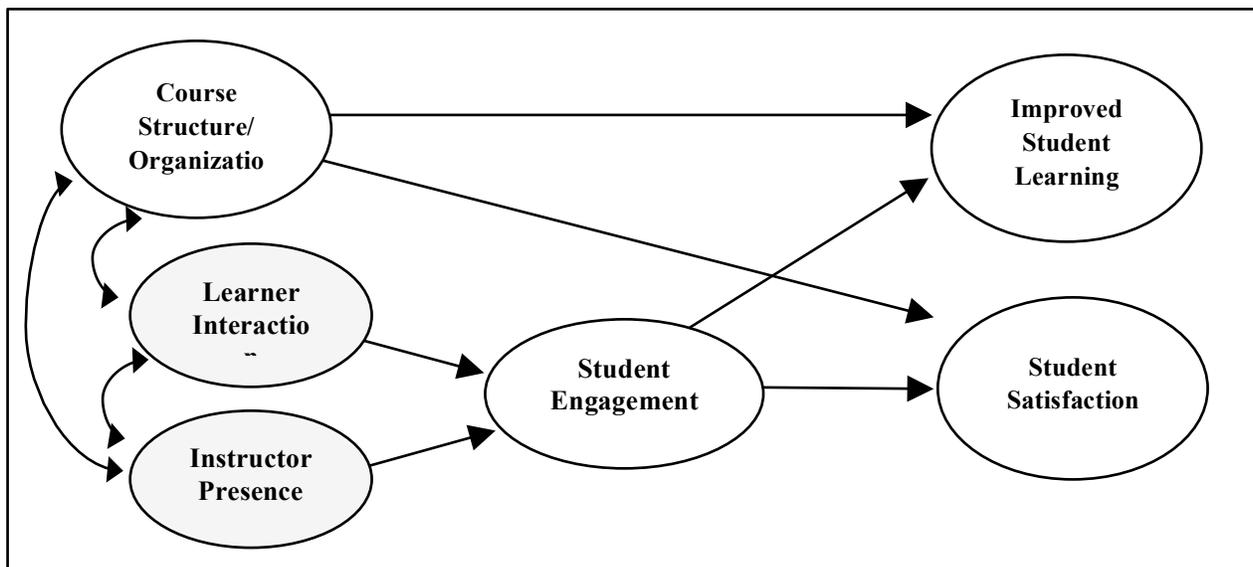
Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram Hypothesized Relationships

Data Sources

Phase I: Pilot Study

The researchers collected evidence of validity and reliability of a significantly modified version of a previously published instrument by completing a pilot study using a small sub-set of survey participants. The researchers reported the internal consistency of the items on the instrument as well as tested the proposed measurement model. This phase of the study was conducted during fall 2014.

Methods

Phase II: Main Study

The researchers used a cross-sectional design using survey methodology. A measurement-of-mediation design, using both the Baron and Kenny (1986) and the Shrout and Bolger (2002) bootstrap mediation analysis were employed in order to understand the relationships between course structure, learner interaction, student engagement, and instructor presence with student satisfaction and perceived student learning. This phase of the study was conducted in spring 2015.

The independent variables were course structure and organization, learner interaction, and instructor presence. The dependent or outcome variables for the study were improved student learning and student satisfaction, while we hypothesized that student engagement was a mediating variable.

Sample

Data were collected from all graduate students enrolled in an online educational leadership program in a regional, teaching university in the southeast of the United States. Of the 567 enrolled students invited to participate, 216 completed the Qualtrics Research Suite survey online. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the researchers had the program academic advisor send an email request to students. Participants who completed at least 85% of the questionnaire were kept in the analyses. Multiple regression procedures were used to replace missing values for any remaining items. The researchers included 187 participants' completed responses in the final analyses of the data. For this study, the response rate was 33% of the students (187 out of 567 invited).

Participants

Students enrolled in a minimum of one online course during the spring 2015 semester were asked to participate in the study. The study was delimited to students pursuing a Master's degree in an online educational leadership program offered at a medium, regional comprehensive university located in the southeast. Of the respondents, 100 had completed at least six online courses in the program. The majority of participants was female, from the same southeastern state, and ranged from 31 to 50 years of age. Many reported their expected graduation date to be within the next academic year and selected this program as the convenience and flexibility of an online program.

Procedures

The researchers created an instrument by modifying items from multiple existing instruments in order to collect data about student satisfaction and learning outcomes from currently enrolled online graduate students. A cross-sectional design using survey methodology was employed. Graduate students attending a regional comprehensive university located in the southeast were surveyed about their experiences and beliefs about their satisfaction and perceived learning in online courses.

Hypotheses

We asserted that there is a direct effect of course structure on perceived learning and student satisfaction. We also hypothesized that learner interaction and instructor presence causes student engagement, which in turn causes perceived student learning and student satisfaction. Finally, we sought to determine if student engagement was a mediating variable.

This study investigated the effects of these variables on improved student learning and student satisfaction. Therefore we hypothesized that:

H1: Course structure will have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction.

H2: Student engagement mediates the relationship of learner interaction and instructor presence on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction.

H3: Learner interaction will have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction.

H4: Instructor Presence will have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction**.**

Instrumentation

The Student Learning and Satisfaction in Online Learning Environments Instrument (SLS-OLE) was created after reviewing an existing instrument and study (Eom et al., 2006), as well as numerous studies about online learning environments, student engagement, satisfaction, and learning, instructor presence, and learner interaction. The SLS-OLE was piloted with a sample of students in fall 2014. Based upon the results of the pilot testing of the instrument, several items were reworded and additional items were included. A positively-packed rating scale was used in attempt to elicit data that didn't violate the assumption of normality and to elicit more variability in responses. Sample items include: "The learning activities promoted interaction with others," "I am satisfied with my learning in the course," and "I discussed what I have learned in the course outside of class" (Author, 2015b).

Data Analysis

The descriptive data of the study are summarized by the means, standard deviations, and range for each of the variable is reported (see Table 1). Next, the relationships among the variables of the study are reported and finally, the results of the results of the mediated variables are shared.

Descriptive Analysis

Our first level of analysis involved obtaining descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables in our study. The descriptive statistics for our sample revealed that course structure and organization ranged from 1.00 to 6.00 with a mean of 5.3 and a standard deviation of .82. Learner interaction ranged from 2.14 to 6.00 with a mean of 4.8 and standard deviation of .92. Student engagement, instructor presence, student satisfaction, and perceived student learning all ranged from 1.00 to 6.00 with various means and standard deviations (see Table 1).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Sample

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Course Structure/Organization	187	1.00	6.00	5.2730	.82369
Learner Interaction	187	2.14	6.00	4.7854	.91845
Student Engagement	187	1.00	6.00	4.9783	.86155
Instructor Presence	187	1.00	6.00	5.1433	1.11587
Student Satisfaction	187	1.00	6.00	5.2445	.99107

| Perceived Student Learning | 187 | 1.00 | 6.00 | 5.2793 | 1.04295 |

Bivariate Correlational Analysis

The researchers investigated the relationships of the dependent and independent variables of the study using the bivariate correlational analysis as seen in Table 2 and Figure 2. All independent variables were significantly and positively correlated with each other, as well as the two outcome variables, student learning and student satisfaction.

Table 2
Bivariate Correlation of all Variables (N=187)

	Learner Interaction	Student Engagement	Instructor Presence	Student Satisfaction	Perceived Learning
Course Structure / Organization	.51**	.51**	.62**	.66**	.62**
Learner Interaction	1	.72**	.62**	.64**	.62**
Student Engagement		1	.55**	.63**	.61**
Instructor Presence			1	.84**	.69**
Student Satisfaction				1	.85**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The two outcome variables, student satisfaction and perceived learning, share the strongest relationship of the variables of this study ($r = .85$, $\rho < .01$). Another equally strong and significant correlation exists between instructor presence and student satisfaction ($r = .84$, $\rho < .01$). A third strong and significant relationship is found between learner interaction and student engagement ($r = .72$, $\rho < .01$). All other correlations were significant and moderately strong (See Table 2).

Results

The researchers developed four hypotheses based on empirical evidence found within the literature. As such, the researchers hypothesized that course structure, learner interaction, and instructor presence will all have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction. Furthermore, the researchers hypothesized that student engagement mediates the relationship of learner interaction and instructor presence on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction.

Using the basic normal theory approach to testing for mediating effects of a variable (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004), four necessary steps should take place before mediation is concluded (Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei, & Russell, 2006). First, there must be a significant correlation between the predictor variable and the dependent or outcome variable. Second, the independent or predictor variable must account for a significant proportion of the variance in the

mediating variable. Third, the mediating variable must account for a significant proportion of variance in the dependent or outcome variable. And, finally, the association between the predictor variable and the dependent or outcome variable must be significantly less after controlling for the variance shared between the mediator and the dependent or outcome variable. In the case of this particular study, all steps were met and mediation analyses were conducted.
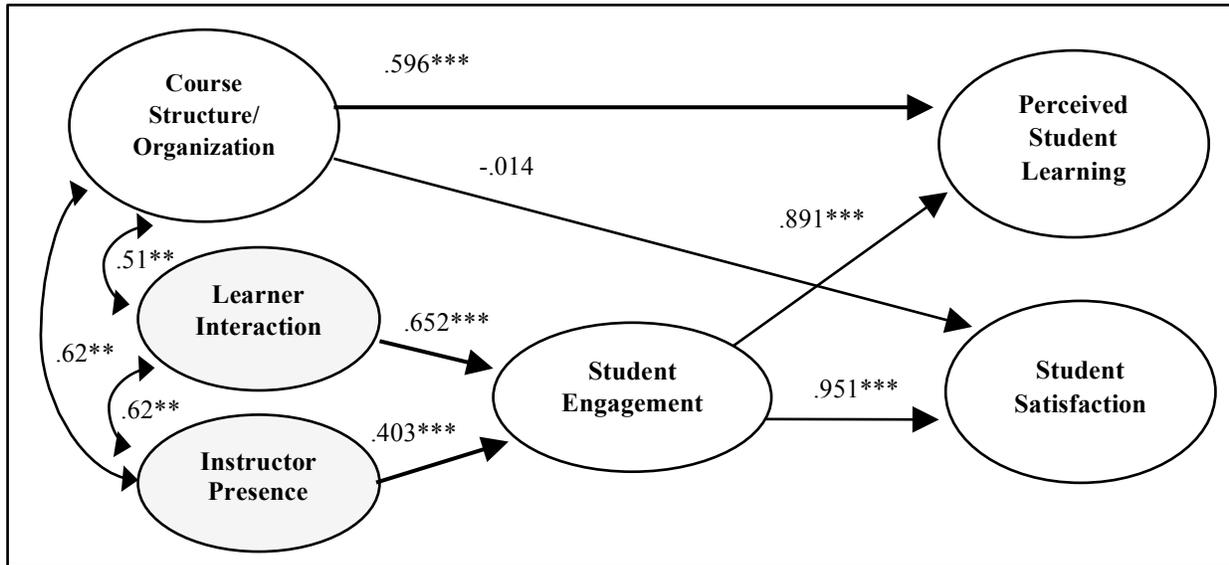
Figure 2. Diagram of Hypothesized Relationships with Unstandardized Regression Coefficient
* significant at .05; ** significant at .01; *** significant at < .01

The researchers hypothesized that course structure, learner interaction, and instructor presence would all have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction. As illustrated in Table 3, it is evident that course structure does have a statistically significant impact on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction. Furthermore, learner interaction has a statistically significant impact on perceived student learning; however, learner interaction does not significantly impact student satisfaction as evident in past studies (Kuo, Walker, Belland, & Schroder, 2013; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Swan 2001). Finally, instructor presence does significantly impact both perceived student learning as well as student satisfaction ($p < .001$).

Table 3
Direct & Indirect Effects (N=187)

Path			Direct Without Mediator (Standardized Regression Weights & Significance)	Direct With Mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986 Approach)	Indirect Effects (Bootstrap Two-Tailed Significance – Shrout & Bolger, 2002)	Conclusions
Structure	Learning		.411***			
Engagement	Learning		-.188***			
Structure	Satisfaction		.157***			
Engagement	Satisfaction		.862***			
Instructor Presence	Engagement		.445***			
Learner Interaction	Engagement		.720***			
Learner Interaction	Engagement	Learning	.148*	-.675(.12)NS	**	Full mediation
Instructor Presence	Engagement	Learning	.340***	-.188(.53)NS	**	Full mediation
Learner Interaction	Engagement	Satisfaction	-.013(.79)NS	-.554(.12)NS	***	No Mediation
Instructor Presence	Engagement	Satisfaction	.819***	.479*	***	Partial mediation

* significant at .05; ** significant at .01; *** significant at < .01

The researchers further hypothesized that student engagement mediates the relationship of learner interaction and instructor presence on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction. Using Amos 23, the researchers tested the mediator variable of student engagement

on learner interaction and instructor presence on both perceived student learning and student satisfaction. As such, once student engagement was added to the model, the impact of learner interaction on student learning went from $\beta = .148$ ($p < .05$) to $\beta = -.675$ ($p = .12$) indicating a full mediation. Furthermore, full mediation was present with student engagement mediating the effect of instructor presence on student learning from $\beta = .340$ ($p < .01$) to $\beta = -.188$ ($p = .53$). Student engagement, however, does not mediate the relationship between learner interaction and student satisfaction as the direct effects of learner interaction and student satisfaction were not statistically significant ($p < .05$). Finally, student engagement did partially mediate the effect of instructor presence and student satisfaction indicated by $\Delta \beta = .34$ while remaining significant at the .05 level (see Table 3).

Discussion

This study examined the factors that impact both perceived student learning outcomes and student satisfaction in asynchronous online learning courses. The research model was tested by using Amos 23 on data collected by the researchers from surveying graduate students. The researchers concluded that the hypotheses in this study were tested and received support with the exception of student interaction not significantly impacting student satisfaction. All other relationships were positively correlated with significant regression coefficients. Similar to past research (Eom et al., 2006), the researchers found a strong relationship between course structure and student satisfaction (Author, 2015a).

However, unlike past research completed by Eom et al. (2006), this study indicated a significant relationship between course structure and perceived student learning. Furthermore, the data indicated that student interaction does not have a statistically significant impact on student satisfaction yet instructor presence does have a statistically significant impact on perceived student learning. The data, however, indicated that learner interaction does significantly impact perceived student learning. The data also indicated that instructor presence does influence student satisfaction. The mediated variable, student engagement, partially mediated the impact that instructor presence has on student satisfaction. Furthermore, student engagement fully mediated the impact of both instructor presence and learner interaction on perceived student learning.

Of the three hypothesized factors to affect perceived student learning, course structure, learner interaction, and instructor presence all had a significant effect. These impacts, however, were fully mediated by student engagement. Of the three hypothesized factors to affect student satisfaction, both course structure and instructor presence had a significant direct effect. Learner interaction, however, did not have a significant impact on student satisfaction. Of the three types of interaction (learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-learner) "learner to learner interaction was a poor predictor of student satisfaction" (Kuo et al., 2013, p. 30). Student engagement partially mediated instructor presence on student satisfaction.

Contrary to past findings from Eom et al. (2006) and similar to LaPoint and Gunawardena (2004), there was a positive relationship between learner interaction and perceived student learning. One possible explanation for this finding is that the online community at this institution is large and there is little variability between the requirements faculty place on students to interact with each other; therefore, students feel this aspect is important to their

learning. Conversely, the data did not indicate that participants felt that their interaction impacted their satisfaction – with or without their engagement.

Another interesting point is that statistically significant relationship between course structure and perceived student learning. Unlike past research from Eom et al. (2006), the results of this study show a positive significant relationship between course structure and perceived student learning. Not only is it a positive statistically significant relationship, course structure has one of the strongest impacts of all independent variables on the dependent variable, perceived student learning. One possible explanation is that many of the online courses at this particular institution use a consistent course layout template. Therefore, it is possible that as a result of such consistency among the structure of the courses, students believe that this is an extremely important aspect to improving their learning.

Partially congruent with the researchers' hypothesis that student engagement mediates the effect of learner interaction and instructor presence on student satisfaction; it was interesting to find that student engagement only partially mediated the effect of instructor presence on student satisfaction and there was no mediated effect of learner interaction on student satisfaction. The researchers are unable to soundly explain this deviation; however, conceptually, the more the instructor is present, the more engaged a student becomes, and the more satisfied he becomes (Garrison et al., 2000; Jaggars et al., 2013). Kuo et al. found that "learner-instructor interaction followed as the second strongest predictor that significantly contributed to student satisfaction" (2013, p. 30). Furthermore, graduate students in online settings are often self-motivated; therefore, they may not see the importance of interacting with their peers in order to be satisfied with the course.

The researchers also hypothesized that student engagement mediates the effect of learner interaction on perceived student learning. Congruent with their hypothesis, the data did indicate this mediational effect. This may be explained by the possibility that as students interact with one another; they are increasing their learning whether consciously or subconsciously.

Limitations and Future Research

While these findings provide evidence of the importance of aspects of course design, organization, planning, social interaction, engagement, and instructor presence, we acknowledge that these results may not be generalizable to other online learning environments. Students were instructed to respond to the survey with one course in mind, however this may have limited how they responded in context to the various constructs. The participants were also permitted to complete the online instrument more than once by responding about a different course, as most students are enrolled in more than one course at a time. We acknowledge that these responses may have potentially inflated the results for each participant. We are cautious in interpreting these items and making "inferences about differences in the underlying, latent, characteristic reflected in the Likert numbers, but this does not invalidate conclusions about the numbers" (Norman, 2010, p. 629). Therefore, we realize that additional analysis and testing on the data collected from this instrument is necessary.

Scholarly and Practical Significance of the Study

This study demonstrates the importance of course structure and organization in online learning environments. Course structure and organization shared a moderate and significant relationship with learner interaction, instructor presence, student engagement, student learning, and student satisfaction. Students seem to benefit from and appreciate well-designed and developed online courses that are detailed, logical, and user-friendly (Eom et al., 2006). When the course learning objectives are specific, students have a clearer understanding of the expectations for success and learning in the course. It is important for instructors to design well-structured courses, maintain regular communication and presence in their courses, and promote student engagement. This can lead to greater student perceptions of learning and satisfaction (Eom et al., 2006). Furthermore, there are positive implications for providing courses that include opportunities for learners to interact with each other in addition to a high-level of involvement from the instructor. Students have a more positive outlook about what they have learned and their overall satisfaction with the course if they're provided opportunities to interact with each other and their instructors are present.

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Appendix A

Student Learning and Satisfaction in Online Learning Environments Instrument (SLS-OLE)

Directions: This questionnaire assesses your satisfaction and perceived learning in online environments based upon the following constructs: course organization/structure, learner interaction, student engagement, instructor presence, student satisfaction, and perceived learning. Read each statement and use the associated scale to select which best reflects your opinion.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Mostly Disagree (MD) 3 = Slightly Agree (SA),
4 = Moderately Agree (MA), 5 = Mostly Agree (MOA), 6 = Strongly Agree (SA)

SAMPLE ITEMS	SCALE					
Course Structure/Organization	**S D**	**M D**	**S A**	**M A**	**MO A**	**S A**
Student learning outcomes was aligned to the learning activities.						
Course navigation was illogical.						
The layout of the course was disorganized.						
Instructions about student participation were clearly presented.						
The purpose of the course was clearly presented.						
Learner Interaction						
I frequently interacted with other students in the course.						
There were no opportunities for active learning in this course.						
The learning activities promoted interaction with others.						
I had the opportunity to introduce myself to others in the class.						
I communicated often with other students within the course.						
I regularly communicated with the instructor of the course.						
I received ongoing feedback from my classmates.						
Student Engagement						
I frequently interacted with my instructor of this course.						
I discussed what I learned in the course outside of class.						
I completed my readings as assigned during the course.						
I participated in synchronous and/or asynchronous chat						

	SAMPLE ITEMS	S D	M D	S A	M A	MO A	S A
	sessions during the course.						
	I was not actively engaged in the activities required in the course.						
	Instructor Presence						
	The instructor's feedback on assignments was clearly stated.						
	The instructor's feedback on assignments was not constructive.						
	The instructor provided timely feedback about my progress in the course.						
	The instructor cared about my progress in this course.						
	I learned from the feedback that was provided during the course.						
	Student Satisfaction						
	I am satisfied with my overall experience in this course.						
	I would not recommend this course to other students.						
	I am satisfied with the level of student interaction that occurred in the course.						
	I am satisfied with my learning in the course.						
	I am satisfied with the instructor of the course.						
	I am satisfied with the content of the course.						
	Perceived Learning						
	I am pleased with what I learned in the course.						
	The learning tasks enhanced my understanding of the content.						
	I learned less in the course than I anticipated.						
	I learned skills that will help me in the future.						
	The learning activities promoted the achievement of student learning outcomes.						
	The course contributed to my professional development.						

Student Learning and Satisfaction in Online Learning Environments Instrument (SLS-OLE)

Written permission is requested for use of this questionnaire by emailing the author (mdiloreto@uwf.edu).

Teachers' Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the Impact on Leadership Preparation: Lessons for Future Reform Efforts

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of one school's teacher-driven professional development effort to address culturally responsive teaching practices in a large district in a Midwestern state. During the 2011-2012 school year, a team of teachers and principals began a three-year long effort to provide job-embedded professional development intended to focus on delivering high-impact strategies to transform the educational practices of teachers through improving cultural competence. A survey was given to 120 fulltime certified teachers, and findings suggest that while teachers agreed most that the professional development helped examine views on poverty, they agreed least that the professional development helped close the achievement gap. Additionally, elective and special education teachers were significantly more positive than core subject classroom teachers in terms of how the research they read improved instruction and how the professional development provided impacted building-wide faculty instruction. Analysis of open-ended items highlight several themes, namely the professional development helped teachers by acknowledging cultural differences of the students they taught, but that ultimately the challenges of lack of time and implementation apathy impeded the success of the professional development effort. These findings provide important insight for leadership preparation, particularly about supporting teacher-driven efforts, facilitating culturally responsive practices, and the reflecting on the pressures teachers face due to high stakes accountability and reform efforts.

Introduction

As the diversity of our nation increases, teachers of today must educate students who come from a variety of cultures, languages, and with varying abilities (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). According to Hawley and Nieto (2010), ethnicity and race influence teaching and learning by impacting how students react to curriculum and to instruction, but also by shaping teachers' notions about students' capacity for learning. Often teachers are unaware of their own beliefs about their students' backgrounds, and as a result teachers are not conscious of the potential impact those biases might have on interactions with others who are not like themselves (Ayres, 2001). To help combat these perspectives, Hawley and Nieto (2010) posit, "school-based professional learning communities can improve teaching and learning and lead to a fundamental change in teachers' work" (p. 70). By analyzing culturally responsive teaching practices and providing professional development in this arena, teachers and principals can help school systems address stereotypes that traditionally limit opportunities for students (Gay, 2010; Haberman, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2009). It is critically important to study how this type of professional development impacts the everyday work of educators, as well as the leadership required to facilitate and support this important work. Thus, understanding how to develop these skills in leadership preparation programs is equally important.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) refers to effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms (Irvine, 2009). Ford (2010) states,

> When we are responsive, we feel an obligation, a sense of urgency, to address a need… so that students experience success. When teachers are culturally responsive, they are student-centered; they eliminate barriers to learning and achievement and, thereby, open doors for culturally different students to reach their potential…[when culturally responsive] teachers proactively and assertively work to understand, respect, and meet the needs of students who come from cultural backgrounds different from their own (p. 50).

Building on the idea that learning may be different across cultures, CRP helps teachers to learn about cultural backgrounds with the intent to use the knowledge to design lessons which could increase students' success (Irvine, 2009). In truly culturally responsive classrooms, students and teachers experience culturally supported and student-centered instruction that focuses on the strengths of the students to promote achievement for all (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). CRP strategies include scaffolding of students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles to provide better access to curriculum through flexible groups, collaboration with other students, and creating a classroom community that is cooperative and family like (Ford, 2010). By employing this style of instruction, CRP is student-centered and provides high levels of support by approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens to help learners understand new concepts and information (Irvine, 2009).

Allen and Boykin (1992) posit to genuinely increase student success and achievement, teachers must find a way to help students to bridge various cultural gaps that exist between home and school. CRP attempts to accomplish this by nurturing the achievement of students of all cultures, and by capitalizing on the individual strengths each child brings to school (Richards,

Brown, & Forde, 2007). Irvine (2009) suggests by understanding student learning as a socially constructed process influenced by cultural backgrounds and experiences, CRP can impact teachers' instructional strategies to maximize student learning. It is through identifying these strengths, and providing faculty members with appropriate support to grow professionally, that culturally responsive teaching can be utilized to increase student achievement. Truly culturally responsive teachers have deep understanding of content and are able to provide multiple representations of this knowledge to connect with students' lived experiences in the home, community and society (Irvine, 2009).

Culturally responsive instruction can best be understood by examining its basic components. Richards, Brown, & Forde (2007) define CRP in the following manner:

> Culturally responsive pedagogy comprises three dimensions: (a) institutional, (b) personal and (c) instructional. The institutional dimension reflects the administration and its policy and values. The personal dimension refers to the cognitive and emotional processes teachers must engage in to become culturally responsive. The instructional dimension includes materials, strategies, and activities that form the basis of instruction (p. 64).

Recognizing that these three components are significantly intertwined in the teaching and learning process is the critical first step in truly understanding the effectiveness of CRP.

Institutional Dimension of CRP

Little (1999) notes that our educational system is comprised of both physical and political structures. The challenge, then, to make our educational system or institution more culturally responsive should be approached in three specific areas: (1) school organization, including principals and central office administrators and their views regarding diversity and the use of physical space; (2) school policies and procedures, which determine the delivery of services for students of diverse backgrounds; and (3) community involvement, in relation to how the institution is involved with the community to include all stakeholders and build strong relationships with both families and communities (Little, 1999). Nieto (2002/2003) emphasizes that perhaps the most significant of the three areas are how institutions allocate their resources, specifically where the best teachers are assigned as schools could develop greater awareness by allocating more proficient teachers for culturally diverse classrooms as a routine institutional practice. Therefore, principals play a critical role in in supporting CRP and influencing school policies and procedures. It is through questioning these practices that principals can help institutions to become more culturally responsive.

Personal Dimension of CRP

To become culturally proficient, teachers must undergo a personal transformation through careful self-reflection of their own biases, attitudes, beliefs, as well as their beliefs about others. Through deep, personal self-reflection known as the cycle of socialization (Harro, 2000), teachers uncover experiences in their lives that have shaped their thoughts and feelings about themselves and others. When teachers honestly examine their own attitudes and beliefs as well as their beliefs about others, they begin to realize who they are, why they are this way, and can confront biases that have shaped their moral compass (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). It is through

this deep reflection of their own personal histories and experiences that teachers can recognize and reconcile their negative views toward specific groups, including but not limited to economic status, sexual orientation, language, or other cultural identities. Often, this is difficult work for teachers who may resist acknowledging their own prejudices or racism toward certain groups.

Instructional Dimension of CRP

Culturally responsive pedagogy impacts instruction at the classroom level and strives to create a more socially just learning environment, by addressing the needs of all learners. Richards, Brown, and Forde (2007, p.66) posit, "Culturally responsive pedagogy recognizes and utilizes the students' culture and language in instruction, and ultimately respects students personal and community identities." A synopsis of the literature suggests culturally responsive instruction is characterized by learning by valuing various cultural identities, respecting diversity, strengthening relationships between schools and the communities they serve, valuing student voice, and instilling critical perspectives to questions issues of equity (Banks & Banks, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Richards, Brown, and Forde, 2007. Bluntly, race and ethnicity impact and influence not only how students perceive the world, but also how teachers perceive instructional practices and abilities of students (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Often, however, teachers and principals have had little training about CRP in their preparation programs, and as a result these educators often have a limited understanding of racism and race relations in American schools (Lopez, 2003). Moreover, while issues of diversity and equity have been openly addressed starting in the Civil Rights Movement and up through No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability measures, CRP has not always translated into practice nor has it necessarily been valued in research (Evans, 2013).

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was born out of legal scholarship and questions the status quo on race, gender, and equality in the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to the field of education, providing a basic understanding of the racial discrimination that impacts the educational experiences of children of color. CRT contends racism is inherent in American society and is central to the functioning of the laws and policies of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Through this framework educational policies and practices are seen as inequitable and unjust to students of color (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lerma, Linick, Warren-Grice, & Parker, 2013), and views racism as "the weapon of choice used by the ruling class to keep the working class divided" (Gilligan, 1997). Wise (2003) posits that racism in the form of White privilege is so deeply entrenched in American society, that it goes unnoticed, with the analogy of a fish in water does not know she exists within the water and thus takes it for granted. Supporting this notion, Spina (2000) argues, "racism is so deeply internalized in our society that most Whites are not even aware of its existence or how far they will go to keep it that way" (p. 9).

Historically, White culture, privilege, and hegemony have permeated education systems, including educational preparation programs that traditionally lack focus on helping address issues of race to help schools transform society (Brown, 2014). As America has advanced through history, immigration and annexation of people from various backgrounds has produced

cultural boundaries and have failed to address different racial identities (Ji-Yeon, 2004). Critical scholars argue that teachers and administrators have a duty to transform schools from historical sorting machines where students were prepared for their place in society, into an equitable system where the disenfranchised are given hope and social change becomes a reality (Anyon, 2005; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This goal for social change can only be achieved by preparing future educators to understand how concepts of racism are embedded in the educational system with the hope to eradicate racism as they work in schools (Lopez, 2003; Parker & Shapiro, 1992). This critical context is essential for practitioners and scholars to recognize so that change can occur and teacher and principal preparation programs can address this topic in course work.

To understand and change the current social situation for racial minorities, CRT seeks to analyze society's self-organization according to racial boundaries and hierarchies and then strives to eradicate these boundaries and hierarchies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Additionally, CRT provides a theoretical framework to analyze existing power structures through the lens that racism is institutionalized and pervasive in the dominant culture in the United States (Jay, 2003). Through questioning the power dynamics reinforced in American society, school systems can help confront the persistence of racism, classism, and sexism in the quest for social justice (Jay, 2003; Lerma, Linick, Warren-Grice, & Parker, 2013). What is most disturbing, however, is many authors postulate our educational system has become complacent and does little to change the status quo of racial and social structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000).

Teachers and principals have a duty and an ethical responsibility to interrogate systems, organizational frameworks, and leadership theories that privilege certain groups and/or perspectives over other groups (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995). Historically, however, traditional preparation programs of teachers and principals often neglect to examine the historical components of race and racism in our society, as well as how certain privileges based on racial and socioeconomic status impacts our educational system (Blount, 2013). "Quite simply, preparation programs across the nation do very little to equip students with a cogent understanding of racism and race relations" (Lopez, 2003, p. 70). There is much research to support the position that CRT is a valuable framework to promote social justice within our school systems (Laible & Harrington, 1998; Lomotey, 1995; Parker & Shapiro, 1992; Parker & Villalpando, 2007; Reyes, Velez, & Peña, 1993; Young & Laible, 2000). As teachers and principals attempt to address issues of racism that further alienate traditionally disenfranchised students based on academic achievement, race, and socioeconomic factors (Noguera, 2003), researchers must also be cognizant of the role race and racism play in conducting research in order to help acknowledge and express deeply held beliefs (Brown, 2011). Thus, in order for schools to become vehicles of social justice to help transform issues of poverty and racism (Anyon, 2005; Noguera, 2003), practitioners and researchers must be able to work together to highlight school reform and policy issues that impede efforts to address injustice and to inform policy makers of what might be done differently to produce policy that truly address deeply-seeded issues within America's schools and districts.

Using Professional Learning Communities to Address Issues of Social Justice

For almost two decades, professional learning communities (PLCs) have been viewed by educators as the foundation for sustaining school improvement efforts, improving student achievement, and addressing the culture of a school building (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). However, as our country becomes increasingly diverse, the use of PLCs have also been used by teachers and administrators to help address hidden cultural assumptions amongst educators, increase culturally proficient practices based on the demographics of students being served, and embrace diversity as a strength of a community (Lindsey, Jungwirth, Pahl, & Lindsey, 2009). To move beyond minor changes in teaching, often the result of top down reform initiatives, teachers must be able to renegotiate the pressures of policies and programs in order to apply instructional concepts that are meaningful, applicable, and that speak to the identity of the learners in their classroom (Spillane, 2002). This requires principals who are supportive of creating and fostering PLC environments that allow teachers a safe space to explore cultural differences and address issues of social justice.

As posited by Sharratt and Planche (2016), principals must be able and willing to work alongside teachers and engage in collaborative learning in order to understand the needs of a building, addressing a plan for action, and continually refining the plan of improvement based on ongoing data collection. Additionally, strong school leadership is required in order for educators to talk about the history of race in America, the ability for staff to examine White privilege, and enable school faculties to work together to close the achievement gap between White and non-White students (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Thus, through PLCs, teachers and principals can critically examine issues of race and culturally responsive pedagogy, all in the hope of addressing issues of social justice and equity.

Context of the Study

The study occurred in a Midwestern city with a population of over 136,000 people. The district selected is one of the largest in the state and serves just over 18,000 students. While 83% of the citizens self-identify as White, only 61% of students report as being White, accounting for a huge cultural and generational shift that is occurring within the regional area. With 39% of the students within the school district identifying as non-White, there have been considerable efforts to increase culturally responsive practices, especially considering the school district studied exists in the same city as the local university, which is a major land-grant institution and provides many professional development opportunities for the local school district. Existing in the same community as the local university has provided the school district an advantage when it comes to employing well-educated teachers – with 73.5% of teachers having earned a master's degree or higher, the school district in this study employs almost 15% more teachers with a master's degree or higher than the state average.

Table 1
District Subgroup Student Achievement by Year and Percent Proficient or Advanced

Subgroup Achievement (non-White)	2011-2012 % Proficient or Advanced	2012-2013 % Proficient or Advanced	2013-2014 % Proficient or Advanced
English Language Arts	34.3 %	33.3 %	31.4 %
Mathematics	32.1 %	28.3 %	28.6 %
Science	35.4 %	37.2 %	33.1 %

Table 2
District Total Student Achievement by Year and Percent Proficient or Advanced

Total Achievement (all students)	2011-2012 % Proficient or Advanced	2012-2013 % Proficient or Advanced	2013-2014 % Proficient or Advanced
English Language Arts	54.7 %	55.5 %	53.3 %
Mathematics	52.0 %	48.7 %	48.3 %
Science	57.2 %	59.9 %	56.0 %

The school district was selected for this study due to its efforts to improve student achievement, specifically focusing on narrowing the achievement gap between White and minority students. While the district has been able to make some progress on narrowing the achievement gap, stubborn levels of low performance by students of color on the state standardized test have prevented the district from fully addressing this issue of equity regarding student achievement. Table 1 shows the percentage of non-White students scoring proficient or advanced on the state standardized test, while Table 2 shows the percentage of all students in the district scoring proficient or advanced on the state standardized test. When comparing this information there is almost a 20% difference between percentage of White and non-White students scoring proficient or advanced, providing a clear display in the difference of the level of achievement based on race, and thus the focus on providing culturally responsive practices to help improve achievement within the district.

The school selected for this study, Clear River High School (CRHS), is demographically different than the district in the sense that 71% of its students are White and 29% are non-White, which accounts for a 20% change in demographics when compared to the aforementioned school

district population that is more diverse (61% White; 39% non-White). When comparing the student achievement of CRHS in the 2011-2012 school year, total student achievement was considerably higher than subgroup (non-White) achievement. These achievement data helped serve as the foundation for CRHS faculty to continuously examine data discrepancies between White and non-White students.

Starting in the 2011-2012 school year, nine CRHS educators who served on the building multicultural committee, including teachers, department chairs, and an assistant principal, began reading and researching information on the achievement gap, culturally proficient teaching, and examining the societal notion of White privilege. Their readings included works of Gloria Ladson-Billings, Gary Howard, Jean Anyon, Peggy MacIntosh Michelle Jay, and Glenn Singleton. Together, the group began to formulate their understanding of barriers that made it difficult for students of color to be successful.

The CRHS multicultural committee shared their learning with the building leadership team and the group was invited to continue their work next year and create job-embedded professional development sessions to share with small groups of teachers on a semi-regular basis, which amounted to three times a year. These sessions were 45 minutes in length and occurred during teachers' professional learning committee meeting time. Sessions were designed and planned by the group and facilitated by various group members utilizing a common script to ensure fidelity of the content delivered. Sessions typically contained norms, content, discussion, and reflection. Feedback was solicited from participants and that input shaped future professional developments.

Over the summer of 2012, the group grew to 12 and met and continued to research and learn about factors that contribute to the achievement gap and sought out researched based strategies to close the gap. The group read work by Noguera & Boykin (2011), which is a meta-analysis of 26 years of research around closing the achievement gap. During the 2012-2013 school year, the group compiled proven strategies from this book and delivered professional development supporting the implementation of these strategies during PLC meeting times. To illuminate the achievement gap within CRHS, the group compiled school achievement data illustrating the seriousness of the problem that minority students and students of poverty were failing courses at a much higher rate than their White counterparts. In the 2013-2014 school year, the group grew to 16 and continued to study ways to close the achievement gap and provide culturally proficient teaching strategies. CRHS faculty members designed three more job-embedded professional sessions and delivered one each trimester. These sessions explored the idea of culture, various identities, structural oppression, poverty, and specific characteristics of culturally responsive teaching. Over the course of the three year period, the multicultural group continued to research and learn as they facilitated professional development for their staff. During the spring of 2014, a survey as delivered to all certified teachers in CRHS to assess the impact culturally responsive practices had on teachers' perceptions.

Method

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of CRP professional development and the impact this had on their instructional practices. The high school, CRHS, was selected for this study due to its attempted efforts to implement CRP practices in order to better engage students of color in instruction and to further narrow the achievement gap within the school building. In order to

gain a better understanding of the impact of the CRP professional development, two research questions guided this study: 1) How do teachers perceive culturally responsive pedagogy professional development based on their job assignment? and 2) What do teachers perceive as the greatest successes and challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy?

Data were collected using an online survey tool and was distributed to all teachers in CRHS via email to assess their perceptions of the impact of culturally responsive instruction professional development. An overview of the survey was shared with the entire faculty during a faculty meeting in April of 2014. Then the survey was sent to the principal of CRHS, who in turn forwarded the survey to all certified teachers in the school building. In total, the survey was sent out twice to increase the participation rate of teachers. Of the 120 teachers the survey was sent, 73 responded, giving the study a 61% response rate. Thus, the intent of the study was to better inform the impact of CRP professional development on teachers' perceptions in one high school in a school district experiencing racial and socioeconomic change.

Instrument

In the data collection process the researchers used a survey instrument that was composed of three sections. Developed by the researchers who have more than 73 years of combined teaching, administration, and research experience, the intent of the instrument was to assess the impact of the CRP professional development based on the perceptions of teachers. The first section was informed by 11 Likert scaled items (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) to measure teachers' perceptions of the aforementioned professional development. To establish internal reliability of the created instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient were calculated on all 11 scaled items and found to be 0.90. The second section of the instrument consisted of two-open ended questions that asked teachers to describe the greatest successes and challenges to implementing CRP within their instruction. The third section of the survey allowed the researchers to gather demographic information of the participants and included gender, race, years of experience, job assignment, and tenure status.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential analyses were used to interpret quantitative data. To analyze the entire sample, descriptive means were calculated for the 11 items measured. Additionally, means were broken down and analyzed by job assignment, (two groups), years of teaching experience (three groups), and tenure status (two groups). Data were analyzed with inferential statistics as well, specifically independent samples *t*-tests for the variable of job assignment. To analyze the two open-ended items, an open-coded process was used to identify initial themes and remained flexible as additional themes emerged (Saldaña, 2013).

Results

Of the 73 teachers who responded to the survey, 20 identified as male and 52 as female, with one participant choosing not to self-identify. Additionally, 54 identified as tenured (73.9%) compared to 14 as non-tenured (19.1%). Regarding years of teaching, 26 had one to nine years of experience (35.6%), 28 had 10 to 19 years of experience (38.3%), and 18 had 20 years or

more of teaching experience (24.6%). A total of 49 teachers (67.1%) identified as being a regular classroom teacher who taught a core subject such as English, math, science, or social studies, while 18 (24.6%) identified as being an elective or special education teacher. For the purpose of this study, an elective or special education teacher includes all non-core subject teachers (e.g. music, art, physical education, technology, etc.) and special education teachers. When analyzing racial composition of the teachers who took part in the survey, 67 identified as being White (91.7%). In context of the school being studied, the percentage of White teachers in the building is 20% greater than the White student population of CRHS, and 30% more White than the average of the school district student population. This discrepancy is important to point out when interpreting the analysis of teachers' perceptions.

To answer the first research question, "How do teachers perceive culturally responsive practice professional development based on their job assignment?" the researchers analyzed the data descriptively. Overall means for the 11 items were calculated in order to analyze perceptions of how culturally responsive practices impacted the perceptions of teachers. Table 3 shows the over means for the 11 items, as well as for tenure status, years of teaching experience, and job assignment.

Table 3
Perceptions about Culturally Responsive Practice Professional Development based on Job Assignment, Years of Teaching Experience, and Tenure Status

	Overall Mean	Tenure Status Mean		Years of Teaching Mean			Job Assignment Mean	
		Tenured (*n=54*)	Non (n=14)	1 to 9 (*n=26*)	10 to 19 (*n=28*)	20 or more (*n=18*)	Classroom (*n=49*)	Elective/ SPED (*n=18*)
PD helped examine views on poverty	3.54	3.60	3.14	3.54	3.50	3.63	3.46	3.82
PD helped examine racial identity	3.49	3.50	3.43	3.58	3.32	3.67	3.45	3.78
Change requires administrators and teachers to work together	3.49	3.40	3.64	3.46	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.67
PD helped examine white privilege	3.32	3.26	3.43	3.46	3.21	3.29	3.23	3.67
Research read improved instruction*	3.31	3.33	3.07	3.25	3.36	3.35	*3.11*	*3.82*
PD improved instruction	3.29	3.31	3.14	3.35	3.30	3.28	3.18	3.61
PD impacted building faculty*	3.12	3.19	2.93	3.08	3.15	3.17	*2.96*	*3.61*
PD helped address racism in building	3.10	3.06	3.21	3.19	2.89	3.28	3.00	3.50
PD helped examine grading practices	2.76	2.74	2.71	2.58	3.46	3.58	2.57	3.22
Research read helped close achievement gap	2.75	2.80	2.50	2.65	2.86	2.83	2.57	3.22
PD helped close achievement gap	2.73	2.75	2.54	2.65	2.85	2.78	2.56	3.24

Note: Scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; Elective includes music, art, physical education, technology, etc.; SPED indicates special education * indicates a significant difference at the 0.001 level between classroom teachers and elective/special education teachers

Overall, teachers in the study agreed with all items as all had means higher than 2.50. Teachers agreed most that the *professional development helped examine views on poverty* (*M*=3.54), however they agreed least that the *professional development helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=2.73). When examining the data through the perception of tenure status, those teachers who have tenure agreed most that the *professional development helped examine views on poverty* (*M*=3.60), and least that the *professional development helped examine grading practices* (*M*=2.74). Additionally, non-tenured teachers agreed most that *change requires administrators and teachers to work together* (*M*=3.64), and least that the *research read helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=2.50).

When analyzing the data through the lens of years of teaching experience, teachers with one to nine years of experience agreed most that the *professional development helped examine racial identity* (*M*=3.58) and least that the *professional development helped examine grading practices* (*M*=2.58). Teachers with 10 to 19 years of experience agreed most with the *professional development helped examine views on poverty* as well as *change requires administrators and teachers to work together* (*M*=3.50), and least that the *professional development helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=2.85). Additionally, teachers with 20 or more years of teaching experience agreed most that the *professional development helped examine racial identity* (*M*=3.67) and least that that the *professional development helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=2.78).

Finally, when analyzing the data by job assignment, regular classroom teachers agreed most that the *professional development helped examine views on poverty* (*M*=3.46), however they agreed least that the *professional development helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=2.56). Elective and special education teachers agreed most that the *professional development helped examine views on poverty* as well as the *research read improved instruction* (*M*=3.82). Elective and special education teachers also agreed least that the *professional development helped examine grading practices* and the *research read helped close the achievement gap* (*M*=3.22). An independent *t* test revealed there was a significant difference between regular classroom teachers and elective and special education teachers in terms of how they viewed culturally responsive practice professional development in terms of how the *research read improved instruction* ($p < 0.001$) and how the *professional development impacted building faculty instruction* ($p = 0.001$). Specifically, the elective and special education teachers were significantly more positive about these items. An alpha level of 0.05 was initially used to determine significance, and a Bonferroni correction was applied to reduce the chance of a type I error. Thus, a final alpha level of 0.004 was used to determine significance.

Table 4
2013-2014 CRHS Student Achievement by Year and Percent Proficient or Advanced

Subgroup Achievement (non-White)	2012-2013 % Proficient or Advanced	2013-2014 % Proficient or Advanced
English Language Arts	40.1 %	52.2 %
Mathematics	8.5 %	35.5 %
Science	64.5 %	48.3 %

Table 4 shows the percentage of non-White CRHS students scoring proficient or advanced actually increased from 2013 to 2014 in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, however students scoring proficient or advanced in Science decreased. Compared to the 31.4% of district non-White students who scored proficient or advanced in English Language Arts in the 2013-2014 school year, 52.2% of CRHS non-White students scored proficient or advanced in the same subject. Additionally, 28.6% of district non-White students who scored proficient or advanced in Mathematics during the 2013-2014 school year, while 35.5% of CRHS non-White students scored proficient or advanced in Mathematics. Also, it should be noted that in the 2013-2014 school year, 52.2% of CRHS non-White students scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts is on par with the 53.3% of total district students scoring proficient or advanced in the same subject.

To answer the second research question, "What do teachers perceive as the greatest successes and challenges in implementing culturally responsive professional development?", researchers analyzed two open-ended questions with an open-coding process. With regards to the reported success of implementing CRP professional development, the main theme that emerged was the notion of *acknowledging cultural differences*. Teachers commented on their increased respect for diversity, the awareness of different cultural backgrounds and how this translated to building positive relationships, and the ability to reflect on how a student from a different racial and/or socioeconomic background might perceive instruction within CRHS. One respondent stated:

> I think just a shift in mindset. I feel like I used to ignore race, treat every kid the same, but I'm realizing more and more that we can't just put all our kids in a box. So, I think it's been good for me to have to think more about how I identify my kids.

Another teacher reflected:

> The professional development has reminded me… [to] add another dimension to knowing my students as individuals. I understand my students and their situation better. I have tried to encourage my students to be successful at school with the culturally relevant information in the front of my mind. This is the only way to truly connect….

Thus, some teachers were able to reflect on notions of race, poverty, and white privilege as a result of the culturally responsive practice professional development.

Regarding the reported challenges of the CRP professional development efforts, two main themes emerged, namely *lack of time* and *implementation apathy*. In reflecting on the challenges faced implementing the improvement effort over a three year period, some teachers commented on the difficulty to deeply connect with students, parents, and community members while attempting to implement other improvement efforts.

> It is challenging to impact big changes in such a short time. We could have used more time to unpack, discuss, implement and work through this material as a staff. I think the teachers who gained the most from this PD were teachers who already strive to practice culturally relevant teaching.

> I need more time to work with/help students, and our district need[s] more institutional opportunities for students who need education to look differently.

In implementing a self-directed improvement effort, albeit an important one, teachers also had to adhere to other ongoing improvement efforts driven by building leadership as well as district

initiatives. This highlights the notion that for school improvement efforts to be accomplished, principals need to be cognizant of the number of these initiatives and focus on only one or two aspects to truly impact change.

Additionally, teachers commented on the notion that some teachers sincerely took the improvement effort to heart, while others struggled to change deeply held beliefs about racial and cultural differences. Many of the comments regarding the challenges of the CRP professional development implementation highlight beliefs of apathy among fellow teachers.

> [We are still] fighting the perception that we don't have a lot of diversity or need to close the achievement gap.

> Not everyone seems to have a desire to learn about culturally relevant practices or seems to believe that this is something we need to address.

> I feel there are many teachers who do not work with, or think they don't work with these populations, and that is a huge problem. This can't be ignored and I think too often it is, or that people feel it is someone else's problem.

Thus, there appeared to be a divide in the staff between those teachers who were willing to look at students differently and engage them in culturally responsive practice, and those who were not willing. This theme reflects the significant differences between subject areas, specifically how elective and special education teachers applied the research regarding CRP from the readings, as well as how this professional development initiative impacted the faculty.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of teachers' perceptions about CRP and to better understand how teachers perceive the successes and challenges to implementing such a professional development initiative. The findings from this study can be summarized by the following: 1) teachers agreed most that culturally responsive pedagogy *professional development helped examine views on poverty* (M=3.54), however they agreed least that *professional development helped close the achievement gap* (M=2.73), 2) elective and special education teachers were more positive than regular teachers on every survey item regarding their perception of the impact of culturally responsive pedagogy, 3) elective and special education teachers were significantly more positive than regular classroom teachers in terms of how the *research read improved instruction* ($p < 0.001$) and how the *professional development impacted building faculty instruction* ($p = 0.001$), 4) teachers reported success of the CRP professional development by *acknowledging cultural differences*, however 5) teachers also reported challenges of the CRP professional development efforts, namely *lack of time* and *implementation apathy*.

Based on the context of the study, the findings in this article should help inform leadership preparation in general, as well as future school improvement and reform efforts that are led by school leaders. First, much can be said about the important steps taken by a group of educators that work in a school that employs 91% of teachers who are White but of whom 29% of students identify as non-White. By acknowledging the importance race and ethnicity have on learning (Hawley & Nieto, 2010), the teacher leaders of CRHS provided grassroots professional development opportunities that specifically helped teachers examine their own views on poverty

and race, as well as address pervasive stereotypes (Gay, 2010; Haberman, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Additionally, the teachers of CRHS were empowered by CRHS principals to explore these important issues as they took part in the collaborative learning process (Sharratt & Planche, 2016). While this collaboration is paramount, it is also interesting to point out that teachers' agreed least that the CRP professional development helped close the achievement gap, even though the percentage of non-White CRHS students scoring proficient or advanced actually increased from 2013 to 2014 in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. It is possible that this discrepancy between perception and reality occurred because the survey was given in the spring of 2014, and achievement data for the 2013-2014 school year was not released until the late summer of 2014. When viewed through the CRT framework, educational practices and procedures highlight inequities and keep racial classes divided (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), even though the CRHS faculty attempted to improve efforts over the course of three years of CRP professional development to increase student engagement, success, and achievement (Allen & Boykin, 1992). As a result, providing leadership that focuses on issues of social justice, and celebrating improvements in closing the achievement gap, are considered critical components of educational leadership.

In terms of elective and special education teachers being more positive than regular teachers regarding their perception of the impact of CRP, this study adds to preexisting literature that explores perceptual differences of educators based on developmental stages of teaching careers (Range, Anderson, Hvidston, & Mette, 2013) and administrative experience (Hvidston, Range, McKim, & Mette, 2015). What is interesting about this specific finding is it highlights the notion that elective and special education teachers might provide a different approach to incorporating culturally responsive instruction that is student-centered and focuses on individual strengths rather than being *topic* centered (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007). By definition, special education teachers adapt instruction to meet the needs of individual students, and elective teachers typically provide instruction to students who *chose* to be in their classrooms. Regular classroom teachers who deliver core content, on the other hand, are increasingly scrutinized with accountability measures to examine if quality instruction is being provided. While this cannot be a conclusion of causality, it is important to question if added pressures to perform on state standardized tests creates the opposite desired effect of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other reform efforts. When viewed from a CRT framework, instead of eliminating racial disparities, reform policies further institutionalize the dominant White culture in America by enforcing racial boundaries and hierarchies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Jay, 2003). These findings have major implications for educational leadership preparation programs, particularly around understanding the psychology of teachers responding to reform efforts, especially in subjects assessed by high stakes accountability exams, but also the need for educators to be able to examine their own beliefs about racial disparities and stereotypes about student achievement.

In attempting to address achievement disparities, it is crucial to highlight the perceived success of the CRP professional development effort, specifically the chance for a predominately White faculty to reflect on and learn about cultural differences in the students they serve. As teachers at CRHS learned more about the backgrounds that their non-White students came from, they were better able to understand them as individuals and meet their personal learning needs (Ford, 2010). In this regard, teachers went beyond what their educational preparation programs provided them and challenged their own understandings of race and poverty (Lopez, 2003). That being said, due to other conflicting improvement efforts, as well as the perception that not all

teachers were willing to question their own White privilege (Spina, 2000), the effort has met some resistance in continuing to question the status quo of racial and social structures, supporting the notions of CRT that racism and segregation is institutionalized by the dominant culture in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Clearly, there is a need for leadership to help address the issues of institutionalized racism with their own school buildings.

Conclusions

Three important conclusions can be drawn from this study. First, the three year, grassroots, ongoing CRP professional development effort highlights that teachers and principals have an ethical and moral obligation to challenge the status quo of school systems to lead to better outcomes for historically disenfranchised groups (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer et al., 1995). In this study, the educators of CRHS helped bridge the gap between theory and practice to show the important work that can be done to help teachers and principals examine their views on racial and socioeconomic factors that impact instruction of students and school culture. However, teachers agreed least that the culturally responsive practice professional development helped close the achievement gap, even though the data suggests the percentage of non-White CRHS students scoring proficient or advanced increased from 2013 to 2014 in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. While this is likely due to the perceptions of teachers being collected prior to the release of student achievement data, it does not minimize the perceptions of teachers (a majority of whom are White), that closing the achievement gap is a legitimate struggle. Thus, while teachers and principals have a duty to help traditionally disenfranchised students by transforming educational systems (Anyon, 2005; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), there continues to be a struggle to close the achievement gap, or even the *perceived ability* to close the achievement gap, particularly as practitioners navigate a high stakes accountability and reform environment.

Second, elective and special education teachers were more positive about the CRP professional development than regular classroom teachers who taught core subjects such as English, math, science, and social studies. Additionally, elective and special education teachers were significantly more positive than regular classroom teachers regarding their perceptions of research on culturally responsive practice, as well as how they perceived the impact the CRP professional development had on overall faculty instruction. Previous studies have highlighted the need to differentiate professional development opportunities for teachers based on various demographic backgrounds, such as job assignment, years of teaching, and tenure status (Range et al., 2013), however another conclusion could be that there are different driving factors as to *why* these differences occur in the first place. Teachers instructing courses that are assessed with a state standardized test likely experience more pressure to ensure content is learned as opposed to support teachers whose job it is to engage students with a course that the student elects to take, or through special education requirements that dictate accommodations to meet the individual needs of students. This finding can and should inform school and district leaders about the need understand the perceptions of teachers in their own buildings and districts, support professional learning communities that address issues of social justice and equity, and target ongoing efforts to narrow the achievement gap. Additionally, further research should be conducted to gain the perspectives of students to see if there is a perceptual difference between instruction provided by

regular classroom teachers and elective and special education teachers. This type of research could provide evidence that the current accountability system is not helping address an achievement gap, but rather further alienating students and inhibiting school systems from addressing issues of social justice (Anyon, 2005).

Third, while the culturally responsive practice professional development helped CRHS teachers acknowledge cultural differences, the continual pressure from additional school improvement and reform efforts, coupled with apathy from some teachers to address issues of race and culture, contributed to the *perceived* lack of any major student achievement improvement. Not only is there a need for educational preparation programs to continue to improve ways to help teachers and principals reflect on issues of race and racism (Lopez, 2003; Parker & Villalpando, 2007), but there seemingly still exists the notion that racism is so deeply embedded and reinforced that teachers who identify as White are not able to deconstruct the narrative of how public school systems favor White students (Spina, 2000). All leadership preparation programs, regardless of the apparent level of diversity, will need to find ways to incorporate this important and yet very difficult work, especially as America continues to rapidly diversify.

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Principal Instructional Leadership Behaviors: Teacher vs. Self-Perceptions

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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In response to ever-increasing accountability of school principals to demonstrate higher levels of student achievement, instructional leadership continues to be an important focus among educational researchers. In this paper, researchers briefly review the literature base regarding instructional leadership, then present the conceptual framework adopted for the study. Using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), the team measured self-perceptions of principals (n=17) regarding frequency of instructional leadership behaviors enacted in daily leadership, then compared self-reports to reports of teachers (n= 407) in principals' schools. Findings revealed no significant differences between respondent groups–a departure from typical findings in similar studies. Further investigation of these non-significant differences, however, indicated that magnitude and direction of principal-teacher differences varies among schools in the sample. The article concludes with possible implications for further research and practice.

Introduction

In response to mounting expectations holding school principals accountable for demonstrating increasing levels of student achievement, instructional leadership continues to be an important focus among educational researchers. Acknowledging a burgeoning focus in the empirical literature on distributed leadership models (Spillane, 2006) and the important role teachers play in instructional leadership (Barth, 2001; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), researchers focused this study on specific instructional leadership behaviors of the primary instructional leader in schools–the school principal. Hallinger and Murphy (2012) wrote, "While effective leadership cannot guarantee successful education reform, research affirms that sustainable school improvement is seldom found without active, skillful, instructional leadership from *principals* and teachers" (p. 6, emphasis added).

In light of this recent and growing emphasis placed upon the role of school building principal to perform as an instructional leader, research team members were interested in exploring and comparing principal self-perceptions of their own instructional leadership behaviors with the perceptions held by teachers whose instructional practice these principals supervised. In other words, we wanted to explore whether or not teachers and principals agreed regarding how frequently the principal performs specific behaviors and duties of an instructional leader. In previous studies, these sample groups have tended to differ significantly from one another. Hallinger, Wang, and Chen (2013) noted that "researchers consistently report significant differences between teacher and principal perceptions of the principal's instructional leadership. Moreover, principal self-report scores tend to be substantially higher than those obtained from teachers (p. 277).

The team conducted this study in a mid-sized school district in the southeastern portion of the United States, with all schools, principals, and teachers in the district invited to participate. It is important to note that this study is one of two companion studies, conducted simultaneously in two neighboring school districts, but for different purposes and with separate respondent groups. See Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, Lee, & Shores, (2015) for a complete description of the companion study.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to measure self-perceptions held by school principals regarding the frequency with which principals enacted specific instructional leadership behaviors, as defined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), and measured by the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1983). Research question asked, How do principal self-perceptions compare to those held by teachers in these principals' schools regarding how often principals demonstrate specific instructional leadership behaviors?

Background

Recently, the role of the school building principal in the United States has evolved and expanded in many different ways. The most important recent change lies in the increased focus on instructional leadership skills of school principals. This focus has taken center stage in the discourse regarding school improvement, illuminated by the increasingly intense spotlight of

accountability (Fullan, 2006; Hall & Hord, 2002; Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). These accountability policies have reignited researcher interest in instructional leadership, reframing their thinking about instructional leadership as an *option* to a *necessity* for school administrators (Murphy, 2008; Silva, White, & Yoshida, 2011). According to Hallinger and Murphy (2012), "Today, we view instructional leadership as an influence process through which leaders identify direction for the school, motivate staff and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (p. 7).

Researchers agree that improving schools in the 21st century requires that principals exhibit strong skills and expertise in instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2008). Recent discussions offered in the literature on instructional leadership contend that, next to teaching, the school leader is a key lever in school reform (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Additionally, the empirical evidence provided in recent years (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) also affirms the importance of instructional leadership to the professional practice of school principals.

Hallinger and Heck (1998) identified the impact of leadership in terms of categories of defining school mission, managing the instructional programs and promoting the school climate. They further identified the impact of leadership in terms of mode of impact as direct, mediated and reciprocal. Blase and Blase (1999) favor a broader perspective to instructional leadership in which instructional leaders value a blend of supervision, staff development and curriculum development.

More current authors agreed with these earlier works regarding the instructional practices of principals, and advocated for principals to place teaching and learning at the core of their leadership efforts. Leithwood et al., (2004) stated that instructional leaders today must be engaged in setting direction in their schools by (a) building and communicating a compelling vision; (b) developing shared goals; (c) engaging in effective planning and organization; (d) clarifying roles and objectives; (e) motivating and inspiring others; and (f) setting high performance expectations for all.

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) examined a meta-analysis conducted by Marzano and his colleagues (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters et al., 2003). Marzano and his team reviewed "70 empirical studies over a 30-year period which included objective measures of student achievement and teacher reports of leadership behaviors" (p. 21). As an outcome of this meta-analysis, Marzano and colleagues identified 21 leadership responsibilities which contributed to instructional leadership of principals and ultimately in increased levels of student achievement.

Educational experts have evolved substantially over the past several decades in their thinking about instructional leadership and the role that the principal plays in supporting the teaching and learning environment within a school (Gurley et al., 2015). Generally speaking, the evidence supports the notion that the principal plays a critical role in establishing and maintaining a focus on learning in a school through his or her continual and routine engagement in instructional leadership behaviors. It is toward a more precise definition of instructional leadership, and the identification of the specific best practices in instructional leadership

behaviors that we now turn in the discussion of the conceptual framework adopted to guide this study.

Conceptual Framework

Leithwood et al. (2006) compared key principal/leader behaviors described across various models of instructional leadership they found in the related literature. These authors concluded that "Hallinger (2000), Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Heck, Larson and Marcoulides (1990) have provided the most fully specified model and by far the most empirical evidence concerning the nature and effects of that model in practice" (p. 20). According to Leithwood et al., there have been 125 studies published between 1980 and 2000 regarding this foundational model of instructional leadership.

The Hallinger and Murphy (1985) framework of instructional leadership was among the first to identify specific, key behaviors enacted by principals in an attempt to more carefully define the construct of instructional leadership. The research team adopted this framework as a conceptual anchor to guide the research, data analysis, and interpretation because it is the dominant and most widely affirmed school leadership terminology for the past quarter of a century and has been used most frequently in empirical investigations (Hallinger, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2006).

This definition of instructional leadership is comprised of three dimensions, each accompanied by sub-scale dimensions or *functions*. The three primary dimensions include: (a) *Defining the School's Mission*, (b) *Managing the Instructional Program*, and (c) *Promoting a Positive School Learning Climate*. Each of these dimensions is supported or underpinned by two to five specific instructional leadership behaviors called *functions*. For example, the dimension *Defining the School's Mission* is supported by the specific functions of (a) *Frames the School's Goals,* and (b) C*ommunicates the School's Goals.*

Based upon this conceptual framework, Hallinger and Murphy (1985) developed the *Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale* (PIMRS)*,* an instrument that has been used widely since to measure the frequency with which school principals engage in, or are observed engaging in, the specific functions identified. The PIMRS was designed to be completed by principals themselves, regarding their own instructional leadership behavior, but also by teachers and by principal supervisors who respond to the survey based upon their observation of the frequency with which they have observed the principal enacting the specific instructional leadership functions. By administering the PIMRS to these three respondent groups (i.e., principals, teachers, and principal supervisors), the individual principal can obtain a thorough, 360-degree perspective on their instructional leadership practice.

Methods

Researchers administered the PIMRS (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) to principals and to teachers in each of the schools ($n = 21$) in a mid-sized school district located in the southeastern region of the United States. The 50-item principal version of the PIMRS asks respondents to rate, on a Likert-type scale, how frequently they perceive themselves enacting specific instructional leadership behaviors in the schools they lead (1= *Almost Never,* 5 = *Almost Always*). Behaviors measured by the scale have been defined in the literature as best practices demonstrated by

principals in effective schools. The survey was administered, via email invitation, in electronic format. Of the 21 principals who were invited to complete the survey, 17 principals returned complete surveys, yielding a response rate of 80.9%.

In an attempt to provide a critical point of comparison with principal data, all certified teachers in these principals' schools (n = 661) were invited, via separate email, to anonymously complete an electronic version of an alternate, 22-item PIMRS, shortened for ease of administration to teachers (see Hallinger, & Wang [2015] for discussion of validity and reliability measures of the shortened version of the PIMRS). Of the teachers invited, 407 returned complete surveys, yielding a return rate of 61.5%. In the interest of protecting all human subjects, this research project was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the affiliated university.

Data Sources

Researchers gathered data using the PIMRS. The PIMRS has been used extensively over the last three decades by numerous school systems and in more than 200 empirical studies conducted in 22 countries (Hallinger, 2011). The PIMRS is scored by calculating the mean response for each survey item among, but not across, respondent groups. The PIMRS yields 10 *function* scores by averaging responses for the five items comprising each subscale. By further averaging the function scores under each of the dimensions, the scale yields three *dimension* scores. These 10 function and three dimension scores, from each respondent group, comprise the instructional leadership profile for the individual principal. Profiles may be helpful for principals to use as a self-assessment tool by comparing the means and distributions of scores within and across respondent groups.

Results

Principals responded to the survey in roughly equal numbers of male and female participants. Notably, however, about a third of participants (6 of 17) reported being either in their first year or in the first four years of their career as a principal. About half of the teacher respondent group reported having worked with their principal for less than five years. Teachers were generally more experienced in their roles, compared to their principals, with 65% (n = 267) reporting having 10 or more years' of classroom teaching experience. Demographic characteristics of respondent groups are reported in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1
Demographics of 17 Principals Completing PIMRS

Characteristic	*F*	%
Male	8	47
Female	9	53
Total	17	100

Principal 1 Year	2	12
Principal 2-4 Years	4	22
Principal 5-9 Years	9	53
Principal 10-15 Years	0	0
Principal More than 15 Years	2	12
Total	17	
High School (Grades 9-12)	4	24
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	5	29
Elementary School (Grades P-5)	8	47
Total	17	100

Table 2
Demographics of Teachers Completing PIMRS

Characteristic	f	%	
Years Worked with Principal			
1	88	22	
2-4	109	27	
5-9	157	39	
10-15	31	8	
More than 15	19	5	
Total Teacher Responses	404	101	+
Years of Experience as a Teacher			
1	18	4	
2-4	48	12	
5-9	74	18	
10-15	63	15	
More than 15	204	50	
Total Teacher Responses	407	99	+
School Level			
High School (Grades 9-12)	91	22	
Middle School (Grades 6-8)	143	35	
Elementary School (Grades P-5)	173	43	
Total Teacher Responses	407	100	

Note. + denotes rounding error.

In an effort to provide evidence of reliability for PIMRS scores for both principal and teacher responses, the research team calculated a Chronbach's Alpha (Chronbach, 1951) score

for each survey. In addition to the 50-item survey scores, however, and in order to be able to compare principal and teacher scores more directly, the team created an *ad hoc* principal survey (for statistical analysis only) using only the 22 items from the principal survey that matched the 22 items on the shortened teacher form of the test. Chronbach's Alpha scores for the full version of the principal survey demonstrated a fairly wide range among the individual functions measured on the test. But reliability estimates for the three main survey dimension scores were strong, ranging from α = 0.81 to α = 0.91. Reliability estimates for the 22-item *ad hoc* principal survey were considerably lower, ranging from α = 0.55 to α = 0.82. Reliability estimates, as well as descriptive statistics for the principal survey and principal *ad hoc* survey, are presented in Table 3. (Please note that the number of principals [n = 28] used in the calculation of the Chronbach's Alpha scores includes an additional group of 11 principals from a neighboring school district who responded to the exact same survey, administered in the same manner and at the same time, but for a different, companion study. See [citation omitted for anonymity] for a description of this parallel study. Additional principals from the companion study were added to this analysis due to small sample size.).

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients – Principal Survey

Element	50-items (n=28 principals)				22-items (n=28 principals)			
	Items	*M*	*SD*	*α*	Items	*M*	*SD*	*α*
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	10	4.45	0.43	0.81	5	4.63	0.32	0.55
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	5	4.60	0.37	0.70	3	4.73	0.34	0.51
Function 1B: Communicates the School's Goals	5	4.29	0.62	0.82	2	4.48	0.48	0.36
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	15	4.35	0.46	0.91	7	4.44	0.43	0.82
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluates Instruction	5	4.32	0.54	0.75	2	4.34	0.58	0.32
Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	5	4.56	0.46	0.80	3	4.64	0.42	0.69
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	5	4.16	0.59	0.87	2	4.25	0.55	0.79
Dimension 3: Developing the School Learning Climate	25	4.18	0.44	0.86	10	4.18	0.53	0.78

Element	Items	M	SD	α	Items	M	SD	α
Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	5	4.44	0.41	0.59	1	4.93	0.26	NA
Function 3B: Maintains High Visibility	5	3.85	0.70	0.68	2	4.57	0.52	0.26
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	5	3.96	0.76	0.81	3	3.87	0.84	0.71
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Development	5	4.45	0.55	0.80	2	4.36	0.54	0.38
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	5	4.18	0.69	0.81	2	3.71	1.02	0.70

Note: This table provides descriptive statistics and (Cronbach's Alpha) reliability estimates for the PIMRS principal form (50 items) and for 22 items that match the PIMRS teacher short form. Principal responses from two school systems are combined due to small sample size from current study.

Reliability estimates for the three main dimensions measured by the PIMRS among the teacher respondent group were also quite high, ranging from $\alpha = 0.93$ to $\alpha = 0.94$. Reliability estimates and descriptive statistics for the teacher survey are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Coefficients – Teacher Survey

Element	One school system (n=407 teachers)			
	Items	M	SD	α
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	5	4.50	0.69	0.93
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	3	4.55	0.67	0.90
Function 1B: Communicates the School's Goals	2	4.44	0.78	0.83
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	7	4.29	0.80	0.93
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluates Instruction	2	4.17	0.94	0.80
Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	3	4.38	0.81	0.89
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	2	4.29	0.84	0.75
Dimension 3: Developing the School	10	4.05	0.93	0.94

Learning Climate

Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	1	4.53	0.83	
Function 3B: Maintains High Visibility	2	4.35	0.91	0.84
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	3	3.68	1.21	0.90
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Development	2	4.20	0.98	0.80
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	2	3.90	1.14	0.88

In reviewing the mean scores for the three dimensions of instructional leadership and the 10 functions, or sub-dimensions measured by the PIMRS, the team discovered that principals, on average, rated the frequency with which they enact the specific instructional leadership behaviors identified on the survey at about the same level as teachers report observing principals enacting these behaviors. On several of the scores, principals rated themselves higher than the teachers, a typical pattern reported in the literature (Hallinger et al., 2013), but for several other behaviors, the teachers actually rated the principal higher than the principals rated themselves. But, in general, the two respondent groups agreed, across function and dimension scores, indicating that there was a close match between how principals perceived themselves as displaying these specific instructional leadership behaviors and how teachers viewed principal behaviors. Results from this part of the analysis are reported in Table 5.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics for PIMRS Teacher Survey and Comparable Principal Surveys

	17 Schools (n=17 principals) 50 items		17 Schools (n=17 principals) 22 items		17 Schools (n=407 teachers) 22 items	
Element	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Dimension 1: Defining the School Mission	4.35	0.51	4.60	0.39	4.51	0.68
Function 1A: Frames the School's Goals	4.59	0.43	4.73	0.38	4.55	0.67
Function 1B: Communicates the School's Goals	4.12	0.69	4.41	0.54	4.44	0.78
Dimension 2: Managing the Instructional Program	4.25	0.52	4.36	0.45	4.31	0.79
Function 2A: Supervises & Evaluates Instruction	4.34	0.52	4.32	0.61	4.20	0.93

Function 2B: Coordinates the Curriculum	4.39	0.50	4.55	0.42	4.39	0.79
Function 2C: Monitors Student Progress	4.01	0.66	4.12	0.57	4.31	0.83
Dimension 3: Developing the School Learning Climate	4.07	0.45	4.23	0.45	4.07	0.91
Function 3A: Protects Instructional Time	4.25	0.39	4.94	0.24	4.55	0.80
Function 3B: Maintains High Visibility	3.75	0.66	4.50	0.53	4.37	0.91
Function 3C: Provides Incentives for Teachers	3.91	0.80	4.20	0.73	3.70	1.20
Function 3D: Promotes Professional Development	4.34	0.59	4.26	0.53	4.20	0.98
Function 3E: Provides Incentives for Learning	4.11	0.69	3.62	0.96	3.93	1.12

This finding is of particular interest in light of the fact that, over the last three decades, typical findings indicate that principals tend to rate themselves consistently and substantially higher than do teachers regarding principal instructional leadership behaviors. Hallinger et al., (2013) stated that "principal self-report scores [on the PIMRS] tend to be substantially higher than those obtained from teachers" (p. 277).

In an effort to compare principal scores more closely to those of the teachers in their specific buildings, the research team also conducted paired *t* tests for each of the schools. For each dimension, the principal score for a given school was paired with the mean of the teacher scores for that school. Results indicated no statistically significant differences between teacher and principal dimension scores on any of the three dimensions. Results from the paired *t* test are shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Paired t Test Results on Three Dimensions of PIMRS Comparing Principal Means with Teacher Means

	Principal			Teacher			Paired *t* test Results		
Dimension	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*Pr > |t|*
1	17	4.60	0.39	17	4.51	0.68	16	0.60	0.5601
2	17	4.36	0.45	17	4.31	0.79	16	0.18	0.8619
3	17	4.23	0.45	17	4.07	0.91	16	1.06	0.3064

Upon further analysis, however, the research team discovered that, despite the lack of statistically significant differences relative to teacher and principal dimension scores within buildings, there are, indeed, differences in direction and magnitude of scores obtained within

buildings. In some schools, principals consistently rate themselves higher than did their teachers in enacting instructional leadership behaviors. In other schools, the opposite result was observed. In the remaining schools, the scores were very closely matched. Such discrepancies between schools may suggest that calculation of mean scores and tests of significance selected for this study may, in fact, have a centralizing effect on results, and may therefore mask important discrepancies within and between schools. Further examination of such discrepancies may reveal that in some schools there is a substantial mismatch in perceptions of principal instructional leadership behaviors, while in the majority of schools in our sample (9 of 17; 53%), perceptions of the frequency of enactment of these behaviors seem well matched. Further analysis is indicated in order to uncover the causes for such discrepancies within buildings. Averages by individual school are graphically displayed in Figures 1 through 3.
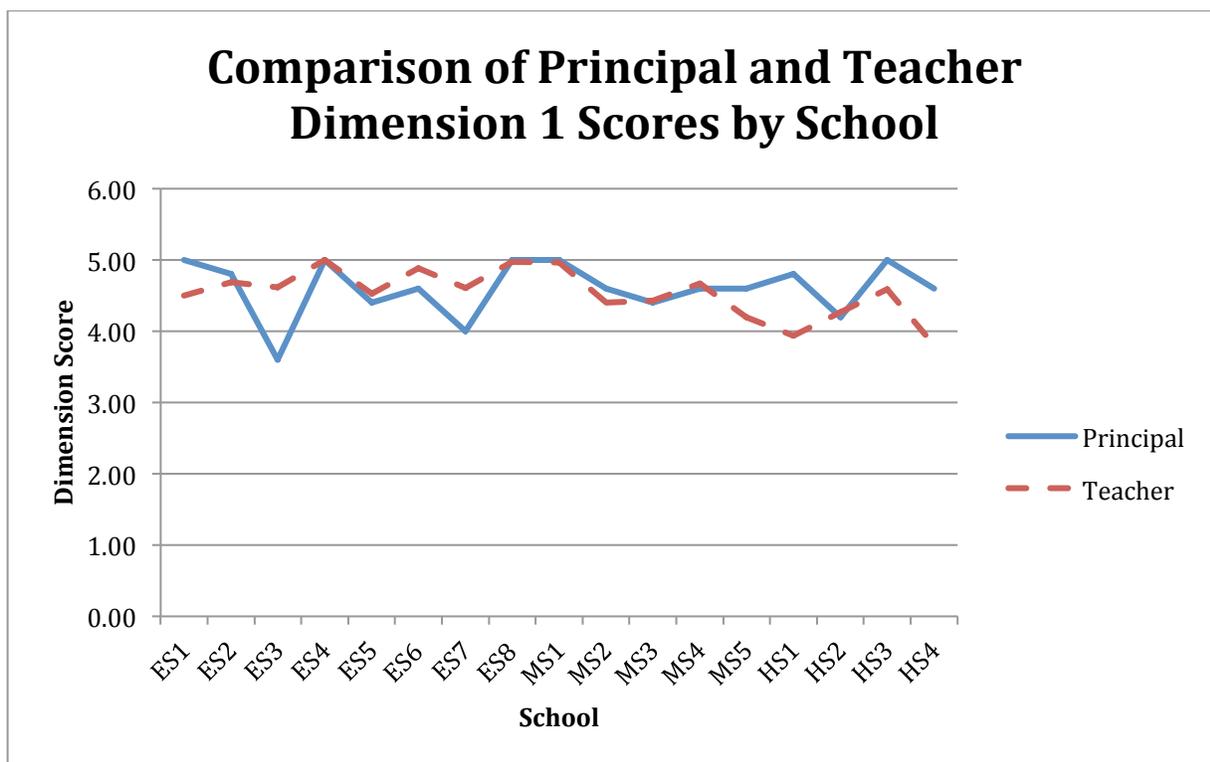

Figure 1. Comparison of principal and teacher scores by school for Dimension 1: *Defining the School Mission*.
Note: E=Elementary School, M=Middle School, H=High School
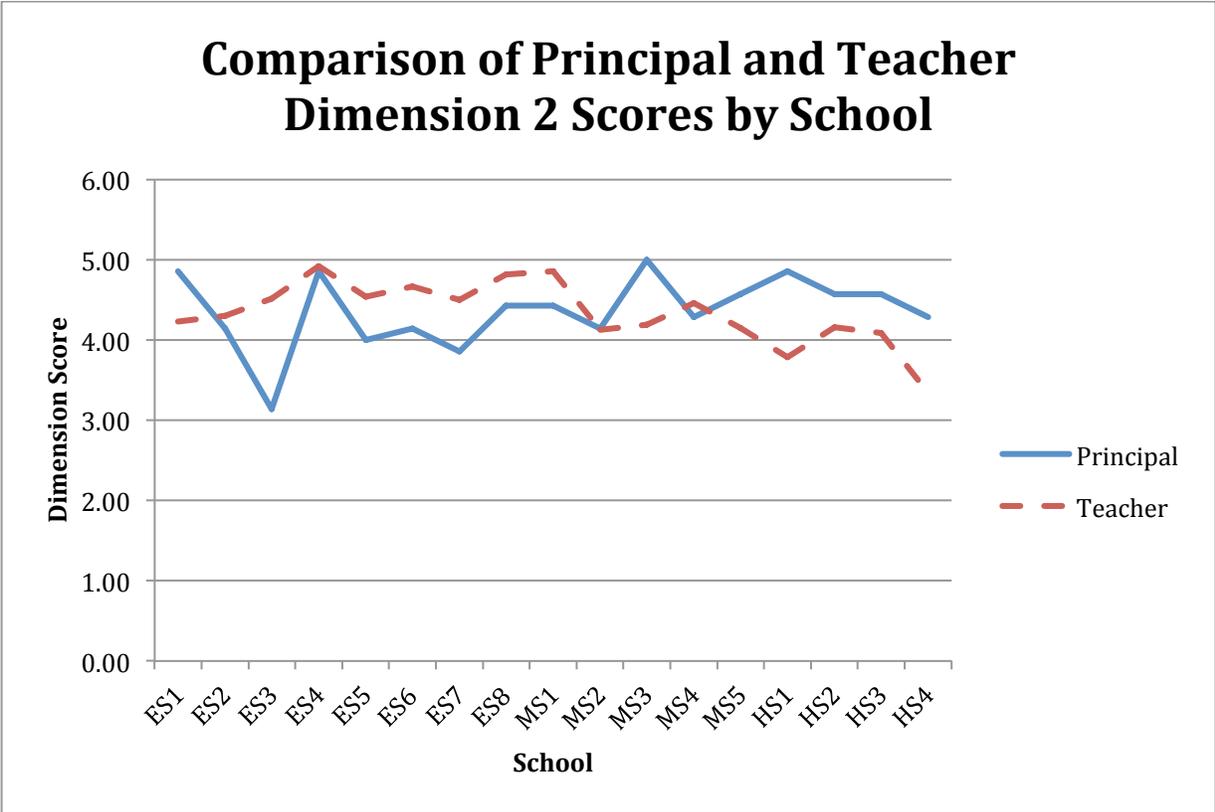
Figure 2. Comparison of principal and teacher scores by school for Dimension 2: *Managing the Instructional Program.*

Note: E=Elementary School, M=Middle School, H=High School
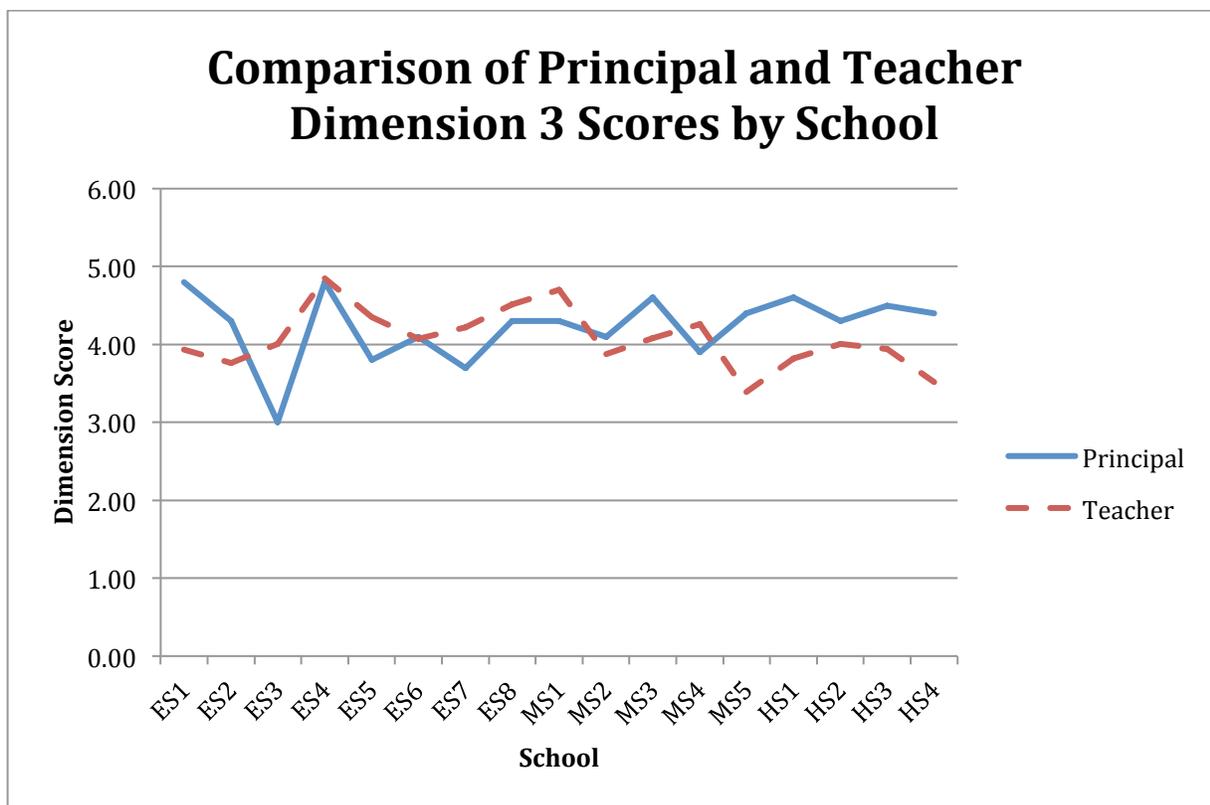
Figure 3. Comparison of principal and teacher scores by school for Dimension 3: *Developing the School Learning Climate.*
Note: E=Elementary School, M=Middle School, H=High School

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in the fact that findings depart somewhat from what has typically been reported by other researchers using the same measure. As mentioned above, it is a much more typical finding that principals rate themselves substantially and consistently higher than do their teachers in reporting on the frequency with which they engage in instructional leadership behaviors measured by the PIMRS (Hallinger et al., 2013). In this study the research team discovered that, while mean scores suggest a close match in perceptions between respondent groups, when the team compared findings by individual building, results varied. Though perhaps tempting to interpret the initial finding of a lack of significance in differences between the two respondent groups as an encouraging result, findings suggest that, within individual school buildings, differences are observed which merit further investigation. Researchers would do well to further explore why some principals perceive themselves as more frequently engaged in instructional leadership behaviors than do their teachers, and why some principals and teachers report the opposite perceptions.

Nevertheless, given the findings from most (53%) of the buildings in the sample, i.e., that there is little if any difference between the perceptions of principals and teachers, there is a suggestion that respondent groups generally agree regarding the frequency of principal instructional leadership behaviors enacted and observed. Further, team members wonder, could

these findings indicate that principals in our sample, about a third of whom were serving in the first four years in the role (i.e., newly appointed and therefore likely to be newly matriculated from leadership training programs which emphasize instructional leadership skill development for pre-service principals), are spending more time in instructional leadership than samples of principals measured in previous studies? Samples of this size and limited location are certainly not large enough to merit such a generalization. But, these findings do suggest that further research along these lines is certainly indicated and may indeed prove to be encouraging.

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Aspiring School Leaders' Perceptions of the Walkthrough Observations

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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The accountability pressures of the recent decade require that instructional leaders work with teachers to ensure student academic success. The "walkthrough" or "walkthrough observation" is an instructional leadership practice that has been regarded as a promising avenue to collaboratively work with teachers. This exploratory study examines aspiring instructional leaders' perceptions regarding the walkthrough observation. Findings indicate that this type of practice is perceived as a Bureaucratic Approach, incorporating a one-way transmission of feedback from the principal to the observed teacher, or as a Collaborative Approach, including teachers in conducting observations and actively participating in the collection of walkthrough data. Additionally, findings suggest that regardless of the perceived approach, a walkthrough observation may be considered an authentic feedback data source.

An instructional leadership practice that has become prominent as a promising avenue to collect data for enhancing teaching and learning, is known as the "walkthrough" or "walkthrough observation," and "learning walks." These walkthroughs, conducted predominantly by school administrators, focus on instruction and center on improvement of the school or staff (Cudeiro & Nelson, 2009) and may vary in nature and process. For example, Calvin, Flannery, Sugai, and Monegan (2009) conducted ten minute observations, provided teachers with feedback regarding their performance, and collaboratively developed an action plan to improve instructional approaches. Similarly, Downey, Steffy, English, Frase, and Poston, (2004) developed a very brief observation protocol for more proficient teachers to foster professional growth through reflective dialogue. However, a lack of agreement appears to exist as researchers and practitioners continue to assign different meaning to this practice, also known as "informal observations, pop-ins, walk-ins, or drop-ins" (Zepeda, 2005, p.18). Other definitions include the following: "learning walks, instructional walks, focus walks, walk-abouts, data walks, data snaps, learning visits, quick visits, mini-observations, rounds, instructionally focused walkthroughs, administrative walkthroughs, supervisory walkthroughs, collegial walkthroughs, reflective walkthroughs, classroom walkthroughs, and just walkthroughs" (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010, p. 1). Although there exists a variation in the meaning of the tool used for observation purposes, the end result is to gather evidence of teaching and student learning to inform actions that will guide improvement. However, limited research examines walkthrough observations from a teacher perspective regarding their use in a collaborative process (Bushman, 2006; Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002). Recently, researchers have attempted "to ascertain perceptions of the usefulness of classroom observations as a means of individual professional growth" for teachers (Topolka-Jorissen & Allen, 2009, p. 5). In addition, teachers' voices appear to be absent from the discourse, and therefore, it is critical to highlight their perspectives in order to promote teacher active participation in enhancing their instructional practice (Bushman, 2006).

This paper highlights the findings of an exploratory study aimed at illuminating the perceptions of aspiring instructional leaders regarding the walkthrough observation and its actual potential. Thus, the following includes the theoretical background, methodological considerations, findings, and implications.

Theoretical Background

This study is guided by the literature on walkthroughs. For the purpose of this exploratory study, the term walkthrough observation refers to a "series of brief classroom observations" (Ovando, 2001, p. 223). Principals, teacher leaders, mentors, coaches and other administrators may conduct these observations. According to Zepeda, walkthrough observations share the following features: "1) They are brief, lasting approximately 15 to 20 minutes (perhaps longer), 2) They can occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a period, and 3) They can occur at any time during the school year" (Zepeda, 2005, p. 18). Further, these observations are recognized by teachers "as an effective way to focus on real teaching episodes, teachers' instructional performance, student learning and teachers' individual needs" (Ovando, 2001, p. 223). The most proficient teachers expect feedback from the campus instructional leader as a way to develop and grow professionally (Colasacco, 2010).

Walkthrough Protocols

Given the apparent utility of walkthrough observations, school leaders have been engaged in conducting these observations (Downey et al., 2004) to collect information related to actual classroom instruction. Others report that some school districts "require that principals do a specific number of walkthroughs or "five-by-fives" (visits to five classrooms for five minutes) each week" (Topolka-Jorissen & Allen, 2009, p. 3). At the same time, teachers are encouraged to get involved in the walkthrough observation process and to become partners in a dialogue based on these observations (Bushman, 2006). Regular discussions can influence teacher reflection and empower teachers to foster their own professional growth (Shortland, 2010). As result, the classroom walkthrough observation is viewed as a suitable mechanism to collect classroom-based data to help teachers enhance instruction (Topolka-Jorissen & Allen, 2009).

        Similarly, novice principals value a walkthrough observation, as an effective collaborative instructional leadership practice to facilitate effective student learning. For instance, walkthrough observations may "include brief routine peer or administrator observations of classroom instruction with feedback combined with reflections on personal practice" (Ovando & O'Doherty, 2010, p. 15). Others note that "to make informal classroom observations a priority, principals must frame their work habits and daily routines around dropping by classrooms and then following up by providing teachers with feedback and opportunities for reflection and inquiry" (Zepeda, 2005, pp. 1-2). Similalry, first–year principals "conduct walk-through observations which allow them to briefly visit classroom on a more frequent basis, offering feedback intended to acknowledge effective teaching and assist teachers' efforts to enhance instruction as a well as collaborating with teachers and instructional coaches in the walk-through process" (Ovando & O'Doherty, 2010, p. 25). By conducting frequent classroom observations, principals may also get to know students better and develop a real understanding of what students are actually learning (Holland, n/d). However, many administrators view walkthroughs as time consuming and choose not to use, while prioritizing other administrative tasks (Granada & Vriesenga, 2008).

Walkthroughs and Outcomes

Moreover, a walkthrough observation may serve several purposes. For instance, previous research suggests that conducting walkthroughs may increase leadership capacity (Moss & Brookhart, 2013) to heighten leadership visibility on campus (Fisher, 2013), to become familiar with the daily activity in a classroom (Kachur, Stout, & Edwards, 2010), and "to focus on real teaching episodes, teachers' instructional performance, students learning and teachers' individual needs" (Ovando, 2001, p. 223). Others use walkthroughs as an opportunity to develop and to discuss agenda items with faculty, to help faculty focus on ways to contribute to school-wide success (Kachur et al., 2010) or gather data to improve student success and lower the drop-out rates (Ziegler, (2006).

        While a walkthrough observation may lead to instruction-focused conversations between instructional leaders and teachers (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013), the appropriate duration of sufficient data collection remains unclear. For instance, Downey et al. (2005) advanced the Downey Informal Observation approach which requires that principals observe classrooms from three to five minutes. As a result the "three-minute classroom walk-through" has become a

common classroom assessment practice (Downey et. al, 2005). Ginsberg and Murphy (2002) agree that "these frequent, short, unscheduled visits can foster focused, reflective, and collaborative adult learning" (p. 34). This may be viewed as an organized and quick approach to collect sufficient (David, 2008). However, such short observations may not be an effective practice. As Zepeda (2005) asserts, "the egg-timer approach to classroom observations of this duration is a "blitz" in which the observation's brevity minimizes data collection" (p. 19). Others suggest that teachers themselves may conduct a walk-through observation. Thus, this observation "is unique because it does focus on enabling teachers to learn by exploring and relating to what the teachers are doing in their classrooms" (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003, p. 121). As Sullivan and Glanz (2005) acknowledge, the "standards-based walkthrough focus is on enabling you to learn by exploring and relating to what other teachers are doing in their classrooms. Because it is designed and carried out by you, it helps to develop your leadership capacity" (pp. 136-137). Further, according to teachers, it is a process that "encouraged teachers to reflect and share" (Bushman, 2006, p. 58). This collaborative sharing session is a way to enable both parties to compare, to provide, and to receive evidence of the classroom activity (Shortland, 2010).

Perspectives Regarding Walkthroughs

While walkthroughs may assess teacher performance through a supervisory lens rather than an evaluative one (Range, Scherz, Holt & Young, 2011), principals may also adopt bureaucratic methods when conducting walkthroughs (Minnear-Peplinski, (2009). In spite of these approaches, research exploring principals' perceptions of walkthroughs is limited. In one example, Keruskin (2005) examined high school principals' perceptions about the impact of walkthroughs on student achievement. Findings suggested that the use of walkthroughs can promote change in the culture of the school and classrooms through collaboration between the teacher and the principal positively impacting instruction and student achievement. In a similar study (Rossi, 2007) of elementary school principals' conceptions, findings indicated that walkthroughs promoted an improvement in test scores, teachers implemented more focused instructional strategies and improved their practice, students were more engaged and produced better work, and teacher/principal dialogue regarding teaching and student learning increased.

In another study, Dixon-Houston (2012) examined principals' and teachers' perspectives regarding the collegial aspect of walkthroughs. While administrators identified trust, positive relationships, common goals, modeling, transparency, and a culture for learning as aspects of promoting collegiality through walkthroughs, teachers reported that trust between both parties, and feedback and reflection are key in promoting a collegial relationship to enhance teaching and increase dialogue with the administrator. Overall, "all agreed that walkthroughs should be collegial in an effort to improve teacher pedagogy, classroom management, and student achievement" (p 67). Administrators and teachers viewed the walkthrough as an effective approach to supervision, however teachers agreed that it should be at least 25 minutes long.

Although some teachers may perceive walkthroughs as ineffective as a result of unclear expectations, lack of transparency, or concern about their teaching performance, Brown and Coley (2011) explored the use of walkthroughs as a means to improve administrators' instructional leadership and reflective conversations about teaching performance with teachers. Results indicated that the frequency of walkthroughs promoted trust between administrator and teacher; thus, an administrator needs to have a more intimate connection teaching and learning to

improve instruction on the school campus. Teachers also need to participate in ongoing critical reflection about their teaching performance to improve their skill that will benefit students.

Given such divergent perspectives regarding walkthrough observations, it is important to highlight walkthrough observations' potential for collaborative work with teachers to enhance instruction and student learning. As Topolka-Jorissen and Allen (2009) suggested, there is a need "for further exploration of supervisory artifacts and their potential as a collaborative process that might strengthen school capacity and student learning, as well as the need for additional research on the utility of learning walks as a capacity-building strategy" (p. 16). This also means that trust and transparency must be established for collaboration to be effective (David, 2008). The literature offers an account about some of the benefits of walk through observations (Ovando, 2001); however, questions regarding actual practice remain and merit attention. For example, How do teachers and principals define the walkthrough observation? What do they see as benefits or limitations? How should walkthrough observations be conducted? Who should conduct these observations, and for what purpose?

Methodological Considerations

This exploratory study focused on aspiring instructional leaders' perceptions regarding the potential of walkthrough observations. Exploratory qualitative studies are appropriate "to investigate little understood phenomenon, to identify or discover important categories of meaning, to generate hypothesis of future research" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 96). Thus, we were interested in educators' perceptions about walkthroughs since the critical nature of observations continues to be illuminated as an effective practice (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). The following questions guided this study:

1) What are aspiring instructional leaders' overall perceptions of the walkthrough observation?
2) What are aspiring instructional leaders' perceptions about the potential of walkthrough observations?

We employed a qualitative descriptive research approach with an open-ended questionnaire as a single data collection source. The intent was to capture respondents' views related to the walkthrough observation. As Leedy and Ormord (2005) remind us, "the researcher who conducts a descriptive study wants to determine the nature of how things are" (p. 198).

Participants

Given the main aim of the study, convenience sampling (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) was used to invite teachers enrolled in, or recent graduates of, an educational administration principal preparation program in a major southwestern university. These participants were readily available and their authentic experiences were conducive to providing rich data to address the research questions of this study, thereby illuminating participants' voices regarding walkthroughs. From a total 59 invited participants, 33 began the survey and 22 responded to all questions and returned the completed questionnaires for a 37% response rate. The majority (72%) of the participants were currently enrolled at one of two sites of a principal preparation program and only 4 of the participants (18%) were recent graduates. All were certified as teachers and had at least two years of teaching experience in elementary, middle school, or high

school. Over half of the participants were still classroom teachers at the time of the study and three self-identified as instructional coaches. An instructional coach in this study refers to a full time classroom teacher who also works with other teachers to provide instructional support towards improving classroom instruction. Six participants self-identified as assistant principals; however, since this was their first assistant principal assignment at the time of this study, we considered them aspiring instructional teachers. Table 1 shows a description of the participants.

Table 1
Description of Participants (N = 22)

Current Position	n	%
Classroom Teacher	13	59%
Instructional Coach	3	14%
Assistant Principal	6	27%
Total	22	100%

Data Collection

An open-ended format was used to capture participants' insights, expressed in their own words without attempting to influence their thinking (Patton, 1990). The questionnaire was developed and initially field tested and validated over a period of three years (2010 – 2012) with principalship graduate students who shared a similar professional background with this study's respondents. The questionnaire included open-ended questions related to the nature, purpose, benefits, challenges and utility of the walkthrough observation. The final electronic questionnaire was uploaded to Qualtrics™ and mailed as a web-based link with information on the study including a request for participation. Participants were asked to identify entry cohort year membership, role served during the time of the study, and to respond to nine open-ended questions.

Data analysis

While the Qualtrics™ software allowed for responses to be analyzed separately by cohort year and position served, due to the small number of participants and the risk of revealing the identity of participants, we chose to report the findings only as aggregates. The data analysis was completed according to the two areas of focus. For the first one, teachers' perception of the walkthrough observation, analysis took place at two levels, primary and secondary analysis. The primary analysis aimed at identifying emerging themes related to the first research question guiding the study, and the secondary analysis sought to discern patterns within the primary analysis findings.

The primary analysis began when participants' completed questionnaires containing written responses were received. These responses were analyzed using an inductive process to identify and organize themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Independently, we conducted initial data analysis before meeting to discuss preliminary themes. Two of us conducted an initial analysis

through hand coding of printed results and the other co-author employed HyperResearchÔ Qualitative Analysis Tool Version 2.8 to conduct initial coding.

Once the initial coding was concluded, we conferred on the emerging findings for comparative purposes and addressed differences. During the comparative analysis and discussions of the findings, two patterns within the participants' responses surfaced, and as a result, the researchers conducted a secondary analysis to further explore the patterns and to determine if any meaning could be attributed. Finally, we completed the aforementioned steps to analyze the data related to the potential of the walkthrough observation following an independent inductive process. The following is a summary of the findings.

Findings

Our findings are described according to the two emerging major patterns, including the potential of a walkthrough observation.

Emergence of Two Approaches for Walkthrough Observations

As we analyzed the data, we noticed differences in the participants' responses related to the purpose of the observer(s), how feedback from the walkthrough observations was transmitted, the purpose of the feedback, and positions of power either stated or implied. As a result, two distinct approaches emerged to convey participants' overall perceptions about the walkthrough observation. Figure 1 shows the two approaches used in conducting a walkthrough observation.

Two Approaches of Walkthrough Observations
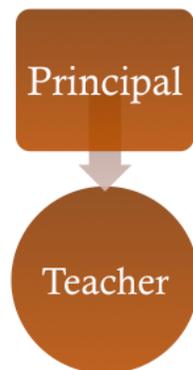
Bureaucratic Approach   Collaborative Approach
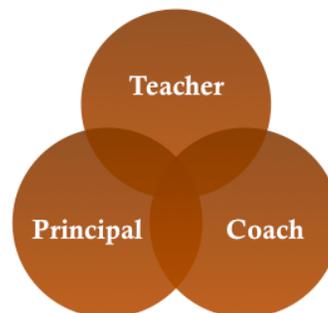
Figure 1. Two Approaches of Walkthrough Observations

The Bureaucratic Approach. The bureaucratic approach reflects a hierarchical structure based on the assumption that principals are the only ones who have the expertise and direct authority to conduct classroom observations and to offer recommendations to improve teacher's instructional performance. Although participants stressed the role of the principal, this approach could also include others (e.g. assistant principals, instructional coaches) but in the same authoritative role, directly observing and monitoring instruction, evaluating what was observed and providing critical and/or constructive feedback to the teacher being observed.

Participants also embraced the idea that an unannounced or unscheduled nature of a walkthrough was the best mechanism to capture a true picture of what happens in a classroom. As one participant expressed: "Walk-throughs are one of the only authentic ways to monitor and supervise teachers." Though there was general agreement to the length and frequency of walkthrough observations, some participants assigned this process to one individual, as acknowledged by the following comment:

> It is a period of time, about 10-15 minutes, in which an administrator comes into the classroom un-announced. The administrator takes a running record of conversations/observation behaviors on both the part of the teacher and student. The administrator presents thoughtful questions at the end, [to] further the teachers' thinking.

Another participant added: "Walkthrough observations offer teachers immediate feedback so they can grow as learners as well. The observation can also help teachers reflect on their instructional techniques and practices." The data suggested that providing feedback by the administrator to the teacher in written or oral form in a formal conference setting is a critical component of the walkthrough observation process and can be offered directly. However, data also suggested that using a bureaucratic approach contributed to an inconsistency in the delivery of post-observation feedback. For example, a participant acknowledged: "Some teachers get detailed feedback. Some teachers have a conference with the administrator conducting the walk-through. Some teachers never hear anything."

On the other hand, others indicated that feedback was actually not shared or not made explicit: "The observer has the knowledge of what is going on, but does not provide immediate feedback. The information is sometimes used to make goals for the Campus, but this is usually not communicated to the staff."

In this approach, the participants identified frequency of walkthroughs, time to conduct the walkthroughs, consistency of feedback, lack of congruence between the stated purpose and actual use of a walkthrough, and teachers' misunderstanding of the walkthrough as negatively impacting the validity and usefulness of walkthrough observations. As a participant explained:

> If an appraiser does not find the time to observe the teachers, and they do not do it often enough, then the feedback may not be valued. Feedback may also serve [no] benefit because in order to see growth, it is critical to be knowledgeable of the classroom over time in order to offer meaningful feedback they will be supportive in growing teachers.

These negative experiences can be attributed to the dissonance between the stated and intended purpose of a walkthrough observation. "Administrators do not conduct enough walk-throughs to get holistic view of each teacher... Administrators are using the data not just for data collection but rather for evaluative purposes," explained another participant. This intended use of walkthroughs by an administrator may contribute to the mistrust and invalid nature of a walkthrough observation.

Furthermore, teachers' views of a walkthrough observation as a bureaucratic approach also may negatively impact their experiences as noted by a participant.

> The challenges to walkthroughs are making them a priority in a busy schedule and getting teachers to understand what it is going on in their rooms. Teachers' perceptions often are on the side of feeling that we are "getting" them or that we cannot get a true picture of their classroom. We are not out to get them on a walkthrough, but are assessing the climate and practices. From these we can decide if we need to see more and how soon support is needed in the classroom.

More important, it appears that the purpose, process, and scope of a walkthrough observation through clear and consistent communication is necessary to realize its potential as a way to enhance instructional and influence student learning and success. As a participant affirmed,

> The purpose of the walkthrough needs to be communicated to teachers. On the observation form there should also be kind of disclosure mentioned stating that the administration knows that it was only a short amount of time that they were in the room and only so much can be observed at that time, it is impossible to see everything.

> Participants' comments illustrate the authority centered in an administrator, and others serving in a direct bureaucratic role, who is solely responsible for providing the teacher with observation information in addition to reflective questions regarding teacher effectiveness. The teacher then, after passively receiving the information, is expected to follow directives, and/or engage in recommended professional development. In the Bureaucratic Approach both the areas of growth and support are not developed through active engagement with the teacher. In other words, the teacher's voice is excluded in identifying areas for growth and development.

Collaborative Approach. In contrast with the Bureaucratic approach, a collaborative approach includes distributed power reflected through active engagement of shared responsibility and accountability among team members. Along with the principal, other administrators, teachers, and instructional coaches may be included as members of a walkthrough team with the intent of working jointly towards a common purpose of enhancing classroom instruction.

While some participants defined the walkthrough observation as "un-announced, informal, ongoing, or frequent," others embraced the idea of a collaborative process that involved their colleagues. As a participant expressed:

> A walkthrough observation is a short glimpse, usually about 5-20 minutes of a classroom. Traditionally, these observations have been performed by administration to help gage the effectiveness of instruction on their campuses and as a monitoring tool. Walkthroughs hold promise in peer supervision as well when faculties use them to observe each other teaching in a learning situation.

Further, in the collaborative approach, a peer or a walkthrough observation team may not only conduct a walkthrough observation but more importantly, deliver the post observation feedback. One participant noted,

> If it is a peer visit, the teachers meet directly after the walk-through to discuss and reflect on what was observed. At my campus we just committed to looking through our teachers reflections forms on a consistent and weekly basis to help guide our instructional Thursdays (job-embedded professional development) plan. This will help the leadership team discuss our own walk-through observations as well, we will use the same reflection/observation sheet as our teachers do.

According to participants' views, the data gathered collectively is also used to identify campus-wide patterns and practices for professional development purposes for individuals, teams, grade levels, and/or departments. For example, a participant explained:

> The data is collected, scored, and analyzed. It may then be shared with faculty or used by administration in determining what areas to focus on for staff development, supervision etc. The raw data may also be given to groups of teachers to analyze for their own use and development.

Rather than passively receiving feedback, teachers were described as active members who generated, analyzed, reflected, and acted on walkthrough observation data. These comments reflect the power of collaboration when there is a clear purpose and intended outcome of a walkthrough observation. "Communicate clear expectations to the observation or appraisal team and to the teachers who are being observed," expressed a participant.

However, a clear purpose may not always be effective if the observer does not have the adequate knowledge and skills to conduct a walkthrough observation and to create and to deliver constructive feedback resulting from this process. In this approach, it is critical to build the capacity of all observers in order to strengthen the credibility of a classroom observation. As a participant explained:

> Provide training to all those intending to conduct walk-throughs about how to provide feedback and use standard forms. Ensure all administrators are following similar procedures. Only go in pairs or no more than three people at once when entering a classroom.

Another participant stated, "It is important for peers and supervisors to perform walkthroughs. We all can learn so much from one another. Making time to guide novice teachers through walk through observations is necessary." This shared accountability reflects the power of a walkthrough observation when the process is embraced as a learning opportunity.

Data suggested that building transparent interactions and professional relationships to create a culture of trust is necessary to improve the process of walkthrough observations as a collaborative endeavor. "Build a culture of collaboration and trust would address the perception piece. Being a campus leader is all about establishing relationships and it will take time to build that relationship with your staff," commented a participant. This may lead to a true collaborative organizational culture that recognizes walkthrough observations as a vehicle to promote classroom-based reflective conversations, and to promote mutual respect and support among all stakeholders.

Others stressed the value of peer-collected walkthrough observation data to guide teachers' instructional improvement while protecting the teachers' identity and uphold professional confidentiality. A participant explained:

> Names are not put on the form. We then proceed to the next room. Generally, we
> try to do an entire grade level while they are conducting the same lesson. We share the data back to the office. We don't use names but code the data sheets so we are calibrating at the same time… Data is shared at staff development and analyzed and used for future staff development, curriculum planning, PBIS topics, etc.

Although the ultimate purpose of a walkthrough observation is to collect classroom data to effect instructional change towards enhancing teaching and learning, our findings suggest that two approaches are used to achieve this goal: Bureaucratic and Collaborative may dictate how these observations are actually conducted. While the Bureaucratic approach is a one-way transmission

of information, the Collaborative approach provides teachers with an opportunity to play an active role along with administrators in collecting, analyzing, reflecting, and making joint decisions to introduce instructional modifications.

Our findings also revealed that the true potential of a walkthrough observation, regardless of the two emergent approaches, is to serve as a genuine feedback data source and may be the most accurate source of classroom-based information. As a participant observed, "walkthroughs are one of the only authentic ways to monitor and supervise teachers." Another one stated, "The benefits of walkthrough observations are that the observer can get a general feeling of the classroom. They can take the classroom temperature and then asses what kind of support is needed to promote teacher growth and student achievement."

As a data source, a walkthrough observation provides evidence of real instructional practice in order to offer constructive feedback to teachers and used to inform decisions regarding the appropriate assistance needed for improvement. In a participant view a "walkthrough observations offer teachers immediate feedback so they can grow as a learner as well. The observation can also help teachers reflect on their instructional techniques ad practices." Another added, "once the walkthrough observation is complete, teachers receive feedback from the appraiser during the post-observation conference."

Data also revealed that there are variations in the consistency and delivery of post-walkthrough observation feedback. For instance, according to a participant,

> It [feedback] varies….Once per semester, groups of teachers (often teams or departments) are given summaries from walkthroughs to discuss the data, but often times, the teachers have no idea what they are to do with the data they have been given.

This suggests that the variation might be due to the two approaches that surfaced, bureaucratic and collaborative. While variations in the delivery of feedback based on a walkthrough observation data emerged, the end result is to gather evidence of teaching and student learning to inform and improve instructional practice through constructive feedback.

Discussion

In recent years, the "walkthrough observation" has become prominent as an instructional leadership practice that may involve principals and teachers in a collaborative processes to observe, analyze, and determine the appropriateness of instructional practices. Research suggests that walkthrough observations are important classroom observation tools (Zepeda, 2005), may be used by administrators to promote effective instruction and student success (Ovando & Ramirez, 2007), and may include teachers as partners in conducting walk-through observations (Bushman, 2006). While the walkthrough observation is promising, debates about its purpose and practice limit its true potential. Further, few studies have examined the walkthrough observation as a mechanism for instructional improvement and teacher capacity building from a teacher perspective (Ginsberg & Murphy, 2002; Topolka-Jorissen & Allen, 2009). Thus, this exploratory study focused on aspiring instructional leaders' perceptions regarding walkthrough observations.

Our findings suggest that a walkthrough observation is conceptualized as a vehicle to gather classroom-based data about teachers' instructional performance with a diagnostic purpose to guide professional growth. This reinforces the notion that teachers' instructional practice must be authentically examined as a first step to improve their instruction (Zepeda, 2006). However, our findings suggest that teachers' perceptions about who conducts the walkthrough, the length

and frequency of the walkthrough, and the manner with which feedback is provided after the walkthrough, vary. The sporadic occurrence of a walkthrough observation limited the actual benefit associated with someone observing classroom instruction, which in turn reduced the continuity of assistance provided. Given the daily work expectations and unanticipated challenges facing an administrator, difficulty in actually scheduling and completing ongoing walkthrough observations added to the infrequency of the process. As result, two distinctive approaches surfaced from the data, Bureaucratic and Collaborative.

Bureaucratic Approach

The Bureaucratic Approach suggests a hierarchal model to instructional leadership practice. In this approach, participants described the principal, or other designated administrators, as the person(s) who would observe, analyze, compose feedback and dictate what happens as a result of the walkthrough observation. The teacher, on the other hand, is described as a passive recipient of the externally derived wisdom from the leader, implying that power, and instructional knowledge are centered in the leader. The leader is responsible for collecting information about teaching and the teacher is accountable for making the necessary changes. This echoes the notion that principals have the authority to "provide teachers with prescriptions for what, when and how to teach, and for governing other aspects of their school lives. These are provided in the form of expectations" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 27).

Further, the Bureaucratic Approach uncovered in this study shares attributes with bureaucratic authority as described by Sergiovanni and Starratt (2007). They propose "bureaucratic authority relies heavily on hierarchy, rules and regulations, mandates and clearly communicated role expectations" (p. 27). They further posit that "hierarchy equals expertise; thus, supervisors know more about everything than do ordinary teachers" (p. 27). The Bureaucratic Approach is also congruent with original conceptions of instructional leadership. As Marks and Printy (2003) reported, "Instructional leadership, developed during the effective schools movement of the 1980s, viewed the principal as the primary source of educational expertise" (p. 372). It has also been found that given the multitude of responsibilities and ever expanding duties of principals, they do not engage in frequent walkthrough observations, which in turn becomes a drawback as reported by recent research on administrators' perspective highlighting that principals tend to neglect classroom observations (Granada & Vriesenga, 2008).

Collaborative Approach

In stark contrast to the Bureaucratic Approach, the Collaborative Approach supports power distribution between the principal and teachers, shared responsibility for conducting walkthrough observations and analyzing the data, and determining professional development. The Collaborative Approach reflects professional authority which "presumes that the expertise of teachers counts, and if this expertise is fully developed, counts the most" (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 2007 p. 31). Rather than merely subordinate to the formal supervisor, in systems that rely on professional authority, teachers "are *superordinate* to the knowledge base that supports their practice" (p. 31). Further, professional authority supervisory practice "seeks to promote a dialogue among teachers that makes explicit professional values and accepted tenets of practice" (p. 32).

In addition, the Collaborative Approach closely approximates that of shared instructional leadership. Marks and Printy (2003) describe shared instructional leadership as

the active collaboration between the principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Within this model, the principal seeks out the ideas, insights, and expertise of teachers in these areas and works alongside teachers for school improvement. The principal and teachers share responsibility for staff development, curricular development, and supervision of instructional tasks (p. 371).

On the other hand, our findings also suggest that a collaborative approach holds great promise to enhance teaching and student learning, in concert with previous research (Kerusking, 2005; Rossi, 2007). Thus, it can be a genuine source of feedback based on actual teaching episodes. A walkthrough observation provides evidence of real instructional practice in order to offer constructive feedback to teachers and used to inform decisions regarding the appropriate assistance needed for improvement. As others note, an actual observation focuses on 'what the teacher actually says and does, how students react and what actually occurs during a specific teaching episode…" (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 239). This is one of the reasons why teachers appreciate feedback based on classroom observations and the possibilities for professional dialogue (Ovando, 2005; Range et. al, 2011). However, depending on the relationship between a teacher and an administrator, the feedback may be interpreted as "critical, evaluative, judgmental, threatening, or personal," thus impeding true teacher growth (Shortland, 2010, p. 302).

Furthermore, the use of walkthroughs to collect and to analyze classroom-based data to provide feedback to teachers is congruent with the expectation that instructional leaders are in a key position to "analyze instruction and student learning through regular classroom observations and provide detailed feedback to teachers that supports instructional improvement" (U.S. Department of Education Office on Innovation and Improvement, 2004, p. 11). However, divergent views emerged regarding the actual delivery of feedback, based on walkthrough observations, whether feedback is best delivered to individual teachers, or if walkthrough observation data should be collected by teachers. These differences in perceptions may be attributed to individual preferences, leadership styles, training and available resources. As others affirm, both novice and experienced principals and teachers may benefit from learning together and getting feedback about their own ability to conduct observations and writing reports (Ribas, 2001). Thus, building capacity for teachers and instructional leaders to conduct walkthrough observations, analyze, interpret data, prepare reports, and deliver both written and verbal feedback, is imperative to achieve excellence in teaching and learning (Marks & Printy, 2003; Jorissen & Sundstrom, 2009; and Sergiovanni, Starratt & Cho, 2014).

In summary, the resulting classroom-based data from a walkthrough observation can be employed for at least three purposes. First, for formative assessment as a way to guide teachers' instructional changes to better address students' academic needs. Formative assessment, regarding student learning, can inform decisions about professional development for the individual teacher (Stronge, 2006). Moreover, the use of classroom data for formative purposes can go beyond the work with students. As recent researchers affirm "with appropriate data, teachers might redesign lesson plans, create student work groups, or better determine how to involve parents and support staff" (Sergiovanni, Starratt & Cho, 2014, p. 29).

Second, the data collected from a walkthrough observation may guide both teacher's self-reflection on action and guided reflection. This is in concert with other research that highlights

how teacher reflective practice can result from the process (Downey et al, 2004; Shortland, 2010). Further, reflection on action promotes teacher's deliberate thinking of previous teaching activities. It "involves a post hoc, conscious replay of an activity or event from practice" (Ariasian & Gullickson, 2006, p. 192). On the other hand, guided reflection is collaborative in nature, as it encourages "amplifying the meaning of ones work through the insight of others. Commitment to modifications, plans and experimentation; and documenting learning and providing a rich base of shared knowledge" (Costa & Kallick, 2000, p. 60).

Third, the data from a walkthrough observation may serve as a lens for peer assessment in which teachers themselves gather and interpret classroom-based data as in the collaborative approach. Thus, groups of teachers may be able to "observe, reflect, and discuss their practices and to focus on individual, collegial, and school-wide (sic) improvement (Kachur, Stout & Edwards, 2013, p. 2). In a peer supported process "teachers can informally discuss problems they face, share ideas, help one another in preparing lessons, exchange tips and provide each other support to one another" (Sergionani & Starratt, 2007, p. 263). By working together, teachers act as "walkthrough partners" (Bushman, 2006) and empowered and trusting relationships may develop through continual frequent dialogue about observational data (Shortland, 2010). In concert with findings from Dixon-Houston, (2012), creating a culture of trust and developing capacity for collaborative walkthrough observations that could call for adaptive change may result from a mutual process. Enacting adaptive change requires more than new schedules or systems to complete walkthrough observations – it will require developing a culture of shared accountability (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2009).

Conclusion

This exploratory study and its findings are limited to the perspectives of teachers, aspiring to be instructional leaders, and enrolled in or recently graduated, from a single university program. Given the nature and scope of this exploratory study, caution should be taken when generalizing the findings of this study. It should also be noted that the majority of the participants in this study (72%) completed the questionnaire prior to completing coursework on instructional supervision. The remaining six (18%) participants were serving as assistant principals for the first time, which may explain a focus on the bureaucratic approach as opposed to the collaborative approach. Furthermore, it may be that they reflected upon the practices currently occurring at his/her school site – rather than describing how he/she might conduct walkthrough observations as a campus leader. This leads us to question whether or not the campus environment has a more powerful influence on practice than coursework.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the bureaucratic approach reflects a unilateral instructional leadership in which the principal is the driving force that influences teachers' instructional decisions. Even so, the collaborative approach reflects shared instructional leadership in which the principal, teachers, and others, jointly drive the enhancement of instructional capacity. While limited in scope, our findings may provide insight for school leaders about the need to develop leadership capacity among teachers and other school professionals to conduct walkthrough observations. For example, principal preparation programs should promote data collection through walkthrough observations and instruction-focused dialogue between teachers and school administrators to ensure effective teaching and student academic success. By embracing a collaborative approach, principals may be in a better position

to address certain factors that may impact the effectiveness of walkthrough observations (time constraints, scheduling, frequency of these observations, teachers' attitudes, inconsistency with feedback from various observers, and lack of coherence between stated purpose and beliefs and/or actions), as described in the bureaucratic approach. This echoes Lee's (2003) assertion that "frequent classroom visits help refresh your memory and build relationships with teachers. By being visible, you can foster a comfortable rapport with your staff and the student body" (p. 88).

Implications for Future Research

Finally, given the focus of this exploratory study and the small sample size, additional inquiry should include a larger sample of aspiring instructional leaders from different school levels. This includes more empirical studies documenting teacher perceptions of walkthroughs to extend our understanding of the effect of these types of observations. In addition, empirical studies comparing principal and teacher perceptions of the process and the influence of walkthroughs should be conducted to explicitly describe the potential to enhance teacher growth and student achievement.

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