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The International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation is a nationally refereed journal published annually in the Spring by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership.

Note from ICPEL Publications Director, Brad Bizzell

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

In August, 2005, NCPEA¹ partnered with Rice University and the Connexions Project, to publish our IJELP as open and free to all who had access to the Internet. The purpose of the NCPEA/Knowledge Base Connexions Project was to "add to the knowledge base of the educational administration profession" and "aid in the improvement of administrative theory and practice, as well as administrative preparation programs." Our partnership continues but a new door opened for NCPEA Publications to join the OER movement in a more substantive and direct way. In March 2013, NCPEA Publications and the NCPEA Executive Board committed the IJELP to the OER movement.

What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

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

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¹ In 2018 the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration changed its name to the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership

What ICPEL OER is Not!

ICPEL open educational resources are not an open door at the ICPEL Publications submission and review stages. We have always insisted on and will continue to require very thorough peer reviews (double-blind). ICPEL Publications is fortunate to have a cadre of professional reviewers (university professors), numbering over 200. Editors first consider a submitted manuscript, and if appropriate, selects/assigns two reviewers who also have the expertise/interest in the manuscript's specific topic. This process assures that reviewers will read an author's manuscript with expertise/experience in that area.

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

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The manuscripts in Volume 16, Number 1 (Spring 2021) have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership as significant contributions to the scholarship and practice of school administration and PK-12 education.

Contents

Academic Optimism and Enabling School Structure: Predictors of Professional Learning Communities <i>Julie Anne Gray and Roxanne Mitchell</i>	1
Student Perceptions of Instructor Made Videos with Quizzes in an Asynchronous Online Course <i>Laurie A. Kimbrel and Myrna W. Gantner</i>	24
Social Capital for Social Change: Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme, a Solution for Education (In)justice in South Africa? <i>Claire McCann, Anna Lindiwe Prest Talbot, and Ashley Westaway</i>	45
International School Principals' Insights and Experiences with Teacher Motivation <i>David Freed, Paul Sims, Angela Tagaris, Rebecca Hornberger, and Arthur Safer</i>	60
Cultivating a 'Community of Practice' in an Educational Leadership Preparation Program: Experiences and Roles of Adjunct Faculty <i>Karen Swann, Karen L. Sanzo, Jay Paredes Scribner, and Michael Cromartie</i>	74
Mentoring Future Education Leaders: Mentor Perceptions of an Educational Leadership Doctoral Mentoring Program <i>Kat R. McConnell, Rachel Louse Geesa, and Rebecca D. Brown</i>	88
Reform Under Turbulence: Leveraging Accreditation to Improve Principal Preparation Programs <i>David L. Conrad and Jeannine Klomes</i>	106
A Voice at the Table: The Role of Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) in Advancing the Preparation of School Leaders in Florida <i>Valerie Storey</i>	122
"Let's Stay Together": Examining a Grow Your Own Program in an Urban District <i>Felix Simieou III, Jennifer Grace, John Decman, and Thomas Cathern</i>	137
Engaging Educational Leadership and the Coalition of Essential Schools in Appalachian Ohio <i>Amie Musselman, Charles Lowery, and Michael Hess</i>	152

Academic Optimism and Enabling School Structure: Predictors of Professional Learning Communities

This manuscript has 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.



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Organizational properties of schools can explain why some schools are successful and others are not. We explored the role of enabling school structures and academic optimism, comprised of teacher trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis, in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs). Both of our hypotheses were confirmed via correlational analysis and structure equation modeling about the relationships of enabling school structures and academic optimism in the development of PLCs, our outcome variable. These empirical findings validate the importance of enabling school structures as an antecedent to the development of PLCs and contribute to organizational theory about school structure and health. School districts should consider the role of academic optimism and enabling school structures in relationship to developing PLCs.

Keywords: professional learning communities, academic optimism, teacher trust, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis

Over the last few decades, we have learned more about the importance of the organizational properties of our schools and why some schools are successful, while others fail. In this study, we explore the role of enabling school structures and the three components of academic optimism, teacher trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis, in the development of professional learning communities (PLCs). Enabling school structures will represent the formal aspect of the school as an organization, while the three components of academic optimism will comprise the informal part of the organization. PLCs offer a model for school reform that involves the community, in this case students and parents, as well as teachers and instructional leaders, in facing the challenges that exist in our schools today. In this study, we reason that enabling school structures and academic optimism predict the level of development of PLCs. We believe that parents, teachers, school leaders, and students must work in partnership to improve our schools, increase student achievement, and overcome obstacles to do such.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how enabling school structures and academic optimism predict the development of professional learning communities. Many states and school districts across the United States have mandated or recommended PLCs as a model for teachers to use during professional development time. Unfortunately, PLCs are not being implemented and supported by school leaders as they were intended to be effective. Further, the implementation and support of PLCs varies from school to school and from district to district, which can alter their outcomes and effectiveness. Research-based best practices can provide the foundation upon which PLCs can be established, maintained, and supported (Battersby, 2019; Hord, 2004; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; Park, Lee & Cooc, 2019; Schaap & Bruijn, 2018; Stoll et al., 2006; Vescio et al, 2008; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Yin & Zheng, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

In this section, we will discuss our framework; which will explain how professional learning communities are developed, based on enabling school structures working through academic optimism and its three components (teacher trust in clients, academic emphasis, and collective efficacy) despite the effects of school level and socio-economic status.

Professional Learning Communities

Many schools in the United States and around the world are implementing PLCs, although how they are defining such and organizing themselves varies tremendously. Recognizing the need for research-based characteristics of a professional learning community, Hord summarized that PLCs should possess the following components: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (Hord, 1997; Hord & Sommers, 2008). Hord has been credited with developing the definition of a professional learning community as a collegial group of staff and faculty who are united in their commitment to student learning and as “communities of continuous inquiry and improvement” (Hord, 1997, p. 2).

Characteristics of PLCs

PLCs should focus on improving learning for teachers and students alike, within the supportive structures that exist in schools (i.e.: time for professional development during school day) (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; Stoll et al., 2006). Generally speaking, a PLC has been described as a norm-based model for small groups of educators who work collaboratively toward student-focused achievement and academic improvement (Dogan et al., 2015; Kruse & Johnson, 2016). While PLCs are intended to be teacher-led and learning-focused initiatives, often times this is not what is happening in schools. Disregarding research-based best practices, school districts and states are mandating that schools implement PLCs and then monitor and supervise such efforts.

In many schools, shared decision making is an important aspect of developing PLCs, which lead to teachers' sense of empowerment. Teachers' actions are guided by the shared norms of the PLC and focused on improving learning and teaching (Bryk et al., 1999). As an organizing model for improvement, the members of the PLC establish common goals, strategies, and a process for making decisions and instructional changes, based upon research-based best practices and student data gathered (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). Trust, openness to improvement and change, supportive leadership, and opportunities for collaboration and socialization are essential in the development of healthy relationships within a PLC (Kruse et al., 1994).

Benefits of PLCs

When teacher-led and implemented as intended (Hord, 1997), members of a PLC, as well as the school climate and culture, tend to benefit from participation. Teachers tend to feel more supported, trusted and trusting of colleagues, respected as professionals, and motivated in working toward a common goals and purpose within the PLC (Pirtle & Tobia, 2014). PLCs have been credited with larger scale school improvement by "strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 25). McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) maintain teachers who worked in innovative PLCs described their careers as more 'enriched' due to the opportunity for collaboration, sharing of best practices, and professional growth. Furthermore, highly effective and functioning PLCs can positively influence student academic progress and achievement (Bryk et al., 1999; Gray, 2011; Gray et al., 2016, 2017; Harris et al., 2017; Louis & Marks, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Schaap & Bruijn, 2018; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

How PLCs Form

Many school districts in the United States have mandated PLCs as the chosen model for school improvement, which goes against the premise of PLCs being teacher-driven and developed (Hord, 1997). As common planning time has been established in most schools, naturally, teachers with the same students or who teach the same subject areas would begin to plan lessons together and share instructional ideas for practice. As this de-privatization of practice has evolved, teachers become more open about sharing what is really happening in their classrooms, the good and the not so good (Hord, 1997). Some of these teachers' collaborative efforts could be viewed as 'communities of continuous inquiry and improvement' (Hord, 1997), while others that are more structured and organized with common values and goals would be considered PLCs. Unfortunately, in many school districts the supports needed for PLCs to be effective are lacking.

School districts decided to implement PLCs, as a model for school improvement, prior to determining ways to support such efforts. The cart came before the horse, so to speak. The need for supportive conditions is described here and in the section about enabling school structures.

Supportive Conditions

For PLCs to be productive and effective, certain supportive conditions need to be in place within the school environment. Teachers need a place and time to meet, the social capacity for collaborative relationships with colleagues, and the support of school leaders to work toward school improvement (Hord, 2007). A PLC should be a collaborative effort of teachers to learn from one another, support mutual professional growth, and improve instructional practices (Dogan et al., 2015; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Kruse et al. (1994) assert that teachers need certain structural conditions for professional learning and collaboration to occur in PLCs. These conditions include: time to talk and meet, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, teacher empowerment, and school autonomy (Kruse et al., 1994). School leaders can support teachers' efforts of PLCs by allowing the time for such during regular work hours and protecting this time from interruptions (Harris et al., 2017; Hord, 2007; Kruse et al., 1994; Park et al., 2019; Schaap & Bruijn, 2018;). These structural conditions encompass what we refer to as enabling school structures, which will be discussed in the next section.

Enabling School Structures

Enabling school structures (ESS) are described as teachers' belief that the rules and administration of the school help them in doing their work more effectively (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). These structures are "characterized by principals who are disposed to help teachers solve problems, encourage open communication, and help teachers do their jobs" (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001, p. 310). In an earlier study, the term enabling bureaucracy was used, which has since evolved into enabling school structures (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). Enabling school structures establish "a hierarchy of authority and a system of rules and regulations that help rather than hinder the teaching learning mission of the school" (Hoy, 2002, p. 91). Teachers in schools with enabling school structures tend to have more flexibility to solve problems and make decisions in innovative ways, as is typically done in professional learning communities (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001).

In contrast, a hindering school structure is more controlled or tightly managed with a top-down approach by the leader (Hoy, 2002). The bureaucratic structures of organizations vary in the scope of rules, policies, centralization, formalization, and approach to decision making (Hoy, 2002). The centralization of the organization ranges along a continuum from hindering to enabling, much as it does for the degree of formalization of the organization (Adler & Borys, 1996; Hoy, 2002). Schools with enabling structures in place promote problem solving, collaboration, flexibility, and innovation, while protecting participants from external interference (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001). Enabling school structures allow for creative, innovative solutions to problems by encouraging collaborative, open communication among teachers and leaders in working to attain instructional and academic goals together (Hord, 1997). As principals promote enabling school structures by encouraging the development of PLCs, the school's climate improves and student achievement increases (Park et al., 2019). Principals tend to lead from a professional or bureaucratic orientation (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). For a PLC to be effective, the principal needs to establish enabling school structures that are professionally oriented and allow teachers to use

their instructional expertise in their daily work. Another factor related to the climate and relationships of stakeholders of the school is academic optimism, which we will discuss in the next section.

Academic Optimism

Hoy et al. (2006) theorized that the three properties of faculty trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis combine to create a latent variable known as academic optimism. They stated that these three variables collectively “create a positive academic environment we have named *academic optimism*” (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 143). These properties are characterized by the collective perceptions of the group, in this case teachers, rather than those of individual faculty members (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Hoy et al., 2006). All three are similar in their purpose, development, and character, as well as positive influence on school improvement and student achievement (Hoy, et al. 2006; Mitchell et al., 2016a).

Hoy et al. (2006) found that teacher trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis shared a reciprocal and transactional relationship with one another. As teacher trust in parents and students is developed and nurtured, collective efficacy tends to increase (Hoy et al., 2006; Bevel & Mitchell, 2012). When teachers set high academic expectations for students, have a high sense of collective efficacy and trust students and parents their relationships with students and parents are strengthened (Forsyth et al., 2011). These three aspects of academic optimism interact with one another, while developing a school culture that is optimistic about school achievement, academics, and learning (Forsyth et al., 2011). When teachers believe all students can learn and are open to partnerships with clients (students and parents) academic success can be achieved for all stakeholders (Cassity, 2012; Gray et al., 2016, 2017; Gray & Tarter, 2012; Krier, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016c; Mitchell & Tarter, 2016).

Teacher Trust in Clients

Teachers who trust their principal were more likely to trust their colleagues, students, and parents (Brewster & Railsback, 2003; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). While some might argue that teacher trust in parents and teacher trust in students should be considered separately, several factor analyses have demonstrated that when teachers trust their students they also trust the parents and vice versa; leading to this variable being combined into one variable representing ‘teacher trust in clients’ (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 139; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, 2003; Goddard et al., 2001; Smith et al., 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Finally, strong teacher trust in clients leads to greater school improvement and academic achievement (Hoy et al., 2006).

Academic Emphasis

Academic emphasis is defined as the “extent to which the school is driven by a quest for academic excellence” (Hoy et al., 1991, p. 62). Academic goals that are high and achievable are set for students by parents and teachers (Hoy et al., 1991). Students are expected to do their best, earn good grades, work hard, cooperate with others, and achieve academic success (Hoy et al., 1991). The teachers, parents, and leaders view the learning environment as a serious place and believe in their students’ ability to do well academically (Hoy, 2012). A school climate that demonstrates a

strong academic emphasis has the potential to influence individual students and teachers alike and reinforced the benefits of collective beliefs (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000). Academic emphasis is represented by teacher and student behaviors that celebrated, honored, and emphasized academic and intellectual accomplishments (Gray & Tarter, 2012; Hoy, 2012; Hoy et al., 1991; Mitchell et al., 2016b, 2016c; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Finally, the school vision, mission, and improvement plan express elevated expectations for academic accomplishments and high instructional goals for students (Gray & Tarter, 2012; Hoy et al., 2006; Roney et al., 2008).

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy represents the “groups’ shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). Teachers’ beliefs about their colleagues’ capability to successfully educate students are represented by the norm-based concept known as collective efficacy (Goddard et al., 2000). Collective efficacy explains more “school-level variability in faculty trust in clients than other school-level predictors” (Tschannen-Moran & Goddard in Forsyth et al., 2010, p. 60; Tschannen-Moran & Goddard, 2001). When a school’s collective efficacy beliefs are strong, teachers were more likely to exert greater and sustained efforts to achieve academic and organizational goals (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). In summary, collective efficacy represents the judgment the faculty, as a whole, make about the group’s ability to plan and provide effective instruction (Gray et al., 2016, 2017; Gray & Tarter, 2012; Voelkel & Chrispeels, 2017). In the next section, we summarize our theoretical rationale, which serves as our theoretical framework.

Theoretical Rationale

This study hypothesizes that enabling school structures, the components of academic optimism, and PLCs will be positively correlated with each other. We look to the organizational theory literature as related to school structures (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001) and academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2006), as well as organizational learning research which led to development of PLCs; (Senge, 1990; Serrat, 2009). There is emerging research about these variables and their relationships with one another, especially in the areas of trust in clients, academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and enabling school structures (Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Forsyth et al., 2006; Goddard et al., 2009). Further, there is research to support our framework of the formal aspects of the school (policies, rules, and regulations) and leaders enabling teachers to do their jobs (enabling school structures) effectively, in conjunction with the informal or relational factors (trust and collective efficacy), all in the development of PLCs (Gray, 2011).

When working effectively, PLCs promote academic progress and an increase of student achievement (Bryk et al., 1999; Gray, 2011; Louis and Marks, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). However, the existing literature does not address how to cultivate and sustain of PLCs over time (Louis & Marks, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Spillane, 2005; Supovitz). As a school improvement model, PLCs provide teachers a structured time to improve the climate and culture while working toward increasing student achievement (Gray, 2011). We suggest that enabling school structures support the work of PLCs and vice versa. Within the literature, it is suggested that PLCs increase teachers’ sense of professionalism, trust in colleagues and clients, and participation in collaboration and shared decision making (Gray, 2011; Harris et al., 2017; Hipp & Huffman, 2010; Hord, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2009; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Kruse & Gray, 2019; Kruse & Louis, 1993a, 1993b; Kruse et al., 1994; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, 2006; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Hypotheses

Teachers' sense of academic optimism for the school and the school's enabling structures are essential to developing PLCs (Mitchell et al., 2016b, 2016c). In this study, we predict that there is a correlation between teachers' perceptions of academic optimism and enabling school structures and the development of PLCs.

H1: Enabling School structures, the components of academic optimism, and perceptions of professional learning community development will be positively correlated with each other.

We plan to determine if these effects are direct or indirect and beyond the influence of socioeconomic status (SES) and school level (elementary, middle or high). Therefore, we seek to add to the theoretical knowledge base through empirical data and guide organizational practices in schools. In Figure 1, we provide the conceptual diagram for our theoretical model. Enabling school structure is the exogenous predictor variable, academic optimism is the mediating variable, school level and SES are our control variables, and PLC development is our outcome variable.

H2: Enabling school structures will have a direct effect on academic optimism and together ESS and AO will explain a significant proportion of the variance in developing PLCs over and above the effects of SES and school level.

We predict that these two factors, enabling school structures and academic optimism, are essential elements in the development of PLCs. Prior research had shown that there is a relationship between enabling school structure and the individual components that make up academic optimism, specifically: trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis (Goddard, 2002; Gray, 2011; Gray & Tarter, 2014; Hord, 1997, 2004; Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Mitchell et al, 2016).

However, the relationships between enabling school structure, academic optimism and professional learning community development were untested; we reasoned because of the known relationship that enabling school structure had with the components of academic optimism that it would also be related to academic optimism as a unified latent construct and professional learning community development.

Methodology

The unit of analysis for this study was the school: therefore, individual subject scores were aggregated to the school. The predictor variables included; one exogenous variable, (Enabling School Structure) and one latent mediating variable, (Academic Optimism) which was made up of three indicator variables; collective teacher efficacy, academic emphasis, and teacher trust in clients. As enabling school structures and the components of academic optimism are school-level variables, it was essential to analyze PLCs as a collective, school-level variable, as well (Johnson, 2009). Two exogenous control variables were included in the study: socio-economic status (SES), as determined by the proportion of students not eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, and school level, which was dummy coded to reflect elementary and secondary schools in our sample. SES and school level were included because of their known relationship with several of the variables in our study in prior research (Adams, 2008; Forsyth et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2008).

Sample

An existing database from a large southeastern school district provided the data for this study. The sample consisted of 67 schools in a large metropolitan school district, including 44 elementary schools, 17 middle schools, and 6 high schools. Enrollment for these schools totaled over 62,000 students, ranging from 90 to 2,123 students per school. The mean enrollment for the schools were 685 students. Each school had from 12 to 126 teachers, with a mean of 41 teachers per school for this district. Of the 3,700 teachers invited to participate in the study, 42% held a bachelor's degree,

while 51% also had a master's degree, and 4% held more advanced degrees. Teachers completed surveys online via the Qualtrics Research Suite™ software, which was exported to Excel and then SPSS for statistical analysis. There was a 75% completion rate with 67 of the 89 schools in the district participating. Principals of the schools not represented mentioned busy schedules, time constraints, and the voluntary status of the survey as reasons for non-participation.

Data Source

Data for this study were collected from a previously established data base of teachers from one large predominantly urban school system in the southern portion of the United States made up of 89 schools that served 61,181 students. The student population was primarily African American (49%), and white (45%). The proportion of students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program ranged from 33-99% with an average of 76% per school for the schools in our sample.

Seventy-four percent of the schools invited to participate agreed to participate for a total of 66 schools. Forty-six percent of teachers invited participated for a total of 1,713 teachers out of 3,700 teachers in the district. On average 51% of the teachers in each school responded to the surveys. Of the 66 schools that were included in the final sample 45 of the schools had 50% or greater teacher participation and 58 of the schools had 30% or better. Surveys were emailed to teachers with a link to Qualtrics Research Suite™. Teachers filled out the surveys using Qualtrics software. Data were imported into Excel, IBM SPSS Statistics 22, and IBM SPSS Amos 21 for analysis.

Measures

Teachers completed three surveys; the Enabling School Structure survey (ESS), the School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS) (which included three subscales; faculty trust in clients, collective teacher efficacy, and academic emphasis) and the shortened Professional Learning Communities Assessment Scale – Revised (PLCA-R). Data were coded to reflect school of origin and school level. Data for the school level variable called elementary level (Elem) and the percentage free and reduced lunch (FRL) per school were collected from the State Department of Education website. FRL was used as a proxy variable for SES of the school (NCES, 2012).

Enabling School Structure (ESS)

The ESS scale is a 12-item, five-point Likert-type scale that measures the degree to which the school's administration and rules hinder or enable the work of teachers. Responses on this scale range from never (coded as 1) to always (coded as 5). Sample items include "in this school red tape is a problem", "administrative rules help rather than hinder", and "the administrative hierarchy of this school enables teachers to do their job" (Hoy & Sweetland, 2000). The validity of this scale has been supported by multiple studies and the reported reliability of this scale ranges from .90 - .96 (Gray, 2011; Hoy & Sweetland, 2000, 2001). In the current study the coefficient alpha was .91.

School Academic Optimism Scale (SAOS)

The SAOS is a 30-item, Likert-type scale made up of three subscales. Faculty Trust in Clients (FTC), Collective Efficacy (CE), and Academic Emphasis (AE) are designed to measure the cognitive (CE), affective (FTC), and behavioral dimensions (AE) of a culture of hopefulness and optimism that has been linked to student achievement in previous studies (Gray & Tarter, 2012; 2012b; Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007). Twenty two of the items measure FTC and CE. These items have a six-point response scale that ranges from strongly disagree (coded as 1) to strongly agree (coded as 6). Eight of the items measure AE. These items have a four-point response scale that ranges from rarely (coded as 1) to very often (coded as 4). Multiple factor analytic studies have confirmed the construct and predictive validity of these scales (Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007).

Faculty Trust in Clients (FTC). The FTC subscale is a ten-item scale that measures faculty trust in students and parents (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Sample items on the FTC subscale are “teachers in this school trust the parents,” “teachers here believe that students are competent learners,” and “teachers in this school trust their students” (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The reported reliability of this scale ranges from .92 - .98 (Bevel & Mitchell, 2012; Hoy et al., 2006; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007). The coefficient alpha for this scale in the current study was .92.

Collective Efficacy Scale (CE). The CE scale is a 12-item scale that measures the shared perceptions of teachers regarding their collective ability to effectively carry out the teaching task (Goddard, 2002). Sample items on the CE scale are “teachers in this school are able to get through to the most difficult students,” “teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students,” and “teachers in this school believe that every child can learn.” The reported reliability of this scale ranges from .91-.98 (Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; Smith & Hoy, 2007; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). In the current study the coefficient alpha for this scale was .87.

Academic Emphasis (AE). The AE scale is an eight-item scale that measures the press in the school for academic excellence. Sample items on the AE scale are “the school sets high standards for performance,” “students respect others who get good grades,” and “the learning environment is orderly and serious” (Hoy et al., 2006). The reported reliability of this scale ranges from .89 - .94 (Gray & Tarter, 2012; Hoy et al., 2006; Kirby & DiPaola, 2011; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007). The coefficient alpha for this scale in the current study was .90.

Professional Learning Community Assessment - Revised (PLCA – R)

Professional learning community development was measured by a shortened version of the Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA) instrument, which was developed by Olivier et al. (2003), but revised to form the PLCA-R (2010). The shortened version of the PLCA-R was a 12-item, four-point, Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Olivier et al., 2003, 2010). The alphas for the subscales ranged from .82 to .94 (Olivier & Hipp, 2010). The subscales of the PLCA-R included: shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions – relationships, and supportive conditions – structures (Olivier, 2003, p. 69; Olivier, et

al., 2003, 2010). Sample items included: “leadership is promoted and nurtured among staff members,” “professional development focuses on teaching and learning,” and “opportunities exist for coaching and mentoring” (Olivier, et al., 2003, 2010).

This version of the PLCA-R scale was shortened by selecting two items from each of the subscales of the original scale. A pilot study was conducted in eight schools (elementary, middle, and high) in a small southeastern school district. Further, factor analysis was performed to determine that the shortened version of the PLCA-R was valid and reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha of .92 for this study.

Elementary Level (Elem)

School level or elementary school status was added as a control variable. Information regarding the school level was collected from the State Department of Education website. Schools in our sample were dummy coded 1 for elementary and 0 for middle and high school.

Socio-economic Status (SES)

As a proxy for SES we used the proportion of students in the school who were not eligible for the free and reduced lunch program (NCES, 2012). This figure was calculated by subtracting the percent of students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program from 1, such that schools with fewer students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program were considered to have higher SES and schools with more students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program were deemed lower SES schools. Data were retrieved from the State Department of Education’s website.

Analytic Technique

We reasoned, because of prior research studies that have used these variables, that enabling school structure, school academic optimism (and its subcomponents; teacher trust in clients, collective teacher efficacy, and academic emphasis), and the level of professional learning community development are school properties (Hoy & Sweetland, 2001; Hoy et al., 2006; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007; Olivier et al., 2003, 2008, 2010). In addition, items on these scales indicate teachers’ perceptions about the school as a whole. Therefore, in order to justify aggregation of teacher responses to the school we used the Intra-class Correlation, which is a reliability index commonly used to explain aggregation of data (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). We calculated intra-class correlations for ESS, the indicator variables of school academic optimism (CE, TTC, and AE) and PLC, as well as both the ICC-1 and the ICC-2. While ICC-1 represents the variance attributed to group membership, ICC-2 represents the within group agreement between teachers in the sample. Both ICCs were calculated using a Random Effects ANOVA, which measured the reliability of the group means (Bliese, 2000).

We investigated the relationships between enabling school structure (ESS), school academic optimism (SAOS), collective efficacy (CE), faculty trust in clients (FTC), academic emphasis (AE), and professional learning community development (PLC), as well as our control variables; elementary level (Elem) and SES were explored using descriptive and bivariate correlational analysis. We tested the reliability of our scales using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of internal consistency.

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine whether FTC, CE, and AE would come together to create the latent construct referred to as academic optimism, as in prior studies. Next, a structural equation Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause (MIMIC) model, using IBM SPSS AMOS 22, was performed to test the effects of ESS on a latent variable (AO) and our outcome variable professional learning community development (PLC), while controlling for SES and elementary level. Finally, the χ^2 test of model fit, the root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA), the Goodness of Fit index (GFI), and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) were used to assess our model fit, along with G*Power 3.1.7, which was used to assess the power of our model to accurately reject the null hypothesis.

Results

This study examined the relationships between enabling school structure, a latent mediating variable school academic optimism (made up of three indicator variables; faculty trust in clients, academic emphasis, and collective efficacy) and an outcome variable (professional learning community development), while controlling for elementary level and SES.

Intra-Class Correlations

The first step in the analysis involved obtaining ICC-1 and ICC-2 values in order to justify aggregation of our variables to the school as a unit of analysis. We began by conducting five random effects ANOVAs using IBM SPSS 22 to estimate the extent to which our exogenous predictor variable (enabling school structure), our observed indicator variables (faculty trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis) that make up our latent mediating variable school academic optimism, and our outcome variable professional learning community development varied within and between schools. The ICC coefficients confirmed the nested nature of our variables. Our ICC-1's confirmed the school level variability in our observed variables. The F test of significance indicated that as expected the proportions of variance among teachers in enabling school structure (23%), faculty trust in clients (48%), collective efficacy (39%), academic emphasis (46 %) and professional learning community development (28%) were statistically significant.

Table 1*Intra-Class Correlation Coefficients*

Variable	ICC-1	ICC-2	F-ratio
ESS	.23	.64	2.76**
TTC	.48	.92	11.85**
CE	.39	.83	5.92**
AE	.46	.91	11.21**
PLC	.28	.72	3.61**

n = 66, ** *p* < .01

Large ICC-2s for enabling school structure (ICC-2 = .64, *p* < .01), faculty trust in client (ICC-2 = .92, *p* < .01), collective efficacy (ICC-2 = .83, *p* < .01), and academic emphasis (ICC-2 = .91, *p* < .01), professional learning community development (ICC-2 = .72, *p* < .01) indicated strong within group agreement among schools that exceed the 0.60 threshold recommended by Cohen et al. (2001) and Ostroff (1993). Together, these results indicate a significant variance among teachers attributed to school differences, as well as strong within group agreement among teachers. See Table 1 for the results of this analysis.

Descriptive Summary & the Reliability of the Scales

Descriptive statistics were calculated for enabling school structure, faculty trust in clients, collective efficacy, academic emphasis, professional learning community development, SES, and elementary status. On average, teachers tended to be most alike in their perceptions of professional learning community development and least alike in their perceptions of trust in students and parents. The percentage of schools with students eligible for free and reduced lunch services ranged from 34-99%. Schools in this district were largely urban and poor. There were 44 elementary schools and 22 secondary schools in the sample. The Cronbach's alphas for the scales were: ESS (α = .91), CE (α = .87), FTC (α = .92), AE (α = .90), and PLCs (α = .92). See Table 2 for a depiction of the descriptive analyses of the variables and the reliability of the scales in our study.

Table 2*Descriptive Analysis & Scale Reliabilities*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Professional Community	66	2.39	3.81	3.0218	.33181	.92
Enabling Structure	66	2.43	4.77	3.9948	.43759	.91
Teacher Trust in Clients	66	1.87	5.14	3.9446	.71887	.92
Academic Emphasis	66	1.83	3.80	3.0252	.46063	.90
Collective Efficacy	66	2.50	5.19	4.1065	.58611	.87
SES	66	.01	.66	.2474	.18327	
ELEM	66	.00	1.00	.6667	.47502	

Correlational Analysis

Hypothesis 1, which stated that enabling School structures, the components of academic optimism, and perceptions of professional learning community development will be positively correlated

with each other, was confirmed. The results from the correlational analysis indicated that enabling school structure was positively correlated with collective efficacy ($r = .40, p < .01$), teacher trust in clients ($r = .34, p < .01$), academic emphasis ($r = .40, p < .01$) and professional learning community development ($r = .79, p < .01$). Enabling school structure was not correlated with the control variables; SES or elementary school level. In Hypothesis 2, our three observed indicator variables that were hypothesized to come together to make up our latent variable school academic optimism were all positively correlated with each other, collective efficacy and faculty trust ($r = .79, p < .01$), collective efficacy and academic emphasis ($r = .73, p < .01$), and faculty trust and academic emphasis ($r = .82, p < .01$). SES was not correlated with any of the variables in this study. Elementary level was positively correlated with collective efficacy ($r = .44, p < .01$), teacher trust in clients ($r = .51, p < .01$), academic emphasis ($r = .44, p < .01$), and professional learning community development ($r = .35, p < .01$). This indicated that these variables tended to be positively associated with elementary school level and tended to decline at the secondary level. Elementary level was not correlated with enabling school structure or SES.

Table 3
Bivariate Correlations

	ESS	CE	TTC	AE	SES	Elem.
PLC	.79**	.60**	.50**	.63**	-.01	.35**
ESS		.40**	.34**	.40**	.05	.12
CE			.79**	.73**	.22	.44**
TTC				.82**	.17	.51**
AE					.17	.44**
SES						-.06

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N = 66

Measurement Model and Structural Equation Model

Hypothesis 1, which stated enabling school structures, the components of academic optimism, and perceptions of professional learning community development will be positively correlated with each other, was confirmed. Therefore, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model. Structural equation modeling was chosen as the best means of analysis for this data, because the variables in this study are viewed as properties of the school. Further, structural equation modeling is considered “a useful tool because it allows the researcher to propose and subsequently test theoretical propositions about the interrelationships among the constructs in a multivariate setting” (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). We were interested in testing the direct and indirect effects of enabling school structure on two variables school academic optimism and professional learning community development and in extending the body of research on academic optimism, thus identifying antecedents and consequents of academic optimism.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The first phase of this analysis involved a confirmatory factor analysis using IBM SPSS AMOS 21 to test whether the three observed indicator variables (faculty trust in clients, collective teacher efficacy, and academic emphasis) would serve as indicator variables for the unobserved latent

mediating variable called school academic optimism. This allowed us to determine whether the shared variance-covariance of these three variables defined our latent construct and provided a more precise way to account for the error variances, which if untested could lead to biased parameter estimates (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010).

Results from the confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated that the three indicator variables did come together to create the latent variable called school academic optimism. This was indicated by high factor loadings for teacher trust in clients (.90), collective efficacy (.85), and for academic emphasis (.89). Academic optimism accounted for 82% of the variance in faculty trust in clients, 73% of the variance in collective efficacy, and 78% of the variance in academic emphasis. See Table 4 for our measurement model.

Table 4
Measurement Model

Latent	Observed	Factor Loadings	Error	h^2
AO	TTC	.90	.17	.82
	CE	.85	.27	.73
	AE	.89	.22	.78

Structural Equation MIMIC Model

Our Structural Equation Multiple Indicator Multiple Causes (MIMIC) Model consisted of one exogenous predictor variable (enabling school structure) and two exogenous control variables (SES and Elementary Level) that were predicted to have direct and indirect effects on our latent unobserved variable (academic optimism) and our outcome variable (professional learning community development). Three observed endogenous indicator variables (collective efficacy, teacher trust in clients, and academic emphasis) were used to define our latent variable (academic optimism). Our path model indicated that academic optimism would have a direct effect on professional learning community development and would act as a mediator between enabling school structure and professional learning community development. Five unobserved exogenous variables were added to the model to represent the error variance in our indicator variables, our latent variable, and our dependent variable (Err_FTC, Err_CE, Err_AE, Err_AO, Err_PLC). Maximum likelihood estimation was used to estimate the parameters of the variables in this study.

H1 stated enabling school structure will have a direct effect on academic optimism and academic optimism will explain a significant proportion of the variance in developing PLCs over and above the effects of SES and school level, which was confirmed. Enabling school structure had a significant direct effect on academic optimism ($\lambda = .36, p < .01$) and professional learning community development ($\lambda = .65, p < .01$) and a significant indirect effect on professional learning community development ($\lambda = .13, p < .01$). Academic optimism had a significant direct effect on professional learning community development ($\lambda = .35, p < .01$). Despite the fact that SES was not correlated with any of the variables in the bivariate correlations, it had a small but significant effect on AO ($\lambda = .22, p < .05$) and elementary level had a significant direct effect on AO ($\lambda = .51, p < .01$). SES and elementary level did not have a significant effect on professional learning community development.

Together, enabling school structure, academic optimism, and our control variables explained 74% of the variance in PLC development with enabling school structure making the largest contribution followed by academic optimism. The fact that neither SES nor elementary

level had a significant direct effect on PLC development was encouraging. This study also confirmed that AO is indeed made up the three observed variables (collective efficacy, teacher trust in clients, and academic emphasis) as previous studies have demonstrated (Hoy, Tarter Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; McGuigan and Hoy, 2006; Smith & Hoy, 2007). Our factor scores were high and ranged from .84 -.91. Finally, enabling school structure and our control variables explained 43% of the variance in academic optimism with elementary level having the most significant effect on academic optimism. See Figure 1 for our path model. See Table 5 for our Structural Model results.

Goodness-of-Fit Indices

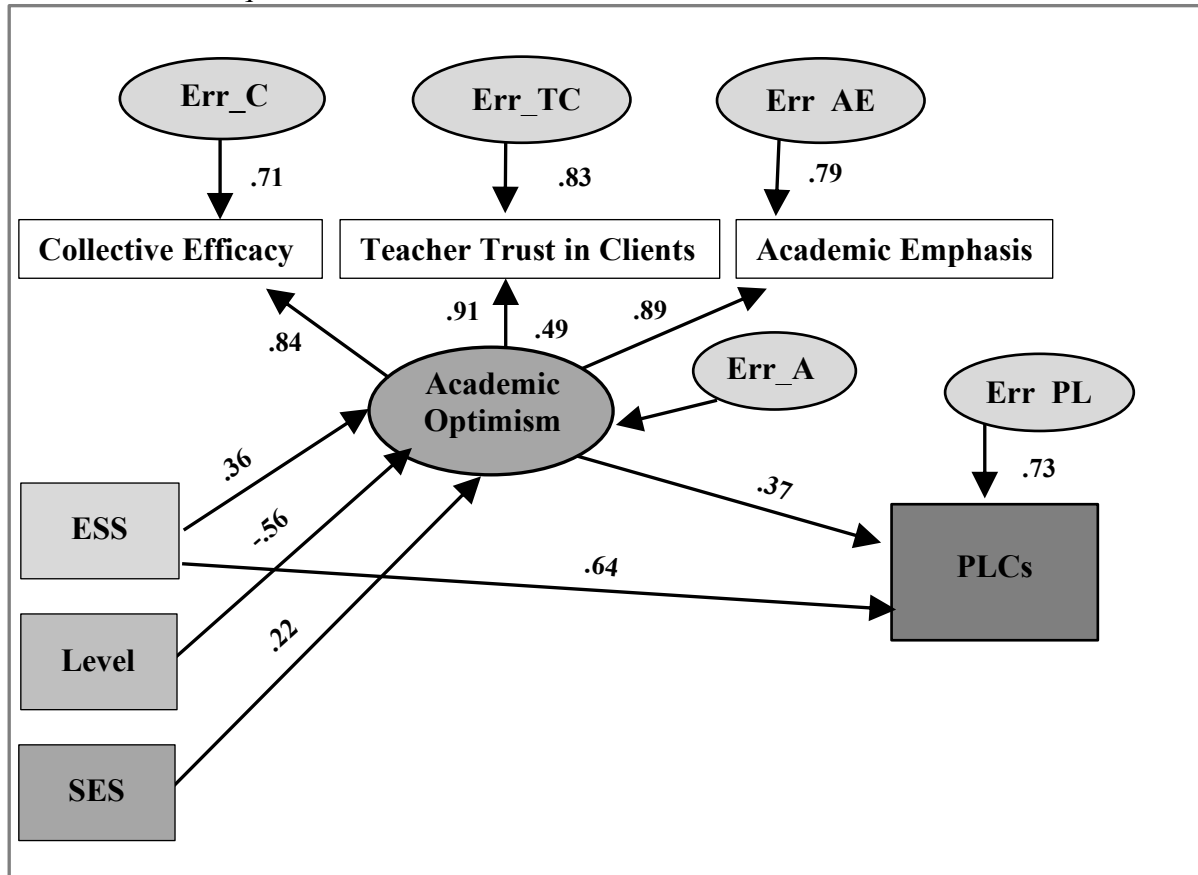
To test our theoretical model, we used the χ test of model fit. Our model had good model fit as evidenced by a non-significant χ of 17.85, $p = .085$. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .098, which is slightly higher than the recommended .05 -.08 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was .94, which is within the recommended range of .90-.95, indicating good data to model fit. Furthermore, a post hoc analysis of power using G*Power 3.1.7 to test the power of our theoretical model, with an NCP of 6.85, 11 degrees of freedom, and $p < .05$, yielded a power of .99, which indicates that we had a 99% chance of correctly rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 5
Structural Model

Path	Standardized Coefficient	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	P
AO ← ESS	.36	.40	.12	3.45	***
AO ← ELEM	.51	.53	.11	4.73	***
AO ← SES	.22	.59	.27	2.14	.03
CE ← AO	.85	1.00			
TTC ← AO	.91	1.30	.14	9.49	***
AE ← AO	.89	.82	.09	9.20	***
PLC ← AO	.35	.23	.06	3.64	***
PLC ← ESS	.65	.48	.05	9.03	***
PLC ← ELEM	.08	.06	.05	1.04	.30
PLC ← SES	-.11	-.20	.12	-1.65	.10

Our sample size of 66 schools is below Costello and Osborne's (2005) recommended criteria of ten subjects per variable or the MacCallum et al. (1999) recommendation of 20 subjects per variable. However, to deal with this question of minimum sample size needed we used Schumacker and Lomax (2010) formula to estimate the minimum sample size (N) that would be needed to correctly reject the null hypothesis. This formula is $N = (NCP/Fmin) + g$ Fmin is calculated by using the minimum fit function χ and the formula $Fmin = \text{Minimum Fit Function } \chi / (N-g)$ where N is the sample number and g is the number of groups. In our case, $Fmin = 17.85/65 = .274$. Using an NCP of 6.85 our estimated sample size $N = (6.85/.274) + 1$ gave us a minimum sample size of 25. Therefore, while the sample size may be small, we have met the minimum sample size recommended by Schumacker and Lomax (2010) and given that the other estimations of model fit are good we suggest that the sample size for this study was adequate.

Figure 1
Final Structural Equation MIMIC Model



Theoretical Implications

Our study validates that schools should be built upon a foundation of enabling school structures and characteristics of a professional learning community with the positive influence of academic optimism. The formal structure provided by a PLC allows for change, as related to curricula, instruction, and assessment practices. In line with years of research about PLCs and the school organization, this study confirmed that certain structural and physical conditions need to be in place for a PLC to be established and sustained over time (Gray, 2011; Gray et al., 2016, 2017; Hord, 2007; Hoy & Sweetland, 2000; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Kruse & Louis, 1993; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Louis & Marks, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

The empirical findings emphasize the relationships of enabling school structures, academic optimism, and the development of PLCs. One cannot exist or be sustained without the others. This reciprocal relationship confirms the hypotheses, further extending what is known about PLCs. Prior to this study, the importance of establishing enabling school structures and academic optimism in PLCs, as described by Hord, had not been addressed in the literature (Gray, 2011; Gray et al., 2017). These findings suggest the need for more professionally oriented leadership within our schools in the form of enabling school structures to support and further develop PLCs (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Further, the aspects of academic optimism lead to greater student achievement and teacher professional growth (Mitchell et al., 2016b). Therefore, our study adds

to the knowledge base about PLCs and the relationship with enabling school structures and academic optimism and to the field of literature.

Scholarly and Practical Significance of the Study

This study demonstrates the importance and necessity of enabling school structure, trust in clients, collective efficacy, and academic emphasis, yet the structural equation model shows the critical role that enabling school structures have in the development of PLCs. Further, this is the first study to investigate and confirm the effects of enabling school structure and academic optimism on the development of PLCs. These empirical findings validate the importance of establishing enabling school structures as an antecedent to the development of PLCs. The reciprocal relationship of PLCs and ESS confirms the Hypothesis 1 and the dependence of one variable upon the other and vice-versa.

In order for PLCs to be sustained, the leadership of the school must ensure the following opportunities for teachers: reflective dialogue, de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values (Kruse et al., 1994; Kruse & Gray, 2019; Louis & Kruse, 1995). From a practical perspective this study predicts that the development of PLCs relies upon the leader's ability to foster collaboration amongst teachers and a school-wide focus on student learning outcomes. "It is clear that the role of the principal is paramount in any endeavor to change pedagogical practice, adopt new curricula, reshape the school's culture and climate, or take on other improvement targets" (Hord & Sommers, 2008, p. 6).

School leaders need to model trust-building behavior and encourage a trusting school culture for teachers by sharing responsibilities, involving teachers and parents in decisions, promoting high expectations for students, and supporting teacher collaboration (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). "By creating the organizational conditions where teachers can exercise greater discretion in using their professional judgment to respond to the needs of students, principals can foster among teachers stronger professional norms, greater energy and enthusiasm for one's work, and greater trust in their relationships with students and colleagues" (Tschannen-Moran, 2009, p. 241). For PLCs to be effective, it is important for principals and districts to protect professional development time, provide it during regular work hours, and to encourage collaborative, professional behaviors.

By understanding the importance of enabling school structures and aspects of academic optimism for the school climate and promoting each within the school, the principal and school faculties have a better opportunity for improvement and increased student achievement (Hord, 2007; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; Kruse & Louis, 1993a, 1993b; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Louis & Marks, 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Beard (2011) conducted a study that also investigated academic optimism and enabling school structures, although not PLCs. She found that "the more enabling a school structure is, the greater a teacher's degree of academic optimism," which further supports some of our findings (Beard, 2011, p. 102).

Limitations of Study

We acknowledge that the sample size of 66 schools is lower than some of the recommendations discussed earlier for conducting factor analysis (Costello & Osborne, 2005; MacCallum et al., 1999). However, Costello and Osborne (2005) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2012) argued that strict rules regarding sample size are less important when there are high commonalities and well-

determined factors yielding good data to model fit. We do advise caution in generalizing these findings because of the concerns with sample size and encourage others who have access to larger sample sizes to conduct further analysis on the variables in this study. We also caution that the findings of this study were based on one large school system in a southern state that had a high rate of poverty. Therefore, these findings may not be generalizable to districts and school systems outside of this general area and with different demographics.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study, we focused on the relationship of these variables across schools, but did not explore how these variables differ among teachers. Our research has laid a foundation for further research on these variables and supports prior research that suggests that these variables are school properties. However, until now no study has compared these variables in relation to one another. We encourage future research to extend this research to explore how these relationships may differ among teachers, as well as across schools using hierarchical linear modeling. While we have argued that our sample size was adequate, we have also acknowledged that a larger sample size would be better in uncovering the relationships among these variables. So, we encourage future researchers to confirm these relationships using a larger sample size.

We have also acknowledged the limitations, based on the demographics and location of our study. We were surprised by the finding that SES was not related to some of the indicator variables that make up academic optimism. This could be due to the fact that the schools in our sample were largely poor. Future research that has a more diverse sample may be able to test these relationships further. While our study has demonstrated that there are relationships between these variables, qualitative research may be able to shed light on precisely how enabling school structure and academic optimism work to facilitate the development of professional learning communities. Finally, the fact that the positive conditions brought about academic optimism seem to be associated most closely with elementary schools, leads us to believe that more research is needed in secondary schools that will help us to understand how these favorable conditions can be established there, also.

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Student Perceptions of Instructor Made Videos with Quizzes in an Asynchronous Online Course

This manuscript has 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.



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The purpose of this study was to determine if graduate students enrolled in an Education Leadership program perceived the use of Instructor Made Videos (IMVs) with quizzes as a useful tool to increase student-to-instructor and student-to content engagement in asynchronous online courses. Additionally, this study sought to determine how graduate students describe their experience in an online course that included IMVs and quizzes. A convergent (one-phase) mixed-method design was employed in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously using a survey embedded in the Learning Management System that included both Likert style and open ended items. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed simultaneously and the results were compared to determine similarities and differences between the two data sets. The quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students perceived IMVs to be an effective strategy to increase student-to-content and to a lesser degree student-to-instructor engagement. Results also revealed that participants perceived quizzes as a positive addition to IMVs that held all students accountable for viewing the complete video. Given the increase in the numbers of graduate courses offered online, this study provides evidence that using Instructor Made Videos with quizzes is an effective strategy to enhance student engagement and student learning.

The recent global pandemic created an environment where many traditionally taught college courses were quickly transitioned to online formats to allow for continued instruction when face-to-face interaction was not possible. As a result, there has been increased attention on the difficulty of delivering high-quality instruction in the fully online format. While the pandemic has caused a sudden increase in the number of college courses offered online, it is hardly a new phenomenon. In the 2016-2017 school year, 76 percent of all degree-granting institutions offered courses online, and about 50 percent of institutions offered at least one program entirely online (Xu & Xu, 2019). The number of students who participate in online learning continues to increase year after year and grew to over 6.3 million for the fall semester of 2016 (Seaman, Allen, & Seaman, 2018).

Bettinger & Loeb (2017) describe online education as a promise not realized. Despite the increased access to college courses provided by online platforms, many professors simply mirror the same techniques they use in face-to-face classes rather than investing the time and effort necessary to leverage available technology to differentiate and increase student learning. The unfortunate results of the lack of attention to effective pedagogy in online courses are adverse outcomes for students.

Studies have consistently reported that students in online courses earn lower grades and are more likely to drop out of college. In a study of over 230,000 students enrolled in over 750 courses at DeVry University, researchers found that taking an online course reduced the student grade by .44 points on a traditional four-point grading scale (Bettinger & Loeb, 2017). Additionally, dropout rates in online environments are much higher than in traditionally taught courses (Muljana & Luo, 2019). Moore and Fetzner (2009) found that dropout rates were 10 to 20 percent higher in online courses and that only 56 percent of undergraduates who participated in online programs completed their courses and graduated.

Given that much of the research in effective online instruction in higher education has been conducted at the undergraduate level, further work is needed to determine the specific impacts of instructional strategies and methods to increase student engagement with graduate students. Undergraduate programs typically include general education requirements with an eventual introduction to a broad field of study. Conversely, graduate programs emphasize the study of complex material and skill development to prepare for a specific professional field (Seligman, 2012). The additional demands of study at the graduate level require that students develop critical thinking skills to master complicated concepts specific to their field of study (Holzweiss et al., 2014). This increased complexity may also create a need for a distinct set of strategies for instructors to ensure graduate student success to master course content and to have the skills necessary to apply knowledge learned in their professional environment.

Enrollment in online courses will likely continue to increase at both the graduate and undergraduate levels because these courses provide access for students who would not otherwise be able to participate in higher education (Goodman, Melkers, & Pallais, 2016), whether it is because of remote location, professional or family demands, or health and safety issues. Therefore, it is incumbent on designers and instructors of online courses to develop innovative delivery methods that engage students and provide interactive experiences.

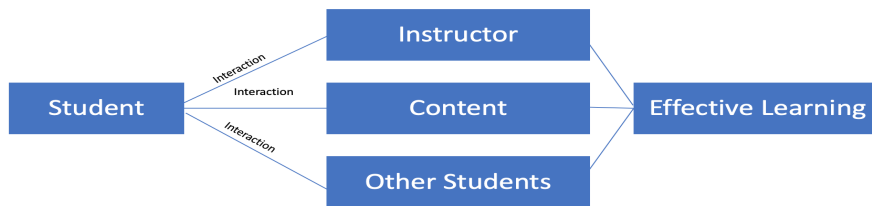
Related Literature

Types of Interaction in Online Learning

This study's framework is derived from the seminal work by Moore (1989), who identified three types of interactions for instructors to consider as they work towards active student engagement in online environments. The first type of interaction is student-to-student, which Moore describes as students working in small groups or interaction among individual students. The second type of interaction is student-to-instructor, which focuses on the dialogue between students and their teacher. Student-to-instructor interaction can be synchronous, such as phone or videoconferencing and chats, or asynchronous, such as correspondence, email, discussion boards, announcements, or videos. Finally, Moore describes student-to-content interaction as the process of students working directly with the subject matter to construct meaning, relate it to personal knowledge, and apply it through problem-solving. Moore's framework is depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1

Moore's Framework for Interaction in Online Environments



Since the publication of Moore's work, several studies have sought to identify the importance of each type of interaction to student engagement in online environments. In a 2016 study, students were asked which type of interaction they found most valuable. Students in online courses perceived student-to-instructor and student-to-content interactions to be more important for learning than student-to-student interaction. In the same study, teaching presence in an online course was also reported as very important to students (Kyei-Blankson, Ntuli, & Donnely, 2016). Similarly, Martin & Bolliger (2018) surveyed college students and found that student-to-instructor engagement strategies were the most valued among the three categories. In particular, students noted that the posting of regular announcements or email reminders and that the inclusion of a variety of course materials were essential strategies to enhance their engagement in the course. These studies' findings reinforce the understanding that effective online learning requires deliberately planned learning experiences where the students regularly engage with both the instructor and the content.

Instructor Made Videos as an Engagement Strategy

Increasing engagement through student interaction with instructor made videos (IMVs) has been documented as an effective online course strategy. In a study of student perceptions of online learning, King (2014) found that short videos and screencasts were tools that students found to increase instructor visibility and communicate course content. In the same study, students reported that timely feedback from the instructor was essential to their learning process. Bailey, Hendricks, & Applewhite (2015) similarly found that student engagement required materials, tasks, and activities that students found relevant. Online learners preferred the use of teaching strategies that made full use of the available technological tools, including video. When students were asked to rate online learning assessments, response to video received the highest rating across all categories. It is important to note that while video has proven to be an engaging strategy in online courses, effective learning also requires that there be a mechanism such as a quiz or accompanying assignment to provide clear and accurate feedback to the student (Abrami et al., 2011). The overarching theme of research that investigates the use of video in online courses is that students recognize video as an effective strategy. However, little research exists that specifically investigates graduate students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of instructional videos made using best practices from the literature related to student-to-content and student-to-instructor engagement.

There is ample guidance in the literature for online instructors who seek to create compelling instructional videos that are most likely to engage students. Cynthia Brame (2015), the assistant director at the Center for Teaching at Vanderbilt University, suggests that videos should be brief, instructors should use a casual and conversational style of speaking, essential ideas should be highlighted using signaling and cuing, and that videos should have an embedded learning activity. Similarly, Guo, Kim, and Rubin (2014) analyzed results from almost seven million video viewings in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and reported that the optimal length of a video in an online course is about six to nine minutes with six minutes or less preferable.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to determine if graduate students perceived the use of IMVs with quizzes as a useful tool to increase student-to-instructor and student-to content engagement in asynchronous online courses. Additionally, this study sought to determine how graduate students describe their experience in an online course that included IMVs and quizzes. Finally, the researchers examined the extent to which student descriptions of their experience with IMVs supported their perceptions of student-to-instructor and student-to content engagement.

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1. How do students rate the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes for understanding course content? (student-to-content engagement)

RQ2. How do students rate the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes to increase feelings of connection to their professor? (student-to-instructor engagement)

RQ3. How do graduate students describe their experience with IMVs with quizzes in an online asynchronous course?

RQ4. How do students' descriptions regarding their experience with IMVs and quizzes help explain their ratings of the effectiveness for understanding course content and feelings of connections to their professor?

Methodology

The methodology section of this paper begins with a description of the study's mixed-method research design, followed by a data collection subsection, which includes a description of participants, the instructors' professional backgrounds and approaches to teaching and learning, the process for the production of the IMVs and quizzes, and a description of the instrument used to collect data. Finally, the methods used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data are described, followed by a statement about the mixed-methods analysis.

Research Design

A mixed-method design was used to develop a deep understanding of student perception of IMVs with quizzes as accountability measures. Cresswell & Cresswell (2018) define mixed method design as an approach in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected, analyzed, and integrated to gain a deeper insight into the problem being studied than is possible with one type of data alone. Specifically, a convergent (one-phase) mixed-method design was employed in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously. After analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, the results were compared to determine similarities and differences between the two data sets. This design approach is derived from Campbell and Fiske (1959), who theorized that analyzing and comparing different data types was the best method to understand a complex phenomenon.

Data Collection

Participants

Participants were post-master's graduate students enrolled in two of the six required courses in an Educational Leadership Program for initial K12 leadership certification in Georgia during the Spring 2020 and Summer 2020 semesters. The population included three sections with 79 students in the spring of 2020 and four sections with 103 students in the summer of 2020. All students enrolled in the courses were practicing educators, with most from Georgia and a small number from nearby states. Program admission requires that students hold a valid, clear, and renewable teaching certificate. All courses in the program, including those in this study, are offered only in an online asynchronous format.

Student enrollments in the two terms were non-duplicative, i.e., students in the spring classes differed from those in the summer courses. Approximately half the students in this study were classroom teachers; the other half functioned in leadership roles such as assistant principals, instructional coaches, department chairs, and program directors. Slightly more than half reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian, a third as Black/African American, with small numbers identifying in other categories or choosing not to self-report. Participant responses indicated that 75% were female and 25% male.

Instructors

Two instructors taught the courses in which data were gathered for this study. The instructors share

similar professional backgrounds in K12 and higher education teaching and leadership roles, including principal, associate superintendent, superintendent, university department chair, associate vice president for academic affairs, and associate provost. These leadership experiences shaped their similar teaching philosophies and expectations for students, with a commitment to effective instructional leadership influencing how they design their online courses. The professors met weekly to ensure that IMVs were made using best practices identified in the literature and that courses were delivered in a similar style with similar expectations.

Instructor-Made Videos and Quizzes

The instructors created the IMVs with the Kaltura Video Platform (version 4.2.29), incorporated into the Learning Management System (D2L, Desire to Learn, version 20.20.5). All IMVs followed production best practices that included attention to video length, delivery in a conversational style, cueing and signaling to indicate important content, and use of accompanying quizzes. In the spring courses included in the study, there were a total of six IMVs that ranged from approximately six minutes to just over eight minutes. The summer courses included seven IMVs ranging from about six minutes to just over 20 minutes.

The required, short, graded assessments associated with each video served as a check to ensure students engaged with the IMVs (Brame, 2015). Students accessed the short, five-question accountability quizzes in one of two ways. In the spring semester courses, the quizzes were separate from the IMVs. Students watched the IMV and then opened and completed the quiz housed in the course platforms assessment feature. In the summer courses, the quizzes were embedded within the IMVs themselves. As students watched a video, it would temporarily stop, and a question would appear. Students could not proceed with the video until the question was answered. Both methods provided the students with instantaneous feedback.

Instrumentation

Survey Development

The instructors developed a 10-item survey within the Learning Management System (LMS) survey tool to assess students' perceptions about the required IMV quizzes. The instructors intended to adjust the delivery of IMV Quizzes in response to student feedback. The first eight items, Likert style questions, employed a *4-point scale* ranging from *4-strongly agree*, *3-agree*, *2-disagree*, to *1-strongly disagree*. Items 9 and 10 were open-ended questions that asked respondents to provide specific examples of what they liked best about the IMVs and one or two suggestions for improving the learning experience. The instructors modified the spring survey slightly for the summer administration to account for embedding the quiz questions directly into the IMVs themselves, i.e., the spring items did not use the word "embedded" to describe quiz questions. Other than that, all items remained the same for both the spring and summer survey administrations. The survey items relevant to this research and their alignment to the research questions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1*Instructional Effectiveness of IMVs with Quizzes (Student Perceptions)*

Survey Question	Question Description for Charts/Graphs	Engagement	Research Question
1. Instructor-Made Videos with quizzes were an effective means of communicating important course information.	Communicating Information	Student to Content	RQ1
2. The videos and quizzes helped me to understand course content.	Understanding Content	Student to Content	RQ1
4. The quizzes held me responsible for watching the videos in their entirety.	Accountability	Student to Content	RQ1
6. The design of the PowerPoints used in the videos helped me to focus on the most important information.	Design for Focus	Student to Content	RQ1
7. The videos helped me to feel connected to my professor.	Instructor Connection	Student to Instructor	RQ2
9. What did you like best about the instructional videos with quizzes? Please provide one or two specific examples.	Liked Best	Student to Content and Student to Instructor	RQ3
10. What suggestions do you have to improve the instructional videos with quizzes? Please provide one or two specific suggestions.	Suggestions for Improvements	Student to Content and Student to Instructor	RQ3

Data Collection

Near the end of each semester, the instructors posted announcements on the course homepage requesting that students complete the anonymous assessment. Email notifications to the classes reminded students to complete the survey if they had not already done so, reiterating that the request was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and their feedback may be used for research.

Data Analysis

As required in a convergent mixed-method design, data analysis began with the simultaneous analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data followed by a mixed-method analysis that integrated the two sets of results.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The researchers' intent for including Likert style quantitative items in the survey was to assess students' positive and negative ratings with regard to the IMVs with quizzes as a pedagogical tool to enhance student-to-content and student-to-instructor engagement. Data from the quantitative items (4-point ordinal scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) were analyzed descriptively by examining the percentage of scores in each of the four categories. So few students responded to the *disagree* and *strongly disagree* options that these two categories were collapsed, leaving three categories: *strongly agree*, *agree*, and *disagree/strongly disagree*. Because the number of responses to the combined *agree* and *strongly agree* categories was high (94-99%) and to the combined *disagree/strongly disagree* was low (1-6%), the descriptive analysis did not probe further into differences between *strongly agree* and *agree* ratings.

Further, differences between spring and summer term data demonstrated that students' strongly agree ratings increased for all five quantitative items. This was an expected consequence of the instructors' commitment to continuously improve their instruction each semester based on student feedback and their assessment of the IMVs with quizzes as effective pedagogy. For these reasons, a separate analysis of spring and summer data did not seem warranted; thus, the two datasets were combined and treated as one.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The purpose of the qualitative portion of this research was to understand how graduate students described their experience with IMVs with quizzes in an online asynchronous course. Qualitative research seeks to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). The examination of qualitative data allowed the researchers to truly understand the student perspective in their own words.

The student perspective was gathered using two open-ended items on the perception survey described in the instrumentation section. While the open-ended items were created to seek data to answer Research Question 3, the survey items were deliberately stated in a general manner so that students could react with their honest thoughts without bias from the researchers' anticipated themes.

A sequential process of first and second cycle coding was used to analyze student responses to the survey's open-ended questions. Saldana (2016) describes first cycle coding as the process of assigning initial codes to units of data and second cycle coding as the work with the resulting first cycle codes to develop parent themes and data patterns. First and second cycle coding were completed using NVivo 12 for Windows software.

Mixed-Method Data Analysis

An essential element of mixed method design is merging results from both the quantitative and qualitative findings. This study employed a side-by-side comparison to determine if the qualitative findings either confirmed or did not confirm the quantitative results. In the side-by-side approach, researchers first report quantitative statistical results and then discuss qualitative findings that either confirm or disconfirm the statistical results (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018).

Results

Quantitative Data

The results are presented in the order of the two quantitative research questions. First, students' ratings of the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes for understanding course content were examined. Next, students' ratings of the effectiveness question related to increased feelings of connection to their professor were assessed.

Research question 1: How do students rate the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes for understanding course content?

As noted in Table 2, this research question was answered through four survey items that examined aspects of the instructional strategies for helping students understand course content. These four items reference Moore's (1989) student-to-content engagement. See Table 2 for the number (and percentages) of responses to each question.

Table 2

RQ 1 - Student Ratings, Effectiveness of IMVs with Quizzes for Understanding Course Content

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-to-Content								
1 – Communicating Information								
Spring 2020	38	73.1	13	25.0	1	1.9	0	0
Summer 2020	66	89.2	8	10.0	0	0	0	0
Combined	104	82.5	21	16.7	1	0.8	0	0
2 – Understanding Content								
Spring 2020	32	61.5	18	34.6	2	3.8	0	0
Summer 2020	60	81.1	14	18.9	0	0	0	0
Combined	92	73.0	32	25.4	2	1.6	0	0
4 – Accountability								
Spring 2020	40	76.9	10	19.2	1	1.9	1	1.9
Summer 2020	61	82.4	10	13.5	3	4.1	0	0
Combined	101	80.2	20	15.9	4	3.2	1	0.8

6 – Design for Focus

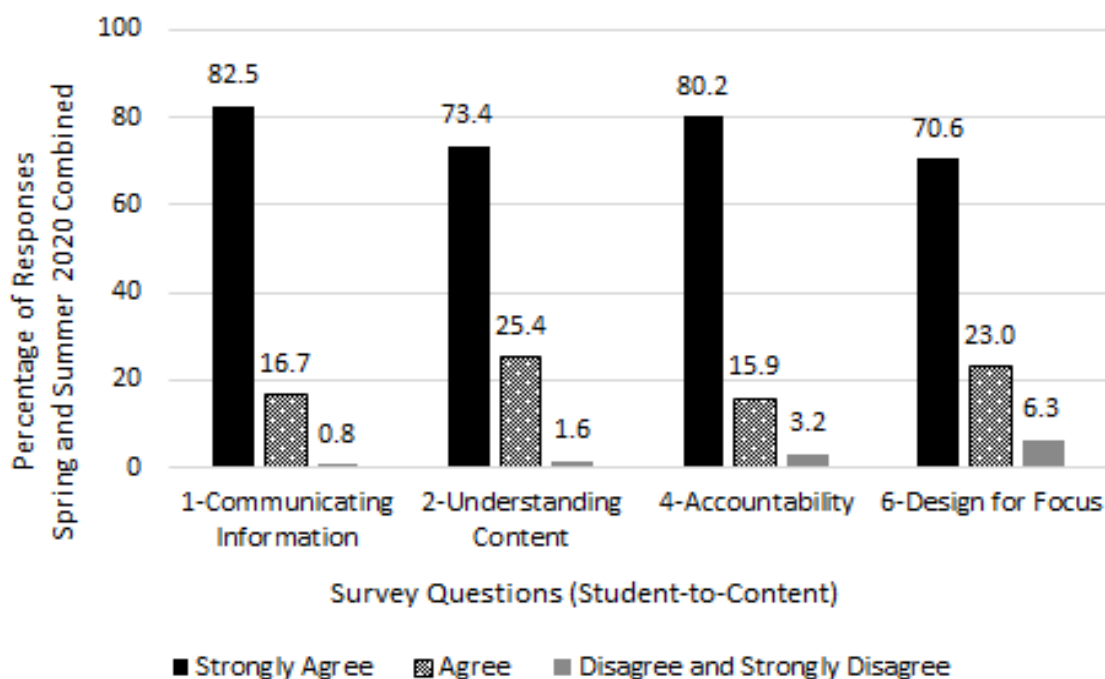
Spring 2020	28	53.8	16	30.8	8	15.4	0	0
Summer 2020	61	82.4	13	17.6	0	0	0	0
Combined	89	70.6	29	23.0	8	6.3	0	0

Note. N = 182 for Spring and Summer 2020. The combined spring/summer response rate was 69% (126/182). The term response rates were 65.8% for spring (52/79) and 71.8% for summer (74/103).

The large numbers of students who strongly agreed or agreed to the four items that addressed Research Question 1 (items 1, 2, 4, and 6) indicated that students believed the IMVs with quizzes strengthened their student-to-content engagement. The *strongly-agree* responses increased from spring to summer, which can be explained through slight changes in the content of IMVs. Both instructors applied student feedback from the spring term to increase the time devoted to content delivery in the IMVs for the summer term. Both delivered content that students traditionally found challenging, expounding on difficult concepts by linking their professional experiences with theories taught in the courses. Noticeably, responses to the *disagree* categories were substantially smaller than those in the *strongly agree* and *agree* options. Only one respondent of 126 answered *strongly disagree* and did so only for the accountability question. Figure 2 illustrates that trend by presenting data in three response categories rather than four by combining the *disagree* and *strongly disagree* responses.

Figure 2

RQ 1 - Students' Ratings, Effectiveness of IMVs with Quizzes for Understanding Content



Note. N = 182 (126 responses) for Spring and Summer 2020 with a response rate of 69.2%.

Research question 2: How do students rate the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes to increase feelings of connection to their professor?

This question was answered through one survey item that examined aspects of the instructional strategies for helping students feel connected to their professor and reference Moore's (1989) student-to-instructor engagement. As noted in Table 1, the one survey item was: The videos helped me to feel connected to my professor. The large numbers of students who strongly agreed or agreed to the survey item that was aligned to Research Question 2 indicated a strong connection between IMVs with quizzes and student-to-instructor engagement in both the spring and summer semesters. See Table 3 for the number (and percentages) of responses to the item.

Table 3

RQ2 - Student Ratings, Effectiveness of IMVs with Quizzes for Connections with Professor

Survey Question	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Student-to-Instructor								
7 – Connection to professor								
Spring 2020	23	44.2	26	50.0	3	5.8	0	0
Summer 2020	50	67.6	22	29.7	1	1.4	0	0
Combined	73	58.4	48	38.4	4	3.2	0	0

Note. N = 182 for Spring and Summer 2020. The combined spring/summer response rate was 69% (126/182). The term response rates were 65.8% for spring (52/79) and 71.8% for summer (74/103).

Qualitative Data

Students' anonymous responses to the open-ended items were gathered and placed in a single document without identifying the specific course or professor. Of the 126 students who completed at least portions of the survey, there were 104 responses to the open-ended item (9) "What did you like best about the three instructional videos? Please provide one or two specific examples." Forty-one of those responses were from the spring semester and 63 from the summer semester. Of the 126 students in the study, there were 96 responses to the open-ended item (10) "What suggestions do you have to improve IMVs? Please provide one or two specific examples." Of those responses, 39 were from spring and 57 from the summer semester.

Once the data were organized into a single document without identifying information, a general overview of the responses was ascertained by reading and considering the document in its entirety. In general, participants reported positive feelings about their experience watching the IMVs and taking the quizzes. Upon first reading, the researchers noted that the student responses from both spring and summer semesters were very similar in content and frequency, and for this reason, results were analyzed with the data from each semester combined into one data set.

First Cycle Coding

Qualitative data were coded within the NVivo 12 for Windows program using a descriptive process that assigned words or short phrases as labels to categorize data into topics (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2020). Items 9 and 10 were coded separately. The five most frequent codes, number of references, and coverage percentage for survey item 9 are included in Table 4. The number of references refers to the actual number of student responses that were assigned a particular code. The coverage percentage refers to the proportion of source content that was assigned a particular code.

Table 4
RQ3 - Survey Question Nine First Cycle Codes

Code	Description from codebook	Number of references	Coverage percent
Course concepts	References to increased understanding of course concepts	33	25.57
Video length	References to brevity or video length	28	17.15
Quizzes	References to being held accountable for video viewing with quizzes	21	20.86
Connection to professor	References to increased feelings of connection with the professor	17	14.27
Reinforced reading	References to connections or reinforcement of course reading	16	14.74

The most frequently occurring responses included references to increased understanding of course concepts. Students also responded positively to the quizzes that accompanied the IMVs. All responses coded with “Quizzes” included a positive reaction to being required to take a quiz after video viewing. The codes for “Video Length,” “Reinforced Reading,” and “Connection to Professor” were also frequently found in student responses to item 9.

Item 10 was coded separately, and a new set of codes were developed for this data based on the content of student responses. The most frequent response to survey item 10 was that no improvements needed to be made or that the student did not have any suggestions. There is a significant drop in the number of references and coverage with the next most frequent codes. The five most frequent codes, number of references, and coverage percentage for Item 10 are included in Table 5.

Table 5*RQ3 – Survey Question Ten First Cycle Codes*

Code	Description from codebook	Number of references	Coverage percent
No improvements	No suggestions provided or comments that no improvements were necessary	47	28.95
Technical issues	References to problems accessing or using video or quiz platform	7	9.26
Video length	Requests for longer videos	5	9.5
Add graphics	Requests to increase graphics or visual images in videos	4	5.65
More Videos	Requests for more videos within the course	4	4.96

Second Cycle Coding

Second cycle coding was used to group the initial codes into a smaller number of categories to connect data to the research questions for this study. NVivo 12 software was also used for the second cycle coding process. Overarching parent codes were created to correspond to “student-to-content engagement” and “student-to-instructor engagement.” First cycle codes were then examined and arranged as child codes under the parent codes. Survey items 9 and 10 were again coded separately. For survey item 10, an additional parent code titled "No Improvements" was also added. Tables 6 and 7 list parent codes, child codes (first cycle codes), number of references from the survey responses, and percentage of coverage from survey items 9 and 10.

Table 6*RQ3 - Survey Question Nine Second Cycle Coding*

Parent Code Child Codes	Number of references	Coverage percentage
student-to-content Engagement Course concepts Reinforced reading Assignment completion Connection to practice	64	49.05
student-to-instructor Engagement Connection with professor	17	14.27

Table 7*RQ3 - Survey Question Ten Second Cycle Coding*

Parent Code Child Codes	Number of references	Coverage percentage
No Improvements Requests for more videos	47	28.95
student-to-content Engagement Confusing content	3	11.64
Research Question 4 Connection with professor	0	0

The second cycle coding of data from survey item 9 revealed that students perceived IMVs to be a useful tool to increase student-to-content engagement. Specifically, there was a high frequency of comments about IMVs clarifying course concepts, reinforcing ideas from the reading, and that their understanding increased when professors made connections of theory to practical application. Data from question nine also indicated that students felt that IMVs helped with student-to-instructor engagement, although this benefit was not as strongly indicated as student-to-content engagement. Most of the data collected from question ten indicated a high overall level of student satisfaction with IMVs, given that the most frequent comments included the idea that no improvements in the IMVs needed to be made.

Mixed-Method

During the final phase of data analysis, the quantitative and qualitative results were compared to determine the similarities and differences.

Similarities

When the results were considered at the broadest possible level, quantitative and qualitative data indicated a high level of student satisfaction and positive perception of IMVs with quizzes. This satisfaction was apparent in the quantitative data in which there was only one rating of *strongly disagree* on the five Likert style items analyzed. Similarly, over 90% of all responses to Likert-style survey items were either *agree* or *strongly agree* except for item 6 during the spring semester. The qualitative data were similarly positive, and by far, the highest number of responses on item 10 indicated that students felt there should be no changes to the IMVs.

The quantitative and qualitative results also indicated that students perceived IMVs as an effective strategy to increase student-to-content engagement. Upon examining the four survey items aligned to student-to-content engagement, only 2.9% of all responses were in the *disagree* or *strongly-disagree* category. Furthermore, results for the survey item most directly related to this construct indicated strong agreement. When responding to question 2, which asked students to rate the extent to which the IMVs helped them to understand course content, 61.5% strongly agreed in spring, and 81.1% strongly agreed in summer. The qualitative results were similar. In second cycle coding, the parent code "student-to-content engagement" had the most references and the largest

coverage percentage. In first cycle coding, mentions of improved understanding of course content were also the highest category for both numbers of references and coverage percentage.

Results also indicated that IMVs with quizzes were an effective strategy to establish student-to-instructor engagement, although this perception was not as strong as the perceived connection between the IMVs and student-to-content engagement. Only 3% of responses to survey item 7, which asked students to rate the connection between IMVs and feeling connected to their professor, were in the *disagree* category, and zero students strongly disagreed with the statement. Similarly, in the qualitative data, the code "connection to professor" received 17 references and had a coverage percentage of 14.27%.

Finally, both the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that students perceived quizzes as a positive addition to IMVs and appreciated that quizzes held all students accountable for viewing the complete video. In fact, in first cycle coding, the number of references and coverage percentage of positive references to quizzes was higher than the code for connection to professor.

Differences

Despite the high level of agreement between quantitative and qualitative data, there were some areas of difference. Quantitative results showed an increase from the spring to summer data in the number of students who strongly agreed with all five of the survey items tested in this study. There was no corresponding shift in the qualitative responses. It may be that the qualitative questions were not written in a manner specific enough to test this type of subtle shift. One of the highest categories of frequency and coverage in the qualitative data was references to video length. While there was a Likert-style question in the survey that asked about this topic, it was not included in this paper's scope. Finally, the quantitative data indicated a perception that IMVs effectively communicated course information such as announcements, whole-class responses to student questions, and tips for producing high-quality assignments, but this same theme was not reflected in the qualitative data.

Discussion

This study examined graduate students' beliefs regarding the effectiveness of IMVs with quizzes as a pedagogical tool to improve their engagement in the course. The strategy exceeded expectations as determined by graduate students' ratings of student-to-content and student-to-instructor engagement and the qualitative responses to open-ended questions in which they described their experiences. This discussion begins with a confirmation of IMVs effectiveness with graduate students, particularly its usefulness for teaching content that students consistently find challenging. It concludes with a discussion of the benefits of IMVs for ameliorating the sense of disconnection common in online settings, a non-trivial matter in today's learning environment that has been reshaped in response to the COVID pandemic.

IMVs with Quizzes to Enhance Graduate Student-to-Content Engagement

Before this study, both researchers used IMVs to enhance *instructor presence* in their online courses by delivering information and announcements instead of delivery of content. These IMVs were produced to provide timely guidance to clarify course assignments, emphasize salient points in whole-class feedback, and reinforce tips for producing high-quality work. The IMVs featured

the instructors as "talking heads" with the idea that it would improve instructor presence and help students feel more connected in the asynchronous online classes.

When this study began in the spring 2020 term, the focus of the IMVs was a mix of course information and some content with the added accountability measure (i.e., quizzes) to oblige students to watch the IMVs in their entirety. In summer 2020, the IMVs' purpose shifted with less focus on conveying course information and more on teaching complex content. This shift in video content was a natural consequence of a commitment to continuously improve instruction.

The researchers found the students' overwhelmingly positive responses to IMVs with quizzes surprising. Positive feedback related to using IMVs to introduce pedagogical variety and focus more on teaching complex content was expected. However, the researchers also anticipated dissatisfaction with using quizzes that compelled students to watch the IMVs in their entirety. The results confirmed expectations that students liked the variety that video introduced to the course (Bailey, Hendricks, & Applewhite, 2015) and appreciated the targeted instruction that helped them understand challenging leadership concepts. The surprising outcome was their support for the quizzes. Students perceived quizzes as a tool to help them learn rather than a mechanism to manipulate their behavior.

IMVs with Quizzes to Increase the Pedagogical Variety and Teach Complex Content

The researchers expected that students would appreciate IMVs as diversions from the extensive reading commonly found in online graduate courses. Results confirmed this expectation; indeed, the data indicated that students wanted more IMVs in their courses. Comments such as, "The videos allowed me to focus my reading assignments when my professor highlighted the most important points," and "The readings are long, and it helped me to know what my professor thought was important" were frequently found in the qualitative data.

After considering various possible explanations for the surprisingly high numbers of positive responses (strongly agree and agree) to the four student-to-content survey questions. The researchers developed a set of questions that may be addressed in future research:

1. Do students in professional preparation programs appreciate the focus on the essential content because they needed the knowledge and skills to apply immediately in their professional settings?
2. Do education leadership students appreciate the IMVs as a way to model effective instructional design that they can apply in their K12 teaching?
3. Do quizzes that are tightly aligned to IMVs create the conditions necessary for students to more easily understand complex concepts?
4. Do IMVs convey the instructor's sense of commitment to helping their students learn?
5. Do IMVs appeal to busy students because of the straight-forward nature of the learning activity?

IMVs with Quizzes to Secure Accountability

The researchers were also interested in students' responses to the inclusion of the quizzes because of a history of push-back against using them to hold graduate students accountable to read assigned materials. Indeed, when this investigation began, the intent was to use the quizzes to oblige students to watch the IMVs in their entirety. However, the data for the accountability question was

surprising. Ninety-six percent of the respondents rated the quizzes as effective tools to hold them accountable for watching the IMVs from beginning to end, and the qualitative data indicated that students valued the quizzes as tools to help them learn. One student shared their feeling about the quizzes by stating, "I liked that quizzes allowed me to see if I understood the key points, and they held me accountable with regard to focusing on the video."

Students' positive responses to the quizzes raised questions for the researchers. Graduate students from earlier terms felt slighted by the inclusion of quizzes to compel engagement with readings, frequently writing comments on course evaluations such as, "I am a graduate student. I shouldn't have to take a quiz to prove that I have read the assigned material." Why did students appreciate the quiz accountability measure when associated with IMVs, but found it distasteful when quizzes were associated with reading? This question was not tested in this study but is worthy of future research.

IMVs with Quizzes: An Effective Pedagogy to Enhance Student-to-Instructor Engagement

The results of this study also indicated that students perceived a connection between the IMVs and feelings of connection with their instructor. It was interesting that students did not need to see their instructor to experience the feelings of connection. During the spring semester, IMVs featured the face of the instructor speaking about course information and content. However, in the summer semester, IMVs included powerpoints where the instructor could be heard but not seen. The researchers wondered if students would have preferred to see the instructors' faces in a small corner of the screen, but no comments in the qualitative data mentioned this issue. This is an interesting finding because it differs from Guo, Kim, and Rubin (2014), who found that students wanted to see the instructor's face during the teaching episode in a large-scale MOOC. This contradiction may relate to the difference in setting. The students in this study were part of a six-course program with class sizes of about 30 students, which is a more intimate and specialized program than the typical MOOC.

It is also interesting that instructors did not establish connections with students by sharing personal information such as hobbies, pets, or interests. Instead, connections were established when instructors offered insights about their professional experiences as practicing educational leaders. In other words, students were invited into real-life school leadership experiences when instructors shared lived experiences, their passion for improving K-12 schools, and linking practice to theories, knowledge, and skills learned in the courses. In effect, the IMVs seemed to remove the "mystery" of effective leadership and instructional leadership. One student commented, "The professor connected the concepts to real-world learning by giving examples of how we would see or hear it in a real school setting. This felt personal and that there was an important reason to learn these things."

The researchers were also struck by the power of video to reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness that students often feel in an online learning environment. COVID has exacerbated these feelings, and so video may be a useful tool beyond courses that are historically delivered in an online asynchronous format. One student summed it up by stating, "The professor told us why we were doing things, and this made the learning more meaningful to me. In some of my online classes, I'm not even sure there is a human on the other side of the computer."

Implications for Practitioners

This study's results give direction to practitioners who seek to enhance student-to-content and student-to-instructor engagement in online courses. While students requested more IMVs in the qualitative feedback, the researchers deliberately used IMVs with quizzes sparingly and focused on the most difficult course concepts. While this study did not test the number of IMVs it would take to reach a saturation level for students; the researchers found it useful to use them infrequently so that the IMVs felt like a novelty or change of pace from reading.

The researchers found that students appreciated the brevity of the IMVs, but limiting them to six minutes, as suggested by Guo, Kim, & Rubin (2014), was unnecessary. The IMVs used in this study were between about six and twenty minutes, and students voiced no objection to length. Further research is necessary to determine the differences between student perception of IMVs in a large scale MOOC as studied by Guo, Kim & Rubin and student perceptions of IMVs used in a graduate program closely related to the student's career goals.

Finally, the researchers found it very useful to embed the video into the Learning Management System so that students did not have to access an external platform with another password. The video production system used in this study also allowed the instructors to embed the quizzes directly into the IMVs. Students noted that this approach, combined with the allowance to repeat the quiz for a higher grade, made the process feel somewhat like online gaming with instantaneous feedback and immediate opportunity to improve. This perspective suggests that gamification may be an innovative delivery method in the online environment to help graduate students learn content and skills. It is an area worthy of further research.

Limitations and Future Directions

There were several limitations of this study based on the population and timeframe. This study focused exclusively on students who were enrolled in a graduate program for school leadership. Graduate students preparing for challenging roles may have been motivated to learn because of the immediate application of knowledge and skills acquisition to their professional environments. Students enrolled in different types of courses or programs may not respond similarly. Another consideration that may limit generalizability is that the study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students might have been more receptive to innovative online teaching and learning strategies because they also were required to teach or lead in K-12 schools that were delivering instruction online.

This study focused on student perceptions of the usefulness of IMVs to establish connections with content and their instructors, but several other issues arose in the data that are worth study. Specifically, the researchers wonder how long IMVs can be before students respond negatively to them. Also, questions remain about the optimal number of IMVs per course. This study only asked one Likert style question to test student perception of feelings of connection to their instructor. While the qualitative data also suggested that IMVs increase student-to-instructor engagement, further studies should ask a greater variety of questions to strengthen these findings. Finally, more research is needed on pedagogies to reduce the loneliness of the online learning environment.

Conclusion

The number of graduate students who take at least some portion of their courses online has grown dramatically in recent years and will only continue to increase in the aftermath of the pandemic. As more professors are called on to transition from face-to-face to online teaching, attention must be given to the importance of effective instructional strategies that create student-to-content and student-to-instructor engagement opportunities. While instructors of graduate students can take some cues from research conducted in undergraduate settings, graduate populations and the content taught are quite different, and so more research must be pursued to understand how these students perceive their online learning experiences. Online education has been described as the promise not realized due to adverse student outcomes, but this may change when instructors move beyond using strategies that are useful when teaching in traditional face-to-face environments. IMVs with quizzes offer an effective “no waste” pedagogy that focuses students on essential learnings and key points in a manner that students find engaging.

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Social Capital for Social Change: Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme, a Solution for Education (In)justice in South Africa?

This manuscript has 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.



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South Africa faces an education crisis that has significant implications for the freedom of citizens and development of the country. A context of government incapacity necessitates that other modes of improving the education system be explored. This paper examines the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme to gauge the potential of community-based efforts as a possible solution for education injustice in South Africa. Using social capital theory, the paper examines how this community engagement programme builds human capabilities. A brief analysis of the improvement in pass rates and reflection on the lessons from the intervention sheds light on the enormous strides made over five years. Despite some limitations to this approach, the paper provides a compelling narrative of the way in which mentoring programmes such as Nine Tenths nurture the necessary social capital to bring about social change, which in turn supports the development of human capabilities in local contexts.

Keywords: mentoring; social capital; human capabilities; education; injustice

Education is seen to be the foundation for the realisation of one's full participation in society. The recognition of education as a fundamental capability and development enhancing service is reflected in South Africa's constitution which enshrines the socio-economic right to quality basic education for all (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 352). This constitutional mandate has to some extent expanded access to education, as enrolment rates across the country have risen significantly since 1994 (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 355). However, the South African case illustrates that often the expansion of capabilities, in the form of education, is constrained by lack of state capacity to provide the required human and material resources. Many no-fee or state subsidised South African schools face material inequality, owing to decaying infrastructure and lack of access to basic resources like water, electricity, libraries and computers, as well as a shortage of qualified teachers (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 355). For these reasons, South Africa, as a middle income country, lags behind its peers in terms of educational attainment, undermining the country's developmental progress. In terms of quality educational attainment, South African schools remain highly unequal, where learners continue to face an education system that fails to favour the poor (Mthethwa, 2020). Therefore, South Africa's education system is in a crisis and any resolution requires substantial investment.

With government support often underwhelmingly low, civil society may in turn play a role in filling the gap to effect social change required to reach a more desired realisation of human capital and our professional and economic potential. Based on this premise, this paper argues that the social capital found in civil society and community organisations may provide the necessary support for the development of human capabilities in local contexts. Education interventions such as the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme taking place in Makhandla, South Africa hold enormous potential to shift a devastating status quo, where the majority of individuals who enrol in local schools will not be able to access the local higher learning institution, Rhodes University.

In this paper, the authors present Sen's capabilities approach and social capital theory as a framework for developing human capabilities in contexts where the state, as a resource provider, is constrained. In order to explore the potential of social capital networks embedded in community action, they reflect on a community engagement programme, the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a model that uses the social capital of university-school partnerships for the development of human capabilities. Based on this exploration, the authors conclude that, while Nine Tenths does have some limitations, this intervention significantly illustrates the power of social capital in catalysing social action geared towards strengthening human capabilities and development.

The first part of this paper highlights Sen's capabilities approach and social capital theory as a theoretical framework that underpins the Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme. This is followed by a discussion of South Africa's education challenges; narrowing in to an overview and reflection of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a community engagement intervention. This reflection serves as an exposé of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme, in order to shed light on this model as a means of leveraging community resources in pursuit of educational change, and to facilitate more scholarly engagement around innovative solutions to educational crises coming out of civil society and community engagement networks.

Theoretical Framework

Education as Freedom: Sen's Capabilities Approach

On an individual level, education is important for socioeconomic mobility and is key to escaping poverty (United Nations, 2020). Education, in this sense, enables the development of human capabilities and agency, providing individuals with the freedom to enhance their own wellbeing (Walker, 2005, p. 106). Furthermore, at a community and nation-wide level, there is growing recognition that the development of human capital, or the skills and knowledge of a population, through education, can play a significant role in development (Evans, 2010, p. 37). Enhanced human capital allows for the accumulation of knowledge and innovation, which in turn can catalyse significant economic growth (David, 2001, p. 59). Thus, education is significant, both in terms of enhancing the freedom and choice of individuals and in terms of catalysing the development of communities and countries.

Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (1999 or earlier work with Nussbaum), which expands the definition of development beyond economic wellbeing, is relevant to any analysis of the liberatory potential of education (Ansari, Munir, & Gregg, 2012, p. 815). Sen claims that GDP and economic growth should not be the primary indicator of development, and instead states that development is better conceived of as *freedom* (Sen, 2017, p. 357). Freedom, according to Sen, can only be achieved through the extension of human capabilities, or the combinations of functionings that an individual can achieve (Sen, 2017, p. 357). This expansion of capabilities is not only the ends of development, enabling individuals the freedom to pursue what they find most valuable, but is also a means towards development as increasing capabilities brings about higher levels of human capital, or the skills, knowledge and experience that can drive growth (Engle, 2010, p. 18). Freedom is thus both instrumental and constitutive (Engle, 2010, p. 18). It is the enhancement of capabilities, rather than income, that enables people to improve their standard of living (Acharya, 2016, pp. 1162-1163).

Based on Sen's recognition that development is more than growth in income, international institutions' definitions have expanded to encompass the notion of development as freedom and capability building. For example, Sen's ideas led to the adoption of the Human Development Index (HDI), as an indicator of development, rather than just GDP growth (Acharya, 2016, p. 1163). The HDI is a summary measure assessing the progress of three dimensions of human development: healthy life, access to knowledge and standard of living (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). The first dimension is measured by life expectancy, while the second dimension is measured by mean years of schooling amongst the adult population (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). Lastly, standard of living is measured by per capita Gross National Income (GNI) (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, Sen's expanded definition of development has spurred on other measures like the Human Capital Index (HCI) which measures the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to obtain by her 18th birthday (Kraay, 2018). Measured in units of productivity, the HCI ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 representing a benchmark of complete education and full health while 0 represents no human capital obtained at all (Kraay, 2018).

Thus, the expansion of human capabilities has been recognised as essential in bringing about individual human agency as well as greater developmental aims (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 2). In this case, schools in particular are important capability enhancing services, with the capacity to empower individuals and transform societies (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 2). Many 21st century development theorists therefore argue that the public provision of capability

enhancing services, in the form of investment into human capital (especially education) and social support, is important (Evans, 2010, p. 44).

For many developing countries, however, the potential of education as a capability enhancer and catalyst for development fails to be realised. Many governments face serious limitations, such as fiscal challenges, inadequate institutional capacity, corruption, and general collective action problems, which impact the quality of service delivery of education (Skidmore, 2001, p. 57). In this context, an under-provision of quality public education comes to erode the freedom of individuals as well as states' developmental potential.

Social Capital for Social Change: The Capability Enhancing Potential of Community Collective Action

Where states are constrained, civil society and community actors can be significant developmental forces. The power of civil society and community groups, which are based on networks engaged in service and participation, is built on social capital, which can bring about effective social outcomes (van Til, 2000, p. 4). Social capital refers to the organisational features of social and economic life, and the wealth-producing potential that comes from collective association (Skidmore, 2001, p. 57). Features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks of reciprocity, improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordination (Putnam, 2002, p. 8). It is based on these features that many theorists have indicated that community problems may be solved by strengthening networks of solidarity among citizens (Putnam, 2002, p. 4).

These social capital networks may take several forms. Bonding social capital refers to the trust and shared norms that allow for social cohesion within a group of generally homogenous individuals, or those with similar backgrounds in the same community (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). Bridging social capital refers to peripheral ties between different groups, or extensive intergroup relationships (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). Bridging social capital enables connections between diverse social groups: these groups often form in horizontal networks, based on relationships between groups with similar characteristics such as life experience and social standing (Terrion, 2006, p. 158). Lastly, linking social capital refers to vertical relationships where people develop "alliances with sympathetic individuals in positions of power [...] to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions" (Woolcock, as cited in Terrion, 2006, p. 158). Linking ties, in contexts of resource disparities between groups, may play a significant role in facilitating the sharing of resources in order to create a more equitable social landscape (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

These three forms of social capital are pivotal in bringing about collective action in the pursuit of social goals (Skidmore, 2001, p. 59). Social capital, or the trust and cohesiveness that comes from community, may in turn promote collective efficacy, or a group's shared belief based on social ties in its conjoint capabilities to organise and execute collective action, usually in the pursuit of social goals (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). Collective efficacy cannot come about in the absence of the sense of cohesiveness stemming from social capital. This statement is important and relevant in relation to community engagement and development. So, first trust and social cohesiveness need to be established within and between communities (the schools as a community and university as a community) because communities are not homogenous. The existence of trust and cohesiveness should not be assumed to be existing in a given community.

This collective efficacy cultivated by networks of social capital in turn promotes social action, and thus has huge change-making potential (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). Social capital in some instances may have to be established first to enable collective capability and engaged

citizenship (Migheli, 2011, p. 136). Therefore, just as the development of education enhances human capital, the strengthening of networks is also an important form of capability expansion. Social capital may strengthen community wellbeing and enable individuals to work together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

Researchers have established a positive connection between the development of social capital and the expansion of education or human capital (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive link between social capital and student retention or throughput rates in American high schools (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). Similarly, other studies show that social capital in the form of exchanges of information and knowledge results in enhanced learning outcomes (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). In this scenario, the presence of social capital is important in fostering an enabling social context for the transfer of knowledge, which would not take place in the absence of established networks and trust (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 833). The presence of social capital in these instances serves to enlarge a population's set of capabilities (Migheli, 2011, p. 137).

These empirical findings point towards the possibility of social capital in inspiring collective action in contexts where public provisioning of services remains limited (Skidmore, 2001, p. 71). Civil society and community organisations hold potential in enhancing the capabilities of organisations, through improving the strength of networks as well as educational (and human capital) outcomes, transforming South Africa's education trajectory. In order to explore the potential of these networks, the following sections turn towards community action taking place in the city of Makhanda, South Africa.

The State of Education in South Africa and Makhanda

South Africa faces an education crisis of an enormous magnitude. The poor quality of education is reflected by South Africa's Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Capital Index (HCI). As of 2019, South Africa's HDI is 0.705, positioning it at 113 out of 189 countries (UNDP, 2019). When adjusted for inequality, this HDI drops to a value of 0.463, a loss of over 34 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices, causing the country to lag behind other developing countries in terms of human capital achievement (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 5). South Africa's education underperformance is also reflected in its HCI value of 0.43 (World Bank, 2020). This HCI indicates that the average child born in South Africa will grow up to be only 43 percent productive, less than half as much as she would be if she completed her education and had full health (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, the learning gap in South Africa is evident in statistics. Many schools struggle to retain learners, with a national throughput rate of around 60 percent, indicating that almost half of a cohort beginning Grade 1 will not sit for their final examinations 12 years later (Zero Dropout, 2019, p. 1). The average child starting school at four years old can expect to complete only 9.3 years of schooling by the age of 18 (World Bank, 2020). From these statistics, it is clear that South Africa faces an immense human capital shortage.

In terms of quality educational attainment, South African schools remain highly unequal, where learners continue to face an education system that fails to favour the poor (Mthethwa, 2020). Decaying infrastructure and lack of access to basic resources (e.g. water, electricity, libraries and computers) leaves many no-fee or state subsidised South African schools materially disadvantaged (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 355). Several of these schools also fail to ensure a sufficient number of quality teachers (Spren & Vally, 2006, p. 355). The capability enhancing potential of education is therefore not being realised in many poor communities where individuals cannot afford to pay for quality education (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 815). An incapacitated state facing collective action

problems in terms of the provision of education means that the majority of families in South Africa who are unable to afford the fees of former Model-C (high quality previously racially segregated schools) and private school cannot access quality education.

The town of Makhanda is a microcosm of this inequality of opportunity embedded in South Africa's education system. The province of the Eastern Cape, in which Makhanda is situated, is one of the poorest in the country, and is the worst performing province in terms of its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (StatsSA, 2021), despite it being the third most populous province in the country (StatsSA, 2016). The per capita GDP in the Eastern Cape is therefore well below average, and many in the province experience poverty. The material poverty in the province manifests in Eastern Cape public schools, which attract few and often under-qualified teachers, face decaying infrastructure, and have some of the lowest pass rates in the country (Lemon, 2004, p. 275). It is with this understanding that the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a model that uses the social capital of university-school partnerships for the development of human capabilities is of relevance.

Makhanda is not only the location of the prominent Rhodes University campus, but also houses some of the most prestigious private schools in the country, boasting excellent facilities, education resources, and a 100 percent pass rate norm (Lemon, 2004, p. 280). The town also houses several former Model-C schools that similarly achieve excellent pass rates (Lemon, 2004, p. 282).

In the greater Makhanda setting, however, these schools are "islands of privilege in a poor community" to which the majority of residents do not have access (Lemon, 2004, p. 281). Rather, many children rely on no-fee or state subsidised schools, often with lacking human and material resources and dismal examination results (Lemon, 2004, p. 285). The poor performance of these schools is illustrated by the final school results achieved in 2013, two years prior to the initiation of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme intervention. The Makhanda (then Grahamstown) final year pass rate was 61.3 percent, lagging over 15 percentage points behind the national average of 78.2 percent (Westaway A. , 2014). The town also formed part of the 10th worst performing district nationwide (Westaway A., 2014). A more comprehensive breakdown of these results shows that, while former Model-C schools performed well, it was the inadequate performance of no-fee schools, or the most vulnerable schools in the district, reflected in the overall abysmal pass rate (Westaway A. , 2014). One of the most sought after no-fee schools in Makhanda, achieved a pass rate of only 40 percent (Westaway A. , 2014). Local pass rates of non-fee paying schools before and after 2013 depict a similar, bleak picture.

These results illustrate education inequalities, in Makhanda and South Africa as a whole. For the majority of those residing in Makhanda, the Rhodes University campus did not symbolise the next step in young people's lives but instead became an unreachable ivory tower, as lack of access and opportunity prevented attempts at continuing education. Combatting this injustice - and ensuring Rhodes University's relevance in the setting of Makhanda - requires action on the part of the university and other community stakeholders to change the education trajectory of the district. Without a fundamentally transformed education system, the future of Rhodes University and Makhanda as a whole is jeopardised. In this case, alternative approaches to changing South Africa's education trajectory are important. Civil society and community structures may hold potential in improving this access.

The Potential of Communities to Change South Africa's Education Trajectory: The Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme

Overview

In 2015, the beginnings of this collective action to change Makhanda's education trajectory emerged. In February, Dr. Sizwe Mabizela was inaugurated as the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University (RU). During his inaugural address, he re-positioned Rhodes University, such that "our University is not just in Grahamstown [now Makhanda] but is also *of* and *for* Grahamstown [Makhanda]" (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 3). This statement reflects a repositioning of the university by Mabizela as one that needs to become more relevant to the Makhanda community (Westaway, 2019). Honing in on the education sector, he asserted that RU, as a higher education institution, has a particular responsibility to confront the unequal and inadequate basic education sector in our city. And thus, the Vice Chancellor's Reviving Schools Initiative (herein referred to as the VC Initiative) came into being.

One of the core programmes within the VC Initiative education pathway is the Nine Tenths Matric Mentoring Programme (herein referred to as Nine Tenths). House in the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) Division, the programme is runs in four of the six township schools in the city. As the name suggests, final year, or "matric" learners from local, historically disadvantaged, and predominantly no-fee schools are paired with Rhodes University community engagement student volunteers in mentorship relationships. Learners are given one-on-one support from a trained Rhodes University student volunteer through nine guided and structured contact sessions throughout the year (Talbot, 2020). The mentoring programme is geared towards equipping matric learners in selected local schools to cope with their final year of school and to pass to their full potential. In 2020, the programme was implemented for the fifth year.

Phases and Assertions

The programme designers' experiences pointed towards three assertions (Rhodes University, 2019) which now form the foundation of Nine Tenths:

Firstly, positive role models, in this case Rhodes University volunteers, encourage better academic performance. Secondly, the development of a future orientation (i.e. aspirations, goals, plans, ambitions) is useful as motivation to study. Finally, establishing and learning good study methods improves one's results (Talbot, 2020). The implementation of Nine Tenths is based on these three assertions. Nine Tenths is segmented into three phases. Each phase takes place during critical times of the high school learners' final year. The programme is visibly "top heavy", as six out of nine sessions happen prior to the learners' mid-year exams. A significant challenge of the programme is aligning the chronology between university and school calendars.

The first phase of the programme is based on setting goals. Traditionally, this goal setting takes place in sessions one and two. In 2020, it was decided one session was adequate for this phase, provided the learners completed their personal plan, which sets out their current academic standing, goals and future plans, well in advance of the session with their mentors. The personal plan is significant as it is designed to capture the academic background and commitments of the learner and mentor in the mentoring relationship. It is used as an accountability and motivational tool going forward.

In the second phase, the learners are supported to develop effective, personalised study skills. These skills are developed through the production of summaries of their selected final year

subjects. During sessions two to six, learners analyse the quality and quantity with their mentors. It is not essential that mentors are familiar with the subject content of the summary, although this is a benefit.

The third phase takes place after mid-year exams but prior to preliminary exams. This phase is geared towards career guidance. Mentors and learners collectively assess the performance of the mentee in mid-year examinations against the goals in their personal plan. These offer a benchmark to begin seeking post-school opportunities such as tertiary education. Summary writing and feedback is encouraged throughout this phase.

Nine Tenths Programme Management

Nine Tenths employs a multi-stakeholder approach to decision making that is inclusive of schools, learners, mentors and programme coordinators. Nine Tenths is housed in the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division (RUCE). However, the success of the programme has depended on the co-management model between RUCE and GADRA Education (GADRA). These two entities form the overarching management body. GADRA is a local NGO that brings a wealth of experience in the basic education sector along with close relationships with local schools. GADRA is the liaison between schools (learners and teachers) and Nine Tenths. RUCE provides the critical mass of student volunteers and the coordination thereof and expertise in community development. All management decisions are jointly planned, acted upon and reflected on between these stakeholders. Therefore, each stakeholder has a specific role to play. According to the VC Initiative Plan, these roles are “complementary and synergistic and therefore clear and regular communication and coordination is vital” (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34).

As the programme is centred on the interaction between learners and mentors, the quality of every interaction between mentors and learners is crucial for the success of the initiative (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34). Pairs of student leaders guide groups of fourteen mentors, providing “motivation, technical guidance and assistance, and activity monitoring” (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34). Team leaders also participate in quarterly evaluation meetings, providing insight into the perspectives of mentors. As beneficiaries (in the broadest sense of the word), teachers, principals learner representatives, from each school (usually from the Representative Council of Learners) provide an important perspective for the management of Nine Tenths. Their thoughts are given due weight in considerations made for the programme.

All the above stakeholders form the management team who meet regularly in school analysis meetings to determine the learning outcomes for learners and discuss how the programme is and should be progressing, with actionable commitments. The success that Nine Tenths has experienced is founded on this highly structured programme and the multi-stakeholder management model that utilises the social capital of all involved parties. The following section explores these successes, from the perspectives of various stakeholders in the programme.

Reflections on the Impact of Nine Tenths in Select Makhanda Schools

RUCE’s overarching objective is to work towards community development. Nine Tenths as a top-end intervention of an initiative to revive the city’s full education pathway is a good example of how focused interventions achieve change. In five years, Nine Tenths has played an influential role in the improvement of Makhanda’s Grade 12 pass rate. The following is a collaborative reflection of this impact, representative of key stakeholders of the programme, namely a student volunteer, community partner and programme coordinator, which draws from the monitoring and

evaluation conducted since the inception of the programme (which appears in the public domain) as well as personal experience. This reflection is structured around the three forms of social capital, namely bonding, bridging and linking, which guides a discussion around the extent to which Nine Tenths has been successful in building human capabilities in targeted schools.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital refers to the trust and shared norms that allow for social cohesion within a group of generally homogenous individuals, or those with similar backgrounds in the same community (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). In this section, the authors describe how this form of social capital is nurtured in the partner schools and Rhodes University as the ‘family bodies’ of the programme. Partner schools are selected on the basis of committed management teams, and willingness to co-manage the programme which has been found to make them receptive to such focussed interventions to improve educational outcomes (Rhodes University, 2019). As described above Nine Tenths’ unique multi stakeholder approach to the management of the programme leaves space for several human development opportunities; teacher development chief among them.

In 2017 the introduction of mandatory Teachers In Charge (TIC) proved useful in the integration and ownership of the programme in schools. These teachers, who are usually the Grade 12 Head of Department (HOD), play a critical role in communication and compliance from the mentees, promotion of the programme in the school (e.g. ensuring teachers know to protect the time for Nine Tenths sessions) and logistical support to mentors (e.g. booking classrooms for sessions, ensuring children don’t leave school without attending their session etc.). With the support of senior school management (e.g. the principal and HOD) they ensure the implementation of sessions is seamless. This elevates the teacher’s confidence and position in the school and progresses their professional growth as a teacher leader.

Alongside this, prior to each phase, and the sessions with their mentors thereof, the learners are provided with an information session by the programme managers to lay out the expectations for each phase of the programme. These sessions are provided to *all* the final year learners at each school regardless of their inclusion in the programme or not. This, in some senses, is a form of teacher modelling and engagement; building capabilities from within, as well as a means of encouraging solidarity and in-group trust amongst the learners themselves.

Moving away from the schools and towards Rhodes University students, it is no doubt that student volunteers are the lifeblood of the programme. Without them the programme will not be able to reach as many learners. Small mentor groups of Rhodes volunteers, led by pairs of student leaders, fosters a sense of bonding social capital, and the pursuit of common goals. These groups also undergo mandatory training together throughout the year. In developing the human capabilities of student volunteers in Nine Tenths, a short course has been designed so that they are adequately prepared to assist learners. The course aims to help students understand and appreciate the political and moral need for transformation interventions such as this and assist mentees to make strategically sound decisions about their academic and personal progress. To date, approximately 450 students have been accredited.

Bridging Social Capital

Essential to Nine Tenths is the horizontal leverage of social capital in the relationships between mentors and learners and the consequent impact on academic achievement. This is the most

significant measure of the impact in the Nine Tenths Mentoring programme as it provides access to further capability enhancing services such as higher education. We also discuss the positive effect of the mentor-learner relationship on mentor personal and academic development, pointing towards a mutually beneficial engagement.

The most significant quantitative impact of the relationship between mentors and mentees is registered at the top-end of the performance spectrum. The highest overall level of National Senior Certificate (final school year) pass is termed “Bachelor level”, since attaining this level is the minimum requirement for applying for Bachelor Degree study at a South Africa University. One of the measures that the project uses to gauge its effectiveness at the top-end is to compare the number of Bachelor level performances that the intervention begins with at the beginning of any year (based on final Grade 11 results) with the number of Bachelor level certificates produced at year-end. This comparison is tabulated in Table 1, for the years 2017 – 2019. The respective annual increases are presented in brackets behind the totals produced in the final examinations.

A cursory glance at the table is all that is required in order to conclude that the programme contributes towards increasing the total numbers of Bachelor level passes by consistently more than 30, each year. The significance of this contribution can be assessed when considering this number in relation to the total number of Bachelor passes produced by the six no-fee schools over the period 2014 – 2019. From 2014 – 2016, the number hovered in the 50s (51, 57, 51). It should be recalled here that Nine Tenths was implemented for the first time in 2016. In 2017 the six no-fee schools produced 62 Bachelor passes; at the time, that was an all-time high. Then in 2018 and 2019, the previous record was smashed. 102 Bachelor passes were produced in 2018 and 86 in 2019.

Table 1
Number of Bachelor Passes Per Year

	2017	2018	2019
Starting Point	16	52	43
End Point	52 (+36)	83 (+31)	76 (+33)

Based on these numbers, there are two claims that can be made about the impact of the programme on top-end performance in local no-fee schools. First, the numbers indicate that the impact is indeed significant. Programme participants generally deliver at least 80% of all Bachelor passes produced by the six schools. In other words, participation in the programme enhances one’s prospects of achieving a Bachelor pass. Second, the programme initially (pre-2018) played a role in maintaining the number of Bachelor passes, despite the long, gradual decline in the general state of public schooling and in 2018 and in 2019 it contributed directly to enabling a statistically-significant spike in the overall number of local Bachelors produced (at no-fee schools).

From this analysis, the impact of Nine Tenths on the academic performance of learner participants is clearly quantifiable. At present it is unfortunately not possible to present comparable quantifiable evidence that supports the claim that the programme also boosts the academic performance of mentor students at Rhodes. However, it is worth noting that a common theme that has featured prominently in the testimonies of mentors is that their advocacy of the prioritisation

of study and take-up of effective study methods has rubbed off on their own inclinations and practices.

Based on student testimonies, it does appear that bridging social capital positively enhances the human capabilities of not only mentees but also mentors. An article by the local newspaper, *Grocott's Mail*, explores the reciprocity embedded in this form of social capital (Munemo, 2019). In this article, two interviewed learner participants recalled how their mentor actively assisted them in developing the tools for effective studying, enabling both of them to reach their goal of attending university (Munemo, 2019). Their mentor, in turn, described how the agency and resilience she witnessed in her mentees inspired her to push herself to study a triple major in her final university year, expanding her own human capital (Munemo, 2019). The network of solidarity embraced in these personal relationships enables the growth of individual agency. Social capital therefore acts as a significant capability enhancer, as the personal ties between participants expands the capabilities of both parties.

These relationships are also long-standing, as the network of social capital becomes utilised beyond the year-long programme. Many mentors and learner participants continue to grow their relationship for years after the Nine Tenths programme, often as they come to attend the same university space (Munemo, 2019). The bridging social capital developed in the first year of mentoring often evolves into a kind of bonding capital as the mentors and mentees end up as fellow students and classmates, coming to be part of the same physical spaces and communities.

Linking Social Capital

Bridging social capital therefore is important in supporting individual agency and developing capabilities. Another important aspect of social capital is linking social capital, or the ability to leverage vertical relationships, address power dynamics within partnerships (unique multi stakeholder management model) and provide access-facilitating opportunities for Nine Tenths learners. The established networks of linking social capital also, in turn, promote collective as well as individual agency. The partnerships between various stakeholders and benefits thereof provide an illustration of the way in which social capital can lead to social change. The social capital based on the networks between these organisations comes to promote collective efficacy, or a group's shared belief based on social ties in its conjoint capabilities to organise and execute collective action, in the pursuit of education goals (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). This collective efficacy in turn promotes social action, and thus has huge change-making potential (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428).

The cultivated networks enabled by Nine Tenths provide a means of coordinating various stakeholders and developing collective action in order to transform Makhanda's education trajectory. Nine Tenths is therefore a powerful example of how communities can partner with universities and higher institutions to promote more enabling learning environments (Munemo, 2019). Rhodes University, arguably the most powerful actor in the Nine Tenths partnership, has spent a significant time positioning the university for the public good (IDP). The vertical relationship between Rhodes University and other stakeholders enables the leveraging of resources, ideas and information (Woolcock, as cited in Terrion, 2006, p. 158). This linking tie plays a significant role in facilitating the sharing of resources in order to create a more equitable social landscape (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

This vertical relationship has played an important role in enabling a significant number of local Bachelor candidates to access Rhodes University. Table 2 below reflects the numbers of first year registrations (full-time) from the six local no-fee schools from 2012 – 2020. Note that there

is obviously a 1 year lag between school completion and university registration; it can be assumed, for example, that the bulk of students registering in 2020 write their NSC examinations at the end of 2019.

Table 2

Number of Full-Time, Undergraduate Enrollments at Rhodes University (2012-2020)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Khutliso Daniels	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	3	1
Mary Waters	2	4	7	5	7	8	10	13	17
Nathaniel Nyaluza	2	1	4	0	0	4	4	1	4
Nombulelo	4	7	9	7	10	5	12	20	22
Ntsika	1	0	3	5	7	17	10	23	17
TEM Mrwetyana	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total	9	12	25	19	26	35	36	60	61

In other words, the number of local students finding a pathway to Rhodes increased sixfold from 2012 – 2020. Nine Tenths with its explicit emphasis on facilitating performance-based applications, played a key part in this local triumph.

The significant increases in access to post-school trajectories of Nine Tenths Mentees should be qualified with an acknowledgement that additional support initiatives have been introduced in the post-2017 period. Specifically, mention should be made of an initiative called ‘the Bridging Programme’. This was birthed thanks to the leadership of the Vice Chancellor, Mabizela. He invited GADRA Education to devise a project that would enable the extension of students at its Matric School through access to Rhodes University. The Bridging Programme allows students who have already obtained Bachelor passes to register for and attain a university credit whilst simultaneously upgrading a limited number of school subjects. Essentially, this programme allows the Nine Tenths facilitators and mentors to incentivise good performance in the final examinations. Similarly, the introduction of application and fee waiver commitments from the university were made by university authorities for all academically deserving local learners. In this way, linking social capital has enabled a sharing of resources, helping to narrow the gap in a context of resource disparity.

All three forms of social capital have been leveraged to bring about collective action and the expansion of human capabilities in Makhanda. The power of community groups and civil

society based on networks of trust and reciprocity, has therefore been utilised to bring about significant change in Makhanda's education trajectory.

Is the Nine Tenths a Solution for Education Injustice in South Africa? A Reflection on Potentialities and Pitfalls

The quantitative and qualitative gains of Nine Tenths proves its valuable role in Makhanda's education system. Bonding, bridging and linking social capital have been leveraged to enhance human capabilities as well as increase access to educational resources. However, it seems unlikely that programmes like Nine Tenths operating in isolation will be enough to shift the needle on education in Makhanda and nationally. The issue of education provision is fundamentally political: therefore, one must be wary of technical solutions to political problems and the issue of resource distribution has become depoliticised, diminishing the accountability of the state (Campbell, 2012, p. 140). Furthermore, in the absence of state coordination and funding, the scalability of the Nine Tenths programme remains limited.

Issues around Nine Tenths' reach can also be found within implementation of the programme at selected schools. Nine Tenths top-end intervention programme, whose benefits are most meaningfully experienced by school students at the high end of the performance spectrum. These form a minority of the students at the targeted schools, which continue to have high failure and dropout rates. Successful intervention strategies require more than this one programme, as they need to address educational challenges at all levels of learning to meaningfully change the city's education trajectory. The need for a multifaceted education intervention is recognised by the VC initiative of which Nine Tenths is a part, as one strategy amongst several intervention programmes, ranging from ECD programmes to homework clubs to mobile science labs.

Faced with scalability limitations, Nine Tenths cannot be conceived of as an education solution in isolation or the panacea to South Africa's education maladies. However, though limited in scope, the Nine Tenths approach, which cultivates a sense of collective responsibility and serves as a bridge between different stakeholders in Makhanda's schools, remains valuable as a framework for the ways in which community-university partnership can impact educational outcomes. In this context, further research can aid the implementation and impact of Nine Tenths. Necessary future research includes formal quantitative investigations of the programme's impact, comparative analyses of the improvement of Nine Tenths schools in relation to other schools in the district, and the significance of the social capital ties and mentorship relationships for former Nine Tenths mentees now beginning to navigate the terrain of higher education.

Further collaboration between different groups is likely to strengthen the programme's impact and scale. The programme provides a way forward in compromised circumstances, and has in this role positively impacted the lives of many young people. In this role, Nine Tenths provides a pathway towards leveraging community resources in a constrained system, and collective action by communities ultimately brings about locally significant change. Therefore, the programme provides a testimony of the ways in which social capital, and a sense of community responsibility, can bring about meaningful social outcomes.

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Footnotes

¹ In other words, the programme seeks to boost the performance of the stronger learners in the cohort.

International School Principals' Insights and Experiences with Teacher Motivation

This manuscript has 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.



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Through a basic qualitative approach, this study examined the insights and experiences of elementary principals and teacher motivation. This research was completed in private international schools in Europe where the language of instruction is English. Self-determination theory was the theoretical basis for this examination of teacher motivation. Data were collected through nine interviews and one focus group with elementary principals. Evidence from this study shows that principals have a critical role in supporting and increasing teacher motivation in their schools and providing teachers with autonomy, a sense of competence, and professional and personal support to support teacher motivation. Additionally, the researcher provides specific recommendations that practicing educational leaders can implement in their schools.

Keywords: teacher motivation, elementary principals, self-determination theory, international schools, leadership

In recent years, the research community is focusing more attention on understanding how teachers can maintain high levels of motivation as professionals in their work to help students. As many studies now cite, understanding the importance and impact of increasing teachers' motivation for the hard work of teaching has been an overlooked area of educational research (Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). The role principals play in developing and maintaining the motivation of the teachers in their schools is also becoming more of a focus in research on student learning (Ross & Cozzens, 2016; Supovitz et al., 2010). When principals develop teachers' perceptions of autonomy, competence in their work, and connectedness to their colleagues, these teachers tend to have higher levels of motivation for their work and higher levels of student performance.

This study applied the self-determination theory (SDT) to explore how elementary principals of international schools understand their role in motivating teachers in Europe to perform their work.

Problem Statement and Significance of the Study

While there is evidence of teachers' direct impact on student learning and principals' indirect impact on achievement, there is a specific need to better understand the role principals have in developing and maintaining teachers' levels of motivation (Hipp & Bredesqn, 1995; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Leithwood, 2005; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Eyal and Roth (2011) as well as Han and Yin (2016) pointed out that while much is known about the positive effect teacher behaviors have on student learning, more research is needed to understand the effects of principal behaviors and leadership strategies on teachers' motivation and performance.

Current research on specific leadership practices that are in alignment with the self-determination theory show increased levels of teacher motivation (Yavuz, 2020). Pelletier et al. (2002) posited that when teachers are provided autonomy in their work environment, they more likely develop teaching strategies that enhance students' motivation and learning. In their work to better understand the effects of different leadership styles on teachers' motivation, the researchers noted that there is a need for more research with "a diversified sample of teachers with regard to characteristics such as age, tenure, education, school type, subject matter specialization, attendance in ongoing professional development programs, and designated roles in school" (p. 269). This statement provides a strong rationale for the need for similar research in the international school context.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the insights and experiences of elementary principals of international schools in Europe on how to support and increase teachers' motivation and to provide insight into how elementary principals can create school and working environments that foster the motivation of their teachers. The specific focus of this research was to uncover the processes employed by elementary principals in international schools in Europe to improve the motivation levels of the teachers they work with regularly. A research target was on the development of autonomous motivation, also referred to as internal motivation, a critical form of motivation for educators (Deci et al., 2017). The results of this research led to a pragmatic theory of action with recommendations for practicing principals.

This study makes a unique contribution to the literature in that it sought to understand methods by which school principals of international schools in Europe understand and increase teachers' motivation. This research was intended to parse out what action principals can take to

increase teachers' perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness—three determinants of motivation as explored by self-determination theory. How principals of international schools can work to support teachers' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the three core elements of internal motivation as seen through self-determination theory have needed to be better understood in the research community and schools.

This research involved elementary principals working in international schools in Germany, Austria, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Switzerland.

Review of the Literature

The body of literature reviewed in this study illuminated the direct impact of teachers' self-perceptions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on their levels of motivation, their job performance, as well as student achievement. The analyses of the research provide clear and consistent assessments of the link between particular leadership practices that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness and teachers' motivation. The studies examined the school leadership of teachers in multiple grades, in hundreds of schools, and in different countries.

Now, more than ever, governments around the world are calling on school leaders and teachers to make reforms to how students are educated and prepared for their fast-changing futures (Guglielmi et al., 2014). These demands for change are putting even more pressure on teachers to develop new pedagogical skills and to serve students more effectively, while at the same time, in most parts of the world, levels of compensation and status remain the same. This creates an even greater need for principals to have the skills and knowledge to motivate teachers to remain committed to the difficult job of teaching children and being motivated to work hard over long periods. The evidence is clear: teachers with higher levels of motivation are more likely to meet their students' needs and to comply with the ongoing and changing demands of teaching (Han & Yin, 2016).

Understanding the importance and impact of increasing teachers' motivation for the hard work of teaching has been an overlooked area of educational research (Robinson, et al., 2008; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Higher rates of teacher attrition, or teachers moving from one school to another and/or leaving the profession before retirement age, is one of the leading causes of shortages of educators in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and across Europe (Han & Yin, 2016). Research from Sutchter et al. (2016) in the United States showed there has been an 8% annual attrition rate of teachers in recent years, and more than two-thirds of teachers leaving the profession before retirement age. Reducing attrition rates by identifying means by which to increase teachers' motivation for their work is of critical importance.

According to Sutchter et al. (2016), job dissatisfaction is the primary reason given for leaving teaching. High levels of teacher burnout or exhaustion from teaching have also been documented as a critical concern for the stability of the teaching profession. The evidence for focusing on supporting teachers' levels of motivation is clear and prescient. Shepherd-Jones and Salisbury-Glennon (2018) reported that the primary reason for teachers in their study who moved schools or left the profession was the lack of autonomy in their work.

Developing higher levels of educators' motivation in their work has been an ongoing and vexing topic of concern and interest for researchers in education, psychology, and leadership for decades (Gagné, & Deci, 2005). There is ample evidence of teachers' direct impact on student learning and principals' indirect impact on achievement. However, there is a specific need to better understand the role principals have in developing and maintaining teachers' levels of motivation

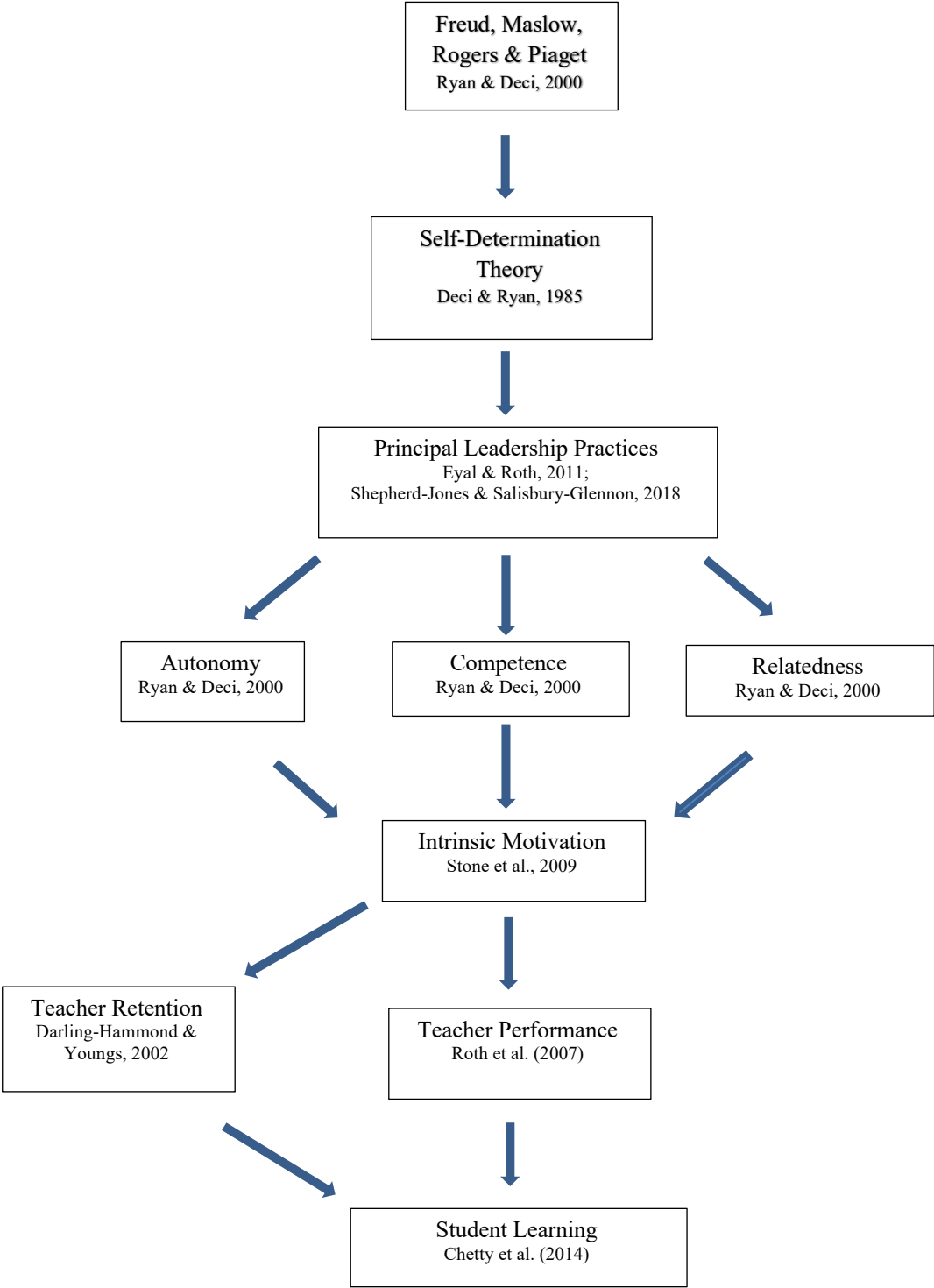
(Hipp & Bredesqn, 1995; Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Leithwood, 2005; Shepherd-Jones & Salisbury-Glennon, 2018). Eyal and Roth (2011) as well as Han and Yin (2016), pointed out that while much is known about the positive effect teacher behaviors have on student learning, it is evident more research is needed to understand the effects of principal behaviors and leadership strategies on teachers' motivation and performance.

Theoretical Framework

Much of the current research and understanding about how motivation develops in adults and children evolved from and is founded in the self-determination theory (SDT), originally posited by Deci and Ryan in 1985. Deci and Ryan's theory of human motivation evolved from the writings of psychoanalytic theorist Freud, and the humanist and developmental psychologists Maslow, Rogers, and Piaget (Deci & Ryan, 2002). There are two main components of self-determination theory that positively or negatively influence people's innate and positive drive towards psychological fulfillment, intrinsic motivation, and actualization (Eyal & Roth, 2011).

Attention and focus were directed toward understanding the role elementary principals in international schools have in shaping the levels of teacher motivation in their schools. The actions and strategies they employ are rooted in the concepts of self-determination theory. The primary importance of this study is the lens by which their work as school leaders is viewed, and how such leadership behaviors in turn influence student learning. The theoretical framework that was integral to this research is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework



Research Methodology and Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to understand the insights and experiences principals at international schools in Europe have about the motivation of teachers and the practices they employ to support it:

R1: How do international school principals support teacher motivation?

R2: How do international school principals increase teacher motivation?

R3: What challenges do international school principals have with improving teacher motivation?

A qualitative research approach was selected for this study because it provided the researcher with the most powerful means to understand the insights and experiences the principals have supporting and increasing motivation of teachers (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Worthington, 2013). Armstrong and Woloshyn (2017) selected basic qualitative research for their research in educational structures because it provided, “a strong methodological framework for understanding multiple socially-constructed realities and the individual organizational dynamics” (p. 101). In another qualitative study, Sahin (2013) explored the ideas principals have about school improvement through extensive interviews which led to the documentation of specific strategies and the approaches the participating principals implemented. Similarly, this study sought to provide valuable insight and practical suggestions for implementation by other principals working in the field.

The data for this research was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with nine principals conducted through an online platform and a focus group of four elementary principals. All of the participants were principals from international schools in Europe.

Study Population and Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to identify and select participants with five years of leadership experience from international schools in Europe, specifically, Austria, Belgium, Germany, The Netherlands, and Switzerland where the language of instruction is English. The researcher identified principals of elementary schools that were fully accredited in the United States, United Kingdom, or the Council of International Schools, which offered the International Baccalaureate curriculum or a comparable curriculum framework.

Table 1 provides a graphic representation of the participating principals’ gender, nationality, years of experience as a principal, and the country in which they live and work.

Table 1

Elementary Principal Participants

Name	Male/ Female	Nationality	Years’ Experience	Country
Principal A	Female	British	6	Germany
Principal B	Female	British	5	Switzerland
Principal C	Female	American	6	Austria

Principal D	Female	Canadian	18	The Netherlands
Principal E	Female	Dutch	18	The Netherlands
Principal F	Male	British	8	Belgium
Principal G	Female	American	6	Germany
Principal H	Male	British	10	Germany
Principal I	Female	Australian	5	Germany
Principal J	Male	American	5	Germany
Principal K	Male	Australian	6	Germany
Principal L	Female	Irish	10	Germany

Results

The questions asked in the one-on-one interviews and the focus group led to a rich and varied collection of ideas, insights, and experiences from the participating principals about how they support and increase teacher motivation as well as the challenges they encounter in this aspect of their work which led to the discovery of five major themes and multiple sub-themes that directly answered the three research questions. Table 2 shows the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Table 2

International School Principal Themes and Sub Themes

Theme	Sub Theme
1. Autonomy	1.1 Innovation Support
2. Competence	2.1 Team Building
3. Support Teachers	3.1 Personal Level 3.2 Know Your Teachers
4. Challenges	4.1 Different Backgrounds 4.2 School as Family

The data collected for this research were provided in response to questions asked during the one-on-one interviews and questions asked during the focus group with four participants. The analysis of the responses to the interview and focus group questions led to the results.

R1: How Do International School Principals Support Teacher Motivation?

Theme 1: Autonomy

Many of the participating principals spoke at length about the need to provide teachers with a sense of agency and the autonomy to make decisions to improve their instructional practices, the curricula, their professional development, and the overall program of study.

The principals had a range and variety of responses to the interview questions on supporting teacher motivation. After an analysis of the data, the researcher found the three main approaches international school principals take to support teacher motivation in their schools are to provide teachers autonomy, develop their sense of competence, and support each teacher on a personal level.

All of the principals spoke about the positive effects of autonomy on teacher motivation. It is clear from the data that principals frequently provided the conditions in their schools for teachers to have autonomy in decision making, planning, and choosing which teaching methods and curricula are to be used. Because these principals are all working in private international schools that have few government mandates for curricula and methodologies, the teachers must be involved in this work and these decision-making processes. The benefit of having the teachers directly involved in this work is that it not only supports the school's need for curricula development, it also supports the teachers' motivation because they have the autonomy to carry out this important work.

Interestingly, many of the principals spoke of the positive effect providing teachers with autonomy had on the amount of innovation, invention of new methods, and teaching in their schools. In other words, when teachers have ownership over the decision-making processes that affect their day-to-day work, they are more inclined to think creatively and innovatively. This is a valuable benefit for the principals of these schools because they are all dependent on teachers to develop materials and ideas that would normally be provided in public or state schools. Furthermore, as leaders of private schools, which are often in competition for students, these school leaders must continually enhance their teaching and learning methods and materials to be perceived by prospective parents as innovative and highly effective.

Theme 2: Competence

The participating principals recognized the importance of teachers maintaining a sense of competence in the work they do. Additionally, professional development that led to competence was often indicated as a means to motivate teachers, especially when teachers have autonomy in the process of choosing the learning they took on.

The second means of supporting teachers was expressed by the principals as improving the perception of teachers' sense of competence. According to the interview comments and descriptive stories, when the teachers in their schools felt competent and prepared in their work, they were more motivated and confident. Principals spoke at length about the need to provide teachers with the professional development they needed to enhance not only their skills but also their sense of competence in taking on new methods of teaching or implementing new curricula.

Comments and responses to the interview and focus group questions pointed to the value of having groups or teams of teachers working together to develop new skills and knowledge. Group work had a multiplier effect because teachers' levels of motivation increased more when they shared new learning with their colleagues or worked together in professional development work.

The most prevalent means of supporting teachers' motivation was at the individual and personal level. The principals spoke emphatically and at length about the need to know the teachers they work with, both personally and professionally in authentic and caring relationships. According to the principals, it was through such relationships that teachers feel valued not only as teachers but also as people. The principals asserted that teacher motivation evolved from a sense of connectedness and feeling valued.

R2: How Do International School Principals Increase Teacher Motivation?

Theme 3: Support Teachers

Nearly all of the participating principals spoke about the importance of supporting teachers on a personal level by developing authentic and caring relationships with them. The need for this was even more pronounced when principals talked about the personal and professional challenges teachers have encountered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that was greatly affecting schools and communities throughout Europe at the time of this study. Principals also mentioned that knowing teachers very well can lead to more direct and honest conversations as a means of developing their professional practices.

During the interviews and focus group, the principals provided many anecdotes and stories of how they have increased teacher motivation. The principals increased teacher motivation in their schools as an extension and refinement of the methods they use to support teacher motivation.

Interestingly, the principals' efforts to increase motivation were most often at an individual teacher level and not directed to the entire staff nor groups of teachers. They repeatedly asserted that to increase a teacher's motivation, a principal must know the teacher at a personal level well enough to be able to, as Principal G stated, "...know what makes them tick." By having a close and in-depth understanding of the teacher, a principal can better determine how to provide that individual with a new challenge or project to get them excited and more motivated in their work. Principal B described this approach as trying to make a teacher recognize an area for improvement in their practice in a positive way which can then inspire them to be more motivated.

Providing teachers with autonomy was also repeatedly shared as an effective means of increasing teachers' levels of motivation. Allocating time for teachers to work on a new project or challenge of the teachers' choosing, and the autonomy to carry out this work was discussed as a powerful means of increasing teachers' motivation. Additionally, when teachers were given the license and autonomy to be innovative in their work, this further increased their motivation to create a new way to teach or implement new technologies.

R3: What Challenges Do International School Principals Have with Improving Teacher Motivation?

Theme 4: Challenges of Principals in International Schools

To answer the third research question about the challenges international school elementary principals have with improving teacher motivation, the researcher asked the participating principals to reflect and consider this aspect of their work as leaders. They spoke about the effect of having teachers from different countries with a variety of educational and cultural backgrounds working in the same school. They also spoke frequently of the challenge of leading many teachers who are living and working far from their home country and their families. The negative effect of this distance has been exacerbated by the travel restrictions put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the principals, a diverse teaching staff has great value; teachers can learn from each other's beliefs, values, and experiences. On the other hand, the range of educational backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs about education can also result in disagreements among the staff that are not easily resolved. Principals provided several descriptions of the challenges they have encountered in resolving conflicts between teachers, which involve their culturally biased perceptions. In one case, a principal described how she recognized how her leadership style was culturally biased and is sometimes less effective outside of one's home country.

The other significant challenge these principals described is how the schools they manage must also serve the function of family support because many of the teachers live far away from their home countries and families. Nearly all of the teachers are from English-speaking countries but live in Austria, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany. This presents the principals with the challenges of maintaining and increasing the motivation of their teachers, especially when some were experiencing homesickness or feeling sad that they cannot be closer to their families.

While homesickness and sadness can be a challenge in a normal school year, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this effect and has meant that many of the teachers on the staffs of their schools have not been able to return home for months and possibly more than a year to visit or stay with family and friends. The principals must contend with this challenge of supporting their teachers' motivation while they are far from home.

Conclusion

This study investigated how elementary principals in international schools supported and increased teacher motivation as well as the challenges they encountered in their work. An in-depth understanding of teacher motivation in the school setting was limited in the research literature as noted by (Ryan & Deci, 2019). A qualitative approach was chosen because it was deemed to be an effective way to understand the insights and experiences that principals in international schools have supporting and increasing the motivation of teachers.

An in-depth analysis of SDT and its implication for teacher motivation was detailed in the review of the literature section in this paper. The research evidence presented showed that autonomy, competence, and a sense of connectedness were the fundamental components of autonomous motivation as per Eyal and Roth (2011) and Shepherd-Jones and Salisbury-Glennon (2018).

Teacher motivation is a critical component of successful schools (Bogler, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005). The data collected during the interviews and focus group and the subsequent analysis demonstrated the high value principals of international schools placed on developing teachers' sense of autonomy, competence, and connectedness in their schools. This in-depth qualitative study of principals working in European international schools provided evidence-based recommendations on how to support and increase teacher motivation most effectively.

Principals of international schools must also recognize the importance of creating a sense of connectedness and a family-like atmosphere for the teachers who may be negatively affected by living far from their home countries, parents, and family members. As shown in this research, principals in these circumstances need to prioritize providing additional personal support and care while creating a sense of family and community in their schools.

Implications of the Research

The implications from this study will inform leadership practices for school leaders. The first is the importance of developing management systems and leadership practices that provide teachers with ample autonomy in their work. Principals should provide autonomy to teachers to enhance the selection and development of new curricula materials and methodologies. It is critical for principals of international or independent schools, which are not often mandated to implement state or country-issued curricula materials but instead must supervise the development or selection of their own.

The second implication for practicing principals is the need to support teachers' perceptions of competence in the work they do to educate students. A sense of competence can be enhanced by providing high-quality professional development for teachers. Notably, teachers will develop greater perceptions of competence when they have a voice, or autonomy, in the professional development activities they select and participate in. Evidence from this study also points to the high value of having teachers engage in professional learning with their grade-level or subject teams and colleagues. The professional sharing that takes place in a group and the sense of connectedness and collective responsibility teachers feel to improve their practices can be effective means of supporting teachers' sense of competence and thus motivation.

The third implication concerns the need for principals to dedicate ample time and energy daily to developing and fostering strong interpersonal connections with the teachers they work with. Evidence from this study showed that principals need to prioritize getting to know their teachers, understanding what their interests and motivations are, and forming strong professional and personal bonds with them. Principals who have strong connections with teachers can support and improve their motivation.

Lastly, the implications from this study are specific to principals working in international schools with diverse teaching staffs where many are living far from their home countries and families. Principals in schools with teachers from diverse cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds need to dedicate time to create a sense of common purpose and beliefs about how best to educate the students in their schools. Principals need to recognize the importance of honoring teachers' understandings of education while also forging a common set of approaches and values which can guide decision-making practices.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative study provides valuable data about how principals supported and increased teacher motivation in international schools. While this study provided evidence about the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which supported the main tenets of SDT, more research is needed on principals' roles in supporting teacher motivation in international schools. Specifically, similar research is needed when there are no restrictions on travel. This would help determine the importance principals place on providing personal and professional support to their teachers. The effects of the global pandemic may have influenced the data collection. Additional studies are recommended to determine the baseline of support principals provide.

A second recommendation for future research would be to investigate the topic of teacher motivation from the perspective of the teachers. Researchers could gain additional insight and understanding into teachers' perceptions of the most effective means of supporting and increasing motivation. Quantitative data could be collected through surveys to determine whether principals' actions support their autonomy, competence, and connectedness. This would be invaluable as a means of developing a better understanding of the complexities of supporting and increasing teacher motivation.

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Cultivating a ‘Community of Practice’ in an Educational Leadership Preparation Program: Experiences and Roles of Adjunct Faculty

This manuscript has 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.



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Educational leadership preparation programs increasingly rely on adjunct faculty to teach aspiring leaders. Although the percentage of adjunct faculty serving as instructors continues to grow relative to full-time, tenured faculty, the role of part-time instructors/K-12 practitioners remains confined to instruction. This study explored how one educational leadership preparation program attempted to include adjunct faculty in roles beyond teaching to include course and curriculum development, program redesign, and recruitment and marketing. Informed by the communities of practice literature, this study illustrates ways that programs can foster meaningful professional community among full- and part-time faculty in ways that contribute to program quality. In this study we found that fostering a professional community not only contributes to positive program outcomes, but also creates formal and informal learning opportunities and a powerful professional network for adjunct faculty. The implications for program practice are discussed in light of these findings.

A growing body of literature on educational leadership preparation programs has focused on core program features such as curriculum, cohort format, clinical experiences, university-district partnerships, and student recruitment (Anderson, et al., 2018, Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Haynes et al., 2021). As McCarthy and Hackman (2016) emphasized, “[e]specially meager is the research on part-time adjunct faculty members” (p. 13) and the manner in which these faculty may influence leadership preparation programs. Our limited understanding of the adjunct faculty experience and influence on educational leader preparation is concerning, given the growing numbers of these faculty in education leadership programs.

Two factors support the need for further research on the nature and impact of adjunct faculty work. First, steady graduate enrollment and increases of aspiring school administrators, coupled with decreases of full-time faculty, have resulted in a spike in the number of courses taught by adjunct faculty (Hanson, et al. 2018; McFarland et al., 2018). Second, the increasing role of part-time faculty in educational leader preparation begs a better understanding of the quality of adjunct faculty involvement in program design, continuous improvement, and instructional delivery (Crow et al., 2012; Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Speaking to these challenges, Crow et al. (2012) argue, “Program reform can benefit from authentic and intensive involvement of [adjunct] faculty. Instead of seeing [them] as only responsible for course instruction in the educational leadership program, we recommend that creative ways be developed to increase their involvement in program development” (p. 187).

With these issues in mind, this study contributes to our understanding of adjunct instructors’ roles in preparation programs. Specifically, we explore how one educational leadership program sought to create professional community among full-time university faculty and adjunct instructors. The study was guided by one primary research question: How, and in what ways, was professional community established among adjunct and full-time faculty in an educational leadership preparation program? By addressing this question, we offer insights into how professional community can be fostered and utilized to enhance program development, capacity, and a commitment to continuous improvement (Betancur & Livingstone, 2018).

Focusing on Leadership Preparation

Over the past two decades, the body of evidence supporting the fact that educational leadership programs play a critical role in developing effective school leaders who, in turn, positively influence school improvement and student learning has grown (Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Ni, et al., 2019). Because the relationship between leadership preparation and leadership effectiveness is a relatively recent focus, more research is necessary to inform universities and school district personnel about the factors that contribute to quality school leader preparatory activities and learning. Even proponents of preparation programs have expressed concern about the structures, processes, and content of these programs to provide high quality and practical experiences for aspiring leaders (Davis et al., 2005; Harris, 2008; Hess & Kelly, 2007, Wallace Foundation, 2016).

Critics of educational leadership programs focus on a range of issues, including the quality of instruction, student recruitment and selection processes, and the relevance of course content (Lashway, 2006; Stein, 2006). These critiques have driven ongoing conversations around state and national standards aimed at raising program quality. In turn, these critiques have led to establishing more rigorous expectations around program alignment, teaching methods, and learning outcomes (e.g., Mullen & Eadens 2018). However, the role of part-time faculty – often excluded from program decision-making – remains unexplored.

The Role of Adjunct Faculty

Adjunct faculty address a number of challenges facing institutions of higher education, least of which is providing cost effective ways to increase the number of courses taught (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Hanson, et al. 2018). In educational leadership programs, adjunct faculties' expertise typically aligns with their assigned courses as a way of bridging the theory-practice divide (Wegner et al., 2003). However, securing quality and engaged adjuncts has proven challenging due to factors such as low pay, little job security, and lack of support (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). These part-time employees are expected to possess the requisite expertise and skills to prepare students. However, in many cases their full-time work outside the university leaves them disconnected from the program and its goals. Ultimately, this disconnect leads to pedagogies and content coverage that may be misaligned with the overall intent of the program (Crow et al., 2012).

Research on the relative effectiveness of different types of adjuncts when compared to full-time faculty or graduate assistants is inconsistent. For example, Landrum (2009) and Ronco and Cahill (2004) found that students detect little difference in instructional quality and rigor between faculty types. Conversely, Eagan and Jaeger (2009) found students believe full-time faculty at four-year institutions provide higher quality instruction and that graduates instructed by full-time faculty report higher levels of course completion and graduation rates as well as higher quality post-course and post-graduate experiences. However, Styron et al. (2006) found that students appreciated the practical experiences adjuncts shared and found value in having adjuncts who also worked full-time. These mixed messages in adjunct faculty research underscore the lack of definitive understandings about the nature and impact of adjunct teaching (Morton, 2012).

Perhaps most unexplored are questions related to how universities use and support adjunct faculty. As colleges and universities work through shifting staffing patterns and increasing numbers of part-time staff, McCarthy and Hackmann (2016) argue that investment in adjunct faculty is required, specifically in areas such as program design. Crow et al. (2012) point out that universities miss an opportunity to tap into adjunct faculty expertise and insight. Instead universities tend to relegate adjunct faculty to teaching roles only and, thus, underutilize their potential in other aspects of academic program implementation. Crow et al. further argue that adjunct faculty integration into university communities could foster connectedness and sustain program faculty. To achieve these goals requires recognizing that "part-time adjuncts can similarly strengthen ties [between the universities and the communities they serve] if they are considered part of the preparation programs rather than merely temporary visitors" (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016, p. 14).

Communities of Practice

We drew from the communities of practice (CoP) literature to help us understand how an educational leadership program fostered a sense of community and connectedness with their adjunct faculty. The CoP lens emphasizes that when adults are part of social and collaborative environments, they are better able to share and acquire knowledge and, then subsequently, apply that knowledge to their work (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). The CoP lens not only speaks to how learners accrue knowledge and develop skills, but also to how the social dimensions of learning contribute to role identity development. As a whole, CoP holds the potential for continuous development of self and organizational improvement (Barab & Duffy, 2000).

Brown (1997) posits that members of a CoP assume the community's expectations for professionalism. In the context of educational leadership, full-time and part-time faculty

collaborating as a cohesive community of practice break down barriers to individual and group learning, such as the tendency to treat teaching as a solitary endeavor. Through these communities ideas are exchanged, reflection and introspection are fostered, and ultimately the quality of programs and teaching are strengthened. As Spitzer et al., (1994) describe it, “A supportive community of practice can help to sustain the slow, stepwise process that eventually leads to a fundamental transformation in teaching philosophy and practice” (p. 1).

CoPs are characterized by groups of people who are associated through a profession, engaging and interacting regularly in ways that lead to individual, group, and often organizational learning and improvement (Wenger, 1998, 2011). Authentic CoPs support organizational learning and improvement through fostering effective formal learning (e.g. professional development) and nonstructured learning opportunities to solve problems and brainstorm and share ideas and knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991) note that successful CoP are characterized by three elements, which function to support innovation and learning. First, *community*, refers to the coming together of individuals to willingly build relationships, exchange knowledge, and learn from one another in an environment of trust and shared sense of purpose or accountability. Second, the *domain* consists of the common purpose that instills commitment and a need to interact. And third, *practice* is the shared range of common knowledge, tools, frameworks, and resources that the members share and build related to their profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2007; Wenger, 1998).

Derived from a constructivist paradigm, CoP captures the reproductive aspects of organizational learning (e.g., sharing practices and knowledge) (see Lave & Wenger, 1991) and improvisational learning leading to continuous improvement and innovation (see, e.g., Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Thus, a critical aspect of the CoP model is its ability to foster organizational learning in organic ways. For example, in their groundbreaking work, Brown and Duguid (1991) examined learning through work among photocopier repair technicians and the factors contributing to supportive, collaborative, and most importantly, improvisational workplace learning. They found that informal groups served as catalysts for change and productivity (Brown & Duguid, 1991). In the educational realm, Richlin and Cox (2004) found that by fostering CoP, groups of instructors were better able to engage individual and group learning.

Methods

Program Description and Participant Selection

The educational leadership program that serves as a case for this study delivers instruction through student cohorts to maximize the impact on professional learning (Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). These individuals share classes with the same peers over the course of the program, giving candidates a strong network in the field for post-degree systems of support. The adjunct faculty participants teach solely within the educational leadership licensure program and not for any other universities. The study participants included 27 (of approximately 30 total) educational leadership program adjunct faculty. All participants were part-time adjunct faculty and hold terminal degrees in educational leadership. The participants included 11 female and 16 male adjunct faculty. Of those, 10 participants were African American and seventeen were White. Twenty-five participants held leadership roles in schools and districts, while two were retired K-12 administrators. The majority of the participants taught one course per semester, with a few teaching two courses, depending on program need.

The leadership program provides a variety of training and development opportunities for adjunct faculty to support their role in the program. For example, all faculty – adjunct and full-

time – attend an annual half-day meeting that is focused on instruction, program design, and course-specific training. Additionally, all instructors meet prior to the start of each semester, per course, to calibrate instructional practices, as well as to discuss course specific-details including course changes. Further, instructors within each cohort section meet prior to the start of the semester, guided by full-time faculty, to discuss cohort specific topics. Adjunct faculty are also invited to participate in the program's continuous improvement processes, including their accreditation processes through CAEP.

Data Collection and Analysis

A structured, open-ended interview protocol was developed using literature on adjunct faculty and communities of practice to inform our questions and ultimate research purposes. Interviews were conducted in person, by phone, and through video-conferencing. Questions focused on adjuncts' experiences working in and contributing to the program through teaching and program development work. Interviews, ranging from 45 to 90 minutes in length, were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis followed a systematic procedure presented by Moustakas (1994) in which data were analyzed, specifically seeking to identify meanings related to participants' experiences, while bracketing the researchers' own conceptions of the phenomenon (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Analysis began during interviews and continued as we reviewed transcript themes post interviews (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Subsequent to initial coding, we developed clusters of meaning and memos to synthesize our categories into themes reflecting the experiences of our participants (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Coding and theme development occurred individually among the researchers and then as a group to compare and resolve theme development (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Below, the findings illuminate those themes that represent the essences of the adjunct faculty experiences in our study.

Findings

Below, we present three major categories derived from participants' experiences. Our first category focused on factors participants described as foundational aspects of CoP. The second category synthesized participant data about the structures, processes, and expectations that influenced how participants experienced their work. And finally, evidence is presented outlining how the CoP influenced participants as individuals and as a community of colleagues.

Cultivating Connections: Precursors to CoP

While adjunct faculty experienced their connection stories differently, a consistent theme throughout the data was the affinity participants felt for the university and program, and how the full-time faculty developed and maintained those connections. Adjunct participants described how the program coordinator and full-time faculty created opportunities through which adjunct faculty could contribute more than simply teaching courses. Adjunct faculty believed that being an integral part of the program creates a deeper sense of commitment.

According to the adjunct faculty, this sense of belonging was achieved in various ways. First, several adjunct faculty spoke about the program's shared resources with adjunct faculty were similar to the resources provided to full-time faculty. For example, the program's home department offers office space for adjuncts, shares professional development opportunities, provides technical

training for the online learning platform, engages in processes to norm grading practices, and provides development on teaching at the graduate level. Adjunct faculty noted that this situation is unique compared to peers who taught for other universities. While not all of the adjuncts took advantage of these opportunities, they knew they were available and expressed appreciation for them.

Adjunct faculty also described how consistent communication from the program coordinator and between full-time and adjunct faculty play an important role in adjuncts' sense of connection and commitment to the program. Specifically, adjuncts spoke of the consistency and frequency of communications such as welcome messages each semester, college and program area briefings, and requests to serve on committees or participate in events and workshops. In short, adjunct faculty described a sense of inclusivity with the program area. For some, the program's commitment to include adjuncts was analogous to how healthy school cultures benefit from inclusivity. Referring to the department as "our department," one adjunct faculty noted:

Our department is just one piece of the university and just like in any school district, just like with custodians—if you don't make them feel a part of the family then the morale decreases . . . I think when everyone knows what the left and the right foot is doing, then they feel a sense of belonging.

Some participants were program graduates, and they described how the program had maintained continuous contact with them after graduation. This connectivity factored into their decisions to work with the program in clinical roles. Often the program included graduates in professional learning opportunities or simply to "touch base" with graduates as a way to stay connected to future potential adjunct faculty. One such participant stated:

I participated in a workshop that [the coordinator] initiated several years ago . . . We presented there and it went really well, and [the coordinator] reached out to me to see if I was interested [in teaching]. As you become an administrator and teaching is your craft, this gave me an opportunity to continue with something I love.

Finally, adjunct faculty also described how the program's full-time faculty sees value in the different skill sets adjunct faculty bring to the role. He said,

The thing that I love about [university] is . . . they always show a great value for field practitioners, people who are actually out in the field making this thing work every day. So they lean on us for that expertise. And I began to see that that's a strength of this program.

Another adjunct faculty shared the connectedness she experienced from the recognition she received as the college's "Adjunct of the Year" award:

[The award is] important because it symbolically represents that while we are adjuncts, we're still valued faculty members. A lot of times, the perceptions would be 'Well, you guys come over here and you teach these courses, but you're really not part of the organization or unit.' I think [institution and department] go above and beyond to make their adjuncts feel empowered.

Establishing Professional Community

The program worked in myriad ways to develop and sustain a professional learning community. Adjunct faculty remarked on how their connections to the program enabled their engagement in learning opportunities provided by the program. Much of these professional development initiatives for adjuncts centered around providing a high-quality learning environment for students, as well as focusing on the processes, structures, and routines necessary for overall program success.

Adjunct faculty believed their experiences were unique and qualitatively different from adjunct faculty at other universities. Further, several participants described how the transformation toward a sense of belonging and engagement was not something they would have deemed important at the outset. However, those perspectives changed over time as a result of the ways the program coordinator and full-time faculty worked with the adjunct faculty. For example, the program required all adjuncts to meet in-person annually for professional development around program expectations, calibrating grading practices, teaching, and other program components. Further, in addition to course-specific meetings each semester, adjunct faculty were obliged to attend training sessions on special topics each semester. Some respondents described how they initially questioned why these meetings were necessary and were concerned about the time commitment. One adjunct shared:

When I first started here, [the coordinator] was requesting these meetings. I was like, ‘Does she realize I have a full-time job?’ . . . But it hit me, the worth of going to the meetings. It wasn’t her just talking, it was a matter of *us* talking . . . That fine line between not expecting adjuncts to do more than they’re capable of doing as far as meeting, but making certain they realize they’re part of a team and the work we do is important.

Several adjuncts highlighted the ability of the program’s coordinator to foster this culture by her attention to “the little things” and being detailed-oriented, which helped them facilitate their own work in the program. The vehicle through which program details were tended to was frequent communication between the coordinator, full-time faculty, and adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty gave examples of communication such as the faculty reaching out through phone calls, regular check-ins, and even face-to-face and one-on-one meetings to discuss needs, brainstorm ideas, and collect feedback. As one adjunct shared,

I can text her or call her anytime . . . that was really important to me—that I can pick up the phone and say, ‘Hey, can we talk about this?’ or ‘This is what I’m looking at . . .’ I’ve always had her support.

Further, it was clear to the participants that the program coordinator acted as the centralized communication hub. As the data illustrates, communication is experienced as a two-way street by the participants. When asked how communication facilitated collaboration, one participant described it this way:

[She] does a good job of bringing us all together, especially at the beginning of the year, having us come in . . . inviting us to speak with graduates and those pursuing positions, helping the [students seeking leadership positions] know what questions to ask.

Another example of “the little things” that several adjunct faculty described as “symbolic gestures” of engagement with the program was when the program coordinator provided all adjunct faculty shirts with the institution’s name and emblem. This provided the adjuncts an affiliation and connection with the program, regardless of where they worked full-time. Describing this affiliation, one adjunct faculty said “Well, this is really silly, but . . . [The PC] at one point bought all the adjuncts polo shirts and that helps put a label on your identification.” This particular gesture surfaced as an example in several interviews. Some faculty likened actions to modeling good leadership. An adjunct stated, “little things like [the shirts], as you know as a leader, go a long way as far as feeling like you’re a part of the team. When you feel like you’re a part of a team, you in turn put forth your best effort, I think.”

Adjunct Faculty Learning and Networking through Program Involvement

The processes, structures and leadership that fostered CoP led to two findings: 1) professional learning and growth and 2) professional networking. Learning to lead was reflected in various interpersonal interactions with other full-time and adjunct faculty, influencing adjunct faculty to think differently and/or acquire new knowledge and skills. For example, some participants described the work of consensus building related to the program's vision and standards as meaningful learning opportunities. Faculty experienced the challenge and triumph of "co-constructing" the program's direction with a diverse faculty community—a process facilitated by full-time faculty who modeled strategies for group processing. One participant described the way all of the instructional faculty came together to discuss their protocols and collaborate around program structures and processes.

[The coordinator] was the one who every semester unit[ed] each of us by what we were teaching and then asked that we hold a planning meeting either face-to-face or online prior to the start of the semester to ensure that we were all on the same page, and to reach out . . . [She] would plan the annual faculty get-together . . . and structured it in a way that forced us to bring ideas and to share with each other what . . . strategies, questions we had.

Another adjunct faculty member described how the program's culture of learning and collaboration, and the program's curricular "interconnectedness of the various program systems, were indispensable." She described how the intentionally designed systems created conditions where adjuncts were motivated to serve the program:

We discuss the path we're going to go on, but also to work collaboratively with one another. For example, sometimes we would marry our classes together and join classes. We were given literature to read for our own growth . . . We meet collaboratively to try to provide input on the structure of [courses]. I thought that those things were so very important . . . that helped us to continue to grow as professors, but also, just like we do with our own school buildings, is to have those types of opportunities for professional learning communities where we would sit and share resources and activities.

The authenticity of collaboration in the program created opportunities for the adjunct faculty to contribute in meaningful ways, which they believed strengthened their own leadership skills. For example, adjuncts described how they were asked to participate in most significant program initiatives, such as the program's reaccreditation process. One participant noted that the involvement with such projects was appreciated because, "it makes me feel I am a positive agent of change."

Often, the adjunct faculty expressed how much they appreciated the trust the full-time faculty had in adjunct faculties' ideas and suggestions—whether for a lesson, class project, broader issues around marketing, course content, or leadership and policy issues. In short, adjunct faculty played a vital role in student learning and program development, and through these activities learned valuable professional lessons.

Further, adjunct faculty described the intentionality through which they were brought together to network and how networking within this professional community shaped them individually and as a group. In short, the adjuncts were brought together to be a community of influencers, developing and shaping others within the preparation program. Social learning opportunities and engagement in the program were networking vehicles that contributed to their own growth. As one adjunct faculty stated:

I think [the leadership department's faculty] go above and beyond to make their adjuncts feel empowered, to make us feel as if we've got voice and not only that we have voice in terms of being able to give feedback, but in many, many cases, seeing some of the feedback that we give reflected in our programs.

This networking benefitted not only adjunct faculty but the full-time faculty and the program as a whole. The program faculty used the growing professional network to ensure a high-quality pool of adjuncts to teach courses and provide other learning opportunities (such as webinars) for students and potential students. The program engaged with adjunct faculty to bring on more high-quality instructors into the program and to vet potential instructors through activities such as leadership panels for classes, mock job interviews, and working conferences. Further, the program sought out instructors from different school districts, rather than with one or two primary partners. This both enabled the program to provide students with a wealth of diverse leaders, as well as to provide a mechanism through which the adjuncts themselves could network with a wider array of colleagues beyond district boundaries. As one participant described:

The thing I love about [institution] is that it really fosters partnerships throughout [the region]. We've got a good crew of folks . . . It's just a meeting place for good, smart practitioners to come and share ideas and I think the entire region benefits. I really do. I can tell you if it wasn't intentionally planned, it's one of the most beautiful accidents...Prior to that, [school districts were] sort of out there vulnerable, ready for the benefit of partnership. I think [institution] had the foresight to see that that was an untapped resource and then [they were] smart enough to get rolling and make it happen.

Expanding upon this idea of an intentionally cultivated network of adjuncts from a number of school districts, another adjunct faculty reflected:

I think it is brilliant, because you get all these practitioners working with students. The other smart thing is that the other professors are also my colleagues in the real work world. So I see these people in other workshops and conferences and we have that connection that we all work [together as adjuncts]. All of us [are] like power players in the community. It is really smart because there is always somebody . . . in [an adjunct] role ready to employ [the institution's] graduates. That is just absolutely brilliant.

These professional networks also facilitated adjunct faculty in addressing challenges faced in PK-12 leadership work by providing opportunities for collegial sharing and support. Collaboration through these professional networks allow them to marshal resources to address professional challenges and brainstorm solutions. These efforts create avenues to improve teaching and leadership in the field. One participant shared:

[My work as an adjunct] has advanced some collaboration between those of us on senior leadership teams across the . . . region. I know a good deal of senior level leaders throughout the region based on our affiliation with [institution]. In other words, that was a networking mechanism that put us in the same space and time with some of the similar challenges working on the focus on similar problems.

In sum, these professional socializing interactions were organized for adjuncts and full-time faculty, and through them facilitated the sharing of knowledge and skill sets, connections, and an abundance of new professional relationships. Participants looked forward to the time invested because it aligned with their professional values as leaders and as those responsible for preparing future school leaders.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to better understand the role of adjunct faculty in one educational leadership preparation program. Specifically, we sought to understand the various ways adjunct faculty could contribute to leadership preparation in meaningful ways through the lens of communities of practice. We argue this purpose is timely given the increased reliance on adjunct faculty who traditionally have had marginal impact on shaping educational leadership preparation programs. As described above, CoP theory can be characterized by three elements: 1) *community*, the willingness to work together, to exchange knowledge and learn from each other in an environment of trust; 2) the *domain*, defined as the organizing purpose that serves as the catalyst for work; and 3) the *practice*, or the common knowledge, skill sets, and referents that define a field (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2007; Wenger, 1998).

Through applying a CoP lens we were able to take away important insights from our data and develop propositions about how adjunct faculty, full-time faculty, and university program administrators might work together in ways that better benefit all faculty, programs, and most importantly, students. The first lesson our findings point to is the antecedent conditions of work that program faculty and the coordinator created for adjunct faculty engagement. Our data show that commitment to these external colleagues include physical, structural, and organizational elements; but they also include elements of organizational culture reflected in, for example, how the program coordinator communicated with the adjunct faculty. These faculty noted organizational commitment to them through physical spaces provided for collaborative work and through structured meetings in which their input was sought and valued (Ingle et al., 2018). But perhaps the most significant lessons of antecedent conditioning for CoP in this case was the level and nature of communication between the program and adjunct faculty. Functionally, communication with adjunct faculty focused not only on teaching assignments, but more importantly on curricular content, program direction, accreditation, and other significant topics. Further, the communications were timely, informative and clear. As such, adjunct faculty were drawn into the organization as engaged colleagues.

These antecedent conditions led to a high level of trust among adjunct faculty so that their expertise was sought after for more than simply teaching a course (Knowles, 1980; Troman, 1996). As a result, our data point to how adjunct faculty committed their limited time to engaging with full time faculty for the betterment of the overall program. This trust and engagement is what led to numerous on-going interactions and relationship-building among all faculty concerned. Further, an unexpected outcome of this CoP was the impact of networking within the sphere of the academic program on the external work lives of the adjunct faculty. These positive impacts described in our findings increased the commitment to the university program CoP.

Like the service technicians in Brown and Duguid's (1980) classic study of CoP, the context of adjunct faculties' work in our case study fostered and encouraged individual learning, organizational learning, and innovation among the participants. Beyond the impact on the case study program, our findings illustrate how the work of adjunct faculty associated with a professional degree expanded their CoP through networking beyond the confines of the university program. In fact, their networks led to increased learning, an expanded sense of professional self, and the accumulation of power through knowledge to positively influence their own workplaces (Cosner, 2018; Sanzo, 2014).

This study has important implications for leadership preparation programs. We believe these programs should cultivate networks among their adjunct faculty. Networks and other

collaborative structures act as vehicles that connect stakeholders within and among complex educational environments. Second, communication is an essential element for maintaining CoP comprised of the highest quality personnel (Lolidis, 2006; Wenger et al., 2002). The effort to communicate was seen as an act of respect and value, not overlooking these individuals or thinking they would not want or need it for maximizing their performance. The demands of adjunct faculties' primary work responsibilities can easily pose barriers to adjunct faculty responsibilities. Effective communication has the dual purpose of keeping adjunct faculty engaged, but also demonstrating their value leading to a cycle of mutual benefit among the various parties.

On a broader scale, this study has implications for full-time faculty and district leaders in the field of educational leadership. University program coordinators and faculty might pay particular attention to the beliefs and values potential adjunct have with regard to teaching, learning, and the development of future leaders. When seeking to engage external personnel into a CoP – or to create a new CoP – it is critical to seek group members who share values around critical issues of race, equity, social justice, and their relation to teaching and learning of K-12 students. This commitment to selecting educational advocates and innovators—as opposed to simply “filling teaching slots”—remains one of the most important acts of any educational leadership program seeking to make a difference.

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Mentoring Future Education Leaders: Mentor Perceptions of an Educational Leadership Doctoral Mentoring Program

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Mentoring programs for education doctoral (EdD) students are unique due to the scholar-practitioner nature of the degree program. This paper utilizes mentor perceptions of a mentoring program in its second year of implementation to inform the design of the mentoring program in the future. Mentors were interviewed to discuss their experiences. Four themes emerged related to: (a) mentor education doctoral experiences and challenges as inspiration for their mentoring presentations; (b) mentors as a resource through networking and building connections; (c) mentor and mentee reflection through relatable experiences; and (d) mentor recommendations for improving the EdD mentoring program. Results indicate mentors benefit from personal reflection and networking opportunities.

Keywords: education doctorate, EdD, mentoring program, mentors, doctoral students

When it comes to supporting students through the successful completion of a doctoral program, mentoring is an often-used and successful tool. Mentoring can assist students through the academic and personal challenges of completing a doctorate, and in the case of leadership education doctoral programs, can lay the groundwork for a successful education leadership career (Clayton, Sanzo, & Myran, 2013; Holley & Caldwell, 2012). The process of mentoring can also lend itself to leadership identity development in mentees, who learn both about leadership identity from mentors, and learn the importance of outside supports in the development of leadership (Crisp & Alvarad-Young, 2018). There are seemingly limitless ways to structure and organize mentoring programs; however, successful and sustainable mentorship often depends upon creating and supporting strong mentoring relationships (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2006; Geesa, Lowery, & McConnell, 2018; Geesa, McConnell, Elam, & Clark, 2020).

While much of the existing mentoring research focuses on traditional doctoral programs, mentoring programs for education doctoral (EdD) students have received little attention in research. Crow and Whiteman (2016) identified mentoring and coaching as an important element of effective educational leadership preparation programs, but also drew attention to the lack of research in this area. Mentoring in EdD programs is unique due to the scholar-practitioner nature of the degree program. As scholar-practitioners, EdD students often balance full-time careers in the education field while simultaneously pursuing their education doctorate degree (Holley & Caldwell, 2012).

Pursuing a higher education degree and a career, often while balancing other life and family demands, may place additional stress on scholar-practitioner students (Kerrigan & Hayes, 2016; Mullen & Tuten, 2010). Such unique education requires unique forms of mentoring support. Clayton, Sanzo, and Myran (2013) suggest mentoring between experienced school leaders and school leaders-in-training has the unique benefit of allowing the school leaders to discuss and compare leadership styles and techniques, benefitting both mentors and mentee alike. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2006) similarly suggest that one of the hallmarks of educational leadership readiness is support from leadership mentors already in the field. Due to these considerations, we concluded that EdD students have unique mentoring needs and may benefit from a mentoring program molded specifically to their needs.

During the 2016-17 school year, we designed and implemented an EdD mentoring program that was the first of its kind in our Department of Educational Leadership at a mid-sized Midwestern university (Lowery, Geesa, & McConnell, 2018; McConnell, Geesa, & Lowery, 2018). This EdD program is a hybrid program designed for practitioner-scholar students where students attend on-campus course meetings once per month while also completing coursework online each semester. Course topics during the first two years of the EdD program typically focus on organizational leadership, facilities, finance, law, school superintendency, superintendent internship, and research methodology.

The first mentoring program modeled a one-to-one mentor-mentee relationship for first-year education doctoral students (mentees), with the purpose of the relationship being for each mentee to receive guidance and support from a more experienced student or graduate (mentor) of the EdD program at our institution. After the first year of the EdD mentoring program, we recognized one-to-one mentor-mentee pairings during the first year of the education doctoral program may not be sustainable due to the disproportionate number of mentors available to pair with incoming first-year students during the next school year. We determined mentees may benefit by attending EdD mentoring presentations by mentors during the first two years of their doctoral program. While mentoring is typically dyadic in nature, Hackmann and Malin (2018) suggest that

alternate forms of mentoring, such as group mentoring, may be beneficial for certain mentees. However, there is little research on this form of mentoring in academic settings. As such, we were interested to see how shifting our mentoring program from a one-to-one mentoring model to a group presentation model was perceived by mentors and mentees.

Mentors' perceptions of the mentoring program are valuable to the process of continual evaluation and improvement, as the mentors are familiar with the EdD program and can identify topics relevant to the needs of current students. Education doctoral faculty, EdD mentoring program facilitators, researchers, and mentors may benefit from this study and find significance in how to better guide and support doctoral students in education doctorate or scholar-practitioner doctorate programs.

Within this paper, we (a) review literature related to mentoring and considerations we made as we redesigned and implemented the mentoring program for education doctoral students; (b) examine the redesign, implementation, and evaluation of our EdD mentoring program, which focuses on mentor presentations during the first and second years of students' doctoral program; and (c) investigate mentors' perspectives and perceived benefits of the mentoring program through qualitative data collected from individual interviews and focus groups to improve our EdD mentoring program in the upcoming school year.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

In an effort to create a more sustainable system, the mentoring program was redesigned to a mentoring pathways approach through the utilization of two specific frameworks. Initially analyzed through the conceptual framework developed by Yob and Crawford (2012), the redesign process required additional perspectives to ensure a viable and supportive structure for the doctoral students. Further research and analysis substantiated a connection to Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) – a theoretical framework that models the relationship between self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals (Curtin, Malley, & Steward, 2016; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Through the utilization of both frameworks, we are able to employ the adaptability necessary to ensure an individualized and productive approach, which satisfies both our mentors and their protégés.

Within the initial context of EdD mentoring program development, mentoring was regarded in two domains described in the “mentor behavior and characteristics” conceptual framework: academic benefits and psychosocial benefits (Lowery et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2018; Yob & Crawford, 2012). The attributes of competence, availability, induction, and challenge are addressed through the academic domain. The psychosocial domain of Yob and Crawford's conceptual framework (2012) complements the academic domain through three specific attributes: personal qualities, communication, and emotional support. Consideration of each mentor's ability to meet the requirements within these domains was essential to the success of the education doctoral students participating in the mentoring program, as mentor expertise is most valuable when shared as a learning partnership (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010).

The combination of the academic and psychosocial domains creates an environment in which both mentors and their protégés can grow professionally and personally. Research supports the idea that effective mentoring increases the probability of professionals staying within their field, especially in the teaching profession, while also validating mentors' expertise (Ewing & Smith, 2003; Ewing et al., 2008). Missing from this approach, however, is the consideration of

one's level of self-efficacy and their level of choice (or commitment) regarding participation in the mentoring program.

This further analysis of our data allowed us to recognize a connection that extended into the theoretical framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Brown, Geesa, & McConnell, 2020; Curtin, Malley, & Stewart, 2016; Lent et al., 1994; Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Rooted in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1979), SCCT posits that people are more likely to pursue new opportunities and be more successful in that pursuit if they possess self-efficacy, have access to a support system, and develop outcome expectations. It is within this context that we apply the foundations of SCCT to our mentoring program approach.

Grounded in SCCT, the mentor serves as the source of self-efficacy through affirmative interactions. As a result, it is expected mentees will experience an increase of confidence in their own ability to pursue an academic interest or specific career path, while also increasing the mentees' interest in a desired outcome. This is accomplished through a mentoring approach, which is focused in three social learning domains: instrumental, sponsorship, and expressive (Curtin et al., 2016). While not identified as components of SCCT, each domain aligns with the social learning context and provides a foundational approach to mentoring.

Literature Review

The mentoring needs of EdD students in an educational leadership program are unique. In this review of literature, we focus on definitions related to mentoring, design processes, and redesign processes of mentoring programs.

Defining Mentoring

Mentorship is often viewed as a supplemental, but vital, aspect of successful completion of a doctoral program. The design and implementation processes differ amongst programs due to candidate preferences and needs, program culture, and sustainability options. Likewise, *how* mentorship is defined also varies (Geesa et al., 2018; Mullen & Tuten, 2010). The defining elements of who serves as a mentor and mentee within a doctoral mentoring program is crucial to the development and success of a sustainable mentorship approach (Geesa et al., 2018).

In general, mentors are defined as faculty or administrators who provide professional guidance within a given context (Lunsford, Crisp, Dolan, & Wuetherick, 2017; Mullen & Tuten, 2010; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Peer mentoring is another common choice for graduate mentoring programs in order to provide more informal psychosocial support to students in comparison to the often formal, academia-focused support of a faculty mentor (Holley & Caldwell, 2012; Webb, Wangmo, Ewen, Teaster, & Hatch, 2009). Mentoring is frequently viewed as a relationship between "a more-experienced mentor and a less-experienced protégé," which changes over time and involves support in the areas of career/academics and psychosocial knowledge (Schunk & Mullen, 2013, p. 362; Yob & Crawford, 2012). Although typically experienced as a dyadic, two-person relationship, different variations of mentoring may be utilized based on the needs of the mentee, such as one mentee having multiple mentors or a group/cohort of peers mentoring one another in tandem (Couchman, 2009; Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Pitts Bannister, 2009; Hackmann & Malin, 2018; Preston, Ogenchuk, & Nsiah, 2014).

No matter the form it takes, the mentoring relationship is typically designed and implemented with the purpose of supporting the mentee through education or career processes.

Mentoring gives mentees an opportunity to discuss stressors, work-life balance, future plans, and goals, and to receive feedback, advice, and psychosocial support from their mentor (Fleck & Mullins, 2012; Lowery et al., 2018; Terrion & Leonard, 2007). In leadership development programs, such as EdD programs, mentoring can serve as a mechanism of leadership identity development, as mentees learn about leadership from their mentors, as well as witnessing firsthand the benefits of outside support within leadership (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018). Mentoring also serves leadership development by giving mentees a guide who shows them the norms and customs of an organization, and gives mentees more confidence in their place within an organization or program (Rounpel, Rinfre, & Grenier, 2019).

While traditionally conceptualized as a top-down relationship in which mentors impart guidance and knowledge to mentees, mentoring has evolved and been reconceptualized as a reciprocal, two-way relationship wherein both mentors and mentees benefit and experience growth (Holley & Caldwell, 2012; Lyons & Perrewe, 2014). As mentors share, teach, and advise, they are able to hone their professional skills and reflect upon their own practices (Budge, 2006; Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Holley & Caldwell, 2012; McConnell et al., 2018; Webb et al., 2009). Particularly in the case of peer mentoring, mentors may receive positive benefits from the social support and peer interaction of the mentor/mentee relationship (Noonan, Ballinger, & Black, 2007; Webb et al., 2009).

Recently, research on mentoring models has turned its focus to self-regulated learning within the context of SCCT, a model developed by Lent et al. (1994) in an effort to analyze how individuals affect their own career progress. Via this model, the role of a mentor is to guide and influence an individual's self-regulated learning. A mentor may also benefit through situations where reaching a mutual outcome or developing self-regulated capabilities requires collaboration of knowledge and skills (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). This supports the eventual goal for mentors and protégés to move from a top-down relationship to regarding each other as collaborators and peers. Thus, in an ideally designed mentoring program, all participants find benefit and personal/professional growth from their involvement within the mentoring relationship.

Designing a Mentoring Program

Several approaches to designing and implementing a mentoring program in a doctoral context have been steadily researched over the past decade, with the majority of research recognizing early contributions by Kram (1983), and resulting in the Mentor Relationship Theory (Lunsford et al., 2017; Mullen & Tuten, 2010; Pifer & Baker, 2016; Schunk & Mullen, 2013; Yob & Crawford, 2012). Research conducted by Pifer and Baker (2016) suggests stages in how to develop a purposeful mentoring program for doctoral students: (1) Knowledge Consumption, (2) Knowledge Creation, and (3) Knowledge Enactment. The first stage focuses solely on establishing the needs of doctoral students through conducting a needs assessment in conjunction with faculty and administrators, with the expectation that this will be a repeated process throughout the mentorship experience. The involvement of faculty and administrators helps guide doctoral students through this identification process as “students don't know what they don't know, particularly in the novice stage” (Pifer & Baker, 2016, p. 19).

The second stage addresses knowledge creation through coursework, competency exams, and development of the dissertation proposal and defense (Curtin et al., 2016; Yob & Crawford, 2012). Vital to progress through a doctoral academic program, this phase can be overwhelming to students who are learning to balance their personal and professional lives with program demands

(Fenge, 2012; Jairam & Kahl, 2012; McDaniels, 2010; Pearson, Cumming, Evans, Macauley, & Ryland, 2011). Faculty and administrator involvement through both professional and social events can assist in easing the stress often associated with this stage (Pifer & Baker, 2016).

The third and final stage reported by Pifer and Baker (2016) focuses on the final writing stages of a dissertation. Strategies regarding time management and writing habits are vital at this time, but social networking for both personal and professional gain are also needed. Building on relationships formed in the second stage, students can vocalize their experiences and alleviate potential feelings of isolation. Additionally, building on professional relationships with the department can assist in research and publication opportunities, as well as job searches (Pifer & Baker, 2016).

Redesigning a Mentoring Program

An essential part of designing an effective mentoring program is to ensure that the program is regularly being evaluated for both strengths and growth areas, and then adapted to best suit the needs of the participants. By allowing mentors, mentees, and other involved parties such as faculty to provide feedback, and then making efforts to make adjustments and changes based upon the feedback, mentoring programs can continue to grow and benefit the best interest and development of those involved in the mentoring program (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011; Holley & Caldwell, 2012).

Ongoing evaluation is a critical part of doctoral mentoring, both to uncover what elements of the program are working, as well as what elements are not working and need to be phased out or changed (Mullen & Tuten, 2010). In the creation of their own mentoring program, Hall and Jaugietis (2011) made the collection and harnessing of feedback from mentees and mentors an integral part of the program, and used this feedback to make real changes such as improved mentor training and making mentors available on a more flexible schedule for mentees. Farmer, Stockham, and Trussell (2006) implemented a formal evaluation and revitalization campaign for their mentoring program, with the assertion that continual changes based upon participant feedback, whether large or small, is vital to keeping mentoring programs effective and beneficial. As suggested in the stages set out by Pifer and Baker (2016), designing a mentoring program is not a one-time, linear process, but rather a cyclical process wherein program creators should regularly circle back to the first stage, knowledge consumption, to continually assess the needs of their target population and adjusting accordingly.

Methods

As part of a larger case study of a mentoring program, our research methods focused on gaining mentors' perspectives in the second year of an EdD mentoring program at the Midwestern university where the mentoring program took place. In an effort to understand mentors' perspectives of this specific mentoring program, the research design of a case study approach was appropriate (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). According to Villarreal Larrinaga (2017), "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 150).

We examined the following research questions in this study: a) *How does the EdD mentoring program impact mentors?*; b) *How do mentors' own doctoral experiences influence their approach to mentoring?*; c) *How do mentors determine the resources or support mentees*

need most to complete the EdD?; and d) How have mentors' perspectives of the EdD mentoring program changed in the redesigned model?

Research collection was conducted by the three authors, who include two faculty members who are also alumni of the EdD program, and a graduate assistant within the department. Two of us, a faculty member and graduate assistant, were a part of the advent of the mentoring program in its first year, while the third author was a doctoral candidate and mentor herself during the first year, moving on to a leadership and research role after graduating. The three of us assisted with various aspects of the mentoring program, including mentee and mentor recruitment, mentor training, arrangement of mentoring meetings, conducting of interview/focus groups, and transcription and coding of interview/focus group data.

At the beginning of the second year of the EdD mentoring program in 2017, we collected information from each mentor about their career position, education, research interests, location, and future goals (see Table 2). With this information, we created mentor profiles for the mentees to review and refer to later in the EdD program. All eight mentors participated in a one-hour training via WebEx during the first month of the development of the mentoring program. We led the training that focused on the definition of mentoring for the program, purpose of the EdD mentoring program, mentor participation in the mentoring program, and mentor presentation topics and schedules. After the training, each mentor agreed to design and deliver a 30-minute presentation to mentees who are in their first or second year of the EdD program (see Table 3) and committed to working with the mentees as needed for one school year.

Participants

Participants in this study included eight individuals who served as mentors in the EdD mentoring program in the Department of Educational Leadership. One mentor was an education doctoral student who was further along in the degree program and seven mentors were graduates of the EdD program from this department. Three of the eight mentors were female, and five mentors were male. Of the eight participants, four mentors participated in the mentoring program during the previous academic school year as mentors, one mentor participated in the mentoring program in 2016-17 as a mentee, and three mentors did not participate in the mentoring program during the past year. The participants had full-time professions related to educational leadership in schools, district school offices, higher education institutions, and tech-based organizations.

Data collection

During the 2017-18 academic school year, each mentor prepared and delivered a 30-minute presentation to mentees who were in their first two years of the EdD program (see Table 3). Individual interviews and focus groups were held via web conferencing and audit recorded. We facilitated the interviews with specific questions for the mentors (see Table 4) at the end of the first year of mentor presentations in May 2018. Focus group questions were refined after we discussed findings from individual interviews (see Table 5). Focus groups took place one month after individual interviews in June 2018.

Data analysis

Interviews and focus groups were our qualitative data in this study. We transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interview and focus group data for themes with structural coding methods (*Saldaña, 2009*). After the first author transcribed interviews/focus groups and completed first-level coding, the transcripts were shared with the other two authors for review and consensus. After discussing and agreeing upon the first-level coding, the first author compiled a more detailed Excel spreadsheet of codes and themes, which was once again shared with the other authors and discussed until consensus was reached. We assigned pseudonyms to all participants in order to ensure confidentiality. Four themes were identified through first and second cycle coding. These themes are further discussed in the findings below.

Findings

All eight mentors ($N=8$) participated in individual interviews and focus groups. Individual interviews occurred at the end of the spring semester in May 2018, approximately one academic year after the mentor presentation format of the mentoring program had begun. One month following individual interviews, focus group interviews took place. From data collected, four themes emerged and are examined in the following subsections.

Doctoral Experiences and Challenges

When speaking about how they approached their presentation topic and constructed mentor presentations for the mentoring program, all eight mentors expressed that their own challenges from their education doctoral studies inspired or influenced the material they presented to the mentees. The challenges the mentors faced were varied, from time management and work-life balance as a scholar-practitioner to dissertation perseverance. “The biggest challenge for me was just staying that course [to dissertation completion],” said mentor Nathan. “Writing and sticking to my plan and schedule that I had created for myself became a personal challenge,” shared Alex. “It just feels so impossible and overwhelming when you're in the place,” expressed another mentor, John. “I remember how many times I wanted to quit [pursing a doctorate] and say ‘Is this really worth it?’”

Although many mentors chose presentation topics from a provided list of topic ideas, each mentor used her or his own experiences as scholar-practitioners in the EdD program to tailor their presentation to their mentee audience. As found in our theoretical framework of SCCT, mentors act as a source of self-efficacy for mentees by providing affirmative interactions, which increase mentees’ self-confidence in their ability to pursue their academic and career path (Curtin et al., 2016; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). By sharing their own challenges and how they overcame those challenges in the educational doctoral program, mentors sought to encourage the mentees in their own academic challenges, as well as displaying their competence to be mentors, as found in the academic domain of Yob and Crawford’s (2012) conceptual framework. Mentor Cathy’s motivation was to share with the mentees what she would have liked to hear herself as a doctoral student:

It would have been nice to know, or to hear from other people that [the EdD] will open doors for you. [...] That was kind of the message I want to give to those students. Keep your head up because it's going to be trying, but it's going to be worth it when it's done.

Also trying to approach doctoral challenges from an inspirational angle, Henry shared his personal perspective as the one mentor this year who was still a doctoral candidate within the program; he shared with his mentees that while academic deadlines need to be met, mentees should not “lose who they are during that time frame.”

Networking and Building Connections

When asked how the EdD mentoring program contributes to development of professionals, six of the eight mentors mentioned networking and building connections. Mentor John spoke of how the EdD mentoring program gave students “access to talk to people that ordinarily they wouldn’t,” while Jamie referred to the mentoring program as a “cross-pollination of people going through the program and past people who have gone through the program” who may not otherwise cross paths. The benefit of such shared connection is, as Mentor Diana stated, “there’s only so much we can learn from books before you have to start learning from experiences and learning from people who walked the walk.” In other words, as mentees interact with advanced education doctoral students and recent graduates, they are able to learn from the mentors’ real-world experiences, as well as established professional connections that may be of future use. The use of networking in their interactions with mentees ties in with SCCT’s domain of sponsorship, wherein mentors introduce mentees into their own professional network and advocate on their behalf (Curtin et al., 2016; Lent et al., 1994).

Establishing these potential professional connections does not benefit the mentees alone. Nathan, who was working as a principal at the time of his interview, but who aspires towards district administration, shared, “I’ve always tried to operate personally under the idea I never know who my future boss will be. And if that’s the person I’m mentoring, heck, this person may set the world on fire.” John shared that fostering connections was one of his primary reasons for participating in the program: “The whole point of doing this besides bettering ourselves is to make connections and to move up in our careers and become more intimately involved with people as we try to work to change education in the state.” These results reflect previous research indicating mentors benefit from the mentoring relationship by building their own professional experience, being able to discuss and compare the experiences of working within the mentor’s and mentee’s mutual field, and networking (Clayton et al., 2013; Hall & Jaugietis, 2011; McConnell & Geesa, 2021; McConnell et al., 2018).

Reflection and Relatable Experiences

Mentors expressed a collective belief concerning the relatable experiences they shared with the mentees, suggesting it led to reflection amongst both mentors and mentees. For mentees, mentors speculated hearing first-hand accounts and advice would give the mentees something to reflect upon as they moved forward in their education doctoral process. “I would hope that it helps them kind of proactively put some structures in place to think through,” said Henry. “And then when they finish with each semester, maybe give that opportunity to [...] just review the advice that’s been given from mentors to get reset for the next semester so that it doesn’t continue to grind on them and wear them down.” Cathy, who aspires to work in higher education, shared a strategy of starting conversations with mentees in which “you can ask questions of your mentee and get them to think in a different way” in the interest of “being able to have different perspectives working toward a common goal.” These strategies of fostering and encouraging reflection in mentees

reflects the “challenge” attribute of the academic domain of Yob and Crawford’s (2012) conceptual framework, as well as SCCT’s instrumental domain (Curtin et al., 2016; Lent et al., 1994).

Much of the reflection for mentees may come from being able to relate to the struggles of their mentors, as well as aspire to their successes. Jamie described mentoring as “just showing people who have gone through the process, allowing them to share a little bit that, yes, there are struggles. And, yes, what you're going through right now is normal, but it's going to be okay.” Jamie also discussed the importance of seeing other scholar-practitioners who survived the EdD process, sharing, “They're not the first to hit these walls or these issues, and they're going to make it past them one way or another.”

On a similar note, Alex perceives mentees learn “there's at least something or someone that they could relate to and make them think about and reflect it with their own path that they're taking.” By encouraging mentees with the idea that they are not alone in their challenges, mentors show their competency in the psychosocial domain of the Yob and Crawford (2012) framework as well, particularly in the attribute of emotional support.

The experience of talking to new students about their experiences initiated much reflection in the mentors themselves, who even found some of their prior beliefs and habits challenged. “It’s pushed me a little bit out of my comfort zone and my bubble,” shared Nathan. “It's also push[ed] me and made me reflect on ‘wow, I need to learn more about this,’ or ‘this person said this,’ or ‘this person said that.’” Henry shared that being a mentor forced him to re-evaluate his own practices as a doctoral candidate and school principal: “As I was reflecting on it, [I] really needed to make sure that my practices were aligning with what I was trying to share with the others in terms of life balance.” Reflection is a two-way process in mentoring, according to Dan, who described it as “you're giving but you're getting.” He went continued, “It allowed me to have a fresher look at how I kind of got through [the doctoral program] and what experiences I had, both positive and productive.” Mentors found they were not only giving to their mentees, but receiving, as well in the form of personal and professional reflection and growth (Booth et al., 2016; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Lowery, Geesa, & McConnell, 2019; McConnell et al., 2018; McConnell & Geesa, 2021). This echoed results from a mentor-focused study of the first year of this EdD mentoring program where mentors cited self-reflection as one of the primary benefits of acting as a mentor (McConnell et al., 2018).

Recommendations for Program Improvement

Although this EdD mentoring program started in its first year as a dyadic, one-on-one mentoring format and was well received by both mentees and mentors (Brown et al., 2020; Lowery et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2018), changes were made in the second year to ensure sustainability of the program when not enough mentors were available to continue to match on a one-on-one basis with mentees (Geesa, Brown, & McConnell, 2020). Considering the change of format from the first year of the EdD mentoring program to the second, we were interested in obtaining feedback from the mentors on the redesign of the program and any further changes or improvements that could be made due to our belief that participant-informed feedback is integral to continual program improvement (Farmer et al., 2006; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Overall, mentors had a positive opinion of the mentor presentation format for education doctoral students. Diana, who had participated as a one-on-one mentor in the first year of the program, stated, “I liked making a presentation this year. I certainly think that it gives you a wider span of who you can provide information to.” Henry,

another previous one-on-one mentor agreed the new format “seemed to be much more effective.” While Cathy found the presentations “fun,” she also expressed her belief regarding one-on-one mentoring having its place, as well. “I think maybe a mix between the two,” she recommended.

The idea of combining mentor presentations and one-on-one mentoring was a common topic of discussion amongst the mentors. Alex, a former mentee herself shared, “There at the end, when I was trying to finish up, it was very beneficial for me.” Suggesting such an intimate mentoring relationship was not for every student, she articulated some students “may be more personable and need that one-on-one contact.” Another suggestion was for the format of mentoring to change depending on the year or stage of the EdD program. “As [the students] move towards the dissertation [...] I think you're building towards where having an individual mentor would actually feel useful,” suggested John. Cathy also weighed in, stating she thought presentations were useful during the coursework phase, but “conversations and the check-ins are way more beneficial during the dissertation process, to kind of keep them [students] on track and on pace and accountable.” These reactions and ideas from the mentors closely reflect the idea of a three-stage mentoring program as suggested by Pifer and Baker (2016) wherein the nature of the mentoring relationship changes and evolves as the needs of the mentee change along the academic process, as well as research by Lochmiller (2014), which suggests that strategies to support educational leaders should change depending on the growth stage and challenge they are experiencing.

What mentors seemed to desire most of all out of future EdD mentoring program involvement was better feedback after presentations. Many mentors expressed the concern regarding whether their presentation had a positive impact or what the mentees wanted to hear from them. “I felt like [I was] in a little bit of a vacuum,” shared Jamie about his presentation experience. “Something I would have appreciated greatly would be just some feedback saying, ‘Hey, that was horrible. What were you doing?’ Or vice versa. [...] What would be most beneficial to those students? What resonated, what didn’t?” Dan, a first-time mentor this year, shared similar concerns about getting accurate feedback because, “I think one thing that I’m guilty of in my professional position is making assumptions just because I’ve been a teacher or a principal, that I know what their needs are.” Instead, Dan shared, “really trying to take the time to identify what their needs are and then matching us with what they need” was what was desired. The requests for feedback from mentees would appear to show mentors have the desire to improve upon their role in the academic domain of mentoring by ensuring they are competently addressing the needs of mentees, communicating clearly with mentees, and appropriately available to mentee’s questions and concerns (Yob & Crawford, 2012).

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the limited time frame to study the effect of redesigned program, as well as the small pool of participants. However, although the redesign of the program was less than a year old, we believe that it is imperative to the success of mentoring programs to continually evaluate and modify the mentoring program so as to be the most efficacious to the intended audience, the EdD student-mentees (Farmer et al., 2006; Hall & Jaugietis, 2011; Holley & Caldwell, 2012; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Additionally, as the authors are involved with the doctoral program in question (as a former graduate assistant, current faculty, and former student, respectively), there is potential for bias in the research process. This potential bias could be addressed in future studies by recruiting outside researchers to audit the research process and coding.

The most prevalent limitation to the mentoring program itself is the availability of mentors. While several expressed interest in participating, the lack of flexibility in presentation times and dates often competed with the work requirements and responsibilities of the mentors. This is one of the weaknesses of using full-time professionals and administrators as mentors, as their busy professional schedules combined with the busy academic and professional schedules of mentees makes arranging convenient meeting times challenging. It is possible this issue could be addressed in future implementations of the mentoring program by recruiting a wider selection of mentors or making mentors accessible in other formats, such as by email, video conferencing, or pre-recorded sessions.

Discussion

In this case study, our aim was to answer our four research questions. In addressing the first research question, *How does the EdD mentoring program impact mentors?*, we discovered through our interviews and focus groups that the participating mentors found the EdD mentoring program to be an overall positive experience. Although some mentors wished for more personal connections with mentees, most expressed that they enjoyed the presentation format of the program because it allowed them to feel they were distributing useful information to a larger audience than they would be able to give to an individual mentee. Mentors largely drew upon their own challenges and experiences from their doctoral programs when designing and presenting their presentations; this allowed mentors to reflect upon their practices, challenges, and successes they had experienced in their academic journeys (Booth et al., 2016; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; McConnell et al., 2018). Additionally, mentors felt the mentoring program was a good networking opportunity, not only for the mentees, but for the mentors as well. They enjoyed getting to know future professionals from their field and making professional connections that may be of use in the future. The mentors' experiences connected to our theoretical and conceptual frameworks as the mentors acted both as academic support and emotional support to mentees and used their own experiences to encourage and inspire confidence in mentees, while also introducing them into their own professional networks (Curtin et al., 2016; Lent, et al., 1994; Yob & Crawford, 2012).

In addressing the second research question, *How do mentors' own doctoral experiences influence their approach to mentoring?* we found all mentors, without exception, used their own experiences and challenges from their doctoral programs to inspire their mentor presentations. The presentations became an opportunity for mentors to share their experiences and challenges, as well as, how they overcame those challenges and what tools and methods they used to succeed in their education doctoral programs. Reflecting on their own EdD journeys, mentors constructed their presentations around what would have been useful for them to hear as a new doctoral student, from concrete tips and tools to simple encouragement and empathy. In doing so, mentors demonstrated the psychosocial domain of Yob and Crawford's (2012) conceptual framework of mentoring by creating a sense of trust with mentees and providing emotional support. These presentations also conveyed mentors' belief in the mentees' ability to succeed since the mentors had been in their shoes and understood their struggles (Curtin et al., 2016).

Considering the mentors themselves have either recently graduated from the EdD program or are close to doing so, we were interested in the third research question, *How do mentors determine the resources or support mentees need most to complete the EdD?* The mentors agreed that offering the mentoring program was a good step towards offering new EdD students more support, with some mentors expressing the wish that they had access to supportive individuals

available to give advice and answer questions during their own EdD programs. While most mentors agreed a simple presentation model was appropriate for the first two years of the doctoral program, some mentors also expressed the belief that more personalized support may be useful to mentees as they move into the comprehensive exam and dissertation stages of their EdD work in order to give them additional encouragement and accountability as they complete the required coursework for the degree. Pifer and Baker's (2016) mentoring model reinforces the mentors' perspective that students' needs change as they move from establishing competency, to knowledge creation, to dissertation writing, and that support should look different at each of these stages.

Finally, we addressed the fourth research question, *How have mentors' perspectives of the EdD mentoring program changed in the redesigned model?* Of the eight mentors who participated in the program this year, four had participated in the prior year when the program had consisted of one-to-one mentor/mentee pairings (Lowery et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2019; McConnell et al., 2018). While these four mentors had mixed reactions to the first-year model of the mentoring program, at times finding it beneficial and at other times feeling like they were bothering the mentee, all agreed the new presentation model felt beneficial to mentees. Many mentors, both those who had participated the first year and those who were new to the mentoring program, expressed the presentation model made sense for students who were still in the coursework phase of the EdD program, and that if one-on-one pairings were still to happen, they should occur later on in the education doctoral program. The primary criticism or concern mentors had about the redesigned mentoring model was the perceived lack of communication and interaction. Mentors were enthusiastic in their desire to connect with and assist mentees, and some felt offering a single presentation per mentor may not be enough exposure to understand and meet the needs of mentees. The primary suggestion given by mentors was to obtain more feedback from mentees and give more opportunities for mentors and mentees to communicate and connect.

The data gathered in this study provided several insights into the mentoring approach specific to this program and to scholar-practitioner students, but it can also offer an additional perspective to other mentoring programs designed for doctoral students: *In establishing a relevant mentoring experience, honesty and vulnerability should be both expected and valued.* By sharing and reflecting on their doctoral experiences and challenges through real-time interactions, mentors not only engaged in productive interactions with the mentees, but also created an atmosphere of both academic and psychosocial support for all stakeholders (Yob & Crawford, 2012; Lent et al., 1994). This positioned the mentors as competent among their scholar-practitioner peers, allowing for reflective growth and networking to take place. The shared learning experience between mentors and mentees validates mentor expertise and continues to support self-efficacy and professional advancement after degree completion (Curtin et al., 2016; Lent & Brown, 2013; Holley & Caldwell, 2011). This benefit assists with sustainability as mentors continue to participate in the program and adapt mentoring programs for student needs.

Conclusion

Education doctoral students must overcome challenges and pass many phases to achieve their degrees. Scholar-practitioner students, in particular, juggle a unique combination of academic, professional, and personal responsibilities, often leaving them feeling overwhelmed and isolated (Kerrigan & Hayes, 2016; Mullen & Tuten, 2010). Mentoring may be one avenue through which scholar-practitioner doctoral students or other education leaders may find additional emotional support, academic advice, and professional connection (Holley & Caldwell, 2012; Pifer & Baker,

2016; Yob & Crawford, 2012). As a reciprocal relationship, mentoring serves to benefit not only the mentees but the mentors as well. Mentors may find opportunity for personal and professional growth, networking, and self-reflection through the experience of forming mentoring relationships (Budge, 2006; Gimbel & Kefor, 2018; Holley & Caldwell, 2012; McConnell et al., 2018; Webb et al., 2009).

This study is important as a case study utilizing mentors' perspectives in an EdD mentoring program for scholar-practitioner educational leaders. While research about doctoral mentoring programs exists, few studies focus specifically on the needs of EdD students and the unique benefit of mentoring in EdD programs where students are scholar-practitioners typically maintaining a full-time education-focused career while taking doctoral-level courses (Crow & Whiteman, 2016). Additionally, few research studies look at the effects of non-dyadic mentoring and how group mentoring may meet the needs of certain populations of mentees (Hackmann & Malin, 2018). This study shows the benefits of such a program for both mentees and mentors, as well as the importance of continual collection of feedback to inform regular improvements to such programs (Farmer et al., 2006; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Further research is needed to continue our efforts to create and provide equal educational opportunities and support for all EdD students along the developmental continuum.

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Reform Under Turbulence: Leveraging Accreditation to Improve Principal Preparation Programs

This manuscript has 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.



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One principal preparation program in Illinois experienced severe turbulence following the statewide redesign of all principal preparation programs. Myriad problems contributed to a cascading turbulence that negatively skewed stakeholder perceptions of program quality. In addition, the program failed two national accreditation submissions and faced the looming deadline for a final submission attempt. Using the conceptual framework of Turbulence Theory, this self-study illuminates how the program leveraged the accreditation process to quickly lower the turbulence level. Accreditation brought focused reflection and improvement, resulting in program stability, improved program outcomes, and full national recognition. Principal preparation programs are encouraged to use accreditation for collaborative reflection, study, and improvement.

Keywords: principal preparation, higher education accreditation, Turbulence Theory, Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation, self-study

Once enrolling over 600 candidates, the principal preparation program at one Illinois university was popular with educators seeking Illinois administrative licensure. However, a series of dynamic events destabilized the program and caused a steep decline in enrollment and candidates' perceptions of the program—precipitated by the mandated statewide reform of Illinois principal preparation programs between 2010 and 2014 (Haller et al., 2019). These events included faculty retirements, failed faculty searches, transitory leadership, unstable University funding, declining program enrollment, and incomplete assessment data. Meanwhile, the program was charged with submitting Specialized Professional Association (SPA) accreditation reports for the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The program had failed two submissions and was facing a third and final attempt to earn accreditation.

Using the conceptual framework of Turbulence Theory (Gross, 2020), this study uses the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices methodology (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015) to illuminate how the program leveraged the accreditation process to quickly implement changes that stabilized the program, lowering the turbulence level and improving program outcomes. The program earned full national accreditation. Contrary to the research literature suggesting that rapid accreditation changes destabilize higher education programs (Berliner & Schmelkin, 2010), the accreditation lever—in this local context—decreased the cascading turbulence and motivated changes to strengthen the program.

Literature Review

Accreditation in higher education has evolved from a concept of peer review in which outside peers use established criteria to evaluate their peers for quality assurance (Woolston, 2012). According to Berliner and Schmelkin (2010), higher education accreditation serves multiple purposes:

Accreditations are third-party verifications of quality. At the extreme, accreditations can be gatekeepers—without the accreditation you cannot operate. Other accreditations are more or less voluntary depending on particular state policies. Most programmatic accreditations, however, are voluntary and serve the verification function. Accreditation can also provide a roadmap to continuous quality improvement through feedback on a program or a school. Even preparing for an accreditation visit has a positive effect, assuming you believe in the standards being applied. (p. 1)

Other benefits of accreditation include peer review for improvement, improved quality control and accountability, faculty reflection, institutional and program prestige, improved faculty recruitment and retention, and increased rigor of instruction (Hail et al., 2019; Wheelan & Elgart, 2015).

Accreditation occurs on multiple levels within an institution, such as the entire university or an individual program of study. Universities as institutions seek accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission or similar organizations. For institutions who prepare educators, the prevailing accreditation process is CAEP. This organization evolved from the merger of two prior accrediting efforts—the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Within CAEP, some disciplines have an added accreditation through the SPA accreditation process. For educational leadership programs, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) created the national standards. Previously known as Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

(ISLLC) standards, these standards were revised and replaced by the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) in 2015 (CAEP, 2016; Young, 2020).

Many scholars have questioned the value of higher education accreditation. Nationwide, the aggregate costs for accreditation in 2015 were estimated at \$3 billion (Wheelan & Elgart, 2015). Institutions must allocate significant human and financial capital needed to collect, analyze, and report the data (Groves, 2019; Hail et al., 2019; Woolston, 2012). Smaller and rural institutions are particularly disadvantaged due to fewer available resources to meet extensive reporting requirements—with fewer personnel assigned to more responsibilities (Berliner & Schmelkin, 2010; Groves, 2019). Taubman (2010) asserted that accreditation minimizes the professional judgments of skilled faculty when assessments are distilled into quantifiable data. And Hail et al. (2019) pointed out that once accreditation standards are met, some institutions abandon the processes until the next accreditation cycle arrives.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of Turbulence Theory (Gross, 2020) illustrates how contextual factors influenced the cascading turbulence level of the program. Turbulence Theory provides a useful lens to analyze the degree of challenge facing educational organizations. Though created as a model to measure the challenge level when implementing reforms in an elementary school, Turbulence Theory can be applied to all educational organizations facing pressures from accountability, regulation, and reform forces. The intensity of turbulence is measured by four intensity levels that mirror the definitions used by pilots to define turbulence in-flight. These levels are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Degrees of Turbulence in Educational Organizations

Level of Turbulence	Description
Light	Associated with ongoing issues, little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress.
Moderate	Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins.
Severe	Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis.
Extreme	Structural damage to the reform movement is occurring. Collapse of reform seems likely.

Note. Gross (2020, p. 17).

Turbulence Theory (Gross, 2020) defines three drivers that influence these turbulence levels. The first element driving turbulence is positionality or the perspectives of the various actors, their groups, and coalitions. Urgency worsens turbulence by limiting response time, hindering careful analysis of positionality. Leaders often engage in long-term analyses of positionality to prepare for potential but currently unknown future challenges. The second element of Turbulence Theory is cascading. This element also drives increasing turbulence since challenges rarely occur in isolation but are dynamic, resulting from interacting forces and events.

Each turbulent event builds upon another, increasing the intensity of turbulence as multiple forces act upon each other. Cascading occurs at all intensities of turbulence and in all turbulent situations. According to Gross (2020), leaders may respond to cascading in three ways:

The first kind of leader finds a way to be an effective lightning rod by somehow grounding the danger safely away from the innocent so that the school and district can function while still dealing honestly with the turbulent incident. The second kind of leader takes the power of the turbulent incident and, instead of grounding it safely away from others, sends it directly into the organization. The third kind of leader actually amplifies the imagined dangers of the critical incident and then sends it in exaggerated form into the organization. (p. 32)

The third element of Turbulence Theory is stability—the dynamic relationship between the program and the forces acting upon it. Organizational stability “is achieved and sustained through movement, not by being rigid” (Gross, 2020, p. 33). Stability in universities is perceived by measures such as reputation, admissions selectivity, enrollment, and awards or recognitions.

Turbulence Theory was chosen as a framework to understand how cascading turbulence faced by one higher education program was stabilized by the lever of accreditation. Dynamic forces increased turbulence levels to severe until the final pressures to meet SPA accreditation standards brought reforms that stabilized the program and lowered the turbulence level to light. This analysis focuses on the turbulence drivers of cascading and stability.

Methodology

This study employed the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) method (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015) to describe the events and experiences from one professional case—a University principal preparation program in Illinois undergoing accreditation. Self-study is often used in teacher education research literature to help scholars and practitioners understand the complexities of local contexts and improve their own professional practices. In S-STEP, authors function as both researchers and participant-practitioners as professors in teacher preparation programs, using their lived impressions and perceptions to inform the narrative. In addition to the authors’ first-hand experiences, self-study uses multiple methods to strengthen the findings, but primarily uses qualitative methods. In this study, the authors analyzed University documents and other data to support their personal impressions and make sense of the events.

Several limitations must be acknowledged for this self-study. First, this case represents the experiences of one higher education program. The findings and recommendations may not be generalizable to other contexts, especially given the influence of statewide policy changes unique to principal preparation in Illinois (Haller et al., 2019). Second, as first-hand participants in the events, the authors’ interpretations were influenced by biases that may affect the trustworthiness of the narrative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To mitigate this problem, rich examples and detailed narratives were written to “interpretatively reconstruct” (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015, p. 522) what occurred. These impressions were reviewed between the authors, with a peer checker at the University who was familiar with the program, and by presenting a draft paper at a peer-reviewed conference for public critique. Third, although data from completer exit surveys suggested program changes improved candidates’ experiences and perceptions of program quality, more study is needed to understand how these program changes informed candidates’ perceptions of the program.

Findings

The findings will be reported in two sections. The first section describes the dynamic events that caused cascading turbulence (Gross, 2020) that challenged the program. The second section describes how the accreditation process reduced this cascading and lower the turbulence level. Following this section, the discussion of the findings will offer insights and recommendations for professional practice.

Cascading Turbulence Hindered Program Success

The principal preparation program experienced cascading turbulence (Gross, 2020) between 2013 and 2018. Interaction of several events negatively affected program quality, decreased enrollment, and lowered candidate satisfaction. These were triggered by mandated statewide reform of principal leadership programs in Illinois which resulted in a precipitous enrollment decline. The program also experienced unstable staffing, loss of program leadership, statewide financial instability, and transitory division- and college-level leadership, all of which contributed to two failed SPA submissions for CAEP national accreditation.

Enrollment Declined Following Reforms

In the 2000s, scholarship began questioning the rigor of educational leadership programs, including low admissions standards, weak curricula, and candidates who completed the degree for salary advancement only, resulting in an overabundant supply of graduates for the marketplace demand (Levine, 2005). During this period, Illinois underwent several reform efforts to improve these programs (Hackmann & Malin, 2016; Haller et al., 2019; White et al., 2016). The Illinois General Assembly passed Senate Bill 226 with extensive reforms to principal leadership; the bill was signed into law by Governor Patrick Quinn in May 2010.

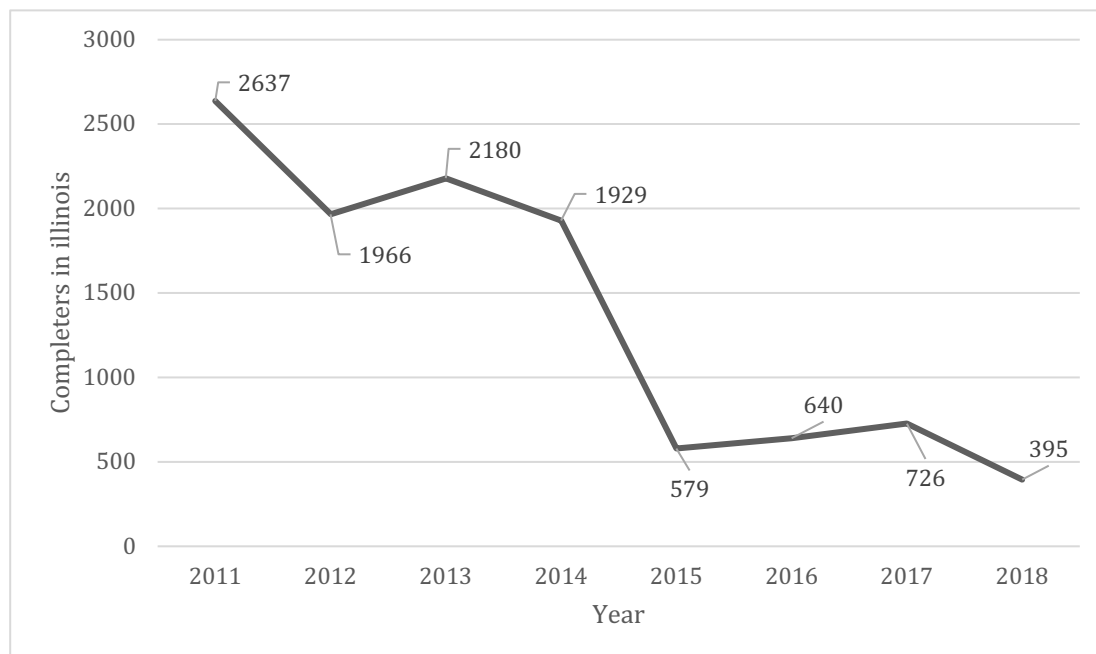
The subsequent creation of regulations resulted in numerous changes to licensure, standards, internships, and candidate selection. The General Administrative (“Type 75”) endorsement was retired and replaced by the new Principal as Instructional Leader licensure. This change reflected a broader realignment with the research on the influence of principal leadership on student learning improvement in schools (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010). Subsequently, standards for coursework and internship were adopted to reflect this research. As a result of new statewide policies, all principal leadership programs in Illinois were required to be redesigned and submitted for Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) approval by September 2014 or close. Final opportunity for candidates’ admission into programs under the old rules was September 1, 2012. The final “Type 75” endorsements were issued in 2015 (ISBE, 2020). This program’s application for redesign was approved in October 2012 (White et al., 2016).

Following the implementation of redesigned principal leadership programs in Illinois, the enrollment at all Illinois principal preparation programs declined precipitously (Hackmann & Malin, 2016; White et al., 2016). Many candidates had rushed to enroll under the old General Administrative programs prior to September 1, 2012, to earn their licensure under the old rules, concerned that a new program would be more rigorous. Potential candidates were also confused about new internship requirements, falsely believing they would be required to resign from current employment to complete unpaid, one-year internships (Hackmann & Malin, 2016). Figure 1 illustrates the decline statewide in principal leadership program completers between 2011 and

2018 (Figure 1). ISBE defines *completers* in principal leadership programs as those graduate candidates who meet the following criteria: completion of the degree program, passing the licensure exam, and, beginning with graduates from redesigned programs, completion of initial evaluator training (ISBE, 2020).

Figure 1

Illinois Statewide Principal Completers

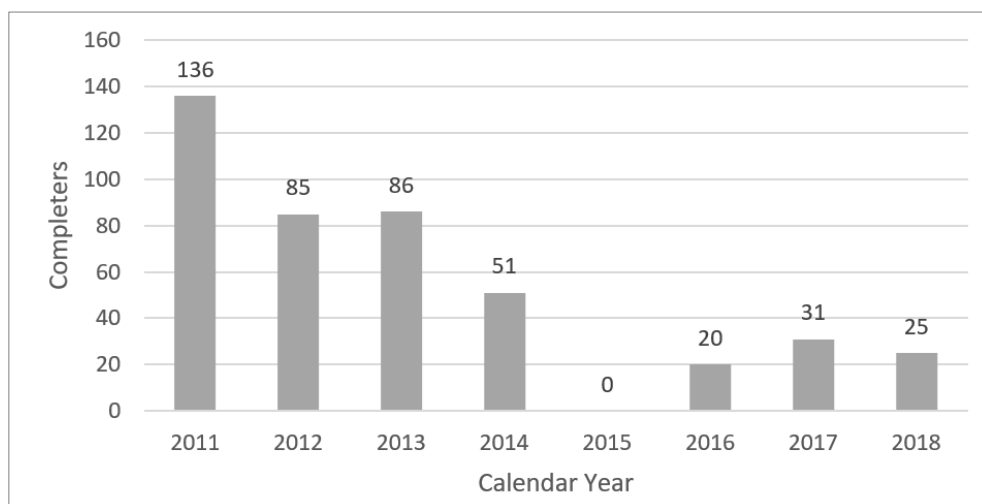


Note. ISBE (2020).

This program experienced similar declines in completers. In 2011, the program graduated 136 completers, but by 2015—the final year to earn licensure under the old General Administrative rules—no program candidates were completers (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Program Completers: 2011-2018



Note. ISBE (2020). 2015 was the final year the retired “Type 75” endorsement was issued.

Loss of Faculty, Failed Searches, and Shared Appointments

As happened for other Illinois programs, the program’s faculty size decreased following the reforms (Hackmann & Malin, 2016). By August 2016, through retirements, only two full-time faculty remained in the program. One remaining full-time faculty member accepted a new workload assignment with a .625 full-time equivalence (FTE) in union leadership that reduced their teaching load of principal preparation courses. As a result, the program relied heavily on adjunct professors to teach the program’s courses. Additionally, vacant positions went unfilled. Four national searches failed to secure new faculty, creating a loss of institutional knowledge and human capital to implement program improvements.

Vacant Program Leadership

In addition to faculty vacancies, the Program Coordinator role was vacant between 2012 and 2018. When neither full-time faculty member affiliated with the program was willing to accept these duties, the Division Chair of Education assumed program leadership responsibilities, adding to the burden of their other administrative duties. During this period, adjunct professors received minimal support, resulting in quality control challenges. When surveyed, candidates expressed frustration with poor communication and inconsistent messaging. Another consequence of this void in program leadership was a backlog of candidates who had not completed their licensure examinations, hindering their earning education salary advancement or seeking leadership positions. Without leadership to ensure program advising about test preparation and the testing process, many candidates were stalled.

Statewide Financial Instability Affected Public and Private Universities

The State of Illinois did not pass a working budget between 2015 and 2017, rocking the financial plans of all state universities. Higher education in Illinois endured two years of instability due to significant reductions in state appropriations, including operating revenue reductions for public universities and severe delays and reductions in college student financial aid for both public and private universities. As a result, credit agencies downgraded the debt of all Illinois public universities and public and private institutions were pressured to support their students who depended on state assistance (State of Illinois, 2019).

In response to the budget impasse, the University closed education programs in science and special education, leaving the principal preparation master's degree as the only advanced-level program eligible for SPA accreditation. While the principal leadership program was spared closure and teach out, the program continued to be unable to fill vacant positions due to retirements and suffered a reputational decline. Moreover, because of publicity about closing the science and special education programs, practitioners who might have enrolled in the principal leadership program (and other programs at the University) erroneously believed that many or even all University education programs were in jeopardy and thus lost confidence in completing a degree at the University. This false perception is believed to have contributed to lower enrollments in all University education preparation programs during this period of budget impasse in the State legislature.

Transitional Administrative Leadership and Gaps in Oversight

The division- and college-level leadership roles were in transition. New appointments to the positions of Interim Dean of the College of Education and Chair of the Division of Education were made. Before and during these transitions, the processes vital to meeting accreditation standards lacked oversight. The newly appointed Division Chair addressed these issues by creating and filling new positions for an Assessment Coordinator to monitor data collection and assessments and a Director of Educator Preparation to oversee the certificated education programs and candidates' entitlement for graduation and licensure. The importance of these positions and the qualified human capital necessary to manage the education programs were supported by two examples of problems discovered after these positions were created and filled. First, the Director of Educator Preparation discovered that several master's degrees had been issued in error to candidates who did not meet University degree requirements. Several degrees were recalled. Second, the Assessment Coordinator discovered many professors and adjunct instructors had not completed required collection of assessment data—including the disposition assessments for each course—due to lack of accountability and oversight.

Failed Accreditation Submissions

During the 2018-2019 academic year, the College of Education faced two accreditation deadlines. First, the principal leadership program faced an imminent deadline for submission of their third and final report attempt to earn SPA accreditation. This report was due on September 15, 2018. In two prior submissions, no national standards had been met. As the program reviewed these reports, many problems including missing data, only tangential alignment to standards, and failure to document program changes became clear. Second, the entire Education Preparation Provider

(EPP) unit—including all education programs offered by the University in the College of Education and two other colleges—was due for an accreditation visit on April 28-30, 2019. The principal leadership program was the only EPP graduate program eligible for accreditation and was responsible for CAEP documentation for all advanced programs.

Together, these cascading forces (Table 2) created a severe turbulence level. If the program failed national accreditation, the turbulence level would increase with new cascading problems. Candidates would be notified that the program had lost its accreditation—creating uncertainty about licensure and degree completion, further eroding program reputation. The program’s websites and promotional materials would have the accreditation logo removed. Partner districts would lose confidence in the program and would refer fewer candidates for enrollment. Ability of program faculty to maintain their appointments could be jeopardized.

Table 2

Cascading Forces

Event	Approximate Timeframe
Vacant Program Leadership	2012-2018
Enrollment Declined Following Reforms	2014-2018
Loss of Faculty, Failed Searches, and Shared Appointments	2014-2018
Transitioning Administrators and Oversight Gaps	2015-2017
Statewide Financial Instability Affected Public Universities	2015-2018
Two Failed SPA Accreditation Submissions	2016-2017

Cascading Towards Stability

Faced with a final SPA accreditation deadline, the program needed rapid changes to satisfy accreditation requirements. This section discusses seven major program reforms that were influenced by the accreditation lever. The Program Coordinator vacancy was filled—providing leadership to create partnerships, improve documentation and recordkeeping, realign and modify program assessments, improve candidate support for the state licensure examination, and engage candidate voices in program evaluation and improvements. These changes all contributed to achievement of full national accreditation.

Program Coordinator Secured

A new faculty member was hired and began work on August 1, 2018. This new assistant professor was assigned Program Coordinator duties, including responsibility for revising the final SPA accreditation report due 45 days later on September 15, 2018. Although this was this new faculty member’s first experience in higher education and accreditation, their human capital was needed to implement and document the necessary changes and reforms. The University provided a three-credit hour release for Program Coordinator duties during each semester, representing a course release of .29 FTE. Working to meet the SPA deadline, the Coordinator was given wide latitude to make rapid changes. With limited time, the program benefited from the final year of “phase-in”—a CAEP accreditation procedure whereby programs could demonstrate plans to implement

future changes. Since many reforms could not be implemented by the new Program Coordinator within the 45 days remaining until deadline, the program created plans for future procedures (CAEP, 2016).

Partnerships

Accreditation requires higher education to show evidence of partnerships with PK-21 stakeholders for the co-creation of program elements (CAEP, 2016). The program found this requirement challenging. Within the immediate market area of the University, the program had established some partnerships with districts but had not found a school district partner who needed an ongoing, scalable principal pipeline partnership. Illinois school districts are decentralized, with over 850 school districts, including many districts that are standalone elementary or secondary schools, plus hundreds of cooperatives, vocational schools, alternative schools, and other entities. These school districts may not have the need nor the resources for a pipeline partnership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2011). Given this challenge, the program addressed enhancing the kind and number of partnerships with several strategies.

Because most school leaders are hired for their first leadership position in the district where they are employed as educators (Bastian & Henry, 2015), the program reframed all embedded field experiences and internships as a “grow your own” program whereby candidates complete their fieldwork in the partner school and district where they are employed. This formalized existing district relationships while embracing the research on career pipelines. These partners and others were invited to join the new Partnership Advisory Council (PAC). The PAC including practicing school leaders and current program candidates to advise the program on curriculum, assessment, and policies. The first meeting was held virtually in November 2019; principals discussed the kinds of technology skills and knowledge they needed in the roles as principals while candidates compared technology expectations in the program curriculum to those they encountered in the field. Collaboratively, the PAC recommended several revisions to the curriculum.

The program collaborated with leadership from a regional division of the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) to co-create assessments for the internship. For example, during one internship seminar meeting, candidates were organized into small groups, each with an assigned IPA region leader. Candidates and leaders worked together to design an internship assessment that reflected both the relevant leadership standards and the daily work of principals in the field. Faculty also began attending regional meetings of the IPA to gain insight for program improvement. The Program Coordinator was also appointed as the higher education representative for a regional division of the IPA.

In addition, the program engaged with an advocacy group that collaborates with higher education partners to provide mentoring and career advancement support for principal leadership candidates working in one large public school district. This arrangement allowed the University to partner with a school district on a scale commensurate to the program’s resources. The Program Coordinator attended regular meetings and engaged with the partnership on planning, review, and internship design. As a result, program candidates who were employed in that district were eligible to apply for the mentoring program starting in August 2020. For the 2020-2021 school year, six program candidates who were eligible to apply were accepted into the mentoring experience.

Program Documentation and Procedures

The accreditation process required evidence of various policies and procedures. To streamline the submission documents, new handbooks were created for the one-year internship and for the program overall. A new candidate progress referral procedure was developed and significant corrections and revisions to the course catalog and marketing tools were completed. New procedures were implemented to ensure the benchmark process was followed for candidate advancement through the benchmarks to degree issuance. These documents were used in the CAEP reports and with candidates, faculty, and staff to ensure consistent procedures throughout the program.

Assessment and Data

Accreditation also requires significant data collection and analysis. A new, full-time Assessment Coordinator position, focused on managing data collection and analysis using a cloud-based software VIA, was created and filled. This Coordinator increased faculty accountability for data collection and created tables and grids of data to help faculty in analyzing their data as a basis for program improvement. To assist faculty in data collection, at the conclusion of each term, the Assessment Coordinator audits the database and notifies professors when data are missing. Prior problems with missing or incomplete data were solved.

In preparing the final SPA report, the program responded to concerns about assessments. First, accreditors asked for significant revisions to the internship rubrics. This revision was challenging for the program because Illinois already required use of three statutory rubrics. Therefore, program faculty created a fourth internship rubric to align with accreditation and national standards while maintaining alignment to Illinois' standards in the three original internship rubrics. Second, all Key Assessment rubrics were revised, expanding the original three evaluative ratings to the four CAEP-required ratings. New rubric language was also created to improve alignment with the ELCC standards (CAEP, 2016). Third, the program created a phase-in study of graduates to measure their preparation and influence on student learning in P-21 schools. Finally, research was conducted to document the validity of the ISBE-required teacher evaluation assessment that was used as a Key Assessment for the program.

State Licensure and Assessments

Accreditation data analysis revealed lower rates of candidates taking the two Illinois licensure exams, with some candidates having difficulty passing the second exam. To address this problem, the program created a test preparation intervention to be presented during a final internship seminar. This initiative evolved into a workshop now offered once each semester on Saturdays. In addition, program faculty integrated practice test questions into their courses and created practice questions for an online practice test now offered to candidates.

Communication and Candidate Voice

Accreditation requires collection of various data from program completers, including their perceptions of their program. New exit surveys—created by the Director of Educator Preparation for the accreditation review—suggested completers were dissatisfied with program

communication and structure. In response to this finding, the new Program Coordinator communicated frequently with candidates, informing them about program deadlines, program changes, and program benchmarks. The Program Coordinator also assumed a new advocacy role to help candidates manage the bureaucracy of the University. Frequent surveys of current and former candidates were conducted to understand textbook preferences and perceptions of the Illinois licensure exams; exit surveys of all candidates were implemented by the EPP in August 2018. And, with high expectations for the depth of the qualitative data to be collected, a phase-in study of program completers working in school leadership roles was created and implemented, later replaced with outcomes data provided by ISBE.

Issuance of National Recognition and Improved Candidate Perceptions

The program expected to learn the final decision regarding the third and final SPA submission by February 1, 2019. On the morning of January 31, 2019, the Division Chair and other University administrators received an email from CAEP announcing their decision for the principal preparation program. This notification of failing the final accreditation submission raised the turbulence to extreme as faculty considered how this decision would damage the program.

The Director of Educator Preparation immediately phoned the CAEP representative who coordinated the accreditation process with the EPP to inquire about this disappointing and unexpected result. Within an hour, CAEP rescinded the initial negative report and apologized for sending an inaccurate document. CAEP confirmed the principal preparation program had earned full SPA accreditation on the third and final submission, effective February 1, 2019, through February 1, 2025. This welcome news quickly lowered the turbulence to a moderate level.

Following receipt of national accreditation, the program observed several outcome measures to determine the turbulence level. In August 2018, the program began collecting annual exit data during the concluding session of the final internship. The purpose of this data collection was to inform program improvements and monitor trends in candidate satisfaction. Because most accreditation reforms were implemented between August 2018 and April 2019, comparing exit survey data from August 2018 with data from the following two years captures the perceptions of one group prior to the reforms and two groups following the reforms. When candidates were asked if they would enroll at the University again, positive responses increased by 82.60% in August 2019. The increase in program reputation gained through accreditation had contributed to the stability of the program (Gross, 2020). A chart of selected questions from the exit surveys is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

Candidate Exit Satisfaction Surveys

Question	August 2018 Positive Responses	August 2019 Positive Responses	August 2020 Positive Responses
Survey Participants	N = 23	N = 18	N = 23
If I were to begin my education experience (most recent degree, license,	38%	68%	85%

or endorsement) all over again, I would attend (the University).

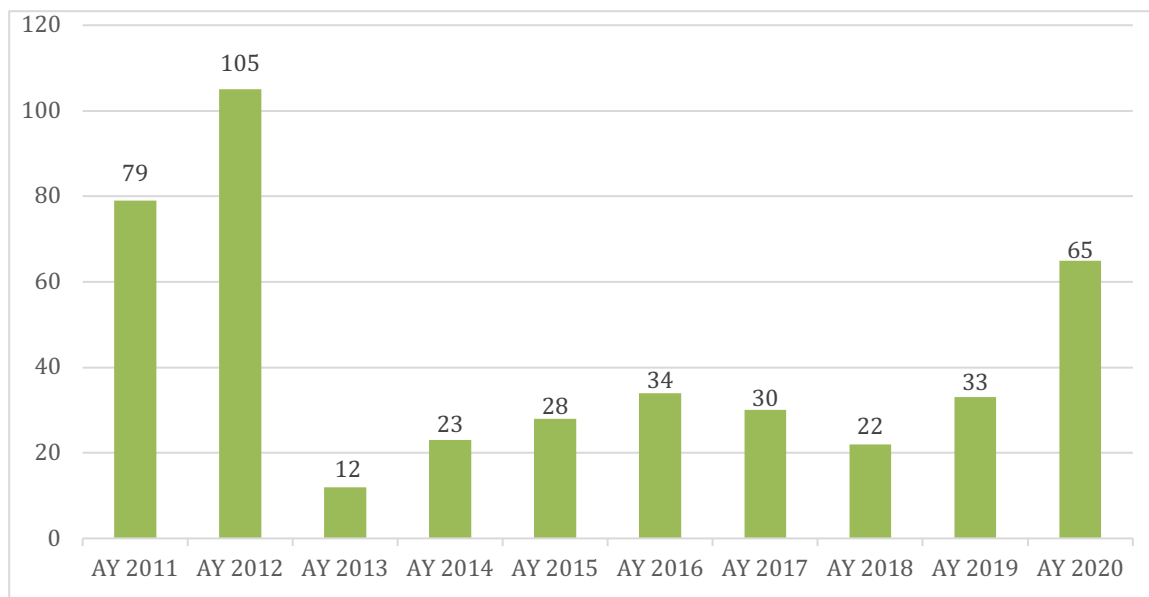
My program prepared me for the principal licensure exam.	53%	88%	75%
Perceptions of Program Quality			
Instruction	57%	88%	95%
Selection/Acceptance Process	41%	76%	85%
Sequence of Courses	52%	76%	80%
Portfolio Assessment	48%	76%	75%
Preparation to Implement:			
Curriculum Process	64%	94%	100%
Professional Ethics	77%	94%	100%
Human Resources	57%	88%	95%
Evaluation Process	64%	88%	100%

Note: University documents.

This reputation increase is one indicator of stability, as is enrollment (Gross, 2020). The program experienced a 195% increase in enrollment between AY 2018 and AY 2020—following the implementation of changes during accreditation (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Annual New Student Enrollment (AY 2011-2020)



Note: University documents.

Discussion and Recommendations

In their discussion of accreditation, Berliner and Schmelkin (2010) contended that “major changes cannot be made at the last minute without undercutting the stability of a program” (p. 1). However, this program’s experience suggests that rapid accreditation changes produced greater program stability. Like Lewin’s concept of unfreezing an organization (1958), the accreditation turbulence created an “emotional stir-up” (p. 344), a sense of urgency to refocus the organization on needed changes. Gross suggested that organizations operating as learning systems could use turbulence as “an opportunity to reflect, innovate, and actually profit” (Gross, 2020, p. 33) because reaching stability requires flexibility and change.

Deadlines may not allow organizations time to engage in deep sense making and reflection when “the need for a rapid, well-considered response is too acute” (Gross, 2020, pp. 29-30). While accreditation pressures initially increased the turbulence level of this program, the process brought focused reflection and improvement, resulting in program stability, improved program outcomes, and full national recognition. The cascading turbulence was caused by the program’s inability to change, caused primarily by the lack of human capital and leadership. However, the employment of a Program Coordinator in August 2018 who believed in the potential of the program—coupled with the accreditation lever—provided “the needed energy to respond in measured flexible ways” (Gross, 2020, p. 33).

Now that accreditation has been achieved, the program must plan for the next accreditation cycle to avoid the cascading turbulence of the previous cycle. Local procedures must be monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing documentation and fidelity of implementation. In addition, though stability was achieved, the timelines left little opportunity to reflect or study. The positionality of program faculty was not a major driver in the reforms. The Program Coordinator worked in isolation and minimally engaged other program faculty to participate in accreditation revisions. For continual improvement processes to have lasting influence, all program faculty must engage in the processes.

Consistent with the research literature, the lack of human capital for implementing the accreditation processes significantly hindered program stability (Groves, 2019; Hail et al., 2019). However, once the EPP added additional positions for assessment and educator preparation, these non-faculty personnel began work to draft reports and reform local procedures. With the Division Chair, these two dedicated staff members spent many evenings and weekends during 2017 and 2018 working to correct past accreditation problems. The new Program Coordinator began their accreditation work in August 2018, in addition to acclimating to a new faculty position with teaching, service, and research expectations. Research cautions that personnel assigned to accreditation tasks may be challenged by the workload burdens and suffer negative personal consequences from the stressors of the position (Hail et al., 2019; Woolston, 2012). University leadership must monitor and support these personnel to reduce burnout potential.

Overall, principal preparation programs are encouraged to use this research to shape their own improvement processes and avoid the challenges described here. Rather than making changes merely for compliance, however, programs are encouraged to use the process for collaborative reflection, study, and improvement. Accreditation can be an important credential for external validation of program quality, but this case has shown how programs can leverage accreditation to motivate program reform. The authors hope others will benefit from this study and use accreditation to improve their own programs.

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A Voice at the Table: The Role of Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) in Advancing the Preparation of School Leaders in Florida

This manuscript has 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.



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Educational leadership faculty from Florida state-accredited educational leadership programs formed the Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) in 1995 to provide a means through which they could effectively communicate and work together on issues of mutual interest, and for twenty-five years members have collaborated to raise the profile of the profession. FAPEL works to effect change by serving as experts in a broad range of statewide issues that affect principal preparation, facilitating informed advocacy, and developing communication pathways with state regulators, and legislators. FAPEL presents a model for collective interactions among educational leadership faculty to improve the quality of their programs and influence state and regional issues related to principal preparation.

Keywords: Educational Leadership; Higher Education; Principal Preparation; Masters Programs; Principal Preparation; Florida; FAPEL

In 1993, Block described the educational environment as being characterized by accelerating and turbulent change, complexity, confusion, and conflict in comparison to previous decades focused on control, consistency, and predictability of the educational process. Nowhere was this turbulence felt more than in the state of Florida where until the 1980s, the graduate program in educational administration was the predominant method of principal preparation. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) granted certification in administration and/or supervision which qualified a person to hold positions as school principal, assistant principal, or district level administrator depending on the specified qualification established by the school district. To obtain certification in administration or administration and supervision, an applicant completed a master's degree in education administration from an approved program or completed a specified number of graduate hours as an add-on to another graduate degree from an approved graduate program (Florida Board of Education Rules and Regulations, 1980). But in the 1980's due to state legislation, there was a systemic change in how principals should be prepared.

During this period educational leadership faculty leading Florida programs had no unifying voice and no leverage at the state level. Early in 1994 Peter Cistone (Florida International University), Bill Bozeman (University of Central Florida), and representatives from Florida Atlantic University, Florida State University and the University of Florida (W. Bozeman 2018 & R. Taylor, 2019, personal communication) met to consider the establishment of an association that would enable Florida educational leadership professors a voice in the development process of legislation on educational leadership programs and certification (P. Borthwick, 2018, personal communication). In 1995 articles of association were drafted and the Florida Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (FAPEL) was formed.

This study examines the origins and impact of a state association representing educational leadership faculty. It draws on (a) empirical data; (b) conceptual analysis; and (c) the conceptualization of intellectual histories. First, the literature is reviewed. Second, the study's methods are described and the findings of the analysis presented. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings concerning the extant literature and offers implications for both leadership preparation programs, educational leadership faculty, and state associations. Insights will be beneficial to states in the process of creating a professor of educational leadership association.

Conceptual Framework and Review of Relevant Literature

The emergent conceptual framework examines the view that an association can better be understood by a consideration of power and influence, and how members participate in the association. The literature review is divided into two sections. First, social network theory and urban regime theory are conceptualized. Second, the political environment is reviewed with a specific focus on state legislation relating to principal preparation. The intent is to give the reader a snapshot of the ever-changing landscape of principal preparation in Florida and to provide a rationale as to the important relevance of a state association for ensuring high-quality principal preparation.

Social Network Theory

Social networking is defined as the process of developing relationships with other individuals, based on mutual interests, friendship, interdisciplinary knowledge, learning information, and

other beneficial reasons (Cote, 2019). The theory is founded on Barne's (1954) seminal research on social relationships in a small parish in Norway in the 1950s. Barne's analyzed the relationships of individuals in a social class and is believed to be the source for phrases such as "networking" and "social networking" used today (Cote, 2019). The impact of Barne's (1954) research has provided the framework for social network theory grounded on organizational structures with a focus on social relationships, including the influence of hierarchy, centrality, and power in an organizational structure (Liu & Moskvina, 2016, Cote, 2019). Barne's (1954) concluded that diverse relationships between acquaintances, friends, and followers provide an arrangement of strong and weak ties intertwined between individuals in a social setting. Borgatti and Halgin, (2011) explain a connection between ties of a given type constitutes a social relation, and each connection of actors defines a different network with connections referred to as a networking relationship.

In the formation of networking relationships with other individuals, the exchange of information and knowledge provides networking opportunities that will evolve and develop over time (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011). A network is described as a structure of actors or "nodes" connected by ties or connections (Cote, 2019).

Kasushin (2002) emphasizes the pivotal nature of networks in facilitating social capital by drawing on resources controlled by individual network members thereby increasingly developing knowledge, influence, and power. Hausman and Goldring (2001) stress that network building is necessary to cultivate partnerships with both the private and public sectors. The most productive social networks are horizontal/egalitarian (Gamarnikow & Green, 2000) with a stable balance of power (Bonachich et al., 2001).

Urban Regime Theory

In the last three decades, urban regime theory has become the dominant theory for the study of local politics (Imbroscio, 1998; Davies & Blanco, 2017). The theory clarifies the nature of local power structures and their importance for political decision making (Davies & Blanco, 2017). It emphasizes the need for pragmatic actors to build alliances to get things done thereby sharing collective power horizontally rather than vertically (Davies, 2002; Davies & Blanco, 2017). Power is perceived as fragmented and regimes as the collaborative arrangement through which local government and private actors assemble the capacity to govern (Stone, 1989, 1993, 1998; Davies, 2002; Davies & Blanco, 2017). The way people organize, according to Stone (1989), is in pursuit of small opportunities, comprising selective incentives, small purposes, and accomplishments. Most of the time, actors pursue immediate opportunities and respond to immediate threats (Stone, 1989). Stone (1993) describes the regime concept as originating from a political economy perspective that rejects assumptions that government authority is adequate to make and carry out policies. Although regimes represent how local actors mediate external pressures, the focus in regime analysis is on the internal dynamics of coalition building, and on who has the power to set the agenda.

Stoker and Mossberger (1994) identified five steps in regime building: purpose; motivation of participants; the sense of common purpose; quality of coalition; and relationship with the wider political environment. Crowson and Boyd (2001) take a broader view of regime theory by asserting that the theory is a culturalist interpretation of politics and that the prime source of power in a community's development is grounded on the community's overall ecology i.e. the essential culture; social institutions; local history; values, expectations, and local markets.

Political Environment-Historical Context

State

In 1979, the Florida Legislature passed the Management Training Act (FS 231.086) (MTA), which outlined a new process for ensuring Florida schools were managed efficiently and effectively. The Act stated that the management of schools required professionals with "unique blends of skills, experience, and academic background which is rarely provided through typical programs in education" (p.1). The Act intended to develop a uniform post-secondary training program for school leaders. The Act created the Florida Council on Educational Management (FCEM) with the power to generate the 19 Florida Principal Competencies, which became part of all administrative training programs. In section four of the statute, the Florida Academy for School Leaders (FASL) was established to upgrade the quality of management in the Florida public school system. The fifth section provided that the school board of each district should design its own program for training aspiring principals.

The MTA system involved three major partners—State University System (SUS) institutions, school districts, and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Each partner was assigned a specific role. Universities were tasked with teaching the knowledge base associated with the field of educational leadership (Level 1). The state also required that educational leadership programs (formerly known as administration, or supervision and administration programs) offer the following eight core curriculum areas: public school curriculum and instruction, organizational management and development, human resource management and development, leadership skills, communication skills, technology, educational law, and educational finance plus six credit hours in one of the following areas of emphasis: elementary, middle, secondary or exceptional student education (FAPEL White Paper, 1999). School districts were required to develop a Human Resource Management Development plan for recruitment, selection, certification, training, assessment, and compensation of all school administrators (Management Training Act, 1979, Florida Statutes 231.095; State Board of Education Rule 6A-4.0082). The FDOE was tasked with developing and adopting guidelines for approving university program curricula, a program review process, procedures for initial and continuing program approval, and the administration of the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE).

Partly in response to three influential reports describing the way administrators should be prepared: *The National Commission in Educational Administration, Leaders for America's Schools* (1987); *Time for Results* (National Governors' Association, 1991); and the Southern Regional Education Board report, *Effective School Principals* (1986) a major shift occurred as the locus of educational policymaking moved from the federal government and local governments to the states (Ravitch, 1990). The state increased its influence on leadership preparation programs, setting policies related to certification and licensure requirements, approving programs, and providing resources to universities through state budgets (Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016).

In 2001, Florida Statute 231.0861(2) reduced the certification requirements needed for an individual to obtain licensure as a principal (Archer, 2002). This opened the pool of prospective candidates who could lead a school. Following this legislative change, educators from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the National Association of Elementary Principals met to provide a framework for leadership development.

In 2005, a list of ten principal standards was produced in Florida as described by Florida Statute 1012.986. Using the leadership standards adopted by the State Board of Education, the Southern Regional Education Board, and the National Staff Development Council, this statutory requirement mandated support for the human resource development needs of principals, principal leadership teams, and candidates for principal leadership positions. Each of Florida's 67 school districts created a unique program and was individually approved by the Florida Department of Education. The Florida Principal Leadership Standards were updated in 2011. The most significant changes from the 2005 version of standards were in content, focus, and specificity as the new standards emphasized instructional leadership and student achievement. Mountford and Acker-Hocevar (2013) found that policies aimed at introducing new educational leadership standards in Florida failed to involve university preparation program faculty in their development and yet faculty were later mandated to comply with a policy with which they felt no ownership.

In 2020 the FDOE continues to review and approve each submitted Level 1 Educational Leadership Programs every 5 years. A postsecondary institution, school district, charter school, or charter management organization may apply to the department to establish a Level I school leader preparation program (Florida Statutes 1012.562.2(a), 2019). Currently, 24 universities have an approved Level 1 Educational Leadership Program, and one school district (FDOE, 2020). Effective December 2016, educational leadership programs seeking initial or continued program approval rating from the state (Florida Statutes 1012.562), were required to submit an electronic folio that contains a description and supporting evidence of the design, delivery, curriculum content, evaluation of the specified program, and explicit description of a partnership agreement between the institution's principal preparation program and the school district(s) (Florida Statutes 1012.562(2)(a)2.).

School District

Emergent literature and practice continue to support the notion that high-quality preparation programs come from partnerships between universities and school districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Jacobson et al., 2015; Fry et al., 2007). Formally established partnerships between school districts and universities are mutually beneficial as the outcome is the design of a principal preparation program tailored to the local context and need (Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016). Districts can influence curriculum and course content to align with district reform priorities; offer support for prospective candidates; and identify excellent practitioners to collaborate with university faculty in delivering the program (Orr, King, & LaPointe, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Reyes-Guerra & Lochmiller, 2016). Universities can support district leadership decision making by providing evidence-based research and data to ensure that limited resources are best utilized to support the community they serve.

Methodology

For twenty-five years, FAPEL has been a leading professional association for the field of educational leadership preparation in the state of Florida. This study conducted over a period of two years (2017-2019) examines the origins of FAPEL and in doing so draws on (a) empirical data; (b) conceptual analysis; and (c) the conceptualization of intellectual histories from individual narratives (Cresswell, 2013). The procedure consists of gathering data through a collection of stories, individual experiences, and chronologically ordering the meaning of those

experiences (p.70). The study is a contribution to filling the historical and archival gap in the association's history, and a blueprint for young ICPEL affiliated state associations.

Historical research attempts to arrive at an account of what has happened in the past by systematically examining association documents, extant documents, and collected individual narratives. It is conducted to uncover the unknown; to answer questions; to identify the relationship that the past has to the present; to record and evaluate the accomplishments of individual, agencies, and institutions, and aid our understanding of the culture in which we live (Johnson & Christensen, 2016, p.425). This study followed Johnsen and Christensen's (2016) five steps for historical research: (1) research topic identification, (2) data collection, (3) data evaluation, (4) data synthesis, and (5) report preparation. Data were collected through individual narratives and semi-structured interviews with key FAPEL leaders (past Presidents), and members. This study capitalized on qualitative methods to identify and examine the reactions, feelings, and opinions of FAPEL leaders and members related to FAPEL's development and sustainability, impact in the field, and the state of Florida.

The aims of this historical study were to (1) identify the factors contributing to the origin of FAPEL (2) identify key FAPEL and state events from 1995 to 2020, (3) describe key contributions of FAPEL to the educational leadership field during this period, and (4) identify potential future directions for FAPEL. Key leaders (past presidents) ($n = 10$) and members ($n=10$) participated in narrative and semi-structured interviews. Results from the thematic analysis revealed several themes in three areas: FAPEL development growth and sustainability; accomplishments; and possible future directions for FAPEL to explore.

At the time of writing, there have been 14 FAPEL presidents, eight males, and six females. Elected presidents have come from both public and private institutions: five presidents were faculty at the University of Central Florida; three presidents were faculty at Florida Atlantic University; and one president from each of the following institutions- Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Nova Southeastern University, St. Leo University, Stetson University, and the University of South Florida.

Findings

The Catalyst for Educational Leadership Faculty Transitioning from Isolation to Collaboration

The emergence of the 1980s critical reports of school leadership preparation combined with Florida MTA requirement for review, continuing approval of all educational leadership preparation providers in the state (State Board Rules 6A-5.081 and 6A-5.080), and development of the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) were the catalyst in bringing together professors of educational leadership programs in Florida to form FAPEL. Up to this time networking among (and even within) the State University System (SUS) institutions was almost nonexistent. Compounding the issue was the factious relationship between many regional programs and local school districts (past president narrative, 2018).

Association Growth

In 1997, there were six institutional members i.e. Florida Atlantic University, Nova Southeastern University, Stetson University, University of Florida, University of North Florida, and the

University of Central Florida. By 1998 there were seven institutional members with a total of 58 individual members (FAPEL minutes and narratives). Attendance at recent meetings has risen to representation from 20 institutions with seven institutional members (FAPEL minutes). The Association's goal is to have representation from each university in Florida that provides a Master's degree and/or certification program in Educational Leadership (FAPEL website).

Association minutes suggest that membership continued to grow in the early years. For example, in 1997, FAPEL and UCF hosted a hospitality reception at the annual convention of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), and at the Southern Regional Conference (SRCEA). Early meetings (1997 & 1998) were co-sponsored by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS), and since 2013, Pearson has sponsored meetings (narrative and minutes).

Florida Department of Education (FDOE) and the Florida Association of School Superintendents (FASS) attend and participate in meetings (minutes). In May 1998, a panel of principals shared with FAPEL members what they believed principals needed to know to lead and manage successful schools in the future. A second panel discussion focused on Educational Leadership Program Approval. The FDOE made a presentation focused on the Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE). This trend of involving practitioners from the field, state policymakers, and FLDOE administrators in association meetings has remained constant.

In May 1998 a motion was approved by members enabling the President to attend one of three national organizations' annual meetings (UCEA, AERA, & NCPEA), not to exceed \$300. FAPEL Board members now attend the following conferences in an association/institution/individual capacity: AERA, NCPEA/ICPEL, UCEA, UCEA with association funding for the President to attend the annual meeting of ICPEL (narrative and minutes).

The association met annually with Orlando proving to be a favorite location because of its state centrality. The later shift to twice a year occurred in 2010-2011 when the association began holding one meeting a year in Tallahassee at the Florida Department of Education Building (winter/spring) and also a fall meeting in the current President's hometown (narrative and minutes).

In July 2013, the FAPEL Board held their first-day retreat in the Orlando home of Rosemarye Taylor (2012-2014). The retreat's goal was to substantively plan for the 2013-2014 FAPEL year including fall and spring meeting agendas. The Board's retreat has since become a scheduled event held at the President's university. An outcome of the retreat is that the association's planning is strategic, and that board members have an understanding of their roles and responsibilities (narrative and minutes).

Advocacy

Either the Education Commissioner, Chancellor of Florida Colleges, Chancellor of Public schools, or a representative from the Office of Safe Schools is invited to attend FAPEL meetings and to give the opening address. The invitation for the fall meeting at Tallahassee held in the education building is generally accepted. This strategy raises the profile of the association and engages members in critical conversations that might not otherwise occur.

Policy Liaison Committee (2011) adopted a service orientation with a general membership agreement that it would advise the association regarding policy issues. In 2016, the committee was renamed *The Policy and Advocacy Committee* as part of a strategic effort to develop a strong, positive relationship with FLDOE and to become a voice for policy and

legislation related to our field. The committee has crafted several White Papers with approval from members. The first White Paper was a concept paper on Principal Preparation in Florida submitted to FDOE and the second prepared for the Teacher Leader Preparation Implementation Committee (TLPIC, 2015) giving recommendations for a future leadership preparation program accountability model. More recently FAPEL has been discussing the impact of student trauma on learning, and the implications for schools.

Legislative Liaison Committee (2011) creates talking points about current legislation; meets with legislators or more typically aides during the spring meeting in Tallahassee; and ensures that legislators know of the association and Florida universities with FAPEL members.

Florida Education Leadership Exam (FELE)

The FELE is a recurrent item meeting agenda whether to review data presented by FDOE, Division of Accountability, Research, and Measurement, discuss program issues or to share the best test-taking strategies and practice (meeting agendas, minutes, narratives, and website).

The reforms in leadership preparation policy that resulted in various iterations of the Florida Education leadership Exam (FELE) evolved into a problematic process with empirical limitations and practical issues (Storey & Johnson, 2017). Success on the FELE is a requirement in order to graduate from any state-accredited principal preparation program.

The current FELE, known, as FELE 3.0 was developed to align with the State Board of Education-approved FPLS, adopted into a rule (6A-5.080) by the State Board in 2011 (Canto, 2013). FAPEL members were involved in the FELE 3.0 developmental process e.g. item writing committee, item review for bias and sensitivity committee, validation committee, standard-setting committee, and pilot testing. Before FELE 3.0 statewide pass rates were generally at or near 90% (minutes & narratives). With the implementation of FELE 3.0 came a marked decrease in pass rates. In 2015-16, the two years since the implementation of FELE 3.0 with the new cut scores, pass rates across the four examination areas ranged from 52% to 63% for first-attempt and from 71% to 75% for the best attempt (Canto & Olgar, 2017). FAPEL pushed for data to be first disaggregated by race and later by the institution as increasingly evaluation of leadership preparation programs was based on outcomes that largely reflected FELE results. FAPEL recommended that attention be paid to nurturing demonstrable competencies rather than completion of multiple-choice questions and to utilizing modern technology to assess aspiring administrators (minutes & narratives). An electronic portfolio and clinical simulation are recommendations made to FDOE (minutes & narratives).

Meeting feedback forms constantly highlight the value of presentations by the FDOE focused on the FELE, and the opportunity to discuss the test in an open forum with colleagues.

Program Design

Early meeting agendas highlight the concern of members in transferring from a focus on individual courses in educational leadership to a focus on knowledge, and competencies, needed for success. FAPEL members collaborated on the redesign of their program concerning the sequence of courses compliant with state legislation (minutes and narratives). Generally, Introduction to Educational Leadership was the first course, followed by core courses such as law, technology, personnel, finance, leadership, community relations, and curriculum. Courses in the program of studies recommended for inclusion toward the end of a student's program were

Curriculum Innovations, Decision-Oriented Research, and Applications of Leadership Theory (Cox et al., 1999).

Partnerships

Effective partnerships continue to be seen as essential to navigate through change and meet the ever-growing and changing demands of stakeholders, and policy-makers.

State-FAPEL has worked with the FDOE first in creating higher standards for educational leadership program approval, developing a Florida Educational Leadership Exam (FELE) that is rigorous, and providing feedback to policymakers and the FDOE. Members have participated as subject matter experts, item validation sessions; standards development, competencies/skills development, and item development. Second, by advocating for the need for greater emphasis to be placed on school safety in both the Florida Principal Leadership Standards (FPLS) and the FELE.

International- Since 2016, FAPEL has worked with a recently created UK research interest group (RIG), focused on Leadership Preparation and Development, launched by British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society (BELMAS).

Professional Learning

Through meeting breakout sessions members can engage each other in the professional dialogues and discussions that will lead to a stronger profession in Florida (Reyes-Guerra, 2016).

Aspiring Administrator's Program

In 2010, the board added a graduate student membership category and developed a program aimed at mentoring and helping those doctoral students in school leadership programs who wished to be exposed to the issues faced by educational leadership faculty in Florida. Special mentoring sessions have been developed for graduate students before and during meetings. The goal is to provide networking opportunities with faculty across the state. Graduate students are also invited to shadow Legislative Committee members during the spring meeting and to accompany them when they visit legislators on the hill.

To connect with the school leader profession, FAPEL has associated itself with the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA) to help bridge the area of theory to practice. Since 2014, FASA has offered and given scholarships to graduate students to attend their summer conference. These opportunities have included transportation costs, free registration, free hotel stays, and special sessions designed for the aspiring assistant principal.

Research Alliance (FRA)

The seeds for the FAPEL Research Alliance (FRA) were sown at the Spring 2018 meeting during a discussion between FAPEL members, Eileen McDaniels (FDOE), and Philip Canto (FDOE). To date the University of Central Florida, University of South Florida, University of North Florida, Florida State University, and St. Thomas University have contributed abstracts from graduate students in their Educational Leadership doctoral programs (EdD & PhD) to the FRA

database. The database can be accessed through the FAPEL website (narrative, minutes, past president report).

The intent is to

1. Develop an open-access database containing educational leadership doctoral program dissertation abstracts from all FAPEL member institutions with an educational leadership doctoral program (EdD & PhD).
2. Raise awareness of quality research currently being completed in Florida
3. Enable FAPEL institutions to build upon research completed by FAPEL members.
4. Sustain collaborative research engagement leading to graduate work in cross-institutional teams.
5. Contribute valid, relevant, and contextual research to state conversation about K-12 education reform.
6. Facilitate meta-synthesis of the database to the benefit of the state of Florida.

Discussion

Overall, participants ($n = 20$) believed FAPEL will likely continue to adapt and change to meet the needs of educational leadership faculty, school leaders, the Board of Education, and legislators. One past president highlighted this theme stating, "Some challenges for both FAPEL and university programs is how we ensure that we are constantly responding to changes in the national landscape." Narratives highlighted the many opportunities for networking and learning from others. Half of the participants ($n = 10$, 50.00%) described resources provided through the biannual meetings, and leadership opportunities.

The majority of past presidents ($n = 8$) referenced the willingness of FAPEL and its members to work with Florida's Department of Education and other Florida organizations, and specifically emphasized with pride FAPEL's extensive involvement in advocacy initiatives. Past presidents also discussed how FAPEL has built a solid organizational infrastructure with a dedicated, elected board. Overall, past presidents believed that FAPEL has emerged as a leading professional organization. Furthermore, many believed FAPEL has advanced the preparation of school leaders in Florida.

Members highlighted the need for the organization to maintain its momentum and continue to expand the resources made available to members. Several interviewees mentioned the need to extend the mentoring program for current doctoral students.

Throughout the interviews, professional members, student members, and leaders in FAPEL highlighted similar benefits to membership such as networking, access to resources, and the organization is tailored to member needs. However, more past presidents and members discussed the member-centered nature of the organization. Many similarities in perceptions of future directions were seen across the type of interviewees related to the need to continue to strengthen the association, maintain the relationship with the FDOE and legislators, increase the visibility of the organization, and continuing to guide the profession.

Past presidents rather than members pointed out that it was faculty from public institutions that saw the need for a state association representing educational leadership faculty. But in recent years their role in preparing aspiring school leaders within the state has decreased with the growth and availability of out of state online options (Baker, 2012). Several online universities with a presence in Florida have sent a representative to meetings.

In summary principal preparation in Florida has been shaped by state policies implementing federal education initiatives (Manna, 2015; Fusarelli et al., 2019), foundations such as Wallace (Murphy, Young, Crow, & Ogawa, 2009), and commercial organizations such as Pearson who are active in the test development market (Storey, 2019). Whilst the locus of control concerning principal preparation remains at the state level, FAPEL provides an open communication pathway for educational leadership faculty to both state legislators and the state department of education.

Implications for Research and Practice

FAPEL's involvement with FDOE concerning quality assurance and credentialing has allowed educational leadership faculty to present state-based research and best practice at the highest state level. The importance of having a professional association representing the voice of educational leadership faculty should not be underestimated. Many of the future directions described by interviewees in this study apply to the field overall. For example, interviewees describe the need to adapt to the local landscape, build partnerships, and share best practices. This includes being aware of research needs, identifying and obtaining research funding, and ensuring that educational leadership research is connecting evidence to practice.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, not all past presidents that served during the study period participated in the study; therefore, the results may not represent the views of all those who served between 1995 and 2020. A convenience sample was used to select individuals for member interviews, which may not be representative of all FAPEL members.

Recommendations

State educational leadership associations provide the forum for educational leadership faculty to be informed, enter into a dialogue, and develop solutions to the challenges facing our profession. All involved in the preparation of future school leaders have a responsibility to continually focus on improving our profession. Collectively, a state association has the opportunity to influence policy and legislation governing our profession, programs, and the role of school leaders; confront proposed legislation impacting our profession; engage in professional learning to improve our practice; and stay relevant and connected to those that we serve. Programs continuing to work in silos without state representation are unlikely to have a place at the state level table, and individuals will have little leverage with legislators and the state's department of education.

Conclusion

For twenty-five years, FAPEL has been the state association for educational leadership faculty, identifying and addressing the key issues facing the preparation of school leaders in Florida. Over the years FAPEL has continued to redefine its priorities, improve its governance structure, and expand its relationships with other organizations. Events and themes highlighted in this study have shown how FAPEL has a role to play in the development of policy that governs the profession and to ensure that program design and faculty professional development is grounded

on a common understanding based on research and best practice. A willingness by board members to constantly review and reflect on the role of the association in current times has led to significant changes to the financial infrastructure of the association and an engaged membership. Although there will be many challenges to face in the future, FAPEL seems well-positioned to meet these challenges.

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“Let’s Stay Together”: Examining a Grow Your Own Program in an Urban District

This manuscript has 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.



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Grow Your Own Programs (GYO) have gained increasing popularity with the impact of shortages of quality teaching candidates in many school districts, particularly in urban areas. To address the lack of quality teaching candidates, school districts and states have responded creatively to recruit the best teachers for their schools. To explore some of the intricacies involved with GYO partnerships between school districts and universities, this article describes a case study of how two urban school districts partnered with a local university to provide pedagogy and support for paraprofessionals' Grow Your Own programs and their processes to build the partnerships. Specifically, it highlights the overall impressions, opinions, and feelings of stakeholders about participating in the program and the specific incidents, obstacles, and occurrences that may provide guidance and a first attempt at “best practices” for other organizations that might consider GYO programs.

Grow Your Own Programs (GYO) have gained increasing popularity with the impact of shortages of quality teaching candidates in many school districts, particularly in urban areas. To address the lack of quality teaching candidates, school districts and states have responded creatively to recruit the best teachers for their schools. Because of the importance of quality teacher recruitment, local businesses and nonprofit foundations have engaged in providing scholarships to students to help them pursue careers in education to guarantee graduates coming back to their hometown or region for a specific time to teach. The state of Texas has endorsed similar approaches by providing Grow Your Own grants to supply its districts with support in recruitment and retention efforts of paraprofessionals through a competitive process. To explore some of the intricacies involved with GYO partnerships between school districts and universities, this article describes a case study of how two urban school districts partnered with a local university to provide pedagogy and support for paraprofessionals' Grow Your Own programs and their processes to build the partnerships.

Purpose

High teacher attrition rates have been a constant variable many school administrators have weathered annually in providing the best-qualified professionals to teach students, particularly in low socioeconomic urban communities. Many graduates of top-ranked programs seek assignments in private schools or affluent suburban areas to begin and sustain their teaching careers. This paradox leaves urban administrators with unqualified pools of teachers or relegated to filling positions with full-time substitutes with little or no expertise in the highest areas of need. The current trend of teacher attrition led by smaller qualified teacher pools, resignations, retirements, and recent frustrations due to teaching during the pandemic often place additional strains on school districts. Grow Your Own initiatives can potentially provide quality teachers who are qualified and familiar with the demographics of the communities and the specific needs of their students. This research examines the inner workings that contribute to a successful Grow Your Own program at one university and local school districts it serves.

By examining the perspectives, experiences, and challenges of students pursuing a degree through this type of program, school leaders can gain their views on the value of GYO programs. Interviews with the classroom teachers, cooperating teachers, principals, and university stakeholders convey to school districts and universities the planning, scheduling, and support systems needed for successful GYO programs.

Finally, the rich descriptions and perspectives of the stakeholders provided in this qualitative inquiry give not only a voice to all the participants in these programs but also the insight necessary for university personnel to establish programs that meet the needs of students participating in GYO programs, areas such as field placement and designing courses that fit the needs of the participants as they fulfill their contracted obligations to the school districts.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions in this study were related to the experiences of the participants. Researchers were interested in the overall impressions, opinions, and feelings about participating in the program and the specific incidents, obstacles, and occurrences that may provide guidance and a first attempt at “best practices” for other organizations that might consider GYO programs. The study is framed by the following research questions: What components contribute to the

growth of a grow your own program? What are the experiences of students (current paraprofessionals), collaborating teachers, principals, university principals, and university directors in a grow your own program?

Literature Review

There has been a national concern with principals experiencing difficulty in attracting qualified teachers to their schools. While the reasons behind the teacher shortage are debatable, the inability to hire the best teachers to work with students in low-income schools is well documented (Castro, Quinn, Fuller, Barnes, & University Council for Educational Administration, 2018). Although the average starting salary for teachers has increased significantly over the past 20 years, studies indicate a continued decline in the number of teachers entering the profession through traditional teacher education programs, particularly in the areas of STEM and special education (Ingersoll, May & Collins, 2019; Behrstock-Sherratt, 2016). Because of alternative approaches to certification, only about half of the graduating teachers in any given year are hired as public-school teachers (Cowan, Goldhaber, Hayes, & Theobald, 2016). The issue, according to Ingersoll et al. (2019) and Posey (2017), is not a "quantity of available certified teachers" issue, but rather a deep dissatisfaction of newly hired teachers with the climate of the public school and its various mandates. Ingersoll (2019) points to statistics that indicate, although the number of minority teachers has doubled since the late 1980s, efforts to keep minority teachers in classrooms are undermined because of turnover related to poor working conditions and other issues associated with disadvantaged schools. Wronowski (2018), to address these reasons and more, promotes a teacher recruitment and retention tool that increases teacher empowerment within the framework of the learning organizations. In a similar approach, Grow Your Own programs became popular in the last decade as a "grassroots" approach to change the status quo in local schools and school districts (Skinner, Garret, & Schultz, 2011).

Shortage of Teachers

The population of students of color in public schools across America is increasing. It is estimated currently, approximately 50% of the population of public schools are students of color (Jones, Holton, & Joseph, 2019). However, that percentage is expected to increase to 56% by 2024 (Jones et al., 2019; National Center for Children in Poverty [NCCP], 2017). While there has been an increase in students of color, there has not been a corresponding increase in teachers of color. Research in 2011 indicated there are shortages of teachers in many public-school districts in our nation. According to Swanson (2011), researchers estimated 2.7 million new teachers were needed to fill teacher shortages between 1998 and 2009. In addition, some 200,000 teachers were projected to be required each year following to meet the profession's needs (Swanson, 2011). Reasons contributing to the shortage of teachers include teacher attrition, retirement, and turnover (Swanson, 2011). Also, according to the Texas Comprehensive Center (2018), teachers have tendencies to teach at schools like the ones they attended in locations near their hometowns. This fact may negatively impact the quality and quantity of qualified teachers desiring to teach in lower-performing schools (Texas Comprehensive Center, 2018).

When there is a documented shortage of qualified teachers needed to fill the ranks, and despite the data that suggests that far more teachers of color are prepared annually, the number of teachers of color entering the profession remains low. Skinner (2010) reported that while colleges

and universities have responded to meet the shortage of teachers, the candidates in these programs stay white and female. As a result, the teaching force remains 80% white and largely monolingual (Jones et al., 2019; Garcia, Manuel, & Buly, 2019). Of the 3.2 million teachers in public schools, only 6% are Latinx, and 7% are African American (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019). Moreover, approximately 2% of the U.S. teaching population is African American, and less than 2% are Latino (Jones et al., 2019). So, while the number of students of color increases, the number of Latinx and African American teachers constitutes only a tiny percentage of the teaching population.

English language learners (ELL) are a rapidly growing segment of the population of students in the United States (Garcia et al., 2019). Furthermore, ELL students struggle to grasp academic content, particularly when placed in classrooms with teachers who lack adequate, specialized training in the appropriate pedagogical strategies to address English learner needs (Kennedy, 2020). Therefore, research supports the advantages of providing native-language instruction to ELLs as they acquire the English language (Kennedy, 2020). The predominantly White female teacher population cannot often meet the needs of the growing multilingualism found in schools today (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019).

It is essential to note the deficiency of qualified teachers is not distributed evenly amongst all schools but is more acute in high poverty schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). With many students of color attending public schools, these students' areas are often considerably populated with economically disadvantaged students. Due to the shortage of teachers, especially teachers of color, these areas must often resort to hiring teachers possessing temporary or substandard teaching permits (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019). "Teachers of color continue to be disproportionately assigned to under-resourced schools in low-income urban communities (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019, p.25)." Students of color are more likely when compared to their White and more affluent peers, to have teachers not certified in the core subjects as teachers (Barton & Coley, 2009).

As a result of failing to meet the needs of a growingly diverse student population, states and school districts have sought solutions to increase teachers of color in the teaching profession. Grow Your Own (GYO) programs are rising in many states as an answer to addressing the needs of a diverse student population (Gist, 2019). GYO programs are not focused simply on recruiting individuals of color to work in the teaching profession. These programs are designed to prepare teacher candidates who understand the complexities of diverse learning populations and the nature of the relationship between the schools and the communities (Skinner, 2010).

Why Grow Your Own?

There are several benefits to having diversity in the teaching workforce, according to the Texas Comprehensive Center (2018). When teachers of color reflect minority students, improvement is realized in student achievement, school attendance, advanced course enrollment, and enrollment in colleges and universities (Texas Comprehensive Center, 2018).

The national Grow Your Own Collective (GYOC) defines GYO programs as "highly collaborative, community-rooted, intensive efforts for recruiting, preparing, placing, and retaining diverse classroom teachers who dismantle institutional racism and work toward educational equity (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019). Grow Your Own programs have been described as a strategy used by states and communities to "employ to help recruit and retain teachers of color" (Valenzuela, 2017, p. 1). When qualified teacher shortages exist in teacher preparation programs and the teaching profession in general, GYO programs are considered pathways for states and

school districts to address this growing need (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019; Gist, Bianco, & Lynn, 2019). These "homegrown pathways" to the teaching profession offer access to the profession for "people of color from varied class, social, and linguistic backgrounds (Garcia et al., 2019; Gist et al., 2019).

Grow Your Own programs are exciting for a variety of reasons. First, they require teacher preparation programs to modify existing classic tracks to the teaching profession by training their focus away from the brick and mortar of the college campus and toward alternative paths. Programs of this type play a significant role in the preparation of teachers and the recruitment of teachers of color (Garcia et al., 2019; Gist, 2019). According to Gist (2019), once candidates involved in a GYO transition to becoming the teacher of record, there is a strong indication these teachers will remain in the profession. Retention is a crucial benefit of GYO programs (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019).

Candidates who participate in GYO programs are often established community members dedicated to the teaching profession and have served as aides, parents, and community activists (Gist et al., 2019). This concept is vital because established community members are less likely to move away at the end of a certification program. Moreover, established community members are vested in the community, which increases the likelihood they will remain in the community. GYO programs develop pathways for people of color from various social and linguistic backgrounds to become teachers (Gist et al., 2019). Proponents of GYO programs desire to diversify the teaching profession and improve the overall quality of teacher preparation programs (Rogers-Ard et al., 2019).

In many cases, the success of GYOs is dependent on funding from private entities and other state agencies (Ramirez, 2007). Evidence validates that GYO programs that offer strong financial, academic, and social supports are effective recruitment and retention strategies for districts (Muñiz, 2020). Additional benefits of GYO programs include a reduction in teacher turnover costs, increased stability in student-teacher relationships, and more experienced teachers (Muñiz, 2020). Collaboration between universities, state agencies, neighborhood groups, and school districts is a key to the success of GYOs (Ramirez, 2007). When meaningful collaboration occurs, GYO programs can generate highly qualified educators to teach in the geographic locations, content areas, and grade levels that typically face shortages (Muñiz, 2020).

GYO Grants in Texas

In September of 2018, Texas Commissioner Mike Morath announced that the Texas Education Agency would accept Grow Your Own Teacher Grants for the 2019-2021 school terms (Texas Education Agency, 2018). According to the press release, school districts may use the grant to encourage high school students to consider teaching as a profession. Paraprofessionals, teacher-aides, and long-term substitute teachers are eligible to use the grant to pursue certification (Texas Education Agency, 2018). According to Commissioner Morath, the 2018 grant emphasized small and rural districts that had previously been identified as high-need districts for certified teaching candidates. An emphasis to address the needs of small and rural districts was seen as an appropriate investment in Texas education. A vital goal of the 2018 grant was to facilitate diversity and increase the pool of teachers entering the profession (Texas Education Agency, 2018).

The second cycle of the grant provided opportunities for school districts to pair with approved regional service centers and institutions of higher learning to apply for grant awards. In

a January 2019 press release, the Texas Education Agency announced 36 school districts and teacher preparation programs were awarded grants in the second cycle. According to Commissioner Morath,

“Research shows that 60 percent of educators in the United States teach within 20 miles of where they went to high school,” said Commissioner Morath. “Because we know our future teachers are currently in our high schools, the goal of *Grow Your Own* is to help increase the quality and diversity of our teaching force and to better support our paraprofessionals, teacher's aides, and educators, especially in small and rural school districts.”

According to information provided in the press release, the Grow Your Own Grant funds:

- 51 current teachers to receive stipends to lead Education and Training courses, including for dual credit, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year;
- 123 paraprofessionals to receive a bachelor's and teacher certification and project them to be full-time teachers starting the 2021-2022 school year;
- 51 paraprofessionals to receive a teacher certification and project them to be full-time teachers starting the 2020-2021 school year;
- 15 teacher candidates to participate in an intensive pre-service experience and project them to be full-time teachers starting in the 2019-2020 school year;
- 94 teacher candidates to participate in a year-long clinical teaching placement and project them to be full-time teachers starting the 2020-2021 school year; and
- 52 high schools to start or grow Education and Training programs.

Information in a flyer published by the Texas Education Agency identifies three pathways provided in Cycle 3 of Texas Grow Your Own Grant (Texas Education Agency, n.d.). The first pathway offers funding to local education agencies and regional service centers. The grant aims to implement education and training courses in high school. The focus of this pathway is to provide high school students with dual credit courses. The second pathway focuses on the recruitment and support of paraprofessionals, instructional aides, and long-term substitutes. Through this pathway, the recipients remain employed with the district while they work towards becoming certified teachers. The third pathway is a new provision for the grant. In this pathway, the focus is on developing highly qualified teachers by providing support through a year-long clinical teaching assignment or an intensive pre-service teaching experience with a clinical component.

Methodology

Setting

The study was conducted with students attending a mid-size, urban-commuter university in the western-regional part of the U.S. The university has a predominantly non-traditional student body, with 43.9% of the undergraduate students identified as first-generation college students. Multiple resources are utilized to address the needs of the students, and 79% of the undergraduates complete a degree after five years.

Participants

To understand the perspectives and experiences of stakeholders, the study examined the input of students (current paraprofessionals), collaborating teachers, principals, university principals, and university directors in the grow your own program included in the study. Each group will be detailed below.

The student participants included 12 undergraduate females who were selected through a criterion-based nomination process. The criteria for student participants included a) being an educational paraprofessional at the elementary, middle, or high school level, (b) working in one of the local school districts which collaborated with the university on this project, and (c) having completed at least one year of undergraduate coursework. Additional demographic information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Student Participants' Demographics

Student	Age	Race	Years as Paraprofessional
Shannon	26	White	3
Judith	24	Hispanic	2
Tyna	31	Black	8
Leslie	25	Hispanic	2
Angelica	29	Hispanic	5
Cathy	24	Black	3
Anna	27	Hispanic	4
Veronica	34	White	7
Linda	32	Hispanic	8
Lillian	40	Hispanic	12
Charisma	35	Black	5
Laura	22	White	1

The district stakeholders are represented by the four building principals and 12 cooperating teachers at the participating schools in which the paraprofessionals worked. The principals provided feedback in the coordination, recruiting, and professional development of candidates in the program and broad experiences working with participants. Cooperating teachers provided training experiences and worked intimately with the paraprofessionals as they traversed through the school year.

University stakeholders were the last group of participants to contribute to the study. They included four supervisors at each of the participating schools and the College of Education program director of student internships. University supervisors worked in the school, supervised paraprofessional interns in the classroom setting, provided immediate feedback, and provided professional development of relevant topics. The supervisors served as a bridge for the university and schools to provide the most effective experience possible to candidates in the field. The university director was the last component. The role of the director was to organize the experience of students in the teacher education program. The university director worked with university faculty to work outside of the traditional university schedule to create sections of undergraduate courses available for paraprofessionals to attend outside of their district. Additionally, the

university director was responsible for assigning supervisors who would understand the non-traditional aspects of the paraprofessionals as students.

Procedure

The researchers used an interpretive qualitative approach to identify common themes from participant responses and document collection. The participants' responses and documents were analyzed to determine themes that emerged regarding the overall impressions, opinions, and feelings about participating in the program and the specific incidents, obstacles, and occurrences that might provide recommendations and a first attempt at “best practices” for other organizations that might consider GYO programs.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data from the study was collected from in-depth interviews and field notes. All of the data was used for target triangulation of the results. Additional data were drawn from available demographic records, transcripts from college work, and scores on state certification exams.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to explore matters related to the experiences in a new grow your own program. The method involved in-depth discussions of the design, strengths, and areas of growth needed in an open format for participants to share.

One formal, one-hour semi-structured interview was held with all 12 student participants at the campus where they served with students. One formal, 30-minute semi-structured interview was held with all 12 of the cooperating teachers at their campuses, four principals at their campuses, four university supervisors at the campus served, and the university director at the university. To protect the participant's identity and confidentiality of the information received from the participant, data were collected for each participant and identified by pseudonyms for the students and sample type and numbers such as Administrator/University Rep 1-9, or Teacher 1-11.

After gathering participant feedback, researchers identified common themes across all participants. The researchers utilized inductive coding to allow the themes to emerge from the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Triangulation of all of the data collected and converged was used to add validity (Angen,2000). Participant validation of the identified themes provided additional validation.

Findings

As a result of the researchers' data collection and qualitative analysis, an understanding of perspectives and themes emerged. These themes were categorized using the participants' voices and reflections for discussion purposes and were categorized in three areas: 1) addressing teacher shortages, 2) program structure, 3) student recruitment and 4) program funding. The stakeholders provided valuable perspectives of how the grow your own programs were beneficial.

Addressing Shortages

Building principals were asked to describe the challenges of finding qualified individuals to teach in their schools regularly. Principal responses included the experiences of shrinking candidate

pools – the increased use of substitute teachers unable to pass certification exams to fill needs – high attrition rates of novice teachers. Principals expressed frustrations of increased achievement demands without the human resources to provide the best experiences for students. For example, one principal shared her experience of attending five teacher fairs one year and only securing two candidates from the available pools. She further explained a teacher fair she attended as "an experience on shark tank. You have multiple districts fighting for the same qualified candidates. The school or district that wins is the one with the most resources and desirable environment. That is a barrier for inner-city schools." Another principal described filling teacher vacancies as "like playing a game of fitting a square peg in a hole for a circle. You do your best to make it work even if it's not the best situation for the students." These types of examples led to the participants and their districts exploring the Grow Your Own Opportunities with an effort toward increased creativity.

Building partnerships from "ground zero" with another nonprofit educational organization was the most considerable obstacle for the participating school districts to implement the GYO programs. One of the participating school districts started its program with paraprofessionals by utilizing its chamber of commerce for local funds until the district could secure a GYO grant with the state. One principal shared, "We had to think out of the box. We have these resources right here in our backyards, and we had to find a way to take advantage of them. Our superintendent was very supportive, and the Chamber of Commerce came through." The initial assistance provided the first group of paraprofessionals with funding for tuition and flexibility regarding time from the building principals to attend classes.

Student participants were excited to take advantage of the opportunity to become certified teachers and were proud the districts were investing in them. One participant shared, "I grew up here, and my kids go to school in the district...to know I will be a full-time teacher soon makes me proud to know I can make a difference." Most of the student participants were thankful for the chance to receive a degree and the additional salary that will come along with it. They would not have been able to afford to go to school on their own or just didn't know how to go about becoming a teacher. One participant provided insight "I just needed to work...I didn't know anything about college to become a teacher...none of my family went to college." Unfortunately, this was the experience for eight out of the 12 participants. Being first-generation college students did not provide the social capital for the participants to know how to go about receiving a degree and certification to become a teacher. The GYO program provided the money for them to take the subsequent steps. The structure of the programs benefitted the student participants and will be highlighted in the next theme.

Program Structure

The educational relationships and support began when the districts linked with a university to support the students through the certification process. The partnership between the school district and the local university identified a need for coordination in three significant areas: scheduling evening courses, tuition assistance, and academic support systems. The identification of these areas of coordination had multiple sources. Some of the needs were quickly identified due to the district's ability to "pilot" its initiative ahead of the state funding. In contrast, other requirements became apparent only after stakeholders could convene and engage in meaningful conversations. While the areas in need of coordination seem to be minor, the reality is, in that space of time, the individuals involved in the partnership were required to both "think outside of the box" and

coordinate efforts toward a goal that was not an institutional norm. While all organizations have purposes related to partnerships and cooperation among communities and organizations, few invest the time and energy into supporting individuals through the activities that must occur for these types of goals to come to fruition.

The university director served a significant role in facilitating the academic and certification components with the paraprofessionals. Before the advent of the program, the university held most of its teacher preparation classes during the day. With the partnership that evolved as a result of the GYO, profound scheduling accommodations were necessary. The director coordinated with teacher education faculty and set up courses specifically for working students and completed their degree plans. The director commented:

"All faculty members are on board and willing to adjust their course schedules to accommodate the needs of our paraprofessionals. I am asked periodically how many paraprofessionals are in our program and where they are in their degree completion. The associate dean's office has been instrumental in assuring that we can accommodate these students' schedules."

As part of the certification process, all participants are expected to attempt various certification examinations successfully. The university established alternative "preparation sessions and workshops" for the participants in the GYO program. The director was able to select workshops offered on Saturdays and the required practice examinations on alternative schedules, which served to enhance the participants' opportunities for success at alternative schedules to enhance the chances for success.

When commenting about academic support, one principal bragged, "Our people are confident and feel prepared to not only teach in the classroom but also prepare thoughtful lesson plans and engage students from what they have learned in their courses."

One of the paraprofessionals commented how the accommodations helped as the cohort navigated through the program, saying, "Working a full-time job while going through the program is hard because of being in the classroom all day and then meeting for classes into the evening. But having it available for me to get done knowing I will have a job at the end makes it worth it."

Creating these types of collaboration led to rich experiences and constant support for students to perform successfully in their courses and ensure they were well prepared for state examinations for certification. Key personnel in the school districts and university were required to engage in constant communication and joint problem solving to identify issues and mutually work through various options to find the best experiences for the paraprofessionals. The frequency communication is what made the partnership work.

Recruiting Students

At the time of this writing, the initiatives shared by the local districts and universities can best be described as just past their infancy and beginning to gain momentum. Since initiation, the number of districts partnering with the university has doubled from two districts with four paraprofessionals to four districts, one of which received state funding. As college and university expenses are often perceived as barriers to learning, there is a clear need to appropriately communicate and market the program. Moreover, building-level principals need to be educated on the cultural aspects of the GYO program in developing ownership and a heightened sense of belonging within their community. Not only do paraprofessionals need to know about tuition

assistance and support, but district administrators also need to be aware of the opportunities to share and facilitate the development on their campuses.

The districts involved in the study incorporated a recruitment and selection strategy that sent flyers to potential participants and principals, identifying paraprofessionals that were working in their schools to attract strong candidates into the program. It was important the principals were familiar with the potential candidates and that the principals saw the candidates as having the potential to be leaders in the classroom and teaching profession.

Following this method, buy-in was immediate with both the school administration and the paraprofessional to reciprocally benefit one another. Before beginning the program, it is interesting to note that some of the candidates had already invested three or more years in their school districts as paraprofessionals. As an aside, the three-year investment was determined to be a measurable goal of the GYO concept. To strengthen the partnership, the university director assisted former students not affiliated with the GYO program who could not secure employment after graduation in securing interviews for vacant paraprofessional positions in partnering districts. In this way, the former students would benefit from the additional experience of serving as a paraprofessional in the school setting. The university director briefly described how these identifications take place with students:

"I meet with the Teacher Center Executive Board twice yearly. The Human Resource Directors on the Board advise the Center on-field and student-teaching placements. They contact me to schedule district meetings to meet with their paraprofessionals. These individuals are either current students enrolled at the university or interested in pursuing their teacher certification by obtaining a bachelor's degree."

Because each partner district's HR department is involved, there is an alignment through the program concerning expectations, opportunities, and the hiring process. Moreover, the communication between the building principal and the HR department is enhanced because of the additional need to convey assessment and other information regarding participant progress and the desire to identify potential participants in future GYO cohorts. The identification of talent plays one of the most extensive roles, and it takes a team being on the same page to know what to look for in candidates that would be a good fit for support in the program.

Funding

Once identified as a participant in the program, the biggest hurdle for most potential teachers is financial support to enroll and complete a teacher education program at an accredited university. This step provides that gateway for most students who decide to take this route because they can still earn an income while receiving tuition assistance for courses. Without financial aid, most candidates would be locked in their current career path. The students enrolled in the program receive up to \$11,000 towards their bachelor's degree and certification, with the agreement to teach three years as a classroom teacher in the district. This financial arrangement is in alignment with other programs across the state. Participants were in support of the contract. One paraprofessional commented,

"I never knew about how to become a teacher. I just needed a job. After working at the school, I enjoyed working with the teachers and helping students succeed. The grant has opened a door for me I could have never imagined before."

This story echoed the same sentiment from another paraprofessional,

"I didn't have a college fund or any money to go to school. When the principal told me she wanted to invest in me because of how great I was with the student, I was happy. It made me feel good to know I was appreciated and that they wanted to help me."

School districts were creative in finding opportunities to help fund scholarships for students, paraprofessionals, and current teachers to engage in professional growth, utilizing partnerships with private-sector organizations and local chambers of commerce. The grants related to the Grow Your program from the state augmented and, in some cases, replaced the school district efforts to provide funding for professional growth. One principal commented how the grant provided an advantage,

"I was fortunate to be one of the first schools with the GYO grant from the state; I had two paraprofessionals that were great on my campus. To help them and know they will be on my campus to serve my students as certified teachers were invaluable. I hope the program expands more to our students wanting to enter education."

The financial assistance afforded these participants made a positive difference in the choices.

Discussion/Implications for Practice

With the current teacher shortages, school districts must intentionally find strategies to identify, prepare and hire the best applicants. Grow Your programs provide a hometown advantage school districts can use to recruit potential teachers that will be qualified and provide intangible qualities many applicants may not possess immediately about their specific districts. Relationship trust-building is one of the most crucial components of working with students, families, and communities (Bryk and Schneider, 2003); hiring from within jumpstarts the process for all stakeholders because of the familiarity with personnel and systems.

Moreover, the current social environment and the uncertainty of "what schools will look like" are significant reasons for school districts to think "outside the box" and find ways to grow the competent individuals with whom the communities have already established relationships. The risks associated with filling any positions via the application/interview process can be exacerbated in environments fraught with time constraints and the anxieties related to how teaching and learning in public schools will be redefined.

The concept of recruiting from within provides a considerable advantage to school districts and university partners. Participants echoed sentiments of not knowing about college or what path they needed to take to become teachers, in addition to financial barriers to college. Starting the process as early as high school with teacher cadet programs is essential in establishing a pipeline. Additionally, districts and university partners need to increase opportunities to engage students and their families about navigating pathways to become a teacher and providing financial incentives and other information on funding college. Districts should also consider paraprofessionals' initial inductions to the school district as opportunities to develop a pipeline for the candidates to become invested as life-long employees for communities and contributing alumni for universities. School districts are allowed to identify talent at all levels and introduce education as a viable career. District personnel can provide real-life experiences in the profession and introduce education to many who may not have considered it a professional path.

Regarding universities, GYO programs are an occasion to strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships and with school districts, state officials, and nonprofit and community organizations. These collaborations should create long-term funding initiatives and enhanced academic and programmatic supports for participants in GYO Programs. GYO programs have the potential to

benefit the enrollment and diversity of student experiences. By including candidates who might not have ever considered education as a profession, the university experience becomes significantly more robust as it includes candidates with non-traditional backgrounds.

The implications for increasing the teacher pool in districts of need, developing local talent, growing teacher education programs, and providing the best teacher preparation experience are plentiful in GYO programs. District and university leaders have a responsibility to coordinate partnership opportunities and continue to think out of the box to build programs that benefit school-aged children through the development of teachers with whom students can identify. By utilizing local talent, these programs can lead to increased levels of positive culture and school climate, model the importance of investing in one's community, and build meaningful relationships with many local families that can only result in high student achievement and success.

Future Research/Conclusion

Initial results about the implementation and expansion of GYO programs are inspiring. Through the stories of paraprofessionals, cooperating teachers, principals, and university stakeholders, it is easy to understand that focused investment in people, especially people who have already demonstrated an investment in a school district, has the potential to provide significant benefit, not only to measurable factors, but also to those factors that are often unmeasured or difficult to measure: school culture, sense of community, local investment, and overcoming “brain drain.” Future research in this area is essential, as long-term impacts of Grow Your Own programs may provide a yet-unseen formula for improving student success and addressing elements of the socioeconomic and cultural divide that permeate our society.

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Engaging Educational Leadership and the Coalition of Essential Schools in Appalachian Ohio

This manuscript has 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.



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Despite its inherent transformational capacity, day-to-day educational practices have not changed since the late 19th Century, resulting in processes that do not uphold democratic values. (Sizer, 1984; Wood, 2005). This study seeks to answer the following research question: how did an educational leader use the Coalition of Essential School's (CES) model to develop institutional norms to address social inequity? The Coalition's termination in 2017 prompts concern; if a nonprofit organization committed to "student-centered, equity-driven learning" cannot persist, education and democracy are in jeopardy (What We Do, 2017). The Common Principles (2017) and the works of Sizer (1984) and Wood (2005) were used to triangulate the in-depth qualitative interview of Dr. Wood. Three themes emerged from such data: understanding the Common Principles, living the Common Principles, and equity with the Common Principles. These findings ultimately reveal a growing disparity between ideals, implementation, and outcomes. Consequently, active democratic citizen preparation rests with all of us, all facets of education and other societal institutions.

Despite its inherent transformational capacity, day-to-day educational practices have not changed since the late 19th Century (Sizer, 1984; Wood, 2005). The traditional structure—grouping students by age to passively consume content in about 45-minute intervals of an eight instructional period day—still serves as the foundation of today’s high school. Coupled with funding depending on property taxes, such processes do not uphold democratic values; not everyone has an equitable opportunity to learn. Dr. Wood, former principal and superintendent of Federal Hocking Local Schools, sought to address these issues not simply by reforming the high school but transforming its structure and daily procedures (Wood, 2005).

This study aims to understand how said district-level administrator incorporated the Coalition of Essential Schools’ conceptual framework into the everyday practices of a secondary school in rural Appalachia. The Coalition argues that their conceptual framework has the potential to “. . . positively influence the conditions in which all schools operate, serving as examples of and advocates for education policy that supports meaningful teaching and learning that allows all students to use their minds well in school and throughout their lives” (*Vision*, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Student merit is often based on the ability to take tests, regurgitating rather than applying information. In addition to disregarding various types of learners and their subsequent modalities of learning, this creates a disconnect once a student graduates from high school, feeling ill-prepared for civic engagement and daily life like household responsibilities and financial literacy. Notwithstanding state standards, discrepancies in educational opportunities emerge based on context and positionality as those with most economic revenue and/or in suburban areas have greater likelihood of “achievement” based on latter parameters; zip codes are often used to predict ACT scores. How, then, can education be a public good if such discrepancies arise? How is this democratic? Every United States citizen is said to have an equal opportunity to education, yet, in practice, it quickly showcases that equal doesn’t necessarily mean equitable. Due to the latter social processes and tensions, this study aims to answer the following research question: how did an educational leader use the CES model to develop institutional norms to address social inequity?

Background of the Study

In order to understand the Coalition, it is important to understand the context of its founder. Theodore (Ted) Sizer’s 52-year relationship with education began as a training officer in the U.S. Army, where he was inspired to pursue and obtain a master’s degree in teaching in 1957 and eventually a doctorate degree in both American history and education four years later. He then served Harvard, the alma mater of his graduate-professional career, as an instructor and eventual dean of its Graduate School of Education in 1964. After acting as Philips Academy’s headmaster from 1972-1981, Sizer taught at Brown University for 16 years, founding or co-founded several projects like the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and the Forum for Education and Democracy (Ilg, 2019; Founder: Ted Sizer, 2017). With publications sprinkled throughout his career, Sizer strongly advocated for “radical school restructuring,” supporting personalized instruction and flexibility within schools, due to deficits emerging from traditional education (2017). In his work, Sizer (1984) not only critiques such a landscape but serves as the basis of an organization that would become the symbol of his career.

Emerging from such analysis, Sizer and his respective colleagues founded the Coalition of Essential Schools at Brown University in 1984 (Coalition of Essential Schools Timeline, 2016).

The Common Principles also arose from *Horace's Compromise* (1984), outlining the basis of “Learning to use one’s mind well” through “Resources dedicated to teaching and learning”; the last principle was added 13 years later (Table 1). CES separated from Brown University, became an independent nonprofit, and moved to California in 1998. The Coalition’s network grew from a dozen to over 600 partnering districts, or “Essential schools,” during the new millennium and approximately 1,000 essential schools at its height (Ilg, 2019; About CES, 2017; Brezinski, 2019). Whether in rural, urban, or suburban areas, these Pre-K-12 institutions utilized “. . . small, personalized learning communities in which teachers and students know each other well in a climate of trust, decency and high expectations for all” and strove to be “. . . places of powerful learning where all students have the chance to reach their fullest potential” (2017). The Coalition of Essential Schools became a trailblazer in “. . . creating and sustaining personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools,” advocating for school reform and just learning for 33 years (2017).

This study, as a result, is particularly significant because the Coalition of Essential Schools ceases to exist. While its partnering schools may still abide by and implement its framework, a lack of funding ultimately terminated this organization in 2017. Wood mentioned that the Coalition wouldn’t trademark, market, or sell anything perSizer’s vision. Consequently, grants, membership fees, and its annual conference, known as the Fall Forum, were the sole sources of revenue. The standards movement, Wood explained, made it “much harder for schools to get money to go to such conferences—they can only go if they could prove it was going to raise their test scores, which [the Coalition was] never about. Attendance [at] conferences started to drop off.” Further, the Gates Foundation Small Schools Network Grant of 18.7 million was not fulfilled by the benefactors, which lead to additional issues since individuals were hired and under contract for such work on small schools (Coalition of Essential Schools Timeline, 2016). Wood noted that CES website is to be deactivated 2022. At that point, the only lasting, tangible trace of the organization resides at Brown University. If a nonprofit organization committed to “student-centered, equity-driven learning” cannot persist, education and democracy are in jeopardy (What We Do, 2017).

Table 4

The Common Principles

Principle	Description
Learning to use one’s mind well	<i>The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be “comprehensive” if such a claim is made at the expense of the school’s central intellectual purpose.</i>
Less is more: depth over coverage	<i>The school’s goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program’s design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by “subjects” as conventionally defined. The aphorism “less is more” should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.</i>

Goals apply to all students	<i>The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.</i>
Personalization	<i>Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.</i>
Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach	<i>The governing practical metaphor of the school should be "student-as-worker", rather than the more familiar metaphor of "teacher as deliverer of instructional services." Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.</i>
Demonstration of mastery	<i>Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist the quickly to meet standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation: an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of "credits earned" by "time spent" in class.</i>
A tone of decency and trust	<i>The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Families should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.</i>
Commitment to the entire school	<i>The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and demonstrate a sense of commitment to the entire school.</i>

Resources dedicated to teaching and learning	<i>Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided to students in many schools.</i>
Democracy and equity	<i>The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.</i>

(Common Principles, 2017)

Relevant Literature

There are numerous publications that center around reform and moral obligations in the field of education. Yet, *Horace's Compromise*, *Time to Learn*, and *Education for Everyone* are three significant works and theoretical underpinnings of this research (Sizer, 1984; Wood, 2005; Goodlad et al., 2004).

Horace's Compromise

Despite many concerns that plague education, one pivotal question heavily weighs upon teachers: how many human beings do I know at once well enough in order to teach them well?" (James, 2013). Some might argue such a feat is impossible, but Sizer emphasizes it is imperative for rigorous education, "You have to have the conditions of learning for the kids, and the conditions for teaching of the teachers such that each child's individual development is understood." (2013). *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School* emerged from "A Study of High Schools," an ethnographic research project investigating education at various sample public schools in the United States. With particular focus on secondary schools, Sizer ultimately illuminated how the American high schools are structured in a way prevent educators from doing their job effectively, making compromises that often have damaging results (Sizer, 1984; Fiske, 1983; Brezinski, 2019). A heavy student-to-teacher ratio would cause Horace Smith, a fictional English teacher that is composite of such ethnographic accounts, to stratify tasks based on the inescapable fact that time was not on his side, working way over 40 hours a week but forced to choose between what is expected and what is feasible. Consequently, a preliminary draft assignment for a total 120 students in a semester would easily take Horace 10 minutes per student to read and deliver feedback, totaling 20 hours on one sole task. Instead of spending half of the traditional work week on that single assignment, Horace allocated time at the extremes—those who are gifted and those students who need more extensive scaffolding—while remaining individuals receive less attention (Sizer, 1984; Brezinski, 2019).

Students within this structure then perceived education as passive, sitting quietly while "...knowledge just happens to them" and later recited the content (Sizer, 1984, p. 3). Combined with a focus on subject areas, this triad signified the subtle intricacies of learning and their

increasing complexities affecting teaching meanwhile hierarchical bureaucracy urges standardization of an otherwise fluid, context-specific process. Seeking order in an often disorderly educational process influences students and teachers' agency and motivation, valuing predictability over adaptability. Thus,Sizer concluded his analysis with five necessary resolutions to improve high schools:

1. Give room to teachers and student to work and learn in their own, appropriate ways.
2. Insist that student clearly exhibit mastery of their school work.
3. Get the incentives right, for students and for teachers.
4. Focus the students' work on the use of their minds
5. Keep the structure simple and thus flexible. (p. 215)

He acknowledged that such feats are easy to put on paper compared to the deeply entrenched expectations of what school should be, emulating 19th century practices of industrialization (Brezinski, 2019). However, restoring responsibility of adolescents' education to teachers and students themselves would reinstate high school's purpose: preparing youth to use their mind (Sizer, 1984).

Time to Learn

Federal Hocking High School augmented the latter argument in Wood's (2005) *Time to Learn*, a case-study of said Appalachian school that made significant structural changes to better fulfill their public duty in cultivating engaged citizens. This secondary school then modeled its daily procedures around a "*community of learners*," rather than "the *institution of high school*" (p. 10). Focusing on the particular, or adolescents, allowed Federal Hocking to realize their jumbled schooling experience, spending 5,000 hours in a landscape that compartmentalizes content in eight period days with little to no continuity between said courses, let alone connections to adolescents' context. It is possible for an individual to learn a little about each subject, skimming the academic surface, but equally as likely that informational morsels remain as such, never fully digested because they're regurgitated for standardized tests. Graduation is not only influence by the latter, but students' ability to complete 20 credits, or five courses per year. Wood posited such a requirement, "Rather than discuss what should be learned in algebra to equal a high school credit for graduation, the issue becomes just ensuring enough time spent in the math classroom to fulfill the 120-hour criterion" (p. 16). Along with educators teaching more than one content area and instructing a maximum of 150 students per day, time becomes a valuable, yet fleeting commodity (Wood, 2005; Wood, 2010)

Addressing these stressors, along with disengagement and anonymity among students, FHHS instituted a block schedule in the late 1990s, reducing the number of courses per day as well as making room for community building. Four block periods led to less transitioning between subject areas but providing increased personalization and depth of content. Students and teachers had an increased likelihood of developing rapport, notwithstanding time to establish relationships during Advisory and an extended lunch time. In addition, advisory served as a foundation for mentorship by giving each student a direct adult contact—whether a librarian, administrator, counselor, teacher, or even janitor—while unified, hour-long lunch gave students flexibility to communicate to friends and teachers and use resources that they might not have access to at home. This astute focus on time, consequently, aided FHHS in fostering a close-knit, less hectic learning environment adolescents had a sense of belonging and their guiding adults are "...[committed] to knowing their students well" (Wood, 2005, p.59).

Wood infused this case study—which has additional context-specific examples of transforming FHHS—with logistics of understanding such reform and functional methods to overcome hinderances to change, in addition to strategies for sustaining obligations of student-centered learning. Otherwise, high schools would continue to be “...sorting machines, determining who goes to which college and who goes to work,” with higher and higher standards that perpetuate discrepancies among achievement (p. xxi). Without rethinking organization, high schools would continue to fail to fulfill its democratic mission of fostering citizens.

Education for Everyone

Goodlad et al. (2004) posited the socio-political connotations of the latter in *Education for Everyone: Agenda for Education in a Democracy*. Acknowledging the various ways to educate toward democratic behaviors and cognizance, this work centered on inherent ideas and lessons learned over acting as a ‘how-to’ guide. Universal schooling originally functioned as an apprenticeship of democracy, preparing and securing individuals for such a societal organization which then stabilized democracy itself. This symbiotic relationship illuminated public schools’ significance in establishing *the public*, let alone serving it (Goodlad et al., 2004; Cremin, 1990). Even though every culture has ongoing education for everyone, such schooling, in practice, is restricted and stratified because it is “an enterprise of the formal political structure” (Goodlad et al., 2004). Since public schools indeed inform and reflect the public, they cannot disregard existing social institutions influence. These continue to explain:

[Schools] are embedded in a vast and complex social, political, and economic surround. They interact with that surround continuously. Schools affect their cultural context, and their context in turn affects them. It is not possible to have good, healthy, democratic schools in an environment that is hostile to such qualities. (p. 33)

The act of teaching is a civil, moral endeavor as a result, and play a role in the mission of schooling:

1. Enculturating the youth into a social and political democracy
2. Providing access to knowledge for all children and youths
3. Practicing pedagogical nurturing with respect to the art and science of teaching
4. Ensuring responsible stewardship of the schools (pp. 29-32).

Literacy, for instance, is not simply an acquisition of decoding knowledge but rather a critical literacy that ultimately supports tenants of self-governance, like considering multiple perspectives, evaluating an argument and its data’s legitimacy, or notating what is omitted. In order to advance democracy, education must safeguard the afflictions that endanger democracy itself, urging for a renewal instead of a surface-level reform (Goodlad et al., 2004; Goodlad, 1994).

Methods and Procedures

Utilizing a single-significant case design, this study explores Dr. Wood’s integration of the Coalition of Essential School’s (CES) model, specifically the Common Principles, into Federal Hocking Local Schools. Investigating this former principal and superintendent’s narrative will offer “. . . insights that stand alone as important” to education and educational leadership (Patton, 2015, p.274). Notwithstanding its low sample-size, single-significant cases impact every profession, field, and discipline (p.276). Wood’s unique positioning augments current scholarship

regarding educational systems' pursuits of democratic citizenry, "[equipping] all students with the intellectual, emotional, and social habits and skills" to actively contribute to an equitable society (*Vision*, 2017). Thus, such testimony becomes tangible because it was lived; this case not only uncovers real decisions in their context, but "... the investable ambiguities and uncertainties involved in making judgement in an uncertain, complex, and dynamic world." (Patton, 2015, p.275)

Participant

Wood's educational legacy spans over two decades, serving as a former teacher, professor of education, schoolboard member, among many other roles (National Education Policy Center, 2020). His passion for education also led to several books—*Many Children Left Behind* (ed. Meier, 2004), *Schools that Work* (1993), *Time to Learn* (2005)—and academic articles pertaining to democracy and education (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020). Despite being Wildwood's Secondary School founding director, his unique positioning centers on his 27-year-involvement with Federal Hocking Local Schools and CES; he was principal and superintendent of this rural, Appalachian Ohio district and eventually chairman of the Coalition's executive board from 2012-2017 (Lancer letter: Report to our community, 2019; Wood, Farewell, 2017). This then fosters a distinctive lens not only concerning an overarching organization and its operations, but that of a public school and its application of CES' framework since 1994. Even though Wood became principal of Federal Hocking in 1992, the school district didn't join the Coalition until two years later.

Research Analysis

This study consisted of one audio-recorded, in-depth interview. During the conversation, the primary investigator handwrote notes on the questionnaire, which served as conversational guide, to capture the full verbatim account (Miller, 2000). Questions on the interview instrument were developed from the Common Principles, seeking further clarification of such values as well as their application in Federal Hocking's context.

Using the transcription services of Temi.com, Dr. Wood's testimony resulted in a 46-page document that not only was reviewed by the primary researcher but used for initial and second cycle coding. These timestamped accounts assisted the researchers in line-by-line coding: annotations that seek to describe and/or capture the essence of a line of data (Saldaña, 2009). Such notes either mirrored in vivo coding—participants' language used to illuminate their perspective—, descriptive coding—words or phrases that embody the main topic of piece of data—, or simultaneous coding—overlapping "... two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum" (pp. 48, 62, 70). Next, second-cycle coding categorized 396 individual codes with shared meanings or connections into 23 code families. These categories were then printed and cut into 23 pieces as the primary researcher physically organized said groupings. In addition to code weaving, the primary research question guided such organization, causing 14 of the code families to become three overarching themes. This process involved putting "key code words and phrases into narrative form to see how the puzzle pieces fit together" (Saldaña, 2009, p.187). Writing variations of the same sentence highlighted their connectivity by notating a process, larger theme, and/or just cause and effect (2009).

Trustworthiness

The single in-depth interview cultivated thick description, causing the research team to engage in multiple peer-debriefing sessions (Glesne, 2016). The Common Principles (2017) and the works of Sizer (1984) and Wood (2005) were used to triangulate this data. This illuminated various intricacies of perspective and offered a robust compliment to the qualitative interview (Glesne, 2016). Having multiple data sources, consequently, aided the research team in deeply understanding context in order to produce trustworthy interpretations (Patton, 2015).

Results

Wood's testimony illuminated various components of education—the overall institution, state requirements, and daily micro-level proceedings to name a few. However, when triangulated with the Coalition of Essential Schools' and Federal Hocking's respective documents, three themes emerged: understanding the Common Principles, living the Common Principles, and equity with the Common Principles.

Understanding the Common Principles

Dr. Wood's 25-year experience implementing the CES model indeed showcased his familiarity with the Common Principles, further explaining each of the 10 components that uphold the Coalition's vision. Each principle received a name, rather than a number, to further signify their interdependence. Even though most pursuits involve two or more Common Principles, Wood emphasized one pervasive sentiment that underlies all of them: "learning to use one's mind well" (*Common Principles*, 2017). He considers it the foundation of all educational procedures and the sole purpose of a school. This designates "learning to use one's mind well" at the beginning of the Common Principles because it is an overarching perspective of learning and teaching, not memorization. Wood elaborates:

You're not just chanting things back to teachers. You're not just racing through exercises, but you're spending time in class, not outside of class, *in* class, working on the work. [In] 40 minutes you can basically tell a kid a couple things and they go home and work it out on their own. They're not using your minds well. They're just getting the information and going and doing it. The only way [teachers] know [students'] minds is to take time to get to know them, to listen to them, to watch them work, [and] to see them at work.

Notating time and place also highlight context's significance; having school in the evening could feasibly work in a city yet might be difficult in a rural setting. "Learning to use one's mind well," consequently, applies to implementation. Wood further underscores such with the following question: "How do well intentioned people take these principles in the context within which they find themselves and put them to work?"

Since "the Coalition was not a program by design," the Common Principles serve as a guide and are flexible in implementation compared to practices, which remain unchanged by classroom or school environment. Due to their adaptability, an ongoing cycle of action and reflection is required when utilizing the Common Principles. Teachers and educational leaders are, as Wood states:

constantly thinking about, again, back to context, 'What's the context? Where are we? How can we use that context to personalize the curriculum at the same time holding kids

all to the same set of standards and goals?’

The Common Principles, therefore, intricately correspond and communicate with one another while also promoting educators’ critical lens. Wood argues, “Teaching in a Coalition school is a lot harder than teaching in another school [because] it requires you to think deeply about curriculum. What are the things we’re really going to dig into?”

Living the Common Principles

The latter routine of praxis signifies that the CES framework isn’t simply followed, but rather lived. Sustaining the school’s mission and culture becomes the main responsibility of faculty, who are considered permanent residents. Since the student population is transient and advances to eventually graduate, faculty must revisit the CES framework to evaluate if and how the 10 Common Principles are upheld. An administrator must, as Wood notes:

respond to these principles with [her/his/their] staff, then they’ll respond to them with students. This highly-personalized job requires an educational leader to model the desired behavior. Otherwise, the administrator is failing...because if [she/he/they] don’t have that [norm] for the staff, they’re not going to pass it on to the kids. Period.

Acknowledging the significance of the latter, the Common Principles are “a constant conversation” at Federal Hocking Local Schools. Planning period meetings are utilized for such contemplation and dialogue while Wood served as principal of the secondary school, going through the 10 values to review their meaning and implementation as well as how they might impact Federal Hocking’s aspirations. Dr. Wood describes this process further:

We chose to do is always say, ‘Okay, what do we know about the Common Principles? How do they inform our practice?’ Schools spend a lot of time thinking about what they do, but not enough time about why they do it.

Faculty then develops “translation pieces for students” from such contemplation. Since “holding onto the mission is the job of the faculty,” students perform the Common Principles, “[experiencing] them by what they live.” The Operating Principles and Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart are overarching dispositions and characteristics, while scheduling, advisory, and portfolios are practices in which secondary students do the Common Principles.

Operating Principles and Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart. Aspirations of “[helping] all young people become productive and engaged citizens” propel Federal Hocking’s Operating Principles and Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart (2017). The first guiding document isn’t simply do’s and don’ts, but rather a four-pronged approach to their mission, notating how children learn to then formulate optimum educational landscapes. For instance, in order for students to “receive ongoing feedback, see and share models of expected outcomes, feel competent and not overwhelmed, and are provided with time for monitored practice,” classrooms, schools, and the district have varying responsibilities (Federal Hocking Operating Principles, 2017). Classrooms must be “child-centered, flexible learning environments with multiple resources and technologies, and full of displays of student work” (2017). Schools need to “[focus] on the whole-child, her/his social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being” (2017). Thus, the district would be committed to “supporting the development of an infrastructure where teachers and students have access to current technologies, learning tools, and the world beyond schools” (2017). Instead of a flowchart or numbered diagram, these values are listed as a succession from the individual learner to the school district. This micro- to macro-level organization showcases how the

Operating Principles compound, bearing strong associations to one another rather than notating a linear causation.

Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart augment the latter principles by notating desired student traits (Figure 1). Persistence, respect, responsibility, care, and problem-solving not only signify diligence and compassion, but a commitment to developing the entire child (Lancer letter: Report to our community, 2019). While there are academic connotations, Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart desire to cultivate ways-of-being that persist beyond institutional walls, emphasizing continuous practice; establishing habits denotes subsequent action in order to be fulfilled. These translation pieces, subsequently, reinforce the CES model. The concurrent, yet interdependent design of Federal Hocking's Operating Principles and Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart coincide with CES' goal of "[equipping] all students with the intellectual, emotional, and social habits and skills to become powerful and informed citizens who contribute actively toward a democratic and equitable society" (*Vision*, 2017).

Scheduling, Advisory, and Portfolios. Federal Hocking students' embodiment of the CES framework continues with scheduling, advisory, and student portfolios. Instead of taking classes based on a predetermined list or route, students select courses with their parent or guardian during a yearly, after-school event solely focused on scheduling. Dr. Wood elaborates:

You can't just send in a schedule. You have to come to a scheduling meeting with your son or daughter, you have to hear the staff talk about what the options are, and then you sit and work on a schedule with your child. And it's not just, 'I want these eight classes.' It's, 'I want this class first period, first semester. I want this one second--I want to build a schedule.' While this process is conducted on first-come, first-serve basis, the school acknowledges people live very, very busy lives so it'll make another time for [parents and/or guardians] to come in.

Attendance, consequently, an issue as 90% of students plan for the upcoming year during this event; Wood further explained, "Kids are on [their parent or guardian]: 'I [don't] want to get closed out of this course. I want this schedule. I want you to be here'" This is a stark difference from parent-teacher conferences which serve as a periodic check-in regarding student progress and often vary on attendance rates. Wood continued, "[Scheduling] is about something real important like what your life could be for the next year...Parents we never see any other time come to that because their kid wants them there." Scheduling bridges school and home life, signifying families as "...vital members of the school community" (Common Principles, 2017). Wood concludes, "By bringing parents into that process, they're collaborating with us on what their child's education will look like."

Figure 1

Lancer Habits of Mind and Heart



(Lancer letter: Report to our community, 2019)

Connection and teamwork also are components of advisory, or first block. Faculty are regarded as “generalist first... and specialists second” especially during this introductory period; Wood explains that educators “[share their] general wisdom about the way the world works” (Common Principles, 2017). For instance, automotive care, etiquette, and finances are some of the many topics that could be considered for advisory’s content. Developing life skills in advisory emphasizes a commitment to the entire school, as Wood expresses:

Everybody shares the management of the social emotional wellness of children. Everybody's responsible for that, not just the counselor, not just the principal. Everybody. And it happens in advisory, right, which meets for an hour every day. It's not just home room for 10 minutes. It meets. It's got a curriculum and everybody shares in that curriculum. This structure is there all the time for [faculty] to work together on mutual agendas.

Along with content, progressing through mutual agendas requires a demonstration mastery; “teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student

performance of real tasks” (Common Principles, 2017). Portfolios, consequently, are one pivotal instrument that signifies such attainment, exhibiting students’ preparation for the next step. Wood further describes this process:

[Federal Hocking students] present them at three points in the school career. They present one in eighth grade that demonstrates their proficiency and readiness for high school. They present one at the end of division two, which is ninth and tenth grade, which demonstrates they have the skills to move on into division three-- the senior institute, which is eleventh and twelfth grade. And at the end of that, they present a portfolio to the faculty [to demonstrate] they've met not only all the credit requirements, but they've also have the skills to graduate.

This ongoing evidence in conjunction with project-based learning are ways in which Federal Hocking students attain their high school diploma. Wood continues to articulate this active knowledge acquisition below:

If you walk into classes here, you will see students actually doing real work...They're writing a piece of writing. They're sharing a piece of writing. They're doing a lab. They're working on mathematical principles as teams. They're actually doing stuff, not just sitting passively.

Therefore, the Common Principles require action and embodiment; they must be lived.

Equity with the Common Principles

These ten values ultimately desire to promote equitable learning opportunities in pursuit of a just society (What We Do, 2017). However, “Goals apply to all students,” “A tone of decency and trust,” and “Democracy and equity” are three pivotal facets of this mission (Common Principles, 2017). Tailoring school practices “...to meet the needs of every group or class of students” for goals attainment acknowledges positionality and context (2017). Students are held to the same expectation, yet require varying levels of support to achieve it. Wood articulates, “Its differentiation in the name of scaffolding...you differentiate so everybody can get up to the same standards.” “Goals apply to all students” appears in Federal Hocking’s use of portfolios and lack of ability grouping, which wasn’t initially welcomed; Dr. Wood received pushback for ending such academic segregation in order to fulfill this Common Principle (2017). Wood shares that it is “a difficult one to pull off in schools because every parent thinks their child is gifted. Every parent thinks their child deserves a special class or a segregated class by ability.” However, as Wood pointed out, talented and gifted kids will “still be talented and gifted, just in a different way.” A room doesn’t preclude one’s merit or capacities of achieving a goal.

With aforementioned expectations, tolerance, fairness, and generosity should be “explicitly and self-consciously [stressed] by the school (2017). “A tone of decency and trust” then mimics the golden rule (2017). However, Dr. Wood makes a distinction:

You've just got to try and treat everybody as fairly as you can while recognizing [that] fair doesn't always mean equal. Because kids come from different backgrounds, they have different needs, different stressors.

At Federal Hocking, this principle appears in lived and imagined space; students not only come and go for internships but can use any part of the facility during their hour-long lunch. Spatial links continue with scheduling as mentioned under the preceding section (Bailey et al., 2012). Wood continues to outline this yearly event:

Everybody comes to the same room. Everybody sits with their child. Everybody hears the same rap from the teachers, from the principal ...and then everybody goes to work [on scheduling]. Got a question? [The advisor] comes over and helps them.

Parents and guardians aren't simply in the school-- they're deemed "key collaborators" in the educational community (Common Principles, 2017). Such examples of choice and connection emerge from Wood's notion, "We believe you'll do the right thing until you prove us wrong. And when you prove us wrong, we figured that's probably just a mistake and you'll get better." Therefore, "A tone of decency and trust" highlights students' "right to be and become" (Common Principles, 2017; Bailey et al., 2012).

Aforementioned actualizations of dignity propelled the development of the tenth Common Principle: "Democracy and equity" (2017). Rounding out the original nine values in 1997, this addition arose from partnership schools' concerns of equity and democracy. Practices that "...involve all who are directly affected by the school" highlight context's and the particular's importance (2017). Filling faculty vacancies at Federal Hocking is a prime example of this Common Principle. Students are not only considered but consulted during this process. Wood articulates,

Students have equal say in the hiring [of] new teachers. [Applicants are] going to be interviewed by kids, [who are] going to watch him or her teach. They're going to have an equal voice in that."

Accordingly, "devolving authority to the lowest possible level" spreads power to empower individuals. Wood notates the difficulty placed on the administration when making decisions. Leadership should think, as he explains, "Is this a decision everybody can make or only I can make? Is this a decision which we have any latitude? And is this [a decision] anybody gives a damn about?" Coupled with "A tone of decency and trust," pondering levels of care, control, and input become easier (2017). Wood concludes,

John Dewey once said, 'Teachers are the senior members of the community.' And by that they're given certain authority because they've been around a few times. [Therefore] Kids don't get to choose whether or not they're taking an English class. They do get to choose how they tackle the assignments.

Devolving responsibilities resembles a balancing act, trying to find harmony among tensions. Federal Hocking ended tracking to "build on the strengths of the [community] and deliberately and explicitly [challenge] all forms of inequity" (2017). This decision initially spurred micro-tensions from upcoming seventh-grade parents, who were expecting the former classroom structure associated with secondary school. Wood "spent a lot of time listening to people" and referring to research, but ultimately notated the collective when addressing the initial pushback. Wood reflects, "I'm not going to change the whole system because you, one parent, objects. You need to understand that. That's not democratic. We worked hard on this system." Upholding "Democracy and equity," then, not only incorporates "A tone of decency and trust" but also "Goals apply to all students;" inclusive pedagogies and policies involve tolerance and the varying approaches to respect individuals lives (2017).

"Other schools:" the traditional landscape. When discussing equitable practices, Wood often contrasted them with techniques or mentalities associated with traditional education. Most schools appear similar "like they've been dropped in and they just [exist] separate of context or place." Outward appearances or layouts of such physical structures suggest uniformity; education looks the same regardless of location. Consequently, educational organization and procedures follow a similar thread: students are grouped together by age to complete an eight-period day,

going from one teacher to the next to receive deposits of information. Wood further describes this below:

It was Ernest Boyer once said that ‘High schools are places where adolescents go to watch adults work.’ They sit and watch. Watch that guy try and entertain me for 40 minutes. He's going tell me a lot of stuff. He's going to lecture me a lot and then I got to go try and digest it later.

This assembly-line instructional style, among other facets, creates friction as technological advances and society shift with each generation. Wood posits, “Curriculum is not usually something [teachers are asked to] think a lot about because it's kind of laid out. Well I teach English nine, what's English nine, whatever the district says it is.” Instead of addressing structural issues, most schools rely on short-term reform opportunities, solely focusing on action rather than its motivations. Wood explains, “A lot of schools...buy *the* program, they put *the* program into place and it's going to solve everything. And when it doesn't, they go buy *another* program.” This perpetual cycle heightens tensions within the classroom as instructors may incorporate practices that contribute to social inequity like ability grouping, which Wood considers is “the biggest form of inequity in public schools.” When discussing a neighboring district, Wood states

I guarantee you ...they've got all sorts of phasing and tracking. I can tell you most of the kids from [the poor areas] are in the lower tracks and the kids from the rich suburbs of [the neighboring district] are in the upper tracks.

As a result, knowledge acquisition varies based on positionality; class impacts learning opportunities, which may then influence subsequent life prospects and choices.

Discussion

This study was not focused on an unpacking of the framework, but how the participant (i.e., the single significant case) as an educational leader unpacked, implemented, and experienced the framework in his role as a superintendent. Alternatively, coinciding with education's multifaceted nature, this study showcases the growing disparity between ideals, implementation, and outcomes; why we educate may not permeate the who and the how. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) seems to linger along with regimens and practices rooted in the industrial age, further equating learning as a competition with focus on outcomes instead of perceiving its transformational capacity and moral dimensions of citizenry and humanhood.

Implications

Based on the work of Dr. Wood and the Coalition of Essential Schools, research, practice, and policy are implicated in this study. Scholars, educational leaders and advocates, and public servants should consider the following recommendations.

Research implications. Additional investigations of schools implementing the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) framework should occur. This would result in an increased understanding of the different ways the Common Principles were applied to varying contexts. Future research, for instance, could focus on how “Learning to use one's mind well” is foundational to the remaining nine principles, as well as the purpose of schooling (Common Principles, 2017). Further, prospective studies should examine student perceptions of this Common Principle, let alone recent high school graduate's view of “Learning to use one's mind

well” in everyday life.

Practitioner implications. Due to the Coalition’s decline, further considerations of democratic educational practices are needed in hopes to prepare students for active democratic citizenry. Practicing educators should pay particular attention to “Personalization,” “Tone of decency and trust,” and “Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach” (2017). Educational leaders should explore and embody “Tone of decency and trust” and “Goals apply to all students” to promote teacher and student agency and dignity. Such efforts would further support learning environments for youth. Wood concludes, “they are the ones we are creating a community for, and it’s with them that any effort to rethink schools must start” (2005, p. 29).

Policy implications. The current educational landscape resembles much of its predecessor and perpetuates social inequities. There must be increased concern and analysis of structural practices and their persistence as they are out of date and context. Wood expanded on this notion when explaining how building on the community’s strengths explicitly challenges inequity; ability grouping often carries class and race connotations, while weighted classes outwardly show a course’s value. He argued,

Don't do things that cause inequities. That's the problem of schools. We spent so much time trying to figure out, well, 'how can we be more equitable?' We've already set up structures that are completely inequitable. Stop doing-- All you have to do is stop doing stuff...It's really that simple. Stop doing bad things.

Thus, policy makers should consider the Common Principles when enacting future legislations, seeking to restructure education rather than simply reforming it.

Conclusion

The aforementioned inquiries are imperative considering the increasingly polarized climate of the United States. Civic unrest grows as individuals are not prepared for active citizenry, which further deteriorates democracy. Folks are not ready for the responsibility of such nor know how to participate in the public arena due to a limited formal experience. Schooling underscores competition amongst peers rather than a collective perspective; ‘Us v. them’ takes precedent over a reflective mentality to benefit others, society, or democracy. Active democratic citizen preparation, therefore, rests with all of us, all facets of education and other societal institutions. Otherwise, tensions and frustrations will continue because these systems perpetuate helplessness, feeling ill-equipped for basic civic engagement.

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