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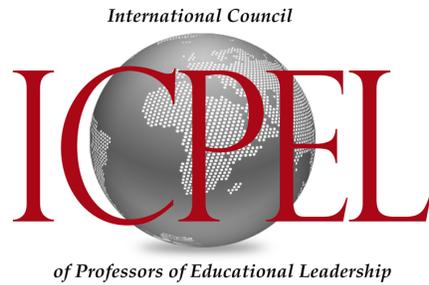
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The **Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research (ELRDR)** is an ICPEL publication of doctoral research in education leadership and a companion peer reviewed journal to the Education Leadership Review (ELR). Lead authors are recent doctoral graduates with chair or committee member serving as coauthor/s. Research is limited to dissertations, capstones, and action research projects. The purpose of the ELRDR is to disseminate the results of doctoral research in education leadership and school administration.

All manuscripts have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education



Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research
Fall 2020

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From the Editors

This issue of Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research (ELRDR) is published in recognition of the extensive work that recent doctoral graduates, chairs, and/or committee members complete to augment the field of education leadership and administration. This work represents a sense of optimism at the close of an unsettling year for all. The ongoing quest to continue to focus on research-based findings to enhance the scholarship and practice K12 education and school leadership remains essential. With that optimism, I am proud to announce that we gained another scholar in supporting this effort; Jennifer K. Clayton, Associate Professor from The George Washington University (and author of one of this issue's articles), accepted the role of assistant editor for this journal. Dr. Clayton shares the journal's commitment to supporting and guiding the work of recent doctoral graduates as they make their entry into publications. We encourage you to further promote our aims to your colleagues and recent graduate students so that we may continue to support new authors and contribute to recent, innovative, and meaningful work to the field. Additionally, we would be remiss if we did not express our deepest gratitude to our authors, editorial advisors, and peer reviewers for continuing such scholarly work amidst the current pandemic.

In this edition, Peter A. Zitko and Katrina Schultz present their work, "The Adjunct Model as an Equity Crisis in Higher Education: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Lived Experience of 'Part-Time' Community College Faculty in Northern California." The authors emphasized that higher education institutions continue to rely on adjunct faculty as part of the educational workforce, particularly at community colleges but those faculty are often marginalized and experience workplace inequities that compromise their occupational well-being. They noted that leaders must assess institutional relationships with adjunct faculty and provide an informed platform for adopting proactive policies. These efforts can, in turn, improve employment conditions for adjunct faculty, as well as enhance student learning, and align with institutional missions aimed to provide equitable and inclusive environments.

In "Novice Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Professional Learning Experiences," Tara A. Wilson and Jennifer K. Clayton, highlighted the importance of assistant principals (APs) as school leaders. They revealed feelings related to the role's challenges and needs during the transition into an administrative role, along with depictions of school districts' intentions behind professional learning offerings. Their findings showed that professional learning that is intentional to new APs' individual needs is beneficial, with collaboration, mentoring, and networking as favorable professional growth opportunities.

Lawrence J. Ruich, Thomas Browning, and Gretchen Butera also emphasized the importance of roles and relationships in their work entitled, "Being There as a Support, a Guide, and to Intervene when you have to: Mentors Reflect on their Work with Teacher Candidates." They investigated how mentors perceived their long-term relationships with teacher candidates in a secondary teacher preparation program. Their findings suggested that the length of time to work together is essential to building trust, and mentors identified serving as an extension to the university preparation process. As they explored such benefits to the mentor-mentee experience, they reminded us of the importance in understanding relationships and outcomes to optimize field experiences.

Terrence Narinesingh completed the issue with a look at how the relationships between instructional practice and student performance reminds school leaders of the need to provide consistent and productive feedback to teachers through formal and informal systems in their work entitled, “A Study of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models and Student Proficiency and Growth in Middle Schools in A Large Suburban School District in South Florida.” The findings examining Florida teacher observation data and student performance outcomes on state assessments suggested a statistical relationship that reinforces the need for robust instructional leadership and feedback.

Again, please encourage your colleagues and their recent doctoral graduates to take the next step beyond the dissertation by pursuing authorship of their work. This helps us to engage in and disseminate innovative and meaningful work in Educational Leadership.

Sincerely,

Jafeth E. Sanchez, PhD

Editor, *The Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*

Jennifer K. Clayton

Assistant Editor, *The Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*

The Adjunct Model as an Equity Crisis in Higher Education: A Qualitative Inquiry into the Lived Experience of “Part-Time” Community College Faculty in Northern California

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The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the lived workplace experiences of adjunct community college faculty in Northern California. The problem is adjunct faculty may experience an institutionalized employment system that marginalizes contingent teachers. Using the theoretical framework of institutionalization theory and phenomenological design, interviews were conducted with 22 adjunct instructors. Findings suggest adjunct faculty are a heterogeneous population motivated by a passion for teaching, but the positive attributes associated with their occupation are circumscribed by marginalizing factors. This study concludes with several recommendations for policy changes, implications for leadership, and suggestions for future research.

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Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States rely on adjunct faculty as the primary educational workforce (Kezar & Gehrke, 2016; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Pyram & Roth, 2018). This dependence on adjunct faculty, also commonly referred to as contingent or part-time faculty, is more pervasive at the community college level (CCCSE, 2014; Kater, 2017; Morest, 2015; Ran & Xu, 2017; Thirolf & Woods, 2018; Wagoner, 2019; Yu, Campbell & Mendoza, 2015). The increasing reliance upon contingent faculty denoted throughout this paper as the adjunct model has emerged with numerous employment issues that threaten the occupational well-being of adjunct faculty. Studies indicate adjunct faculty are often marginalized and experience workplace inequities (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Eagan, Jaeger, & Grantham, 2015; Franczyk, 2014; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2015; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Pons, Burnett, Williams, & Paredes, 2017; Pyram & Roth, 2018; Wagoner, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016).

Studies have indicated the growing reliance on adjunct faculty has resulted in many occupational and employment issues such as insufficient institutional support (Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Maxey & Kezar, 2015), inadequate compensation and lack of benefits (CCCSE, 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Pons et al., 2017; Tierney, 2014), feelings of exclusion or segregation (Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar, 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Pons et al., 2017), and generalized marginalization (Franczyk, 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Moorehead, Russell, & Pula, 2015). The adjunct model has become an isomorphic phenomenon and institutionalized feature among most HEIs at all levels of postsecondary education (Morest 2015: Rhoades, 2017). The research of notable scholars and findings of this study lends credence to the belief that a hierarchical system of *haves* and *have-nots* may exist at some institutions of higher learning.

Statement of Problem

The problem is adjunct faculty who are employed as HEI educators may experience an institutionalized employment system, which compromises their occupational well-being. The background of the problem is well documented in the literature. Researchers have indicated adjunct faculty are frequently marginalized and experience occupational inequities at all levels of higher education (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Eagan et al., 2015; Franczyk, 2014; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2015; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Pons et al., 2017; Pyram & Roth, 2018; Wagoner, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016). Adjunct faculty, students, and HEIs alike are negatively impacted by the problem (Maxey & Kezar, 2015).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the lived workplace experiences of adjunct community college faculty in the northern San Francisco Bay Area region of California (Zitko, 2019). The study made an original contribution in three distinct ways. First, research was focused on adjunct community college faculty in a geographical region, which has not been adequately addressed in the literature. Second, the qualitative research method of phenomenology formed the basis for the study. Lastly, the study utilized the theoretical framework of institutionalization theory, which is not evident in similarly situated studies.

Significance of the Study

The study made original contributions by advancing knowledge in a burgeoning field of research, which has not been thoroughly examined in the literature. The findings of this study may assist HEI leadership to assess institutional relationships with adjunct faculty and provide an informed platform for adopting proactive employment policies, which address the needs of contingent instructors. Findings can be used to provide a pathway for change that holistically improves employment conditions for adjunct faculty, enhances student learning, and aligns HEIs with the normative mission of providing an environment of equity and inclusion for all persons.

Research Questions

Two primary research questions guided this study. The first research question pertains to the overarching experience of contingent faculty. The second research question relates to the meaning adjunct instructors ascribe to existing employment policies.

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of adjunct community college faculty in Northern California?

Research Question 2: What is the meaning of adjunct faculty employment policies for contingent teachers at Northern California community colleges?

Theoretical Framework

Institutionalization theory, as described by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), shaped the theoretical framework of the study. Institutionalization theory was appropriate because it theoretically explains the adjunct model and provides an informed pathway for productive change. Institutionalization theory suggests that policies within an organization become an integral part of the institutional structure when specific practices and norms have become entrenched in the ethos of an institution (Kezar & Sam, 2013). Institutionalization theory does not predict whether organizational policies are good or harmful (Manning, 2018). Instead, institutionalization theory suggests that longstanding policies are difficult to change (Kezar, 2018). Institutionalization is profoundly related to the existing values, rules, and culture within an organization and informs why organizational change among HEIs is often a slow and difficult process (Kezar, 2018).

Institutionalization theory is a vital lens to view the relationship between contingent faculty and the HEIs that employ adjunct instructors. Institutionalization theory is a useful tool for clarifying the nature of organizational relationships and the forces that encumber change (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Kezar, 2018). Using institutionalization theory as a theoretical framework is a valuable tool for assessing prevailing norms and uncovering factors that may prohibit change (Kezar, 2018).

The pervasive norm of dependency on adjunct faculty as the primary workforce among HEIs has created an isomorphic culture of reliance, which is deeply embedded in the institutional composition of HEIs in the United States. When HEIs increasingly conform to extensively accepted norms, like the adjunct model, institutional policies become intensely institutionalized, leading to organizational isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). For this reason, institutionalization theory is a valuable explanatory model when assessing the lived experience of contingent community college faculty.

A Brief Review of the Literature

An investigation of the literature pertaining to employment practices, working conditions, and workplace experiences of adjunct HEI faculty resulted in several recurring themes. In total, 173 themes and subthemes initially arose from the literature and thematic analysis. This was a substantial number of concepts, and many were subsequently conjoined with related points. Consequently, the literature review resulted in several overarching categories as primary topics:

- The adjunct model is widely used by HEIs at all levels of higher education.
- Adjunct faculty are used more extensively by community colleges.
- The adjunct model has negative costs for contingent faculty, students, and HEIs.
- Adjunct faculty are not a homogeneous population.
- Counterarguments to claims about the negative impact of the adjunct model.
- Inherent contradictions within the adjunct model.

The Proliferation of the Adjunct Model in Higher Education

Since the late 1970s, there has been a paradigmatic shift in the employment model used by colleges and universities in the United States (Brennan & Magness, 2018a; Magruder, 2019; Maxey & Kezar, 2015). Today, most HEIs rely on adjunct faculty as the principal academic workforce (ASATF, 2017; Curtis, Mahabir & Vitullo, 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016; Kezar et al., 2015; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Rhoades, 2017). Consequently, as contingent employment increases, the number of available full-time positions has decreased significantly (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Yakoboski, 2016).

There are several hypothesized reasons for the shift among HEIs toward the adjunct model. The most common argument is the adjunct model is a rational fiscal decision to reduce costs (Eagan et al., 2015; Garcia, McNaughtan & Nehls, 2017; Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). Adjunct faculty are typically paid less than full-time faculty and receive few benefits (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Moorehead et al., 2015; Yakoboski, 2016). Simply put, adjunct faculty are hired on a contingency basis as cheap labor.

A significant but somewhat less common reasoning for the adjunct model is it allows greater flexibility for HEI administrators (ASATF, 2017; Eagan et al., 2015; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Maxey & Kezar, 2015). School administrators can use adjunct faculty to fill gaps in course schedules and easily dismiss contingent instructors when student enrollment declines (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Yakoboski, 2016). Adjunct faculty can likewise be used to quickly replace full-time faculty who take sabbaticals or retire (Yakoboski, 2016).

The Adjunct Model and Community Colleges

When compared to universities and four-year institutions, the adjunct model is used more extensively by community colleges (Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Morest, 2015; Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Recent data suggest adjunct community college faculty comprise nearly 70% of all instructional staff (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Eagan et al., 2015; Morest, 2015; Thirolf & Woods, 2017; Wagoner, 2019). The reasoning for the high rate of adjunct faculty utilization among community colleges is similar to that of other HEIs, most notably, cost savings.

The Negative Consequences of the Adjunct Model

Several interrelated themes related to the negative consequences of the adjunct model emerged from the literature. General employment issues were widely cited in the literature. A predominant factor was the trifold problem of job security, advancement, and expendability. Adjunct faculty work on a contingency basis. In other words, adjunct instructors are viewed by the institution as temporary or part-time help (CCCSE, 2014; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2015). This is a significant issue for involuntary part-time faculty who seek full-time employment but are unable to attain a secure full-time faculty position (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Pyram & Roth, 2018). Moreover, adjunct faculty typically lack job security, making their employment status tenuous and unpredictable (ASATF, 2017; Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Curtis et al., 2016; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Moorehead et al., 2015; Pons et al., 2017; Rhoades, 2017; Savage, 2017). In many instances, adjunct faculty teach heavy course loads at multiple institutions to compensate for their part-time status at individual schools (Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Morest, 2015; Pyram & Roth, 2018).

The most common negative consequence of the adjunct model is inadequate compensation and lack of benefits (ASATF, 2017; Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; CCCSE, 2014; Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar et al., 2015; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Moorehead et al., 2015; Morest, 2015; Pyram & Roth, 2018; Savage, 2017; Thirolf & Woods, 2017; Wagoner, 2019). Adjunct faculty typically earn far less than full-time faculty (Brennan & Magness, 2018b; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2015; Pons et al., 2017; Rhoades, 2017). A study by Caruth and Caruth (2013) concluded contingent faculty frequently earn about one-third of what full-time faculty receive.

Lack of resources and support was another theme suggestive of poor working conditions for adjunct faculty (ASATF, 2017; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Kezar et al., 2015; Lengermann & Niebrugge, 2015; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Pyram & Roth, 2018; Savage, 2017). Poor working conditions stems, in part, from the lack of resources and support provided by the institution to contingent instructors. According to Kezar and Sam (2013), the failure of HEIs to provide much-needed support to part-time faculty has led to an overall negative work environment for contingent instructors.

The exigency of the problem and inherent contradictions regarding HEI policies toward adjunct faculty, particularly at the community college level, is best summed up in the 2014 report by the CCCSE, which warns,

Institutions' interactions with part-time faculty result in a profound incongruity: Colleges depend on part-time faculty to educate more than half of their students, yet they do not fully embrace these faculty members. Because of this disconnect, contingency can have consequences that negatively affect student engagement and learning. (p. 3)

These findings are quite concerning. The lack of resources and support may not only impact the lives of contingent faculty but students as well (ASATF, 2017; Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar et al., 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Rhoades, 2017; Yakoboski, 2016).

In addition to structural or policy issues which marginalize adjunct faculty, studies have found that contingent instructors frequently have perceptions of isolation or disconnection from their institutions (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Franczyk, 2014; Kimmel & Fairchild, 2017; Pons et al., 2017; Pyram & Roth, 2018). In some instances, adjunct faculty feel undervalued or underappreciated (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan

et al., 2015; Franczyk, 2014; Pons et al., 2017; Savage, 2017). Several studies found that adjunct faculty feel invisible on campus (ASATF, 2017; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Moorehead et al., 2015; Pyram & Roth, 2018). The alleged problem has led some scholars to intimate a caste system is evident among some HEIs, and adjunct faculty are subordinated to second-class status (ASATF, 2017; Eagan et al., 2015; Franczyk, 2014).

A significant, but less prominent issue for adjunct faculty pertains to adversarial relations between full-time faculty and contingent faculty. Several studies have revealed tension and contention between full-time faculty and adjunct faculty (ASATF, 2017; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Moorehead et al., 2015; Rhoades, 2017). The institutional culture at some HEIs may be a significant barrier for adjunct faculty and promote feelings of isolation, exclusion, expendability, marginalization, or second-class status among contingent teachers.

Adjunct Faculty Heterogeneity

The adjunct model does not impact all adjunct faculty equally. This is due, in part, to the heterogeneity of contingent faculty (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Curtis et al., 2016; Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016; Thirolf & Woods, 2017; Wagoner, 2019; Yakoboski, 2016). Adjunct faculty are a diverse group, and the perceptions which part-time instructors have regarding employment circumstances are influenced by individual characteristics (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016). A distinction made in several studies is to separate contingent faculty into voluntary versus involuntary status (Curtis et al., 2016; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016). Involuntary part-time faculty are those who seek full-time employment but are unable to procure a full-time job. Involuntary part-time faculty are less satisfied with their overall employment status when compared to voluntary part-time faculty (Eagan et al., 2015; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2016). Many voluntary part-time teachers have other jobs, are retired, desire the flexibility of teaching part-time, or teach classes for personal satisfaction (Thirolf & Woods, 2017). Part-time faculty who do not depend on teaching as a primary source of income tend to have a higher degree of job satisfaction (Yakoboski, 2016).

Counterarguments to Claims of Adjunct Model Marginalization

Arguments supporting the adjunct model were not prevalent in the literature. Nonetheless, Brennan and Magness (2018a) argued adjunct faculty are not as unhappy or dissatisfied as some scholarly studies and popular rhetoric has concluded. Brennan and Magness (2018a) likewise argued adjunct faculty are not exploited and conclude adjunct faculty are acceptably remunerated for their services. In a second article, Brennan and Magness (2018b) suggest adjunct faculty are part-time by choice. In each instance, the conclusions drawn by Brennan and Magness (2018a, 2018b) are inconsistent with the findings of this current study and a preponderance of the literature.

Contradictions Within the Adjunct Model

The HEI academic workforce has shifted to the adjunct model. Yet, as Eagan et al. (2015) concluded, the shift has not taken place with corresponding policies supporting the adjunct workforce. Kimmel and Fairchild (2017) found this to be paradoxical because the increased reliance on adjunct faculty by HEIs is incongruent with the negative working environment

experienced by many contingent instructors. Likewise, Savage (2017) acknowledged HEI policymakers understand that inadequate employment conditions negatively impact performance, but few changes have been made to improve employment conditions for adjunct faculty. Similarly, Lengermann and Niebrugge (2015) assert adjunct faculty are paid less than full-time faculty, yet students do not receive a discount for courses taught by part-time instructors.

The adjunct model may be antithetical to the norms of higher education. The adjunct model is inherently hierarchical and separates faculty into a bifurcated system of haves and have-nots (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Pons et al., 2017). To provide an equal opportunity for students, HEIs promote an open-door policy, while simultaneously marginalizing adjunct faculty. (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Colleges and universities rely upon adjunct faculty, though in many cases, they are perceived to be provisional or disposable (Pons et al., 2017). This contradiction is antithetical to the prevailing norms of equity and inclusiveness HEIs seek to achieve.

Methodology and Research Procedures

The qualitative research design of phenomenology was the methodology used for this study. Phenomenology is the study of human experiences and how people perceive these experiences (Sokolowski, 2008). Given the research questions in this study focused on exploring the lived experience of adjunct community college faculty, phenomenology was an appropriate mode of inquiry to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana & Omasta, 2018; van Manen, 2016). Results were analyzed using phenomenological design and evaluated from the perspective of institutionalization theory.

Population and Sample Selection

The target population were adjunct faculty who are employed by Northern California community colleges. The study included 22 adjunct faculty members who were selected as participants via purposeful sampling. Saturation occurred after the 18th interview, though four additional interviews were conducted to ensure saturation had been sufficiently achieved.

Adjunct faculty who teach courses at California community colleges in the northern San Francisco Bay Area regions were approached for participation via institutional email. The requests for participation explained the purpose of the study. Respondents to the initial request for participation were subsequently contacted by the researcher. Each participant signed an informed consent form prior to being interviewed. The sampling strategy was purposive, which is appropriate for phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Saldana & Omasta, 2018).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews of 22 adjunct faculty members from Northern California community colleges. Interviews took place in private and comfortable locations at the participating institutions and satellite locations as chosen by participants. Interviews were the primary data collection instrument. The nature of the inquiries was open-ended, allowing participants the opportunity of expressing personal experiences without being influenced by the interviewer. Interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

Interviews were followed up by a transcript evaluation by participants. The second consultation with participants was done to confirm the accuracy of the interview transcriptions and assist with thematic analysis. The follow-up consultations were conducted primarily via email, although two meetings were done by telephone. During the follow-up consultations, minor adjustments were made to the initial transcriptions. In four instances, participants recommended small clarifications to the transcriptions, which were accommodated by the researcher. Two participants failed to participate in the transcription review. Positive responses to the 20 transcriptions which were reviewed support the overall accuracy of transcriptions. Follow-up interviews represented the final stage of contributions to the study by participants.

Data Analysis and Coding Procedures

The initial procedure for examining data consisted of reading interview transcripts and conducting a preliminary data assessment by writing a summary of each interview. This preliminary phase was followed by establishing codes, considering major themes, recognizing patterns, and creating nascent thematic categories. Examination of data continued with each interview and established the framework for more robust coding and thematic analysis, which took place after interviews were completed.

Coding Procedures

Codes were derived from interview transcripts and interviewer observations. Initial coding focused on individual themes, which were later condensed into general themes as patterns emerged from the collective interviews. Coding ultimately created a thematic linkage of the phenomenon as experienced by participants (Saldana, 2016). The study utilized first-cycle and second-cycle coding. First-cycle coding in the study was an inductive process beginning with *descriptive coding* followed by *in vivo coding* and *emotion coding*. Second-cycle *pattern coding* involved the redistribution of first-cycle codes into fewer categories and recurring themes. During second-cycle coding, the researcher analyzed codes identified in first-cycle coding and arranged initial codes into conceptual categories.

Alignment of Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study was institutionalization theory, which was valuable in assessing the adjunct model as experienced by contingent community college faculty who participated in the study. Using the qualitative research method of phenomenology, the results of this study were evaluated from the perspective of institutionalization theory. As a theoretical framework, institutionalization theory was a critical component of this study, which addressed adjunct employment from both a phenomenological and organizational perspective. Institutionalization theory provided a lens by which to assess entrenched organizational issues arising from the data (Kezar, 2018; Kezar & Sam, 2013).

Research Findings

Results generally indicated a common shared reality among the participants. In some instances, the lived experience of participants diverged quite significantly. To maintain participant

anonymity, subjects were identified as P1-P22. Primary themes included *motivation, positive attributes, negative attributes, and desired policy changes*.

Theme 1: Motivation

Participants were motivated by the occupation of teaching, helping students, sharing life experiences, and the feeling of contributing to others. Factors that inspire adjunct faculty to work in this capacity had a near-universal altruistic component. Adjunct faculty are motivated by teaching and working with students. Comments such as “I really love working with students” (P2), “I do it for the students” (P1), and “It’s always been a privilege for me to teach young people” (P16) were quite common. Almost universally, teaching was a motivating factor that superseded the negative aspects of being a contingent employee.

Theme 2: Positive Attributes

Participants expressed several different positive attributes in their role as adjunct faculty. Autonomy and flexibility were a subtheme that garnered near consensus among the participants ($n = 19, 86\%$). For some participants, the freedom from ancillary duties like serving on committees or becoming involved in campus politics were factors that contributed to a positive experience. As one participant explained, “Adjuncts get to focus on our subject” (P13). Another participant said, “One positive thing is that you don’t have to serve on the committees. You don’t have to go to a lot of meetings. You don’t have to get involved in campus politics” (P14). “Because you are on the periphery,” voiced another participant, “you don’t have to be involved in the politics... you’re sort of isolated” (P18). Comments such as these suggest some adjunct faculty see themselves as teachers first and find solace in circumventing non-teaching roles. For many participants, the freedom of being an adjunct teacher is a liberating experience.

Not surprisingly, when considering Theme 1, most of the participants conveyed a predilection toward student-centeredness. Satisfaction from connecting with students was articulated by 19 of the 22 participants. One venerable participant explained, “I absolutely love teaching and interacting with students” (P14). Remarks such as “It is so fulfilling, and so satisfying working with those students” (P3), “I love the fact that they want to learn” (P8), and “I feel like I’m giving back what was given to me” (P4) were frequently expressed by participants.

A small number of participants suggested teaching as an adjunct had situational appeal ($n = 8, 36\%$). Five of these subjects had no desire for full-time employment and enjoyed part-time work as an adjunct because it complemented their current profession or income earning potential. The remaining three were interested in obtaining a full-time position but were tentatively satisfied in their role as adjunct faculty. Viewpoints of situational appeal are critical because employment positionality impacts perceptions of workplace satisfaction and the meaning attributed to adjunct faculty employment policies.

Theme 3: Negative Attributes

Of the four themes derived from the study, negative attributes were the most highly cited with 639 individual references (Table 1). Table 1 is not intended to suggest negative attributes are more significant than other themes. Instead, negative attributes are indicative of a more complex theme, which is not easily reduceable to an isolated explanatory construct.

Most of the participants ($n = 19$, 86%) expressed viewpoints related to the adjunct model as an institutionalized employment system, which results in the marginalization of adjunct faculty. One participant described the adjunct model as “exploitation from highly educated people” (P2). Subjects explained, “There’s no job security” (P14), “Definitely no guarantee of work from semester to semester” (P17). “Adjuncts are really committed to teaching, but we don’t get any sort of support,” voiced another participant, “we don’t get anything from praise to remuneration” (P11). The adjunct model, from the viewpoint of several participants, is not promoting adjunct justice or HEI equity norms, innate to the values and mission of HEIs. As one participant commented, “It’s not like I’m working in some Gilded Age or Rockefeller’s Standard Oil kind of scenario, I’m in academia. You would think if any group of people could fully recognize equality, it would be academia” (P1).

Table 1

Theme References

Theme	Number of individual references
Motivation	106
Positive attributes	249
Negative attributes	639
Desired policy changes	96

A large number of participants explicitly ($n = 9$, 41%) and implicitly ($n = 17$, 77%) expressed feelings of expendability. One participant remarked, “I don’t think adjunct faculty are much recognized for their important role on campus. They are considered to be expendable resources” (P14). The view was restated by another adjunct instructor who said, “The system is designed to make sure that we are replaceable” (P17). A third participant ominously declared, “They don’t care. We’re disposable to these colleges, and it’s sick. Absolutely sick. There’s no security whatsoever” (P20). These viewpoints exemplified the frustration and stress many participants conveyed during the interviews.

Stress and feelings of being overworked relative to pay were common among subjects. A young adjunct instructor expressed feelings of frustration and stress, “I feel older than I am because of the stress of the job. There is no maternity leave for part-timers. There’s no pay. The districts don’t care. I’m replaceable” (P17). The frustration and stress expressed by several participants are exacerbated by the perceived lack of resources and support. An instructor who has been working exclusively as an adjunct declared, “there has been definite frustrations. Where you realize the lack of support, not only for the faculty but for the people that are supposed to be helping you” (P12). Some participants indicated not having office hours to meet with students but conducted ad hoc office hours on their own time. As one adjunct instructor confessed, “I just did it on my own. I volunteer” (P13).

Many participants expressed feelings, which suggested a lack of respect by the institution or full-time faculty. “It’s very degrading,” said one interviewee, “We’re not taken seriously. I feel like we’re in the industrial revolution, we’re the people that are interchangeable parts. We’re sort of one with the machine” (P11). This community college instructor went on to ask a poignant question, “At what point do you stop abusing your part-timers? I’m willing to work, I’m willing to be a part, but I want to be respected. I don’t feel like I’m respected.”

Views such as these were standard among many participants. Some subjects suggested an ethos of disrespect emanating from full-time faculty. A longstanding adjunct instructor asserted, “I think there’s definitely a prejudice among faculty members towards part-timers. Somehow, we’re not as good, or we would have a full-time job. We’re just not taken seriously, and there’s a lack of collegiality” (P11). The sentiment was repeated by another participant who recalled, “For a long time, I thought I wasn’t being treated very collegially. Sometimes I would say hello to the full-timers, and they just didn’t even respond, which is kind of bizarre” (P14).

A recurring theme among many participants was job insecurity ($n = 17$, 77%). For many subjects, employment insecurity impeded career objectives and negatively impacted personal well-being. In addition, numerous participants conveyed feelings of detachment and isolation as contingent faculty ($n = 15$, 68%). One participant stated, “I’m absolutely on the outside and not taken seriously a lot of the time. It’s really insulting and infuriating. I’m not part of the team” (P11). Another subject mentioned, adjunct faculty “feel like they’re independent contractors, not a part of the institution” (P12). “An adjunct instructor is sort of a different animal,” voiced one participant, “Like not a member of the community at the college. We’re all doing the same work, but there’s an invisible curtain between the faculty and the adjuncts” (P13).

Several participants harbored feelings of being exploited and oppressed ($n = 10$, 45%). One subject commented, “The college takes advantage of the fact that there are adjuncts like me who are just doing it to teach because we want to help young people get started in life” (P13). An adjunct instructor who travels between several colleges said, “You feel like a serf, like it’s a feudal system” (P17). “It’s just not exploitation in a coal mine,” expressed a participant, “It’s exploitation from highly educated people” (P2). The alleged exploitation of adjunct faculty, as expressed by several participants, was that of being marginalized by an inequitable employment model. As one subject suggested, “This has come to be a system that perpetuates all kinds of inequalities and inequities” (P6).

Perceptions of marginalization were expressed by subjects in a variety of permutations. Some participants ($n = 16$, 73%) were distressed by the lack of upward mobility. “I definitely pursued full-time positions,” said one adjunct instructor, “It’s been brutal. It’s absolutely been brutal. It’s just been a nightmare” (P11). After 30 years as an adjunct, this participant has ruled out the possibility of attaining a full-time position, stating, “I’ve totally given up.”

Several interviewees ($n = 12$, 55%) harbored perceptions of an institutionalized caste or class system as a byproduct of the adjunct employment practices. “We’re treated as second-class citizens,” remarked one interviewee (P11). Indeed, four participants referred to their situation as being that of “second-class citizens” (P4, P6, P11, P13). Comments such as “caste system,” “prejudice among faculty members towards part-timers,” “them versus us mentality,” “sharecropping for academia,” “demoralizing,” “feudal system,” “haves and have nots,” “division in classes,” “class system,” “treated differently than the full-time faculty,” and “two-tiered,” give credence to the premise many participants felt a caste or class system is systemic at the subjects’ places of employment.

Low pay and lack of benefits were significant marginalizing factors for most subjects. All but one participant ($n = 21$, 95%) felt relegated due to inadequate remuneration. One long-time adjunct instructor said, “What I’m earning here is really a pittance to try and live on” (P11). “It is a struggle financially,” declared another participant (P12). While many of the participants demonstrated anger and frustration because of low wages, others begrudgingly accepted being paid significantly less than full-time faculty. As one participant admitted, “What I’m getting at the community college, it feels like volunteer work. The disparity is just huge” (P19). Subjects

articulated numerous expressions of inadequate remuneration:

P1: There's certainly no sense of doing it for the money.

P3: They're paying me less than half of what I'm worth.

P4: The work is becoming overwhelming; the pay is underwhelming.

P9: We're not compensated at all, to any level of what our full-time colleagues get.

P10: I couldn't survive just on the teaching.

P13: I don't think that the pay that they're giving is adequate to get really good teachers.

P14: The pay, when all things are considered, is not nearly what the full-timers get.

P15: I don't know if you could support a family on just adjunct teaching.

P17: I know that I get paid less for the same work.

P19: I think we're all paid too low [and] that's absolutely wrong.

Uncompensated time ($n = 8, 36\%$) and administrative marginalization ($n = 20, 91\%$) were additional factors which contributed to overall perceptions of adjunct marginalization. In many instances ($n = 11, 50\%$), participants cited course load restrictions as contributing to financial hardships. A majority of the interviewees ($n = 13, 59\%$) expressed feelings of being exposed to some form of discrimination or bias. "It is a really political environment," said one participant, "your kind of at the bottom of the power hierarchy" (P19). "It's just the institutional bias," voiced another subject (P6). A number of participants ($n = 13, 59\%$) harbored feelings of not being appreciated or valued by their schools or full-time faculty. "I think there should be some way in which we're treated with more respect," concluded one subject (P11). "Sometimes, you just feel a little devalued," proclaimed another participant (P18).

Lastly, participants held viewpoints of conflict between full-time and part-time faculty. A significant number of interviewees ($n = 18, 82\%$) expressed perceptions of marginalization due to a bifurcated employment system, which prioritizes the well-being of full-time faculty over adjunct faculty. One participant explained, "You usually have a them versus us mentality" (P12). "We do exactly the same job," declared another interviewee; "It's definitely a second- or third-class kind of gig. It's almost like an adversarial relationship" (P13). Still, another interviewee proclaimed, "As an adjunct faculty member, there is a division in [social] classes between full-time and adjunct faculty. You're treated differently by the full-time faculty" (P4).

Theme 4: Desired Policy Changes

Participants indicated a desire for three overarching policy changes, increased *equity* ($n = 15, 73\%$), a *pathway to full-time employment* ($n = 9, 41\%$), and improved *remuneration* ($n = 18, 82\%$). When taken together, these three areas of desired policy change suggest a want for better pay, job security, and an opportunity to fully partake in teaching as a viable career. Several participants suggested the "two-tiered system" should be abolished. As one subject articulated, "I would recommend that there be more equity in pay. I don't think there should be two tiers" (P11). "We need to have some job security," voiced another participant, "You should be able to count on a certain number of classes so that you can actually make a living" (P21). Additionally, some interviewees recommended the removal of course load restrictions ($n = 9, 41\%$), incorporating tenure or rehire rights for adjunct faculty ($n = 8, 36\%$), and providing benefits to adjunct faculty ($n = 10, 45\%$). Notwithstanding, better monetary compensation was a primary concern for involuntary part-time faculty. Participant responses like "I think we're all paid too low" (P18), "Our salaries need to be more equitable with what full-timers earn" (P11), and "We need to reach parity...real parity" (P10), were quite common.

Discussion

A significant finding in the study was that adjunct faculty are not a homogeneous group, nor can the collective experience of adjunct instructors be categorized as exclusively good or bad. All 22 participants shared both positive and negative experiences as adjunct college faculty. Participants were all motivated by a passion for teaching and serving students. The degree to which many of the participants sacrificed personal welfare to continue teaching in a part-time capacity was revealing. There was an altruistic component, which was nearly universal among participants. While not surprising, this finding demonstrated the extent to which adjunct faculty are committed to their profession irrespective of working in a frequently uncertain employment environment. Motivational factors may be stronger predictors of remaining in a part-time role than negative factors are of influencing an adjunct to pursue a different career.

Adjunct faculty are rewarded by the autonomy and flexibility enjoyed as educators ($n = 19$, 86%), productive interaction with students ($n = 19$, 86%), and the characteristics of working at a community college ($n = 16$, 73%). However, findings also suggest adjunct faculty are negatively impacted by the adjunct model ($n = 21$, 95%). The vast majority of participants conveyed perceptions of marginalization in some form as a byproduct of employment status and institutional policies. Only one participant, a retired school teacher, did not articulate any negative perceptions regarding employment as an adjunct instructor. Marginalizing factors and participant response ratios to specific themes are listed in Table 2.

Table 2
Marginalizing Factors of the Adjunct Model

Theme	Response Rate
Low pay	($n = 21$, 95%)
Full-time versus part-time conflict	($n = 18$, 82%)
Job insecurity	($n = 17$, 77%)
Limited upward mobility	($n = 16$, 73%)
Detachment and isolation	($n = 15$, 68%)
Exploitation and oppression	($n = 15$, 68%)
Need to work at multiple institutions	($n = 14$, 64%)
Unequal treatment	($n = 14$, 64%)
Few or no benefits	($n = 13$, 59%)
Discrimination or bias	($n = 13$, 59%)
Lack of appreciation or being undervalued	($n = 13$, 59%)
Frustration and stress	($n = 12$, 55%)
Caste or class system	($n = 12$, 55%)
Lack of resources provided to adjunct faculty	($n = 11$, 50%)
Course load restrictions	($n = 11$, 50%)
Negatively impacts teaching	($n = 10$, 45%)
Uncompensated time	($n = 8$, 36%)
Underemployment	($n = 8$, 36%)

Data from Table 2 are consistent with the premise that adjunct faculty have perceptions of marginalization, feel as though they are poorly compensated, and are subject to an inequitable employment model. When the data are viewed holistically, the lived experience of adjunct faculty may be one of marginalization within the adjunct model, school policies, and institutionalized norms. Albeit, when participants are compared by employment objectives, voluntary part-time faculty were less inclined than involuntary part-time faculty to exhibit strong negative viewpoints of marginalization. These findings support the *adjunct heterogeneity hypothesis*, which may be a predictor of dissatisfaction and perceptions of marginalization.

The Adjunct Heterogeneity Hypothesis

An important takeaway is what is referred to in this study as the *adjunct heterogeneity hypothesis* (AHH). Adjunct faculty are a heterogeneous group, which can be characterized as voluntary and involuntary part-time employees. The AHH suggests, adjunct faculty who are involuntary part-time employees tend to have a more negative view of existing employment policies when compared to HEI instructors who are voluntary part-time employees. Voluntary part-time faculty generally experience a moderate degree of marginalization, whereas involuntary part-time faculty expressed greater exposure to marginalizing factors and held more negative perceptions of their part-time status.

Voluntary part-time faculty find consolation in the situational appeal of having an opportunity to teach on a contingency basis. In contrast, involuntary part-time faculty find relegation to contingent status as a harmful byproduct of the adjunct model. Involuntary part-time faculty were far more insecure with their employment status and advancement opportunities than voluntary part-time faculty. Moreover, involuntary part-time faculty were more adamant than voluntary part-time faculty with regard to establishing reformative policies leading to greater equitable conditions for contingent instructors.

Institutionalization Theory and the Adjunct Model

Institutionalization theory as an explanatory mechanism for the adjunct model impacts adjunct community college faculty differently. For voluntary part-time faculty, the adjunct model ensures there will be more part-time positions available. In contrast, the adjunct model safeguards the continuing reliance on contingent instructors in lieu of more available full-time positions. For those adjunct instructors who are seeking a full-time teaching position, the institutionalization of the adjunct model has created a situation by which there is less opportunity to attain permanent employment at an HEI. Debilitating adjunct faculty related factors, such as those described in Table 2, may be institutionalized to the point HEIs take these features for granted. Furthermore, the isomorphic nature of the adjunct model may impede change by supporting the continuance of an employment system that marginalizes adjunct faculty.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study was confined to adjunct community college faculty in a small geographic region of Northern California. Findings are circumscribed by location and the boundaries of phenomenological inquiry. Notwithstanding, the findings of this study are compelling and can be

used as a basis for future research across a broader spectrum of institutions to better evaluate the adjunct model and its impact on contingent faculty. Future research can help determine whether employment objectives, longevity in the field, and age are factors that contribute to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of HEI faculty. Research should be conducted to evaluate the adjunct heterogeneity hypothesis as described in this study and the influence occupational preferences have on the adjunct model. Future studies should include both quantitative and qualitative inquiry as a means of providing insight into the lived experience of adjunct faculty and substantive data, which can be used to formulate new employment policies.

Leadership Implications

The findings of this study suggest adjunct college faculty are fervent educators. Nonetheless, these contingent instructors, to varying degrees, are marginalized by an isomorphic employment system, which has been referred to throughout this article as the adjunct model. The findings from this study and the literature suggest changes to the adjunct model may have a beneficial social impact on adjunct faculty, students, and HEIs (Curtis et al., 2016; Maxey & Kezar, 2015; Yu et al., 2015). Adopting new policies is a multilevel leadership challenge which includes adjunct faculty, full-time faculty, and school administration. The impetus for change begins with adjunct faculty leadership, who should establish a plan for implementing new policies that challenge the adjunct model status quo. Adjunct faculty leadership should find common ground and coalesce with full-time faculty leadership as a necessary step toward implementing change. Likewise, gaining the support of institutional leadership is vital to the establishment and institutionalization of new employment policies. Developing a rapport with institutional leaders may assist adjunct faculty leadership in gaining widespread support for innovative policies. This is vital because institutional leaders are well-positioned to act as intermediaries between the various HEI stakeholders. The implementation and maintenance of reformative policies take place at the institutional level. Innovating new employment policies and practices to create equitable conditions for adjunct HEI faculty is a multilevel leadership challenge.

Conclusion

There is little doubt adjunct faculty are vital to HEIs. The findings of this study suggest adjunct college faculty are passionate and devoted teachers. Many of these dedicated educators choose to work at multiple institutions as a means of earning a modest living in pursuit of their chosen career. Still, other part-time faculty demonstrate a commitment to teaching by working as college educators aside from other full-time employment. Adjunct faculty are, first and foremost, teachers who derive great satisfaction from helping students achieve academic and life goals.

For many adjunct college instructors, the dreams of becoming full-time faculty are impeded by the adjunct model and institutional practices, which largely preclude contingent instructors from attaining desired career objectives. The data suggests many part-time faculty feel marginalized in their role as contingent instructors and desire innovative policy changes, which would reduce the debilitating impact of the adjunct model. Respect, recognition, job security, equity, inclusion, appreciation, and perhaps most importantly, the opportunity to earn a living in their chosen profession, are but a few of the rational requests made by numerous participants in this study. Many desires of adjunct faculty who participated in the study are easily resolved at the institutional level and require little funding—just a genuine effort by the institutions to accept these essential

instructors into the fabric of the institution.

The findings of this study are not intended to insinuate all adjunct faculty are marginalized, or all colleges treat contingent educators poorly. Indeed, there was some evidence to the contrary. The findings do suggest it may be in the best interest of HEIs to embrace adjunct faculty, and to a modest degree, improvement has been accomplished at some institutions. Isomorphism, which is inherent in the adjunct model, may have resulted in the unintentional marginalization of a highly dedicated academic workforce.

This study examined the lived experience of 22 devoted adjunct community college faculty in Northern California. The research included a small sample of the thousands of hardworking and enthusiastic contingent instructors who routinely travel the roads and highways as *freeway flyers*. The title of this paper began with, *The Adjunct Model as an Equity Crisis in Higher Education*. This title is provocative and salient because the impact of the adjunct model and the formation of proactive HEI employment systems is an unresolved issue. Adjunct HEI faculty are a large group of potentially marginalized individuals who work in an occupation by which they have little functional voice or decision-making capability. The author of this paper is hopeful community college leaders will examine this study, reflect on the words of the participants, contemplate the findings, and consider how higher learning institutions can adopt new policies to improve the well-being of adjunct college faculty.

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Novice Assistant Principals' Perceptions of Professional Learning Experiences

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how novice Assistant Principals (APs) perceived administrative professional learning experiences. Data came from twelve first-year APs in two Southeast United States public school districts during the 2017-2018 academic year. Through use of semi-structured interviews, a description of how the APs developed as school leaders, their feelings about their challenges and needs during the transition into an administrative role, and a depiction of the school districts' intentions behind the professional learning offerings were revealed. The data were analyzed with the constructionist epistemology and combined theoretical framework based on Mezirow's transformative learning theory and Savicka's career construction theory. The findings showed that that professional learning that is intentional to new APs' specific needs is beneficial, with collaboration, mentoring, networking described as favorable professional growth opportunities.

Keywords: professional learning, professional development, assistant principals, novice school leaders

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Assistant Principals (APs) are valuable members of most public school systems. Although there is a wealth of research on the benefits of school leadership, research on APs is underdeveloped. The role of an AP is ambiguously and inconsistently defined across school sites. Opportunities for professional learning, in its many forms including coaching and mentoring, is inconsistent for APs, as most schools and districts focus on teacher professional development. Thus, APs may be trained and licensed, yet few are prepared to assume the myriad tasks required of a school leader.

This qualitative study examined the professional learning support of nine (n=9) novice first-year K-12 public school APs in two urban districts located in the southeastern United States. The study made sense of APs' experiences while participating in professional learning, with a focus on how leadership skills develop. In-depth, semi structured interviews about professional development experiences were conducted with first-year novice APs. Through a constructionist epistemological lens and the dual theoretical framework of career construction theory and transformative learning theory, data analysis sought to present how APs attribute meaning to professional growth as development of leadership skills.

Statement of the Problem

The research problem is related to gaps in educators' understanding of the professional preparation and development of APs for career ascension. Numerous researchers have validated strong, competent school leadership, second only to teaching, as a significant contributor to increased student achievement and school success (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Davis, Gooden, & Bowers, 2017; Grissom, Loeb, & Master, 2013; Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock, 2017; Nichols, Glass, Berliner, 2012). Despite the impact of leadership in schools, administrators are leaving positions every year for retirement, transfer opportunities at other schools, and offers for different career tracks (Hill, Ottem, & DeRoche, 2016). A possible solution to attract and sustain highly qualified administrators is to offer support for the purpose of fostering development of school leaders throughout their careers (Pounder & Crow, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the professional development experiences of novice APs working within two urban school districts in the southeastern United States. This study defined professional learning and professional development as activities providing educators with the knowledge and skills to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and meet challenging academic standards (Learning Forward, 2017). Another purpose was to examine the professional development opportunities presented by the districts' professional development programs addressing the unique challenges first-year APs encounter when transitioning from other roles to school administration. The study was guided by one research question and three sub-questions: (1) How do novice APs perceive professional learning experiences?, (1a) What influence, if any, did formal district level professional learning programs have on novice APs?, (1b) What influence, if any, did informal district level professional learning have on novice APs?, and (1c) What influence, if any, did prior education have on novice APs? The research question was used to analyze the overall perceptions of APs' professional learning experiences while each subquestion focused on a different form of professional learning APs typically experience. While overlapping of categories had the potential to occur, I distinguished the forms of professional learning described by participants in my theme descriptions and findings.

Overview of Theoretical Foundation

Two theoretical frameworks were used as interpretive lenses through which to view the perceptions and experiences of novice AP professional development participation. Mezirow's transformative learning theory was the primary lens through which to view the meaning-making process of novice APs' experiences during the beginning of their leadership careers (Mezirow, 2006; Taylor, 2008). To narrow the area of interest, career construction theory helped to understand the perceptions of novice APs who underwent professional development, specifically mentoring or coaching. Transformative learning theory and career construction theory were used together as interpretive lenses through which to view the perceptions and experiences of novice AP professional development participation. As the researcher, I embodied the epistemological stance of APs creating their professional learning, perspectives, and goals based on internal constructs. Under this lens, I believed APs must be open to recreating new perceptions as they encountered new experiences and knowledge during the critical shift from former positions to novice APs. Transformative learning theory addressed the adult learners' sense of emotional preparedness, openness to encountering new knowledge, and preparation for the standards associated with their new role, whereas career construction theory considered the choices individuals make and express based upon goals and self-concepts. The combined theories provided a means to interpret the retrospective thoughts and perceptions of novice APs, in terms of current professional development and former opportunities that served as preparation for the role.

Review of Related Research and Literature

Assistant Principals

The literature review began with a comprehensive account of research about APs in public schools within the United States to describe the importance and value of additional research on this unrepresented population. Even today, the AP role is typically inundated with managerial tasks (Celikten, 2001; Holland, 2004). Such tasks consume the workload, limiting time for on-the-job professional development for school leadership growth (Marshall & Phelps Davidson, 2016). Instructional leadership literature reveals the lack of professional development for APs (Good, 2014; Hunt, 2011). Research is needed to determine which forms of preservice training and professional development might contribute to better prepared school leaders with a stronger propensity to remain in the school leadership field.

Many researchers and scholars agreed that coaching or mentoring can make a tremendous impact on the career trajectory of the AP and create positive long-term effects for the school climate (Goodman & Berry, 2011; Stevenson, 2009). In this study, coaching was defined as a supportive relationship providing a means to grow personally and professionally by a holistic self-improvement process (Bloom, 2005) and mentoring was recognized as a form of support, typically over an extended time period, in which a protégé is paired with a mentor to receive assistance, feedback, and guidance in his or her field or area of desired growth. Evidence from the education field and other fields (Bond & Naughton, 2011) have shown leadership coaching to produce significantly positive results on participants' academic, professional, and personal experiences (Franklin & Franklin, 2012; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Including coaching or mentoring in transformational efforts can aid school leaders in building a culture of success.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow defined transformative learning theory as “the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference—sets of assumption and expectation—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change” (Mezirow, 2006, p. 92). Mezirow’s theory was selected as the study’s primary theoretical framework because its formula focused on how adults encounter new knowledge and make meaning perspectives from the learning. Transformative learning theory was used to analyze how APs encountered professional development and to determine whether or not they made meaning from the information presented.

Career Construction Theory

Career construction theory (CCT) is used to conceptualize how people make meaning out of vocational behavior. Savickas’s (2001) career construction theory is a "process of evolving and implementing the vocational self-concept through the exploration of work roles and life experiences” (Grier-Reed & Conkel-Ziebell, 2009, p. 24). The novice APs experienced a transition from other career roles, which resulted in a new paradigm shift. CCT was applied to this study as the lens through which APs’ first-year administrative experiences and interpretations of professional development opportunities were explored.

Research Design and Methodology

This qualitative study was a basic interpretive study with focus on novice APs’ retrospective and current thoughts regarding participation in professional learning, including professional development, training, university preparation, and coaching or mentoring as new school administrators. Merriam distinguished the researcher of basic interpretive research as being “interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22).

Participants

Nine novice APs within two southern Atlantic school districts were interviewed using a semi-structured, open-ended interview protocol. During the summer, May-July 2018, data collection began by recruiting six participants from a large school Southeast United States district, Crawford County¹, serving more than 200,000 students. Prior to applying for an assistant principalship, Crawford County employees with a leadership certificate were invited to apply for an aspiring leadership academy: a 3-month cohort program offering professional development training, authentic leadership experiences, and mentoring support to prepare for the AP role (Crawford County, website redacted). I reached saturation of APs at nine ($n = 9$) participants by recruiting three additional APs in a smaller, neighboring district, Harbor County², serving over 70,000 students, to reach saturation. Table 1 displays the time of each interview, participant names (pseudonyms), genders, grade levels of students served at the schools, number of months the participants worked as APs at the time of the interview, the name of the school district

¹ Pseudonym to protect confidentiality

² Pseudonym to protect confidentiality

(pseudonym), and whether the APs were hired at the traditional time of year (summer) or midyear, after the school year had begun.

Table 1

Participant List

Time of interview	Pseudonym	Gender	Grade	Months as AP	Hire Time Traditional (T) or late (L)	AP had prior experience at same school level yes (Y) no (N)	District Crawford (CCPS) Harbor (HCPS)
Summer	Armando	M	6-8	10 mo.	T	Y	CCPS
Summer	Alexis	F	K-5	10 mo.	T	Y	CCPS
Summer	Lionel	M	6-8	5 mo.	L	Y	CCPS
Summer	Judy	F	9-12	5 mo.	L	Y	CCPS
Summer	Larry	M	6-8	9 mo.	L	Y	CCPS
Fall	Darnell	M	6-8	6 mo.	L	Y	CCPS
Fall	Thomas	M	K-8	8 mo.	L	Y	HCPS
Fall	Lynn	F	K-5	11 mo.	T	Y	HCPS
Fall	Laureen	F	9-12	11 mo.	T	Y	HCPS

As depicted in Table 1, four of the participants were females whereas five were male, thereby offering a balanced variation of data in terms of gender. Although only three participants had elementary school experience, seven had secondary experience (Thomas worked at a community school serving K-8 students). The participants were classified as traditional hires if they started the position during the summer before the academic year began and late hires if they started the position after the school year had already begun. Five of the nine participants began the AP position after the start of the academic year, August 2017. The table lists the participants in order of interview time. All five Crawford County Public School (CCPS) participants were interviewed during Summer 2017 and the four Harbor County Public Schools (HCPS) participants were interviewed in Fall 2017. In the summer, participants opted for face-to-face interviews whereas participants in the fall chose to be interviewed by phone. While interviewing the participants, during my memo writing, and while coding the transcripts, I considered the degree to which the participants utilized self-reflective practices to construct meaning contributive of further career development. I was interested in learning about the perspectives of the participants during their first-year AP experience; I paid special attention to their preestablished self-concepts of the social reality surrounding the AP role. Thus, I interpreted the APs' narratives for themes that patterned their work lives and professional learning during the first year as school leaders. The voices of these nine APs offered rich data on the experienced faced during the first year as school leaders.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Data sources included semi-structured interviews for novice assistant principals.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To investigate the phenomenon and make meaning of the participants' first-year experiences as APs, I collected data through semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2016) both indicated that the data collection methods utilized in basic qualitative studies were semi-structured interviews guided with a series of open-ended questions. I elected this data collection method because the process provides a conversational, two-way approach that allows for new ideas to be shared as a result of participant responses and accommodates shifts as the conversational interviews progress.

Before beginning the interviews, participants signed informed consent forms and agreed to be audio recorded. Using a peer-reviewed protocol, I interviewed each participant in one 45-60-minute session to gather perspectives on the professional learning that occurred during the first year in an administrative role. Initially, I embedded my theoretical framework into the questions I developed for the interview protocol. Then, I incorporated reflective, open-ended questions to provide opportunities for participants to describe learning experiences as first-year APs. One such question was "How has your participation in [professional development] supported preparation for your current and possible future school leadership roles?" The question not only integrated the critical self-reflection elements of both theories but it also probed to determine the participants' learning experiences and potential recognition of identity shifts. While developing the protocol questions, I considered how the perspective dimensions of transformative learning theory could be reflected upon according to participant responses. For instance, I wanted my questions to offer opportunities for participants to reflect upon how professional learning facilitated an identity transformation on the levels of self, belief systems, and lifestyle changes.

I collected data by digitally recording each interview on two devices and taking written notes. To maintain confidentiality, I assigned a pseudonym to each participant. After all of the interviews were completed, I audiotape recorded each interview and used an advanced speech recognition software service to transcribe the interview. All documents were saved with a password protected digital system and backed up on an external, password protected, hard drive. The recorder and hard copies were stored under lock and key.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began with reading each interview transcript in its entirety to gain a sense of the participants' perceptions of professional learning experiences as beginning APs. As I reviewed the transcripts, I also read my interview notes and wrote reflections in the margins to add to my future coding processes. I used thematic analysis as my analytic strategy (Bernard & Ryan, 2010) because it works well with basic qualitative design (Merriam, 2009). Creswell described thematic analysis as "extensive discussion about the major themes that arise from analyzing a qualitative database" (Creswell, 2013, p. 266). I utilized a detailed approach to thematic analysis of the data, reading and analyzing participant responses recurrently to gain an in-depth understanding beneficial to producing accurate findings to answer the research question and sub-questions. My thematic analysis process involved first- and second-cycle coding methods to generate answers to

the research question and sub-questions. Using the guidance of Saldaña (2016), I carefully selected descriptive and in vivo coding methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data.

I followed Saldaña's (2016) manual to develop first-cycle and second-cycle coding methods for this study. I coded the data from the participants' perspectives by studying the interviews transcripts and recordings of the voices to find emergent themes respective to my research questions and theoretical framework. I selected two elemental methods, descriptive and in vivo coding (Chenail, 1995; Saldaña, 2016), which were ideal to analyze the data because they facilitated the identification of themes within the data collected from novice APs participating in professional learning.

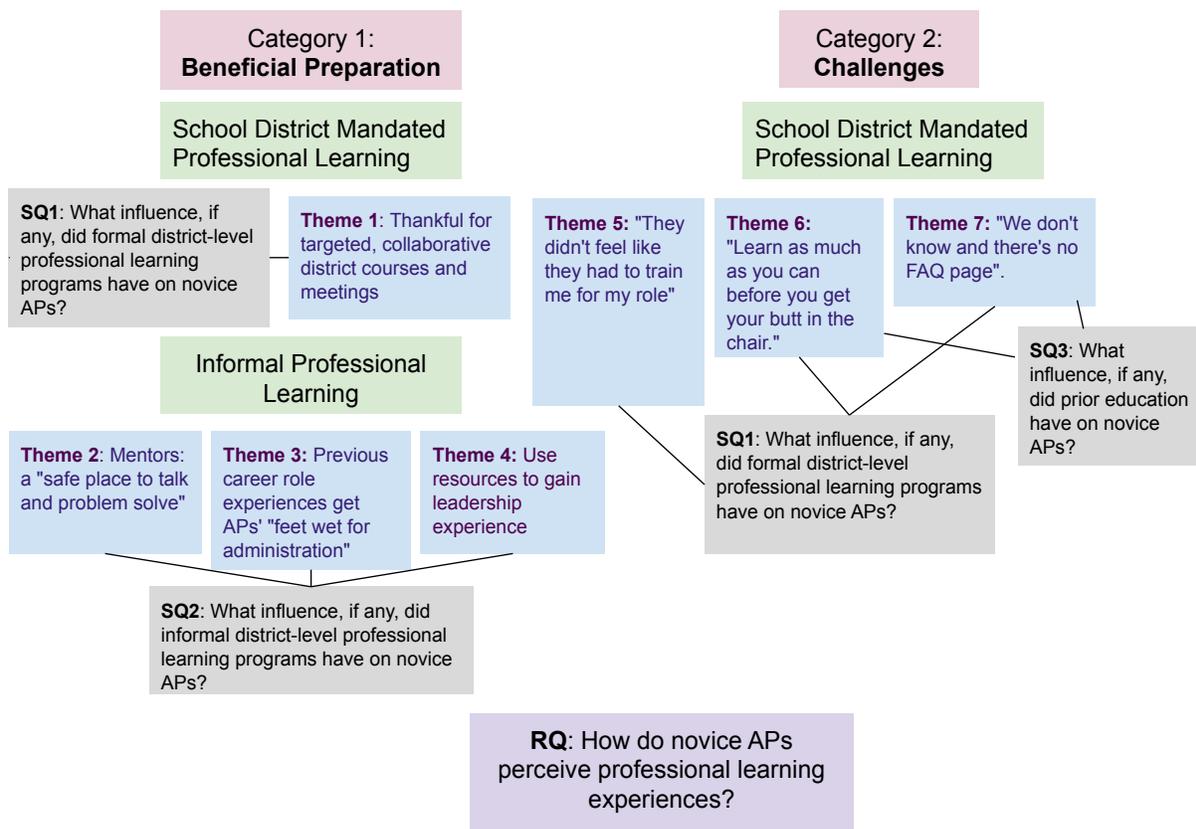
Findings

Coding the interview data revealed patterns representing seven themes. When coding the data, I considered the needs expressed by the APs, how the participants interpreted their beginning year as school leaders, the theoretical frameworks.

Themes

Data analysis revealed two categories comprising seven themes. The participants described the strengths and weaknesses of their AP experiences and offered suggestions for improvement of school district professional learning. Thus, the two categories that emerged were *beneficial prep* and *challenges*. The data were coded with the research question and sub-questions in mind. Figure 1 displays how the research question and sub-questions align with the categories and themes. The research question resides at the bottom center of the figure because it is embedded within all of the themes. The sub-questions are connected to the themes that are in alignment.

Figure 1
Categories and themes



The themes related to forms of beneficial preparation for novice APs or challenges during their acclimation to the school leadership role. The emergent themes fell under two main categories: beneficial preparation and challenges. The first four themes belonged to the category of beneficial preparation, and the remaining three themes fell under the challenges category. Both categories offered insightful information to serve school districts in providing better preparation for future APs.

The first theme explained the participants' views on authentic district courses that were beneficial for their preparation as new administrators. Participants considered district courses and trainings with planned opportunities to connect and collaborate with colleagues from other schools to be beneficial preparation. Monthly meetings and summer institutes with networking opportunities through which colleagues could learn from one another were described as helpful for their professional learning. The participants expressed a desire for more meaningful, authentic training to meet their specific needs as new APs.

The second theme related to how organic mentoring relationships benefited new APs. The APs described mentoring as an effective form of professional learning that helped them improve their job performance and confidence as school leaders. Participants described trusting mentorships that developed naturally as beneficial for their professional learning. They described mentors as safe places to which new APs could turn when they had uncertainties and unanswered questions.

The third theme shared the participants' views about previous career experiences that served as administrative training grounds. The participants reflected upon opportunities to observe and practice administrative tasks while teaching, which offered exposure and low-stakes chances to practice aspects of the AP role. All of the participants had served as teachers during their careers and described their teaching experiences as beneficial professional learning for their current role as APs. All of the participants had served as a dean or instructional coach, or both, prior to becoming APs. Other former career roles were also noted as beneficial professional learning for the AP role, including military and university police work. In all cases, the participants described how the positions gave them chances to hone their leadership skills in real-world contexts.

The fourth theme detailed the resources used by new APs to gain leadership experience that served them well in their current role. Many participants resorted to self-initiated means of professional learning. They used their resources to find answers to questions they did not know, including former job role experiences and job shadowing. Some of the APs shared examples of information they wanted to learn for professional growth that was determined through observing more experienced school leaders. Job-shadowing opportunities, especially prior to becoming an AP, were of tremendous value to several participants. The APs who had multiple experiences from which to draw and watched how veteran school leaders solved problems had beneficial professional learning experiences through resourceful means.

The fifth theme fell under the challenges category. It encompassed the participants' opinions regarding missed opportunities for authentic leadership preparation tailored to their immediate needs as new APs. Effective communication with stakeholders, especially parents, was an area in which most participants felt inadequate and underprepared to navigate. This theme illuminated how professional learning offered by the school districts was not authentic to the specific needs of novice APs.

Issues with establishing and maintaining work-life balance were mentioned by many of the participants. Managing and devoting time for relaxation were challenges for the APs under study. Goal setting for career development were deemed unrealistic. Although the theories pointed to self-reflection and goal setting for personal growth, the participants did not have time to embed these practices into their daily lives. As a result, their reflections were limited to long-term plans with few aspirations to move into other roles in the near future.

The date of hire was another predominant concern of participants. Although the traditional hire date was before the school year began, APs often started the role after the school year had begun, sometimes midyear. Some participants found the traditional start date to be advantageous, yet others preferred a midyear start date. A common reason for preferring to start midyear was for APs to observe the daily operations of the school and grow accustomed to the school culture before the following school year began.

The sixth theme entailed the participants' desired need for more formalized training and mentoring. The numerous unanticipated concerns of novice APs were transitional concerns. APs noted how transitional challenges were unforeseen problems with no form of preparation. Several participants described a lack of support when transitioning in the AP role for the first time. A need for more support and tailored professional development content from their school districts was expressed. Moreover, the need for additional opportunities for networking and mentoring was shared as a dominant concern. Embedding more intentional preparation into school district training might help APs to learn the essentials of their new role and ease their transition into school leadership.

The final theme described the desire of several participants for more managerial preparation. They aired complaints about hindrances to their ability to excel as APs resulting from a lack of preparation for daily requirements of the role. A focus was placed on leadership and preparation for the role of principal rather than preparing APs for the immediate tasks at hand.

The majority of participants raised concerns related to facilities issues. Few participants had a working contact list to call for each type of facility problem. The participants noted how the contact list was frequently updated and therefore unreliable. Several APs noted how simple yet effective having an updated contact list would have been as they transitioned into the role.

While their training was focused on future goals or untimely topics, the participants wanted to receive more training to help them handle managerial issues they were facing. Attention to specific needs could enhance the daily experience of novice APs learning all of the various requirements of their new role.

Discussion

According to the findings from this study, district-offered professional development sessions are rarely useful to novice assistant principals, whether it be redundant, offered at inappropriate timing, uninformative, or nonexistent. The district-level professional development that is helpful comes in the form of on-the-job experiences in leadership roles before becoming an assistant principal, leaders' seeing potential in candidates and allowing job-shadowing opportunities, and mentorship opportunities. Participants described school district trainings and meetings as preparation for a future principalship rather than support for the current AP role.

All but one of the participants specified the principalship as a long-term goal, but they recognized how much other preparation they needed prior to the aspired principal role. Despite the school districts' focus on principal duties and the participants' expressed desires to become principals in the eventual future, the participants described immediate needs left unmet. The participants used self-initiated modes of professional development to prepare for the AP role. According to the Gates and et al. (2019) Principal Pipeline Initiative research, providing preservice and on-the-job supports, such as mentoring and principal preparation programs (PPI), are supports used in PPIs that have positive outcomes with regard to limiting principal turnover. Although on-the-job training can "provide APs with the knowledge base for making quality decisions and opportunities to apply theories in daily school operations" (Kwan, 2011, p. 194), participants from both Crawford County Public Schools and Harbor County Public Schools described school district-offered professional development during the first year as an AP as unreliable. Thus, the findings suggest that school districts are confronted with a missed opportunity to support new APs by offering professional development on topics they immediately need to be successful as school leaders; if school districts support APs by providing training in the areas causing stress and uncertainty, their staff may have energy to reflect and grow as authentic school leaders. This study provides more information to the body of literature supporting the need for authentic, meaningful school district-offered professional development.

University preparation was another form of self-initiated professional development. Although participants positively noted previous experiences in other roles or university preparation for school leadership, they negatively pointed out redundancies in school district training. The repetitive topics were deemed a waste of time for new APs with many questions about the daily tasks they were seeking support to handle. The positive comments about former training from participants were incongruent with the literature on university preparation for school

administration; the participant commentary does not align with the literature's statement that many APs reported feeling ill prepared by university school leadership programs for their current position (Busch et al., 2010; Levine, 2006). Davis et al. (2005) suggested that university preparation programs are not teaching relevant, real-world skills to future school leaders. School districts may use this information to deepen new administrators' former training rather than repeating the same information from university preparation programs.

Authentic mentors and coaches were also sources of learning for the participants. Although some researchers advocated that "the principal has a strong responsibility to serve as a mentor for the AP" (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991, p. 67) and another asserted that "the most logical mentor for the [AP] is the senior principal with whom he or she works" (Marshall & Phelps Davidson, 2016, p. 6), not all principal-AP partnerships are intentional or successful. The typical AP's daily job responsibilities are significantly impacted by the principal under whom he or she serves (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991). Principals placed with novice APs should anticipate mentoring or coaching as part of the transition, but this is not always the case. The participants' lack of support and communication from the principal can cause challenges for new APs in need of guidance and mentoring. Coaching can make a tremendous impact on the career trajectory of the AP as well as create positive long-term effects for the school climate (Goodman & Berry, 2011), and mentoring is an important method for aspiring principals to practice leadership skills (Daresh, 1995). I found the terms mentoring and coaching to be used interchangeably and almost synonymously by my participants. It appeared that although school leaders and school districts recognize the importance of mentoring or coaching on professional development, the specifics of what mentoring or coaching entails has not been clearly defined.

Beginning any new job has its challenges; the AP role is not excluded. APs described the numerous challenges and uncertainties faced during their shift into the new role. As high-stakes testing standards increased the demands for student performance, accreditation standard requirements caused the job of school leaders to become more public. The overwhelming burden of new tasks was exhausting the participants and preventing them from honing new skills for growth as school leaders. Transitioning to the AP role from previous roles within school systems required adaptation and adjustment for all of the participants. An AP's first year presents numerous challenges, some anticipated from university school leadership coursework and observations of supervisors and other APs, but many unexpected, without forewarning or opportunities for preparation. Many new APs experience a learning curve when entering their first school leadership position and therefore are not fully prepared for the job (Mitchell, 2015). For instance, the participants pointed to facilities issues and communication with stakeholders as two reoccurring daily challenges for which they wished they had been better prepared. Several participants described not knowing whom to call for various school facilities problems and suggested that a contact list provided by the school district would be a tremendous help to first-year APs. Several participants suggested providing new administrators with updated contact lists. Because such a contact list is likely to change frequently as transitions occur within staff, it would be logical for the school district to provide assistance in directing administrators to the appropriate contacts.

All the participants were expressive of the lack of time available in the workday and the struggle to balance their personal life with the inundation of work expectations. Further, school districts could help new APs in navigating tactful communication with parents; the participants had not anticipated the high degree of parent communication that persisted throughout their first year on the job as administrators. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the perceived challenges

experienced by one novice AP might vary from those of another AP, causing complications for school districts in providing adequate, timely professional development and professional learning opportunities for all first-year school leaders. For instance, for one AP, being a parent herself helped her transition into communication with parents within her new AP role, but not all new administrators have that perspective upon which to rely. Another participant mentioned a shift in school districts' training on soft skills for administrators, which could benefit new leaders seeking to determine appropriate parent communication methods. Such issues point to the professional development needs and sense of preparedness of first-year APs as they transition into their initial role as school leaders. Mizell (2010) emphasized that school leaders must develop and maintain a diverse repertoire of current essential skills such as academic instruction, data assessment, and professional development for teachers. In reality, the participant responses reporting overwhelming, overworked sentiments resulting from time management concerns of APs transitioning into this administrative role for the first time cannot be left unmentioned. The participants' sentiments aligned with Celikten's (2001) and Holland's (2004) earlier works, which spoke to the issue of managerial duties' dominating AP workload. More recent qualitative research about AP perceptions of current jobs conducted by Militello et al. (2015) also concluded that APs spend most of the work time on managerial tasks. The participants perceived that feeling overworked was just part of the job but balancing personal and professional life was very challenging for the majority in this role.

Marshall (2016) described AP role ambiguity as the unstated rules and norms existing within the school's culture and posited that role ambiguity can limit how the AP does the job. The participants specified some of the unexpected first-year challenges as time management issues, the lower than anticipated pay raise from instructional to administrative classification, anxiety related to possible work site impermanence, and tactfully navigating social interactions with stakeholders. As I was analyzing the data to seek how APs constructed career goals, it was apparent that the lack of time for reflection and planning prevented the AP position from serving as a transformative learning opportunity. Although Petrides et al. (2014) affirmed that long-term school leadership can improve student learning, a need exists for more professional development geared specifically toward immediate, pressing needs to better prepare aspiring and novice school leaders so they can apply the information directly to urgent challenges and focus on other growth opportunities. Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett (2012) reiterated that quick turnover rates promulgate the need to tap and develop competencies in the AP position. In the July 2019 brief on principal turnover, the NASSP and Learning Policy Institute (LPI) confirmed that principal turnover continues to be a serious issue throughout the nation (Levin, Bradley, & Scott, 2019). After a year-long study on principal turnover, the NASSP and LPI named inadequate preparation and professional development as one of the top five reasons why principals leave their jobs (Levin, Bradley, & Scott, 2019).

Moore (2009) asserted that consistency could improve AP job experiences, creating a more uniformly prepared population of candidates, ready to assume principalship opportunities when they arise. He stated, "Establishing more uniformity among [assistant principalship positions] would increase productivity and establish more consistent norms" (Moore, 2009, p. 1). The participants' experiences, however, align with the literature describing managerial tasks as dominating the AP workload (Celikten, 2001; Holland, 2004). Although many researchers, including Van Cleef (2015), validated the connection between stable leadership matters and improved student performance, this research highlighted the fact that a lack of authentic professional development to help maintain school leaders is prevalent. Although experiences from

previous roles provide insight, prior on-the-job training, and at times, empathy, when deciding how to move forward from the new school administrator lens, gaps in training exist for almost all new APs. Thus, the participants' views aligned with the literature stating that job-embedded professional development has focused on teachers and principals, with little mention of APs (Oleszewski et al., 2012).

The research questions were directed at school district professional learning, but the participants did not perceive that this form of training was impactful toward their growth as novice APs. APs lacked opportunities to reflect on the information gathered and provided to them, thereby causing a sense of confusion and disarray. All the participants described school district-offered professional development as unreliable and considered networking to be a critical component for success in the AP role. Aside from one AP who transitioned into the role from another state and therefore lacked a network of colleagues to call on within the district, eight of the participants considered the networks previously established in their former roles to be indispensably beneficial in their first-year transition to AP. School district professional development typically was geared toward satisfying principal licensure requirements. During the first year, APs needed actionable support for immediate problems. Previous experience in dean and teacher roles was more helpful for APs.

Although the sample was small and less diverse than I had intended, the voices of participants are clear in these findings. Their voices and stories help fill the gaps in the literature on APs, professional development, and transitional challenges of first-year school leadership administrators. APs described the challenges associated with beginning an AP role and reflected on the first-year experience career development goals. The professional development needs of first-year APs were illuminated.

Implications for Practice

It is important for school districts to know how their APs make meaning from the first year as school leaders and how the professional development offered to them, or lack thereof, is encountered. The participants noted specific areas of need, which resulted from school districts' not offering timely, practical professional development. The mentioned areas in which participants expressed a need for support included authentic professional development topics such as facilities, stakeholder communication, key contacts for various problems, and instructional leadership. The findings suggest that school districts are confronted with a missed opportunity to support new APs by offering professional development on topics they need immediately to be successful as school leaders; if school districts supported APs by providing training in the areas causing stress and uncertainty, their staff might have energy to reflect and grow as authentic school leaders. The school districts under study design the AP role as a steppingstone to become a principal; APs hired in Crawford and Harbor counties are expected to become principals after about 3 years, when the principal certification program is completed. Professional development is designed to prepare APs for principal roles, rather than for the current needs of the AP role.

More professional development geared specifically toward the needs of new APs is needed to better prepare aspiring and novice school leaders for immediate, pressing needs so they can apply the information directly to urgent challenges and focus on other growth opportunities. Walker and Kwan (2009) recommended on the job training to support school leaders in preparation for the myriad tasks required of them. School district professional development cannot make the mistake of assuming that further training is not necessary for novice school leaders. University

preparation and prior career experiences, such as teachers and pseudo-administrators (deans, instructional coaches, and CRTs), provides several necessary skills sets but gaps still exist in each APs' preparation. Marshall and Hooley (2006) referenced role ambiguity as a leading cause of APs' feeling negatively about their job performance and burnout. Each path to preparation does not prepare new school leaders with the exact skill sets but team-based leadership can complement each school leader's specific area of expertise. Colwell (2015) recommended that APs serve as leadership colleagues to the principal. My research compliments this idea and supports the potential benefits of principals and APs working alongside on another to achieve the same vision and goals for the ultimate benefit of their students.

Further, school districts could help new APs in navigating tactful communication with parents; the participants had not anticipated the high degree of parent communication that persisted throughout their first year on the job as administrators. For one AP, being a parent herself helped her transition into communication with parents within her new AP role, but not all new administrators had that perspective upon which to rely. Another participant mentioned a shift in school districts' training on soft skills for administrators, which could benefit new leaders seeking to determine appropriate parent communication methods. Such issues point to the professional development needs and sense of preparedness of first-year APs as they transition into their initial role as school leaders. Although experiences from previous roles provide insight, prior on-the-job training, and at times, empathy, when deciding how to move forward from the new school administrator lens, gaps in training exist for almost all new APs.

To enhance the organizational experiences of current and future novice assistant principals, there is a need for more consistent pre-service training and job-embedded professional development to support individuals in this fast-paced, multifaceted role, which often serves as a steppingstone to the principalship position. This research may facilitate greater efficiency and effectiveness in the improvement of leadership preparation programs and professional development opportunities for aspiring and current APs. Some skills can only be learned with experience and practice. Creating aspiring AP programs that enable all candidates to practice roles would be a beneficial step for school districts seeking to improve their professional preparation for teachers and staff seeking to become school leaders. A program tailored to each aspiring candidate's unique skill sets, career experience, and needs would help fill in the aforementioned gaps in their path to preparation. Considering Mezirow's transformative learning theory which focuses on adult learning, an aspiring AP program tailored to the candidate's current skillsets and background will help the participant learn new knowledge in a manner differentiated toward them. Moreover, Savicka's career construction theory focused on life design, which gives people the opportunity to create the career they envision for their life. School districts could create AP preparation programs around each participants' background experiences and desires for their career to ultimately form a holistic, comprehensive approach supporting aspiring APs toward long term school leadership paths.

Moreover, aspiring assistant principals must prepare for school leadership before entering the AP role. Once APs have entered the role, opportunities for professional development and training are uncertain. When professional development is offered, the timing of the information received is not always helpful or opportune. Ambitious, resourceful school leaders who have had mentors and completed job shadowing of effective administrators are the most prepared. While mentoring and coaching were identified by participants as beneficial for their professional development, it was unclear whether their mentors or coaches had been trained to serve in that capacity and offer effective feedback for growth. Thus, formal training for mentors or coaches is

a recommendation for school districts preparing effective AP preparation programs. According to the participants in my study, APs are expected to have self-created, previously established network connections to reach out to when assistance is needed. Thus, the mentoring and coaching programs my participants experienced appeared to be less formal or structured than my recommendations would entail.

To enhance the organizational experiences of current and future novice APs, there is a need for better theoretically based constructs that address the unique challenges first-year APs encounter due to transitioning from other roles to school administration. A body of research on career transitions exists in the field of career psychology but there is a lack of research in the field of educational leadership addressing transitional challenges of school leaders.

My use of two combined theories, CCT and transformational learning theory, attempted to address the transitional challenges of novice APs, the new learning constructed during the shift to school leadership, and the new self-concepts APs form when moving into administration. None of the participants entered the AP position with confidence in all necessary skill sets. Previous experience as an instructional coach, dean, and classroom teacher was repeatedly stated as a necessity for success in administration. As the professional development offerings at these two school districts under study stood, aspiring school leaders could not rely on the school district to provide them with all the skill sets needed to be effective school leaders.

Conclusion

The voices of the nine participants helped me to understand the struggles and needs of novice APs. The AP role is filled with expectations, many of which are unanticipated by new school administrators with limited experience. This study presents the positive areas of professional learning occurring in schools as well as feedback on areas in need of improvement. Further studies of APs as a specifically targeted school leadership subgroup are necessary to continue research on their underrepresented group in the literature.

My study indicated that professional learning that is intentional to new APs' specific needs is beneficial. Participants described collaboration and networking as favorable professional growth opportunities. Moreover, mentoring was described as another source for professional growth. As APs searched for answers to the questions that emerged each day, drawing from previous experience in former leadership roles was found to be helpful. Self-initiated means of problem solving and information seeking were also utilized, but a need for more specific, tailored professional development was the desired alternative form of professional learning.

The participants described challenges encountered during their transitions into the AP role, which can be translated as feedback for school districts seeking to improve their professional development opportunities. Formalized training offering authentic professional learning experiences with a focus on their daily necessities could enhance AP training. Offering mentoring and networking opportunities could also be incorporated. APs expressed a desire to connect with others and learn from people in similar situations as well as experts from whom they could draw ideas. The professional learning experiences of these nine APs were helpful, but improvements could be made to enhance the experiences of future APs beginning the role.

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Being There as a Support, a Guide, and to Intervene When You Have To: Mentors Reflect on Working with Teacher Candidates

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This paper presents a study that investigated how mentors perceived their long-term relationships with teacher candidates in a secondary teacher preparation program. The study describes the process by which the teacher candidates and the mentors select each other and how the relationship develops, with findings that suggest that the length of time teacher candidates and mentor teachers work together as essential to building trust. Mentors identify themselves as quasi-teacher educators who serve as an extension to the university preparation process. Findings explore the benefits of mentoring for the prospective and practicing teachers as well as to teacher preparation in general. To optimize the value of field experience, it is important to understand this relationship and its outcomes.

Keywords: *choice, mentor, field experience, teacher preparation*

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Data from this mentor study underlines the essential role of field experience in teacher preparation, making a compelling case for the centrality of the mentor role in solidifying and deepening the teacher candidate's understanding and skills about the profession (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2007). The extensive set of interviews of mentor-teachers provides a glimpse into the ways mentors relate to and support teacher candidates in their efforts to become effective teachers. The length of time these individuals spend together helps develop this significant relationship. The researchers of the study illustrate the wisdom embodied in a policy that extends the mentor-teacher candidate relationship from beginning fieldwork through student teaching. It is common for the relationship to continue into induction.

In this study, we refer to practicing teachers who work with teacher candidates as mentors, signifying the role they play in preparing prospective teachers. The program is unique in that both parties select each other at the outset of a candidate's program. Consequently, the candidate will student teach in the classroom of their chosen mentor.

Literature Review

Researchers in teacher education identified the importance of field experience in teacher preparation. Through early experiences, teacher candidates have opportunities to engage in authentic learning (Caprano et al., 2010), increase knowledge while receiving the collaborative support of others (Glazer & Hannafin, 2006), work toward advancing the skills of students with individual needs (Hanline, 2010), and challenge what may be unchecked biases by working with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Gonzales & Gabel, 2017; Villegas, 2007). During field experiences, teacher candidates work in the classroom to try their hand at identifying suitable material, developing lessons, facilitating classroom procedures, and delivering instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Lampert, 2010).

The impact of these field experiences does not diminish over time. Teachers describe early field experience and student teaching as the most beneficial, authentic, and practical aspects of their teacher education (Clarke et al., 2014). As researchers in teacher education continually informs us, learning to teach is a difficult, complex, demanding, and emotional journey (Orland-Barak & Wang, 2020; Spalding et al., 2011). It occurs over time and is contextualized, unpredictable, often personal, and idiosyncratic (Lampert, 2010; Spalding et al., 2011). Field practicum experience and the relationship the candidate has with a practicing teacher influence how they understand what it means to become a teacher.

Teacher educators cannot assume that a candidate will emerge from field experience with knowledge about how to teach and interact with students in the classroom (Welsh & Schaffer, 2017; Zeichner, 2010). Despite the influence of practicing teachers, it is not always clear how or why experienced teachers assume their role with teacher candidates. Some scholars have found that teachers overseeing a teacher candidate view their role as mere "cooperation," seeming to believe they should do nothing more than provide a place for the teacher candidate to practice teaching (Clarke et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2008). Other times they take a more active role, assisting and supporting the teacher candidate as they learn to teach (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008; Jaspers et al., 2014). In these circumstances, practicing teachers provide examples meant for imitation (Franke & Dahlgren, 1996), solve problems (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005), and provide moral support as they talk with candidates about their attempts to learn to teach (Orland-Barak & Klein, 2005). Clark et al. (2014) detail the numerous and sometimes fragmented roles practicing teachers play as they offer feedback, model lessons,

develop relationships, and invite candidates to consider changes to their teaching approach. Kemmis et al. (2014) point out that the efforts of these practicing teachers serve various purposes including supervision, support, and professional development for the experienced teacher. They mention that many purposes occur within the relationship and that sometimes purposes conflict.

The relationship between teacher candidates and practicing teachers has evolved to become both collegial and collaborative. Ambrosetti (2014) notes that the relationship that develops between a candidate and a mentor becomes reciprocal as they work toward a common understanding. Care and concern for one another grows within the relationship and this mutuality extends beyond either individual's personal agenda (Clark et al., 2014). This reciprocal affiliation lessens the power differential often associated with supervisory models. The approach may significantly enhance the field experience for both partners, as the candidate offers newly acquired (theoretical) knowledge in teacher education while the mentor offers skill and the wisdom of experience (Ferrier-Kerr, 2009). Candidates are encouraged to examine learning in the classroom; they acquire a variety of teaching strategies to respond to students' needs while emphasizing the importance of collaboration and reflective practice (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2008).

Relationships between practicing teachers and candidates may involve tensions (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Conflicting values may pull partners in two directions: one leaning toward established school culture, the other promoting expectations from the university. Practicing teachers report feeling conflicted about being a friend to the candidate in their classroom while also being a critic (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Further struggles arise when a candidate's preparation seems to interfere with the academic progress of students in the classroom (Jasper et al., 2014; Rhoads et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

In the teacher preparation program of this study, situated learning frames the relationships between teacher candidates and their mentors. Conceptualized by Lave and Wenger (1991), situated learning occurs as a candidate acquires instructional competence by engaging in the process of teaching. Playing the role of teacher eventually disappears as they begin to self-identify. Within the school environment, tensions need mediating due to factors such as internal beliefs (how things should go) versus external demands (how administrators want things to go).

The basis of a social theory of learning (Lave & Wenger 1991), a community of practice is a collection of people who engage in an ongoing basis in some common endeavor (e.g., teachers in a school setting). In the course of activity, this effort develops ways of doing things, views, values, power relations, and ways of talking (Eckert, 2006). Two conditions are central to its meaning: a shared experience over time and a commitment to a shared understanding. Such a foundation is central to the construction of a teacher as it outlines a common ground, allowing the development of cultural structures understood holistically (Eckert, 2006).

In a 'community of learners,' committed members participate in practice with other involved members (e.g., mentor-teacher candidate relationship) and construct shared interpretations that become generative. The intention is to transform the candidate into a teacher with an established identity. Both classroom practice and teacher development are stimulated through mutual interactions (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The shared practice and discourse of the 'community of learners' develops a sustainable educational practice and personal and professional

development for both parties. The candidate takes on the responsibility for their own role in relation to that of others and to the totality of the school in which they participate (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

We sought to understand how the element of choice in pairing teacher candidates with mentors influence how they work together. We explore how mentors thought about field experiences and how they develop relationships with teacher candidates. Given the key role of relationship, we speculated that understanding the perspectives of mentors might also serve to inform other programs about how to support practicing teachers in their roles with teacher candidates. What follows is an examination of mentors' perspective about their work.

Three specific questions guided our investigation:

1. Why do mentor teachers agree to mentor teacher candidates?
2. How do mentors describe their relationship with teacher candidates?
3. How do mentors share teaching knowledge and skills in a long-term field experience?

Method

We employed a qualitative design to deepen our understanding of the experience of mentors working with candidates. The design serves to identify the essence of mentor experiences and understand relationships in context such as a school, or classroom (Creswell, 2013). As Polkinghorne (2005) outlines, comparing and contrasting the perspectives of various individuals permits the researcher to uncover essential characteristics across these sources. This phase of discovery involved an unpacking of core meanings through multiple interviews.

Community of Teachers (CoT)

Offered at a south central university in the Midwest, the Community of Teachers (CoT) program aims to cultivate a community of practice where prospective teachers gain teaching competencies and work toward a teaching license. Part of the program's mission encourages candidates and their mentors to set goals and solve teaching problems in the field, rather than perform a series of activities that relate to teaching competencies (Chapman & Flinders, 2006). There are three components of the program: the seminar setting, a culminating professional portfolio, and field experience.

Weekly seminars involve candidates at all stages of preparation, including undergraduate and graduate students, from beginners in the program to those about to graduate. Teacher candidates enroll in various secondary content areas licensed in the state, including language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, art and music education as well as special education. The seminar requirement replaces some professional education coursework (i.e., methods courses) required to complete a license in the state. In seminar, a faculty facilitator guides activities that focus on a semester theme chosen by candidates. Chosen topics explore educational theories, practice, and effective instructional strategies. Themes align with competencies mapped out in the program's portfolio assessment (e.g., curriculum development, teaching reading and writing, assessment). The facilitator also acts as an advisor and university supervisor for fieldwork observations including the candidate's student teaching.

Portfolio evidence compiled throughout the program may or may not involve mentors. Artifacts from a candidate's life experience, including informal teaching activities that occur in various community settings or in coursework at the university, are typically included in the portfolio. At the conclusion of student teaching, candidates earn a license by presenting the accumulated evidence to demonstrate an ability to teach.

As a field-based program, CoT assumes that the acquisition of pedagogical skill strengthens in intensive, long-term field experiences (Chapman & Flinders, 2006). Candidates who enter the program are required to visit several secondary schools to observe and choose a mentor by the end of their second semester. The program offers a list of mentors who have previously worked with the program, but encourages candidates to seek new ones. Once a partnership is established, the facilitator from the candidate's seminar meets with the pair to discuss the program's expectations. Faculty then visit the candidate in the mentor's classroom and discuss observations as well as address any issues of concern. Prior to student teaching, a candidate is required to spend two semesters in the mentor's classroom. The majority of candidates spend an average of four academic semesters before they student teach.

Participants

Thirteen mentors participated with given pseudonyms (see Table 1). Volunteers originated from a list of mentors currently active in CoT. They teach a variety of content areas in both general and special education settings. The complete investigation, procedures and instruments, gained approval from the Institutional Review Board's Human Subjects Committee.

Table 1
Demographic of Mentors in Secondary School Setting

Mentors	Years Teaching	Teacher Candidates*	Content	Institution
Nicole	28	>7	SpEd	Public: HS
Jenny	10	>5	SpEd/AS	Public: HS
Stanley	32	>10	English	Public: HS
Karl	30	>20	SpEd/Basic Skill	Public: HS
Carrie	30	2	Science	Public: HS
Charles	10	1	SpEd/Comm. Base	Public: HS
Rhonda	20	>10	SpEd	Public: HS
Susan	7	3	English	Public: HS
David	5	1	Science/Physics	Public: HS
Miranda	10	>5	English	Public: HS
Gene	10	3	English	Private: MS
Tom	10	3	Science	Public: MS
Richard	15	>5	English	Public: HS

Note. SpEd = Special Education; MS = Middle School; HS = High School.

*may include candidates outside of university's teacher preparation program.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided an interpretive, naturalistic approach to collect perspectives on the phenomenon of mentor experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Open-ended interview questions yielded viewpoints about teaching, relationship building, shared knowledge, and the effects of a field experience partnership over an extended length of time between the mentor and teacher candidate. Six researchers conducted interviews in the mentor's classroom.

Data Analysis

We transcribed and compiled recordings into individual data sets for analysis. Utilizing an inductive process, it required a reading and rereading of sets individually and in small groups. Notations based on interviews identified patterns and regularities originating in tentative themes. A working definition, including criteria emerged for each theme: an ongoing process throughout the study. Nine coded themes originated: length of field experience, relationships between mentor and teacher candidate, candidate need, benefits for mentors, school setting demands, reflection, reproducing the profession, disposition, and miscellaneous. The researchers collapsed coded themes into three categories: Passing it Along, Getting to Know Each Other, and Negotiating a Balance.

Based on the established categories, the authors suggest that mentors perceived their role to be complex and multi-faceted. Some mentors felt obligated to reproduce the profession and maintain the status quo whereas others sought to improve the field of education by exerting an influence on the next generation of teachers. They saw their role as both supportive and focused on relationship building. Mentoring allowed them to examine their own practice –offering insight on what works and what may need alterations. Concurrently, they also emphasized that there was a time and place for a supervisory role and they asserted themselves as needed, usually as a last resort.

Passing It Along

When asked why they agreed to take on the role of mentoring a teacher candidate, most explained that it was helpful to have an extra person in the classroom to assist them with the myriad of teaching tasks. Beyond these practical reasons, mentors acknowledged wanting to pass along their expertise by participating in the preparation of teachers. They also described enjoyable interactions with candidates, which allowed mentors to help them learn to teach.

Miranda, an English teacher who has mentored for more than five years, thought of mentoring a candidate as a way to help provide schools with “good teachers who would become colleagues.” Like Miranda, most interviewed mentors reported wanting to help prepare future teachers by transmitting years of accumulated wisdom and to inspire them to carry on their teaching legacy. As Stanley, another English teacher put it:

Just the chance to pass on tricks and skills and to think along with somebody else who is eager, that becomes really gratifying... because you're not an artist, so you can't turn it into a play or a movie... there's no way to preserve what you've done. So, [mentoring] becomes a way of preserving something.

Karl, a special education mentor, proposed visiting the university more often as a way to “pass along” what he has learned over the years. He also wanted to relay what he knew and felt

his perspective as an experienced teacher was important to convey.

One of the things I enjoyed was coming out [to a university seminar discussion] a couple times personally. I think there's so many people within 30 miles of [the university] that maybe the teacher candidates could bounce questions off of... me and one another to get ideas. [Candidates] can get real life, non-sugar coated answers to how things are heading [in public schools].

Mentors emphasized that over time they realized that they too were benefitting from the relationship with the teacher candidate in their classroom. Susan, an English teacher, explained how this mutuality developed since she “learned so much from her [teacher candidate]. Oh my gosh, so much.” Susan recollected how she met the teacher candidate, explaining:

I think she was talking to another English teacher. I came moseying into his room for some reason or another. We got to talking about how we did something, maybe literary analysis... I asked her if she wanted to come and observe me and she said yes. I guess she liked what she saw. She kept coming, then asked if I would be her mentor. It felt great.

Mentors often spoke of feeling flattered when chosen. Like Susan, Nicole, a veteran special education teacher said she felt honored and that the experience benefitted her practice. Over her twenty-eight years teaching, she had many teacher candidates come “in and out.” She appreciated the depth of the “give and take” experience of CoT and explained that she had learned from them as much as she taught them. “[S]ometimes it's humbling and sometimes it pumps me up, revitalizes me,” she said. Similarly, Stanley explained that “even after thirty-two years of teaching English,” he enjoyed the “collaboration and problem solving” that occurred with CoT teacher candidates. For Karl, the relationship let him reflect upon his own practice:

I think [teaching] just becomes intuitive at some point in time, you know? And maybe that's not always good. We need to find a new way to be reflective. And hosting a student teacher is really the only way we get to say, ‘Hey, I'm going to watch someone else do my job.’ That doesn't happen otherwise.

Like Stanley, Miranda valued the reciprocal nature of the relationship. She noted that watching the teacher candidate work with students provided her with opportunities “to see things that worked, as well as things that were less successful.” She noted that mentoring provided her with an opportunity to “question whether [her] ways of approaching various problems in teaching were always the best.” Nicole also reflected about what she learned from mentoring teacher candidates, pointing out that they brought new ideas to her by describing what was read and discussed in their coursework. She frequently asked the candidate to tell her more about course assignments and requirements.

Charles, a first-time mentor who was also a veteran special education teacher, considered his own “professional development” in an interview:

Yeah, it made me reflect more... If I can't justify why we are doing something, then maybe it is something we shouldn't do... When Adam [the teacher candidate] was leading and doing things similar to the way I would do it, I was able to step back to see if it was working... and then ask, “Is it the right thing?” It would give me insights.

Getting to Know Each Other

Mentors working closely with a candidate built a relationship that they both enjoyed personally and benefited from professionally. Stanley reported that he knew that he would enjoy working with the candidate right away.

I really liked [Terry], and a colleague of mine did too. The very first day Terry was here, I just let him talk to the kids... There's a student support group in the school and the sponsor walked into the classroom and Terry immediately gravitated towards the program, saying he wanted to be part of it. He's wonderful.

According to the mentors, being able to choose one another rather than having a placement arranged by the university seemed to facilitate their relationship. This was evident when the opportunity to choose was not available or when they felt compelled to oversee the development of a candidate in their classroom.

In his interview, David, a science teacher, explained that his principal asked him to take over mentoring a teacher candidate after the retirement of a physics teacher. Reflecting on the experience, David described feeling uncertain. He felt that the candidate, "was groomed to...accept what the model of good teaching looked like" and the school administration appreciated what Lance, the teacher candidate had to offer the school." Unfortunately, the model of teaching the school administration favored was not especially compatible with David's practices and this created tension throughout their relationship.

Miranda had initial reservations about taking on a teacher candidate in her English class. The candidate who visited her classroom was originally from the island of Taiwan and English was her second language. Miranda had concerns about how accepting the students in the classroom would be since there was "very little diversity at this school," and the potential "barriers" related to language and culture seemed evident. Shu-chen, the teacher candidate persisted in visiting and observing the classroom despite Miranda's reservations, which shifted from a concern with cultural "acceptance of someone not from America" to "a willingness to advance the field of teaching." Over time, Miranda's worry lessened, evident initially when she asked Shu-chen to present a lesson about education in Taiwan. The lesson was well received and Shu-chen ended up teaching the students phrases in Mandarin. Surprised and pleased, Miranda felt that the experience brought her students closer to Shu-chen, giving them insight about how difficult it might be to acquire a second language and to navigate unfamiliar cultural practices.

When discussing a traditional short-term practicum experience he had experienced, Karl was emphatic with his position. "I know I sent one packing because I wasn't about to turn my classroom over to somebody who told me she was getting her 'M.R.S. degree...What I've come to love about CoT is I really get to know the teacher candidate. They're in my room for a long time, they really get the flavor, they get an idea of the program, and the kids."

Most mentors mentioned "being good with kids" as essential in building the relationship with teacher candidates. Charles explained he enjoyed having Adam in his room because Adam actively reached out to students. "[T]he very first day he was here, Adam was interacting with the students. That doesn't always happen." Comparing Adam's presence in the classroom with others from another preparation program, Charles reflected, "many just feel comfortable sitting back and being the observer at first, Adam was never an observer. He immediately initiated conversations with students." Adam's efforts to get to know the students led Charles to see him as "somebody I can trust in my room."

Other mentors expressed appreciation for the way candidates fostered connections with students, often noting that the long-term placement supported these relationships. Carrie, a veteran science teacher described the teacher candidate in her classroom this way:

She wasn't waiting for me to give her the answer. She was going to go out there and find the answer. And I think that started when she first started watching my class. She was wanting to be engaged, but she didn't want to cross the line, she wanted to make sure that

I was comfortable with it. She would ask permission, “Can I go around to potentially help groups?” Her overall willingness to want to be active was essential to how we got along.

On occasion, mentors lamented that teacher candidates did not make the most of their time and missed opportunities to establish meaningful relationships. Jenny, a special education teacher, was dismayed with a teacher candidate whose attendance was inconsistent. Jenny explained that her classroom included “a variety of learners with diverse needs.” The realization that the teacher candidate “could not be counted on to attend regularly and to be on time” immediately became an issue. She explained that consistency was essential, especially given the student population in her classroom. Jenny thought the teacher candidate’s intermittent attendance interfered with student learning and elevated their anxiety. She also mentioned that the teacher candidate’s engagement with the students was limited and “she often seemed distant and disinterested in my room.” These behaviors portrayed someone who “was unapproachable and the students seemed wary of her. Her time in my room did not last long.”

As mentors and teacher candidates became acquainted with one another, mentors encouraged initiative as they negotiated the relationship with their teacher candidate. Both individuals learned to collaborate with each other to the benefit of the classroom environment. Mentors seemed to realize that achieving a balance was critical to the professional growth of the teacher candidate as well as their own. As Gene described:

I think my goal is by the end we can go have a beer, talk about teaching. I don’t know if that has to be at the end, but by the end we are talking the same language and I think you reward that by just being professional with them and making them part of the team.

Negotiating a Balance

Mentors spoke about the difficulties with supporting a candidate as they learned to teach while also taking on the role of evaluating them to determine if they were sufficiently prepared to instruct. When the mentor became comfortable with a candidate, they would give them the freedom to try out teaching ideas in the classroom. Occasionally these forays into teaching failed miserably and mentors felt the need to step in and take over. More often, teacher candidates’ efforts were successful. As they explored ideas together, mentors thought candidates learned to evaluate their own teaching and that this was an important part of teacher development. Gene, a ten-year English teacher, articulated this process:

I want to give the freedom to try things that she wants to try. And allow her to notice the things that worked or didn’t work on her own. I want to be there to just talk with her. She sometimes will ask, “[w]hat do you suggest?” I might say, “[t]ry this or maybe do this, but what you did this way was really good.” Instead of criticizing...I don’t know how to explain it. I’m not sitting here like my principal when she comes in and critiques me.

Mentors viewed the freedom to fail as important to the process for learning to teach.. Stanley identified it as “self-discovery” and described it as:

I actually feel like it’s not necessary to throw them into the fire. It is being there as a support, as a guide, and to intervene when you have to. But allowing them to figure out...what works in an actual classroom. Theories are great, but practicality is different... I think that through failure we find out what are our strengths and what are our weaknesses and what did we do wrong and this allows a lot for self-reflection. So, what I am trying to encourage is for them to consistently evaluate themselves and figure out where they are in the process. And ultimately, really, if teaching is for them.

Despite a willingness to let teacher candidates try out ideas about teaching and their belief in the value of occasional failures, mentors also appeared to be well aware of their responsibilities. Karl announced this directly to teacher candidates when he felt he needed to do so.

Ultimately, they have to work within my classroom and how it is set up by me. I am still the boss... These are still my kids in here. And whether what I am doing is right or not, it's mine to decide. This is what I try to get them to understand.

Mentors described the ongoing dialogue with teacher candidates as supportive of their own growth and understanding of what it means to teach –an opportunity to thoughtfully reflect on failures or difficulties to improve as a teacher. Working with candidates was a recursive process made more valuable by the length of time they worked together. Rhonda, a twenty-year veteran and experienced mentor noted, “the long-term field experience provided multiple opportunities to address what Natalie might still need to learn.”

Like Rhonda, most interviewed mentors were aware that teacher candidates required “a gentle touch” during critiques about beginning efforts to teach. Mentors explained that “support was essential for maintaining an open dialogue” with the candidate. They worried that too much “critiquing early on” might discourage that openness and trust in the relationship, which is necessary for professional growth. Stanley explained that he “really loved the ability to sort of problem solve and offer suggestions and talk about theory as we practice it.”

Sometimes the nature of the relationship placed mentors in a difficult position, particularly if candidates were not progressing in a timely fashion. “One thing I don’t like, managing somebody who is quasi-peer, quasi-student. There’s a managerial aspect to it that is really kind of tricky. None of us are really trained for that,” Stanley added. “Knowing how to critique without destroying is a skill that I realize I haven’t always had.”

Stanley and several other mentors advocated for regularly structured observations by CoT faculty as a means to reduce the tension between support and supervision, but acknowledged difficulties this might entail. Stanley thought mentors might do well to include feedback to teacher candidates in a more structured way:

It’s the easiest thing in the world to just use casual conversations at the end of the day or between classes and just say, ‘I’ve done my job.’ And, though I hate the structured thing, it’s probably really smart and that’s one thing I would encourage –a mandated, structured observation. Maybe this is me personally, but I have a real difficulty with ‘hey, I’m now going to use a structured observation.’ It seems heavy suddenly, and makes it seem like there is a problem...if it’s just an expectation all the way through, it makes it easier.

Other mentors also expressed concern about how to provide sufficient feedback to teacher candidates and worried that letting teacher candidates discover their own best practice in teaching is insufficient. Rhonda worried that student teachers might not be able to identify when they needed help or that they would be reluctant to seek it: “Sometimes I worry that I am too loosey-goosey with throwing them out there to the wolves and they’re too polite to say to me, ‘I need more structure from you.’”

In other instances, mentors became aware that teacher candidates were not acquiring needed professional competencies, or wondered if they needed to give more explicit direction. Susan reported that she initially felt uncertain about how much she should direct the teacher candidate about specific activities in the classroom. As the candidate began student teaching, Susan worried about the students in the classroom testing boundaries, making them difficult to reset when she took the class over again. She also worried that students would be less likely to learn what they needed while the teacher candidate was learning to teach. When she sat down with the candidate

to discuss concerns, the two women realized that they differed in their approaches to classroom management. Because they had established a long-term relationship, they were comfortable discussing their conflict and problem-solved the differences together. They discussed “classroom management ideas together and ultimately developed a plan” that they both felt comfortable after acknowledging their “different philosophies.”

Other efforts to work out differences between mentors and teacher candidates were less successful. David, the science teacher who was asked to take over mentoring duties by school administrators reported struggling to help Lance learn habits that were valuable to meet the professional responsibilities of teaching. He explained that Lance did not have “a sense of what is appropriate during class time. He would use his phone in class, something I would never do. Seems like small things, but they are professional things.” As the relationship developed, David tried to help Lance acquire better work habits to little or no avail.

I have not been able to instill in Lance or develop a pattern in grading work on time or grading at ALL. I would make lists of the things that we need...and date it, and put my name on it...and then check up, and then there was still no movement at all on his part.

Discussion

We set about to understand the perspective of the practicing teachers who become mentors in a teacher preparation program. Our findings largely confirm what other researchers have found when examining the perspective of practicing teachers taking on a supervisory or cooperating teacher role. For the most part, the mentors we interviewed enjoyed the role. They valued having candidates in their room because it provided the students in their classroom with an additional adult who could provide support, guidance, and instruction. They also felt that mentoring provided an opportunity to pass along what they had learned about teaching to those individuals who would follow them in education. They noted how they often learned from the candidates and that they valued the reciprocal and generative nature of the relationship. They also acknowledged that the relationship was “tricky,” especially when requested to evaluate a candidate that they viewed as a friend and peer.

Mentors described their dialogue with candidates as informal and ongoing. Some provided written commentary about a lesson observed, or modeled a specific strategy for the candidate. Mentors were comfortable with informal systems of feedback, yet a few commented that a more formal, structured evaluation would benefit candidates.

There is value in long-term field placements that provide an opportunity for candidates to develop a relationship with a practicing teacher. The voices of the participants articulate the inherent value of having a relationship over time, allowing mentors and candidates to learn about each other and gain trust. This enables them to be forthcoming in communication so they may discuss complex, volatile issues inherent in the inevitable uncertainty of teaching. The relationship solidifies as they identify beliefs and understandings, allowing candidates to implement practice from a mutually informed perspective.

Mentors value being chosen by candidates. It is the vehicle through which the relationship forms. A process that encourages initiative in teacher candidates, it likewise offers agency to mentors serving to validate themselves as good teachers and pass along a legacy. The experience of being chosen, and choosing to mentor, helps them view the relationship as a partnership. The process fosters self-confidence, professionalism, and self-discovery for the mentor and the teacher candidate. They recognized the considerable influence they had on candidates and welcomed the

opportunity. For the candidate, the act of selecting serves as a first step in defining the teacher they seek to become.

The mentors also viewed the partnership as complex. There was some discomfort in the role, especially when asked to offer critical feedback. Most mentors privileged providing support over critique, which they viewed as the responsibility of the university. We agree with the mentors, since the responsibility of moving candidates toward licensure rests with the office of teacher education. Given the likely unpleasant aspects of providing negative feedback, it is more than what mentors sign up to do. Detailed and specific feedback, whether positive or corrective, is important whether delivered to students in the classroom or to candidates in the field. Mentors are in a good position to give timely feedback that is both positive and critical.

Mentors sometimes identified less positive experiences with a candidate. In the case of David, the absence of choice was detrimental to his relationship with Lance. In most circumstances, conflicts were easily resolved and mentors acknowledged value in the experience. Assigning candidates to field placements appears more likely to result in less than optimal pairings since preferences and teaching philosophies may be incompatible. Having a choice about accepting a candidate fosters a contemplative act for both parties. Each individual must critically examine the self before making a decision, leading to professional growth.

Implications

Our findings have implications for teacher preparation. We support expanding field experiences and extending student teaching. These mentors' stories illuminate the connections and disconnections between the theoretical knowledge about teaching and the practical actuality of classroom instruction. It is difficult to negotiate differences between what might be and what is. Extended time in field placement offers the opportunity for candidates to examine how preparation and teaching connect, and how they fail. Like the mentors in our study, we recognize the need to work through others to reflect and improve our practice. We value and acknowledge the expertise inherent in the practical activities of teaching. As partners in the process of preparing new teachers, mentors form personal and professional relationships, agree on teaching strategies, create opportunities to reflect, and share practices. These partnerships illuminate the ongoing challenges and rewards inherent in being and becoming a teacher.

Limitations

Our findings warrant caution when objectivity is suspect. The authors of the study were and are participants within the CoT program, so acknowledging bias is valid. We were rigorous in our data collection, analysis, and member checking. There are additional limitations in that no interviewees engaged in other teacher programs. Comparing our data set to a comparable data set from supervisory teachers (mentors) in a more traditional program may have provided deeper understanding. Logistics and time required to observe alternative participants made this task impossible to accomplish.

Conclusion

Scholars are increasingly calling for a greater emphasis on clinical experience and extending experiences in the field. CoT features long-term partnerships between candidates and mentors.

Time alone is probably insufficient to assure that teacher candidates have adequate field experiences. Kemmis et al. (2014) reminds us that, “[t]he way mentoring is practiced produces, reproduces, and transforms the dispositions of both mentors and mentees” (p. 157). Teacher programs need to be mindful about the relationships that develop between practicing teachers and teacher candidates during field experiences, especially over longer periods. Our study provides insight into the experiences of mentors involved in extended placements and we suspect that what we have found here provides valuable insights teacher education programs may wish to consider should they pursue a long-term field placement model.

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A Study of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models and Student Proficiency and Growth in Middle Schools in A Large Suburban School District in South Florida

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models impacted school leader and teacher effectiveness to increase student proficiency and growth. This quantitative, non-experimental study was conducted using existing data in all middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida for 2017-2018. Four research questions guided this study regarding the relationship and predictability among the variables of school leader and teacher instructional practice scores, quantity of observations reported in iObservation® and student proficiency and growth in Florida Standard Assessment (FSA) Developmental Scale Scores (DSS) in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics or corresponding End-of-Course (EOC) assessment.

The linear regression analyses indicated that instructional practice was a statistically significant predictor of Grade 6-8 FSA ELA and Mathematics or corresponding EOC performances. The linear regression analyses indicated that there is a relationship between student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA ELA and FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC. These findings were based on data for one school year, and thus caution must be taken when deducing these findings.

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The Race to the Top (RttT) grant incentivized all United States (U.S.) to focus on educational transformation, which spawned from the Great Recession from 2007-2009 that affected the education sector (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In a critical response, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) regulation was ratified by the U.S. Congress and intended to energize the economy (Federal Communications Commission, 2009). In order to stimulate the education sector, the focus was to enhance school leader and teacher effectiveness to increase student proficiency and growth (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Consequently, states deliberately created school leader and teacher evaluation systems to assess the impact of teachers on student achievement (American Institutes for Research, 2020).

Historical national initiatives such as Sputnik in 1957, National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-864), A Nation at Risk in 1983, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, The Rising Above the Gathering Storm report of 2005 and Race to the Top in 2010, have challenged the rigor and progress of the education system in the U.S. (Flowers, 2013). Marzano (2012) asserts that evaluations serve two purposes: measuring the effectiveness of teachers and developing teachers. School leadership interventions under The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Evidence Review (2015) acknowledged the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model as one of the evidence-based leader evaluation systems (Herman et al., 2017; Manna & Petrilli, 2008). This study investigates whether the Marzano Focused School Leader and teacher evaluation models impacted school leader and teacher effectiveness to increase student achievement and growth more precisely than prior evaluation models.

In Florida's legislation (S.B. 736) all school districts were directed to create or implement an evaluation system that calculates a minimum of 50% of a teacher's final evaluation on a state performance indicator, such as the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), and for non-assessed subject area teachers, a district-wide common assessment is required (The Florida Senate, 2011). A large suburban school district in South Florida approved the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models (Florida Department of Education, 2020).

Florida Standards Assessments are foundational to the Florida Department of Education K-12 assessment program that collectively holds districts, schools, teachers, administrators, and students accountable for determining learning proficiency and academic growth (Florida Department of Education, 2019; Kolen & Brennan, 2004; Livingston, 2004; Pommerich et al., 2004). Students in Grades 6, 7 and 8 take the FSA Mathematics or corresponding Mathematics End-of-Course (EOC) assessment, and English Language Arts (ELA) assessments that measure student proficiency and growth on the Florida Standards.

The FSA ELA assessment consists of a combined score that includes student performance in both the Writing and Reading sections. Student performance on Florida's statewide assessments is classified into five achievement levels, where the lowest score of Level 3 is the passing score for each grade level and subject (Florida Department of Education, 2019). In compliance with §1008.22(3)(b)2., Florida Statutes (F.S.), middle grades students are not be tested on both FSA Mathematics and a Mathematics End-of-Course (EOC) assessment. Middle grade students enrolled in Algebra 1 or Geometry must take the corresponding EOC assessment, not the grade-level FSA Mathematics assessment (Florida Department of Education, 2019)

Conceptual Context

The demanding assessment system in Florida is aligned with the instructional process to ensure that graduating students are college or career ready for success through rigorous coursework. The data are disaggregated to determine if the academic goals are being achieved to drive instruction by school administrators and teachers. The Florida Department of Education assigns school and district grades to evaluate progress towards educational goals. There is currently robust research into the accountability system for K-12 students, however, there is a need for research into the effectiveness of standards-based accountability measures for teachers and educational leaders.

Additionally, the majority of school districts in Florida utilize the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models. Practitioners need to implement both models with fidelity in order to ensure effectiveness, however, there is a lack of research that investigates whether the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models, specifically, impacted school leader and teacher effectiveness to increase student proficiency and growth more precisely than prior evaluation models.

Literature Review

School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Models

There is robust research in school leader and teacher evaluation models. Based on meta-analyses, average effects of specific instructional strategies increase student proficiency and growth (Marzano et al., 2001). When the desired effects of instructional strategies are achieved, such as summarizing and note-taking, identifying similarities and differences, and reinforcing effort and giving recognition, percentile gains of 29-45 points can be yielded (Marzano et al., 2001). The purpose of school leader and teacher evaluation systems are to give feedback for enhancing professional practice (Carbaugh et al., 2015). Performance improvement pertains to the individualized growth factor and includes assisting teachers to learn content, reflect, and enhance their pedagogy. A formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) settles workplace efficiency concerns and assists workers in achieving success by specifying indispensable directions for attaining particular goals (Sen, 2017).

On the contrary, the accountability function reveals an assurance to the goals of expertise and quality performance leadership-focused coaching, an approach to support instructional leadership skills and responsibilities (Gray, 2018). A value-added assessment structure quantifies student learning over a period based on a projected growth rate (Misco, 2008). The preliminary goal of value-added assessment models (VAM) was to encourage positive shifts in instructional practice (Amrein-Beardsley, 2008).

A value-added model (VAM) measures the impact of teaching on student learning by accounting for other factors that may impact the learning process. These models do not evaluate teachers based on a single year of student performance or proficiency or evaluate teachers based on simple comparison of growth from one year to the next. VAM levels the playing field by accounting for differences in the proficiency and characteristics of students assigned to teachers. It is designed to mitigate the influence of differences among the entering classes so that schools and teachers do not have advantages or disadvantages simply as a result of the students who attend a school or are assigned to a class. (Florida Department of Education, 2020, p. 1)

However, VAM measures have been disparaged by researchers and policy makers because of the sensitivity of the model results across various outcome measures (Hawley et al, 2017).

Achievement Gaps in the United States

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Public Law 89-10) was legislated to target students from low socioeconomic families (Pugh-Walker, 2016). The ESEA (1965) strived to narrow the achievement gap of low socioeconomic students who were academically underperforming as compared to their peers. This report cited the systemic cause of learning and achievement differences among students on fiscal imbalance and limited accessibility to resources. A Nation at Risk (1983) focused on public apprehensiveness and the viewpoint that the education system in the U.S. was impaired. A pivotal domain in this report was centered on “assessing the quality of teaching and learning” in our schools (p.31). This was in opposition to holding fiscal disparities such as the ESEA accountable in the 1983 report that directed disparagement on the education system as a whole (Flowers, 2013; Herman et al., 2017; Pugh-Walker, 2016).

In order to narrow the historical achievement gaps in the United States, there needed to be a focus on leadership philosophies and development in addition to teacher development. This ensured that the positive impact of effective leadership on teacher growth is evident. It has been widely recognized that school leaders (principals) play a significant part in efforts to enhance teaching and learning (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2004; O'Day, 2002; Smylie et al., 2003; Spillane et al., 2002; Woody et al., 2004). Schools that work (that are successful by different measures) have leadership that promotes meaningful staff development (Marzano et al., 2005). The meta-analysis of 70 studies of student achievement and leadership examined the effects of certain leadership practices (Marzano et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2003). The results confirm that the school (principal) leadership is positively correlated with student achievement with an average effect size of .25. Knowledge of curriculum and instruction, which encompasses assessment procedures and coaching teachers on enhancing pedagogy, also had an effect size of .25.

Bridging historical achievement gaps in Florida. Since 1999, Florida has implemented education reform initiatives that consist of charter schools, virtual learning, public-school choice, private-school choice, merit-based pay for performance, alternative teacher certification programs, school and district grading systems that include graduation rates and standardized assessments (Florida Department of Education, 2020). Charter schools are public schools of choice that have autonomy in innovation where programs cater to diverse groups of students (Florida Department of Education, 2019). Florida has the third largest charter school enrollment in the U.S. and in 2017-18, 654 charter schools educated 282,924 students in 46 counties (Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools, 2020). Florida is considered a frontrunner in online learning as more than 71,000 students in the state take courses online, and successful completion of an online course is a high school graduation requirement (Florida Department of Education, 2020).

Students in low-performing Florida public schools have the option to relocate to a higher-performing public school of their parents' selection and students with disabilities are eligible for the McKay Scholarship that offers vouchers to attend a private school (Florida Department of Education, 2020). Florida has engaged in teacher salary reform using student performance to offer the maximum raises to teachers with optimal results or most improvement from their students comparable to how the private sector would offer performance reviews with bonuses. The pay for

performance reward system in Florida awards bonuses for teachers who attain student gains and proficiency and also teachers who increase the number of students who pass advanced placement courses, which has led to an increase in both student passing and participation rates on advanced placement exams (Florida Department of Education, 2020).

Prior to 2011, the state adopted teacher evaluation system in Florida was the Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS). The FPMS was the main instrument for teacher evaluation and gave a valid and reliable method to observe teacher behaviors (Lavelly et al., 1994). Peterson, Kromrey, Micceri, and Smith (1987) affirmed that the FPMS instrument was valid and reliable and permitted objective “coding and analysis of lessons” (p. 144). However, on the FPMS instrument, teachers were rated as either effective or less effective, but not ineffective. As a result, the FPMS was not a growth model and lacked a focus on student proficiency and growth and was replaced by the Marzano Focused Teacher Model. Further, MacMillan, and Pendlebury (1985) opined that the Florida Performance Measurement System was a widespread effort to transform research on instruction into real-world application for professional development, assessing, and compensating teachers but missed the target because of an absence of the intrinsic values in instruction that neglected the passion of teaching.

Impact of Leadership

The Marzano Focused School Leadership Evaluation Model is grounded on thorough research in effective educational leadership. Blase and Blase (2000) postulate that effective school leaders offer opportunities through professional development that infuse the study of professional literature and successful programs, implementation of new skills, peer coaching, utilize action research concentrated on student data, and monitor the effect of innovative strategies on students. The Marzano Focused School Leadership framework stems from surveys on school leader competencies that influence student proficiency and growth. Superior results are attained when principals inspire school staff to dynamically analyze data for improving results (Zmuda et al., 2004).

Leadership impact on student proficiency, growth and instructional practice level.

The literature on leadership impact on student proficiency, growth and instructional practice level postulate that the implementation of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model has an impact on school leader and teacher effectiveness more precisely than prior models of school leader and teacher evaluation (Blase & Blase, 2000; Zmuda et al., 2004; Carbaugh et al., 2015). A vast majority of Florida school districts apply the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model. Practitioners need to implement the model with fidelity in order for it to be effective. With the rigidity of standards-based accountability in the K-12 school system, the onus is on educators and administrators to utilize research-based strategies to bridge the achievement gap to ensure that all students have adequate and equitable access to quality public school education.

It is critical to have a comprehensive understanding of adult knowledge acquisition and learning satisfaction levels to foster a relevant culture of andragogy. This can be facilitated by collaborating on an action plan for continuous improvement in learning to promote student achievement. In order to enhance pedagogy and andragogy, deliberate practice needs to eventuate in a methodical process such as internships and group experiences to share best practices. There are implications of gaps in academic achievement among racial and socioeconomic groups in the U.S. There is a need for educational reform initiatives from a socio-educational perspective and the need to investigate whether the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model impacted school leader and teacher effectiveness to increase student achievement and

growth more precisely than prior evaluation models.

The research base of the Marzano School Focused Leader Evaluation Model is extensive. Carbaugh et al. (2015) postulated that the research defining the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model was extracted from four critical contemporary and historical research documents about school leadership: (a) The Wallace Study conducted and issued jointly by the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toron. (b) The 2011 study of *What Works in Oklahoma Schools* (Marzano Research Laboratory, 2011) conducted by Marzano Research Laboratory with the Oklahoma State Department of Education over the 2009-2010 and the 2010-2011 school years; (c) The Marzano, Waters, and McNulty meta-analysis of school leadership published in 2005 in *School Leadership that Works*; and (d) The Marzano study of school effectiveness published in 2003 in *What Works in Schools*.

The Wallace Foundation (2013) is the pivotal analysis of the relationship between school leader actions and behaviors and student academic achievement. The report ratified through quantitative data that effective school leadership is interrelated to student achievement and determined that school leaders (principals) assume the predominant role in leadership, while "collective leadership" shared among stakeholders such as teachers are contributing roles. It was also discovered that instructional leadership aimed at pedagogical improvement has a substantial ancillary impact on student proficiency and growth.

The Marzano Focused School Leadership Evaluation Model classifies 21 elements of principal activities and behaviors that have been ordered into six domains. Accompanying scales with exemplary evidence of success have been established. "When principals and school administrators empower and support teachers and promote a school-wide emphasis on student academic growth, the quality of achievement for students, teachers, schools, and communities improves" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 67). Thus, it is essential to develop effective educational leaders with leadership philosophies that focus on improving student academic achievement. According to Carbaugh et al. (2015), a summary of the domains and elements are as follows:

- Domain 1 – A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement (3 elements)
- Domain 2 – Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum (5 elements)
- Domain 3 – Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff (3 elements)
- Domain 4 – Community of Care and Collaboration (4 elements)
- Domain 5 – Core Values (3 elements)
- Domain 6 – Resource Management (3 elements)

Leadership impact on narrowing historical achievement gaps. Leadership is intricate to define and growing in popularity around the world. The majority of leadership definitions include the common thread that "leadership is an influence process that assists groups of individuals towards goal attainment" (Northouse, 2018, p. 15). The notion of what makes an effective leader is evolving, and businesses are continually searching for leaders to enhance their companies and increase productivity. Degree programs in leadership serve to equip aspiring leaders with skills to navigate complex situations to meet organizational goals. Accomplishing school goals involves individual and shared efforts (Kyrtheotis & Pashiardis, 1998b).

Further, Burns (1978) proposed transformative leadership and stated that leadership is evident "when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers

raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 83). Thus, transformative leadership is an agent for immense organizational and personnel change. Effective leadership is vital to increase workers' expertise in knowledge, problem-solving, and charisma to increase output. Thus, leadership is credited as a critical component to organizational affluence, mediocrity, or collapse (March & Weil, 2005; Northouse, 2018). An understanding of leadership as a process is essential in developing leadership skills for all employees. Ruben and Gigliotti (2017) postulated that leadership is influential and affective between the leader and the employees. Professional development opportunities serve to foster professional expertise. It is understood that some individuals, because of their past experiences, maybe better suited for specific leadership positions. However, professional leadership development and college-level leadership courses can be used to improve the leadership skills of all leaders regardless of past experiences.

There are ramifications of gaps in academic achievement among racial and socioeconomic groups in the U.S. There must be an understanding of the historical perspective in order to discuss improvement efforts within the social, educational context to influence educational reform efforts involving school accountability. D'Amico (2001) proposed that the achievement gap is evident in a multitude of educational success indicators that include grades, test scores, dropout rates, college entrance/completion rates, and in every kind of school district and socioeconomic group. In Florida, these educational success indicators factor into the school grading system by the Florida Department of Education and, thus, greater emphasis is placed on student achievement and postsecondary readiness.

Self-Efficacy in Andragogy

Adult learning opportunities have a plethora of definitions. Adult learning offers a roadmap to district and school administrators for changing current professional development programs into more efficient and groundbreaking learning experiences that advance onsite skill while still supporting school and district priorities (Rodman, 2019). Coto et al (2020) opine that teachers are adult learners and there should be a community of practice approach to professional development. According to Kim, Hagedorn, Williamson, and Chapman (2004), adult learning opportunities, as defined by The National Center for Education Statistics, are two-fold: optional and lifelong learning opportunities in addition to ongoing professional growth courses.

Clardy (2005) interprets andragogy as educational practices pertinent to adults. Andragogy serves as a configuration for choosing instructional experiences to equip aspiring leaders with the tools to be effective leaders. According to McCauley, Hammer, and Hinojosa (2017, p. 312), "they offer examples of leadership instructional tools that align with andragogical assumptions and provide suggestions for scaling these assignments and activities to address students' learning needs at different stages of adulthood." Thus, the aspiring leader is scaffolded to gauge their current leadership level and engage their leadership knowledge and skills to promote active learning and relevant experiences. Principals need to tap the expertise of teacher leaders in their schools in order to enhance improvement efforts and results (Marks & Printy, 2003).

An emotional connection facilitates remembrance so that aspiring leaders can reflect on their teaching practice. It can be debated that adults have specific learning habits, which can impact their learning. It is always a good idea to share how the activity would enhance their overall self-learning and ensure that it is adult appropriate and where the content and learning goals align with each other.

Knowles (1968, p. 351) suggested that andragogy is "a new label and a new technology" to differentiate it from early childhood education. This was oppositional to pedagogy since it encompassed the methodology of adult learning. Knowles (1980, p. 44-45) espouses the following:

1. As a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of a dependent personality toward one of a self-directing human being.
2. An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, which is a precious resource for learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. There is a change in time perspective as people mature - from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Thus, an adult is more problem-centered than subject-centered in learning."

In subsequent publications, Knowles made an addendum by adding two more presumptions:

1. The most potent motivations are internal rather than external (Knowles, 1984, p. 12).
2. Adults need to know why they need to learn something (Knowles, 1984).

Though andragogy is a base for understanding adult learners, some are not proponents of this theory. Merriam (2001) discusses two of these critiques: first, it is debatable if it is categorically a theory of adult learning and, second, the question if the beliefs apply to all adults. After being criticized, Knowles (1984, p. 12) conceded that andragogy was not a learning theory; instead, it is a "model of assumptions about learning or a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent theory." In other words, there is a possibility that adult learners can be instructor-dependent for direction based on their mastery.

The adult learning theory. The Adult Learning Theory offers presumptions for understanding the optimal learning environment for adults (Zuga, 1999). There must be a comprehensive understanding of how adults learn in terms of knowledge acquisition and enjoyment of learning to create the most meaningful climate for learning. It is equally important to ensure that the instructional level adheres to the andragogical framework and meets the needs of adult learners. Nesbit (2001) supports Knowles' model of andragogy in that adult learners have specific demands as when contrasted to younger students, but Merriam (2001) argues that andragogy neglects to recognize the sociocultural influence on the adult learner.

According to Stokes (2006), there is an excess of 90 million adult learners who are 25 years or older that are enrolled in higher education. This is in direct response to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2004) report that estimated that within the next twenty years, 80% of all new jobs would need a higher education credential. Learners need to find their best learning environment to effectively adhere to the cultural, fiscal, and competitive needs of the US.

Historical trainings in self-efficacy in andragogy. In the dynamic fields of educational leadership for school leaders and pedagogy for educators, there needs to be a paradigm shift from traditional pedagogy and andragogy to more innovative ways to engage the 21st-century technology-savvy student and adult learner. Kerka (1999) proposed that younger generations of students and teachers made the internet a norm and were on the cutting edge of self-directed learning. Merriam et al. (2007) "offered a detailed discussion of its key components: the centrality

of experience, the process of critical reflection, and transformative learning's link to adult development."

Current trainings in self-efficacy in andragogy. In a large suburban school district in South Florida, USA, the Deliberate Practice framework is utilized for instructional staff and educational leaders via the Professional Growth Plan (PGP). Deliberate Practice is a means for teachers and educational leaders to enhance their expertise through structured, reflective, and collaborative activities. It involves a systematic approach of formulating personal goals, focused practice with prescriptive feedback, observing and discussing best practices in teaching and leadership practices, and progress monitoring (The School District of Palm Beach County, Professional Development Deliberate Practice, 2019). Thus, Deliberate Practice challenges teachers and educational leaders to attain innovative levels of mastery by increasing the rigor of current practices to achieve the desired effect. Effective principals rely on the expertise of teacher leaders to enhance school effectiveness (Leithwood et al., 2004). All instructional staff and educational leaders in a district must have similar descriptions of effective teaching methodologies.

All educational leaders should have effective leadership methodologies. This conventional description must not be confined to a checklist of strategies for classroom and building utilization and should be broad enough to reflect the variety of actions that can impact student learning in a positive manner (City et al., 2009; Marzano, 2010). It is recommended that instructional staff, with the support of an educational leader, choose a couple of strategies to improve, and one routine, content, and enacted on the spot strategy should be chosen yearly for improvement. It is also recommended that the educational leader, with the support of a higher rank educational leader (such as a Principal if the educational leader is an Assistant Principal and an Area Superintendent if the educational leader is a Principal), also chooses strategies to improve.

Monitoring school leader and teacher progress. According to Marzano (2007), monitoring teacher and educational leader progress in the chosen strategies call for a description of performance levels regarding the strategies. Each scale delineates five performance levels: Not using (1), Beginning (2), Developing (3), Applying (4), and Innovating (5). "Not using" means that the strategy is necessary, but the teacher or educational leader is not utilizing the strategy. "Beginning" means that the teacher or educational leader is misusing the strategy or with errors. "Developing" means that the teacher or educational leader is using the strategy appropriately but in an automated manner. "Applying" means that the target level for expertise has been reached by the teacher or educational leader without errors while simultaneously monitoring for the desired effect on teachers or students. "Innovative" means that the strategy has reached the desired effect and tailored to the unique needs of every teacher or student. The performance system must contain a developmental scale or rubric to progress monitor school leader and teacher development (Marzano et al., 2011).

Knowles (1984) found the Eight Process-Components of an Andragogical Process Design, which focuses on having the adult learner involved in her/his self-directed learning plan. This breaks from the corporate model of efficiency, where profit and output supersede the learners' self-esteem and self-actualization. Merriam et al. (2007) agree with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where the motivation to learn is intrinsic and the desire for self-actualization.

Adult learners can execute their professional development plans aligned with the Principles of Andragogy and promote experiential learning through internships and group experiences such as collaborative workshops to share best practices. According to Merriam et al. (2007), earlier theories such as the behaviorist orientation that learning consists of numerous single theories and forms the basis of adult learning, and the humanist orientation that looks at the viewpoint of human growth potential.

Knowles (1996) proposes that in a productive learning environment, continuous informal observations and useful descriptive feedback should be time-sensitive and targeted to remove the stigma of stressful evaluations and may involve the use of evaluative questionnaires. For educational leaders, this is extremely important because ineffective strategies and procedures can be quickly eliminated, and the focus on student achievement and improving school climate will occur.

Research Design

This quantitative, non-experimental study was conducted using data obtained from the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) Test Score Report for Grades 6-8 in all middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida for the school year 2017-2018. School leader and teacher data are reported in iObservation[®] and it was determined if the desired effect of the instructional practice was achieved or if there needed to be additional strategies implemented to achieve the desired effect. Prescriptive feedback for instructional improvement is given to the school leader and teacher.

A quantitative methodology using non-experimental design was used to investigate whether there was a relationship between (a) two variables, student proficiency and growth, and teacher evaluation performance and (b) student proficiency and growth and usage/number of standard observations accounted for in the Marzano iObservation[®] system. The included existing data of all students who were enrolled in Grades 6-8 in all middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida (31451 based on October 2017 Full-Time Equivalent or FTE) for the school year 2017-2018 (Florida Department of Education, 2020). Additionally, the study encompassed existing data of all teachers assigned to teach English Language Arts and/or Mathematics in Grades 6-8 in all middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida for the school year 2017-2018. Existing data will show that school leaders conduct teacher observations in the fall and continue in the spring of the academic year. There were 407 teachers assessed through formal observations, informal observations, and walkthroughs based on various dominant elements within the design questions and domains. Data from the school year 2017-2018 were accumulated from the student assessment window, which ran from February - April 2018. The data were reported in May-June 2018. The observation data during the subsequent summer and reflected the students who were in the classes in the 2017-2018 school year.

Research Questions

This research will attempt to answer the following four questions:

1. What is the relationship between student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA English Language Arts for sixth-grade, seventh-grade, and eighth-grade students, and the instructional practice school level mean of teacher performance as measured by the Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation Model?
2. What is the relationship between student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC assessment for sixth-grade, seventh grade and eighth-grade students, and the instructional practice school level mean of teacher performance as measured by Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation Model?

3. What is the relationship between the usage/number of Standard Observations on the Marzano iObservation® system used by school leaders in middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida, and student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA English Language Arts for sixth-grade, seventh-grade and eighth-grade students?
4. What is the relationship between the usage/number of Standard Observations on the Marzano iObservation® system used by school leaders in middle schools in a large suburban school district in South Florida, and student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC assessment for sixth-grade, seventh-grade and eighth-grade students?

For Research Questions 1-2, a Pearson r was performed to determine the relationship between the variables of student achievement (English Language Arts and Mathematics DSS scores) and teacher evaluation performance scores. The data was aggregate because specific student groups were not matched to their teacher. A linear regression was also performed to examine predictability between the two variables: Predictor = teacher instructional practice evaluation score and criterion = student achievement DSS score (Spatz, 2011; Steinberg, 2011). For Research Questions 3-4, a Pearson r was performed to determine the relationship between the variables of student achievement (English Language Arts and Mathematics DSS scores) and usage rates/number of standard observations computed on the Marzano iObservation® system. A linear regression was performed to determine predictability between the two variables: predictor = iObservation® usage/number of standard observations and criterion = student achievement DSS scores (Steinberg, 2011; Spatz, 2011).

Assessment System

The standardized assessment system in Florida is closely associated with the curriculum to ensure that rigorous coursework is taught, and student achievement occurs (Florida Department of Education, 2020). This study adds to the research base of the accountability system for 12 students and assesses the effectiveness of standards-based accountability measures for teachers and educational leaders. Teacher Evaluation systems are intended to enable school leaders to differentiate between levels of teacher performance impartially and empirically, and equally important is the practice of enhancing pedagogy to enact instructional changes to meet the rigor of high-stakes assessments (Marzano et al., 2005; Waters et al., 2003).

Results

The summary is ordered by grade level and content for the assessments using the ELA and Mathematics FSA or corresponding EOC developmental scale scores (DSS) and instructional practice and observation mean data analysis for Grades 6, 7 and 8.

Grade 6, 7 and 8: English Language Arts Results and Instructional Practice

The regression analysis indicated that instructional practice was a statistically significant predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA ELA performance. There is a weak positive correlation between usage/number of standard observations because the Pearson’s correlation coefficient was found to be 0.1978. There is a linear regression. The p-value was found to be less than 0.00001, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the test was statistically significant. Hence, there is a weak positive correlation between the usage/number of standard observations and the mean scale score in ELA.

Table 1

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis: Instructional Practice as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA ELA DSS (N = 522)

Instructional Practice as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA ELA DSS			
<i>Coefficient r:</i>	0.198	<i>N:</i> 522.0	<i>T-statistic:</i> 4.60 <i>p-value:</i> 0.0

**p < .05. **p < .01.*

Note. FSA = Florida Standards Assessment; DSS = Developmental Scale Score; ELA = English Language Arts.

Grade 6, 7 and 8: FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC Results and Instructional Practice

The linear regression analysis indicated that instructional practice was a statistically significant predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC performance. The Pearson’s correlation coefficient was found to be 0.1589. There is a linear regression. The $p < .001$ and thus the test was statistically significant. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. Hence there exists a weak positive correlation between the average instructional practice scores and the mean scale score for FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC assessment.

Table 2

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis: Instructional Practice as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC DSS (N = 407)

FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC DSS Instructional Practice Mean			
<i>Coefficient r:</i>	0.159	<i>N:</i> 407	<i>T-statistic:</i> 3.239 <i>p-value:</i> 0.0

**p < .05. **p < .01.*

Note. FSA = Florida Standards Assessment; DSS = Developmental Scale Score; EOC = End-of- Course.

Grade 6, 7 and 8: English Language Arts Results and Observation Mean

The regression analysis indicated there is a relationship between student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA ELA. There is a weak positive correlation between usage/number of standard observations because the Pearson's correlation coefficient was found to be 0.1978. There is a linear regression. The p-value was found to be less than 0.00001, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the test was statistically significant. Hence, there is a weak positive correlation between the usage/number of standard observations and the mean scale score in ELA.

Table 3

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis: Observation as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA ELA DSS (N = 522)

	Observation as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA ELA DSS
Coefficient r:	0.198 N: 522.0 T-statistic: 4.60 p-value: 0.0

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Note. FSA = Florida Standards Assessment; DSS = Developmental Scale Score; ELA = English Language Arts.

Grade 6, 7 and 8: FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC and Observation Mean

The linear regression analysis indicated there is a relationship between student proficiency and growth as measured by the developmental scale mean scores on FSA Mathematics or corresponding EOC assessment. There is a weak positive correlation between usage/number of standard observations because the Pearson's correlation coefficient was found to be 0.1227. There is a linear regression. The p-value was found to be less than 0.00001, which is less than .05. Thus, the test was statistically significant. Hence, there is a weak positive correlation between the usage/number of standard observations and the mean scale score in Math or the corresponding EOC.

Table 4

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis: Observation as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC DSS (N = 407)

	Observation as a Predictor of Grade 6, 7 and 8 FSA Mathematics or Corresponding EOC
Coefficient r:	0.123 N: 407.0 T-statistic: 2.49 p-value: 0.0

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Note. FSA = Florida Standards Assessment; DSS = Developmental Scale Score; EOC = End-of-Course.

The findings of the study were consistent with existing literature. Teacher and school leader evaluations have a trifold function: (1) to develop teacher instructional practice, (2) to enhance school leader observations and inter-rater reliability, and (3) to increase student proficiency and

growth (Donaldson & Papay, 2014; Marzano & Toth, 2013). The Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation model is an appraisal system established on impartial standards-based approaches and its system creates consistency for participants and streamlines teacher evaluation (Marzano et al., 2005). This interactive approach accentuates discernible elements with specific confirmations of efficacy to conclude scores and give prescriptive feedback for instructional improvement. A deficiency in thorough and consistent training of evaluators can skew the objectivity and reliability of any teacher and school leader evaluation system (Stumbo & McWalters, 2011).

The impact of effective school leadership on student proficiency and growth is evident in the high level of engagement in professional learning communities that fosters collaboration and enhances a student-focused culture (Marzano, 2007; Marzano et al., 2011). A positive culture that is supportive at the individual classroom as well as the school improvement level leads to increases in student achievement. Danielson (2011) asserts that even when evaluators are correctly trained, they still need multiple opportunities to exercise their skills and calibrate their findings with peer school leaders to confirm inter-rater reliability. School leaders and teachers require high-quality professional development on the evaluation processes to guarantee that evaluations are accurate and impactful to pedagogy and student results (Donaldson, 2009). It is critical that as the education profession evolves, new research-based strategies are developed to ensure students are college and career ready.

Teachers and school leaders need to have a growth mindset when it comes to attaining feedback on pedagogy and reflection on leadership practices to reach the desired effect to impact teacher, school leader and school improvement goals (Marzano et al., 2005; Nelson et al., 2004; O'Day, 2002; Smylie et al., 2003).

Implications

This study generated results that disclosed partial evidence of statistical significance among observation, instructional practice, and FSA English Language Arts and Mathematics or corresponding EOC performance. These findings can be purposeful and form the framework of continuous professional development and training for school leaders and teachers.

There are four recommendations for implementation. First, progress monitoring of FSA and EOC data should occur in correlation to instructional practice scores at the specific class level for statistical significance and predictability between instructional practice scores and student proficiency and growth. Second, intentional pathways should be developed whereby school leaders can conduct administrative learning walks to calibrate teacher evaluation and provide targeted and reflective feedback for instructional improvement to achieve the desired effect of elements. Third, class level data by grade level and instructional practice scores should be observed to continuously monitor data trends for targeted instruction for instructional remediation or acceleration. Lastly, there should be ongoing professional development and training for school leaders on inter-rater reliability and teachers on deliberate practice to improve pedagogy. Based on the data analysis from the study, several recommendations are suggested for subsequent research. A quantitative study should be conducted that is focused on improving student performance to investigate if there is an improvement in FSA ELA and Math or corresponding EOC scores through the implementation of deliberate practice of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model.

Further, a brief overview of the data highlighted a low level of variability between the majority of teachers scoring a 3.0 (effective) and 4.0 (highly effective) on the Marzano Focused School Leader for deliberate practice on a 4.0 scale. Thus, further studies need to be done to determine focused professional development and perhaps incorporate a deliberate practice scale

from 0 to 10 to make the scoring more quantitative instead of relying on the school leader's subjectivity. Also, the length of the study needs to be increased to examine longitudinal data from the last five years to observe data trends.

In addition, a study should be conducted that is qualitative in nature to investigate the implementation of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model, and address concerns from labor groups such as teacher unions and school leader professional associations regarding the evaluation process and inter-rater reliability to meet the needs of the adult learner. Further, a study should be conducted involving comparable suburban districts with similar demographics that utilize the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model. A quantitative study should be conducted incorporating the elementary and high school levels to investigate if there is an improvement in FSA ELA and Math or corresponding EOC scores through the implementation of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model.

Moreover, a quantitative study should be conducted to investigate if there is an improvement in other assessed content areas such as FSA Civics, and Biology 1, and US History EOC scores through the implementation of the Marzano Focused School Leader and Teacher Evaluation Model. A study should be conducted to determine if the pay for performance reward system in Florida that awards bonuses for teachers who attain student gains and proficiency and also teachers who increase the number of students who pass advanced placement courses, produces highly effective teachers.

It is essential that teacher observation promotes pedagogical improvement where prescriptive feedback leads to enhance educational practitioners. School leaders require a standards-based evaluation system that provides inter-rater reliability and fosters deliberate practice. Although the formal, informal and walkthroughs on iObservation[®] are a critical part of the evaluation process, it must be considered that the pre-planning conference, post-conference and student interviews work in tandem to provide a holistic view of pedagogy, adult learning, school leadership and their combined impact on student growth and proficiency to ensure that students are college and career ready.

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