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STAFFING PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FOR
TEACHERS IN PRIMARY GRADES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PreK-3rd
CONTINUUM

by

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A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education
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Major Professor: David Boote

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ABSTRACT

Principals are considered the educational leaders of their schools and face pressure to improve the quality of education across all levels and disciplines. Principals were interviewed to understand their beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions on staffing teachers in the primary grades. A purposive sample of elementary school principals was drawn from one mid-size suburban district in Florida. Data were analyzed using Bolman and Deal's four-frame organizational theory framework, Cohen's cognitive frame, and Boote's theory of professional discretion.

The data strongly suggest that principals do not understand the foundations of early childhood practice. In addition, they do not understand the differences between Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Elementary Education (EE). The principals tend to hire teachers with EE certification as opposed to ECE training. This is partially due to their lack of understanding of ECE and to the perceived advantage of being able to place teachers in a wide range of grade levels. Although all principals stated that primary teaching requires specialized knowledge, most principals consider flexibility to move teachers into the upper grades more important.

Three main implications for practice are suggested based on recommendations for advocacy and public education for young children within PreK–3rd continuum initiatives. (1) Professional development in ECE should be implemented at the district level for principals to learn and understand the differences in preparation between ECE and EE teacher preparation and to demonstrate the importance of the early years of child development and education. (2) Curriculum enrichment in ECE needs to be added to higher education, graduate teacher leadership programs to demonstrate the importance of the early years of child development and education. (3) The policy for hiring should be centralized at the district level and require teachers

with training in ECE for the primary grades. The limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

I dedicate this project to my husband Jeff who is also working to complete his Ed. D. Without you I would not have been able to complete this endeavor. You supported me when I thought it was impossible to finish. You were my chauffeur, my dinner date, editor, formatter, and study partner. You reminded me of deadlines and keep me on track.

Through all the challenges over the past three years we had fun because we were experiencing it together. We found a way to make this a time of adventure. You are the love of my life and I cannot imagine where I would be without you as my loving husband. I love you forever.

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I am grateful for all the professors I have encountered over the years for their invaluable input and knowledge. A special thanks to Dr. Thomas Vitale for his council and advisement to keep up with program requirements. It would also have been impossible to complete this program without the support of our cohort of students who have grown together over the years.

I am most grateful to my family. My mom Connie Davis, and daddy Bill Bass for instilling a love of learning, the importance of education, and their faith in my abilities. The unconditional love and support of my sister Peggy Bush and brother Billy Bass and their families is always with me. Then thank you to my children Donovan and Jordan Albers and Baile Biddle who always inspire me to love and grow.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACTE = American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education

ACEI = Association for Childhood Education International

ECE = Early Childhood Education (PreK - 3rd grade)

EE = Elementary Education (Kindergarten - 6th grade)

K = Kindergarten

NAECTE = National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

NAESP = National Association of Elementary School Principals

NAEYC = National Association for the Education of Young Children

NASBE = National Association of State Boards of Education

NCATE = National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

NCLB = No Child Left Behind Act

NSD = Nomad School District (pseudonym)

P-20 = Preschool through college

P-3 = Preschool through 3rd grade or Birth through 3rd grade

PK-3 = Prekindergarten through 3rd grade

PreK = Pre-kindergarten (ages 3 and 4)

PreK-3rd = Pre-kindergarten to 3rd grade

Preschool = services before Kindergarten (birth to age 5)

Primary grades = PreK through 3rd grade

UCF = University of Central Florida

Young children = Birth to age 8

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Principals are considered the educational leaders of their schools, and as such they face pressure to improve the quality of education across all levels and disciplines (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Szekley, 2013). Academic reform movements drive schools to provide more rigorous learning environments, and administrators are pressured to meet the demands of high-stakes measures. High-stakes testing and accountability bombard our educational system. School leaders worry about low academic performance and seek answers to close achievement gaps (Ehrenberg, Robinson, & Snow, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Reardon, 2011).

Effective school leaders are essential for improving student achievement, as they are the instructional leaders of their schools (Mead, 2011). It has been estimated that principals impact 25% of student learning, and that impact can be increased to almost 60% when combined with quality teachers (Marzano et al., 2005). Thus, it is imperative that principals hire the best teachers in order to maximize student achievement. Much of the accountability movement focuses on 3rd through 5th grades where high-stakes testing occurs. However, the National Governors Association stated that elementary school principals need the ability to lead high-quality classrooms from Pre-kindergarten (PreK) to 3rd grade.

Principals are in charge of leading faculty as well as hiring effective teachers for their schools. Previous research on principals' preferences for teacher characteristics found that principals prioritize caring, content knowledge, and teaching skills (Engel, 2013; Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2010). According to a study that investigated whether principals prefer the most effective candidates when hiring, "Principals do not seem to personally value certification" (Harris et al., 2010, p. 36). They look for a mixture of personal and professional

qualities, expecting teachers to simultaneously know the content, teach it, and motivate students (Harris et al., 2010).

This study expands on previous research on principals' preferences with a focus on teacher preparation for primary grade teachers. Primary grades are considered PreK through 3rd grade for the purposes of this paper. Teacher preparation programs vary from state to state, and some states such as Florida offer degrees in Elementary Education (EE) and Early Childhood Education (ECE). Most states have some form of early childhood certification, but very few require schools to employ teachers certified in early childhood (NAECTE, 2008). PreK/Primary certification in Florida is earned by completing a four-year degree program in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Only PreK teachers working in jobs that require a four-year degree need to possess a certification in PreK/Primary (age 3 to grade 3). Degree programs in Elementary Education (EE) in Florida cover kindergarten through 6th grade and qualify pre-service teachers to obtain EE certification. Therefore, kindergarten (K) through 3rd grade positions allow certification in either ECE or EE, although the preparation for each is unique.

Importance of Primary Grades

My concern with principals' preferences concentrates on the primary grades and emerged in part from studies that claim long-term, high-quality early learning produces cost benefits to society as a whole (Currie & Thomas, 1998; Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz, 2010; Reynolds, Temple, White, Ou & Robertson, 2011). These studies focused on PreK experiences, and although studies of larger programs have generated somewhat mixed results (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010) the general consensus is that high quality early childhood programs are vital for cognitive, social, and schooling outcomes (Barnett, 2011). Accordingly, the federal government and many states invest in early childhood programs,

especially for children at risk. Their effectiveness may likely deteriorate if low quality teachers are being assigned to the primary grades after children complete quality PreK programs.

Following through with quality teachers in K through 3rd grade could accentuate the positive effects of quality PreK.

Numerous PreK-3rd grade initiatives are becoming prevalent, and programs such as FirstSchool, the New School Project in Chicago, and the Erikson Institute highlight the seamless continuum from PreK through 3rd grade (PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group, 2013; Ritchie & Gutmann, 2014). PreK continuums build on the belief that achievement gaps reflect fragmented services and inconsistent quality from grade to grade and account for fade-out effects. Even if a child receives a high quality preschool education, the effects begin to “fade out” or “converge” without appropriate forms of teaching from kindergarten through 3rd grade (Graves, 2006; Guernsey, Bornfreund, McCann, & Williams, 2014; New American Foundation, 2009). Some sources suggest that the gap in student achievement after third grade could be decreased or even eliminated with specific teacher training (New American Foundation, 2009; Pianta, 2012; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009). The Foundation for Child Development Policy Brief Advancing PK-3 No. 4 listed “qualified teachers” as one of the five components of a coherent PK-3 program and recommended state departments of education, school boards, and local districts incorporate the PK-3 approach (Graves, 2006). It requires teachers of each grade be equipped with a four-year degree with specialized training in ECE and recommends that state departments of education incorporate specific certification for PK through third grade (Graves, 2006).

Introduction to the Study

Principals in Florida are required to follow state certification guidelines when hiring for every grade level residing on their campus. Most elementary schools serve K through 5th grade, with a number also housing state-funded PreK classrooms. The configuration of teacher certification in the State of Florida creates an overlap in grades that ECE and EE majors are eligible to teach (Florida Department of Education Administrative Rule 6A-4.0142; Florida Department of Education Administrative Rule 6A-4.0151). Therefore, administrators have a choice of hiring teachers with pre-service training in ECE or EE for the primary grades of K through 3rd grade.

In a recent study I found that principals in one suburban school district in Florida tended to favor teachers with EE preparation as opposed to ECE when hiring teachers for primary grades (Albers-Biddle, 2013). According to the survey conducted with 17 out of 25 elementary school principals responding (68%), the majority preferred hiring teachers with EE training for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. Kindergarten was the only grade level that a slight majority of principals preferred hiring teachers with ECE preparation. Principals also reported that “flexibility to teach more grade levels” in EE was the main reason a candidate was hired to teach 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade (Albers-Biddle, 2013).

For confidentiality reasons, the pseudonym of the actual district studied for this research will be the “Nomad School District” (NSD). According to the district website, district policy for hiring teachers gives full authority to the principal of each school. The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice is to analyze principals in the same district on their dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers, specifically focusing on the early grades and comparing preparation programs between ECE and EE certification.

History of Teacher Certification in the State of Florida

Historically, teacher certification for primary grades in Florida has varied greatly, and certification in PreK/Primary has been viewed as insignificant. The low value of ECE seen in the recent history of teacher certification in Florida can be traced back to 1986. Elementary Education was the only option (at least at UCF where I attended college) to complete as a major for teaching lower elementary school grades. Elementary certification at the state level covered grades 1-6, and no degree program included kindergarten. To add kindergarten to a certificate, two extra graduate courses in ECE were required.

In 1988, the Florida Legislature expanded the Florida Teacher Certification Examination to include subject matter knowledge in certification areas—now known as Subject Area Exams (Florida Department of Education, 2011a). At that time certification in Primary Education was added for teaching K-3rd grades, and EE covered grades 1-6, creating an overlap in 1st through 3rd grade. Thus, four-year degree programs in ECE were developed at Florida universities to specialize the coursework for the new certification. In 1993, PreK/Primary certification replaced Primary Education and included Pre-kindergarten so as to cover PreK through 3rd grade, keeping the same overlap with EE but adding Pre-kindergarten only to PreK/Primary (age 3 to grade 3).

Prior to 2002, candidates working in kindergarten were required to have earned the extra ECE specialization along with their EE certification or completed ECE coursework to qualify for certification in Primary Education or PreK/Primary. In 2002, the legislature added kindergarten to the EE certificate allowing teachers with the same preparation as those previously to teach an additional grade (State of Florida Statute 6A-4.0151). This statute changed the elementary certification structure from 1st-6th to K-6th “with a stroke of a pen,” and automatically “certified” EE trained teachers to teach kindergarten with no regard for specialized training

(Hyun, 2003, p. 121). As a result, even less value was placed on the ECE degree (Marxen et al., 2012).

The Florida Department of Education (Stewart, 2012) recently revised competencies and skills for Pre-kindergarten/Primary PreK–3 teacher certification and the examination format to include more content knowledge as included in EE certification. The structure changed to cover four subject areas as opposed to one large test based on developmental knowledge. Subtests were added to increase rigor and cover subject-area content as well as subject-specific content pedagogy in developmental knowledge, language arts, reading, mathematics, and science. The changes to the PreK/Primary certification were made beginning in July of 2013 to align with Common Core State Standards, Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards (2011) as well as Florida Early Learning and Development Standards for Four-Year-Olds. By contrast EE competencies and skills required for teacher certification comprise subtests in the following content areas: Language Arts and Reading, Social Science, Science, and Mathematics (Stewart, 2012). The ECE certification exam has increased in rigor and continues to require the developmental knowledge needed to work with young children. Although EE certification includes kindergarten, no developmental knowledge is included.

Principals' Hiring Practices

A number of principals in the NSD in a previous study reported hiring teachers with more subject-area knowledge expertise, deeming EE as more efficient to move teachers across a larger grade span (Albers-Biddle, 2013). One study in North Carolina also found deficits in teacher quality for the lower grades and declared that accountability pressures caused principals to place their stronger teachers in upper grades (3-5) and lower quality teachers in K-2 (Fuller & Ladd,

2013). Two credential-based measures of teacher quality proved that weaker teachers were moved to lower grades and higher quality teacher to grades impacted by high-stakes testing (Fuller & Ladd). This practice undermines the research that stresses the importance of the early years of a child's life and the benefits of quality early childhood programs (Heckman et al., 2010; Reynolds et al., 2011). Principals might naturally focus on grades where student achievement affects school grades which begin at 3rd grade. Too often the early grades are not considered in discussions involving accountability efforts such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Kauerz & McMaken, 2004; Miller & Smith, 2011). Yet the positive results of high-quality early learning have been established, resulting in increased recognition that principals should be accountable for young children in preschool, kindergarten, and the early grades (NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011).

The reason principals value EE over ECE is not clear. A number of possible reasons have been speculated, but prior research has not asked principals directly. My research sought to discover more about their reasoning and whether they knew or understood the difference between the two preparation programs and philosophies.

Statement of the Problem

Empirically, the problem of practice is that principals in one suburban school district in Florida tend to favor teachers with EE certification as opposed to ECE training when staffing teachers for primary grades. My normative assumption is that ECE-specialized training better prepares teachers for enhanced student outcomes in the primary grades. Nonetheless, principals in general do not agree or are not aware of the possible improved outcomes. While prior research on the topic has suggested a number of possible reasons, it is important to study the dynamics in this school district in more depth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers and inquire about their knowledge of and value of preparation programs of ECE and EE teacher certification. ECE and EE degrees embrace different philosophies (Johnson, Fiene, McKinnon, & Babu, 2010). They have separate histories and traditionally different teaching practices (File & Gullo, 2002).

Principals are crucial as academic leaders of their schools. They make vital decisions about staffing personnel as well as budgets, school policies, curriculum, assessment, materials, and training, all intended to improve student achievement. Academic success of students depends on the effective operation of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). As it is the responsibility of principals to hire faculty, their preferences impact the successful operation of the schools they lead. When principals hire EE-degreed teachers to work with PreK, K 1st-,2nd, and 3rd- grades, young children in the foundational years of their education may be receiving instruction from teachers with content knowledge focused on middle-to-upper elementary grades and not specialized knowledge of early childhood development and how young children learn (Bornfreund, 2012; Marxen, Ofstedal & Danbom, 2008).

Unfortunately, many school leaders may not be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively supervise teachers earliest grade levels (Mead, 2011). This study focuses on the practices of principals in the district I refer to as the Nomad School District (NSD). An analysis of the interviews conducted illustrates the dispositions, beliefs, and knowledge of these instructional leaders concerning teachers in primary grades.

Research Questions

The following are the study research questions:

What factors affect principals' staffing decisions in primary grades in the NSD?

- (a) What grade level(s) do elementary school principals value, and where do they place their highest quality teachers?
- (b) Do principals understand the differences between ECE teacher preparation and EE preparedness?
- (c) Why is flexibility important to the majority of principals when staffing teachers in primary grades?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will inform the district about staffing practices of principals specific to primary grades and will provide an opportunity for suggestions based on the results and research conducted. It will add to previous research on principals' hiring practices. Past research has been conducted on principals' preferences and methods for hiring teachers at all levels K-12 (Engel, 2013; Harris et al., 2010), but an exhaustive literature review found no research specific to the elementary level, much less the primary grades.

Past studies found that principals preferred a mixture of personal and professional qualities; however certification was barely addressed (Engel, 2013; Harris et al., 2010). With increased awareness of the importance of early learning, principals' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2013) and PreK-3rd learning should be at the forefront of staffing practices. Nevertheless, research conducted so far has proven that ECE is undervalued. The results from this study will document the current level of knowledge, dispositions, and beliefs of principals for high-quality teaching in primary grades and create new awareness of the PreK-3rd continuums. It may also be used to advocate for the importance of early learning.

Previous Research

In a previous study, I administered a survey to principals in the NSD to gain more insight into possible perceptions of administrators. The research questions were “Do principals perceive a degree in ECE as valuable for teachers in Kindergarten through 3rd grade?” Or “Do they perceive a degree in EE as more advantageous and if so, why?” (Albers-Biddle, 2013). Sixty-eight percent of principals responded, ranging in experience from 1-5 years to over 21 years. Nine of the principals originally majored in EE and the remainder held a variety of degrees related to education. The majority of schools housed 500 to 999 students, with only two over 1000, and the school populations were diverse. (See Appendix A)

On October 10, 2013, I met with the superintendent of NSD to reveal the results of the survey, and I interviewed her for background information and insight. The interview took place first so as not to bias her answers based on the survey results. The protocol used is located in Appendix B. To better understand her values and beliefs I asked how important she thought the primary grades are to the overall future success for children and what skills she thought were needed to teach young children. Next I asked her what hiring policies or expectations were in place for hiring primary versus upper elementary grades. The results of the interview revealed that she believed that the primary grades are fundamentally important and that teachers require specialized knowledge to work with young children. Although she demonstrated value for early childhood as a field of study, she stated there was no policy to require different qualification for primary grades, and she did not support efforts to change the policy or practice. Without solid research to demonstrate that it would have an impact on test scores in upper grades, any change that limited principals to staffing teachers without the flexibility to move them into 4th and 5th grade would not be considered a good business model (personal communication, October 10,

2013). The results of the survey were also presented to her and she was receptive to them and gave her support to further investigation of the topic.

Quantitative results from the survey revealed that 59% of principals preferred ECE training when hiring for Kindergarten, 24% for 1st grade, and 0% for 2nd and 3rd grade. In short, principals in NSD said they would hire teachers with EE training for the primary grades the majority of the time. The consideration of specialized training for 1st through 3rd grade was not a priority, although it was considered more often for Kindergarten (Table 1).

Table 1

Survey of Nomad District School Principals

Grade	Early Childhood	Elementary	Either
K	59%	29%	12%
1 st	24%	59%	18%
2 nd	0%	82%	18%
3 rd	0%	88%	12%

Principal survey results found that the majority of principals preferred the ECE degree for Kindergarten but not for 1st through 3rd grade (Albers-Biddle, 2013). Qualitative results revealed that the major consideration for hiring 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade teachers was the flexibility to teach more grade levels; therefore EE was preferred. As demonstrated in Figure 1, a little over half of the principals considered specialized training in ECE for hiring teachers in kindergarten, many fewer considered it for 1st grade, and none considered it for 2nd or 3rd grade. Principals in the NSD completed a survey asking their preference between ECE and EE for hiring teachers in the primary grades. They were then asked to give up to three reasons for their preference.

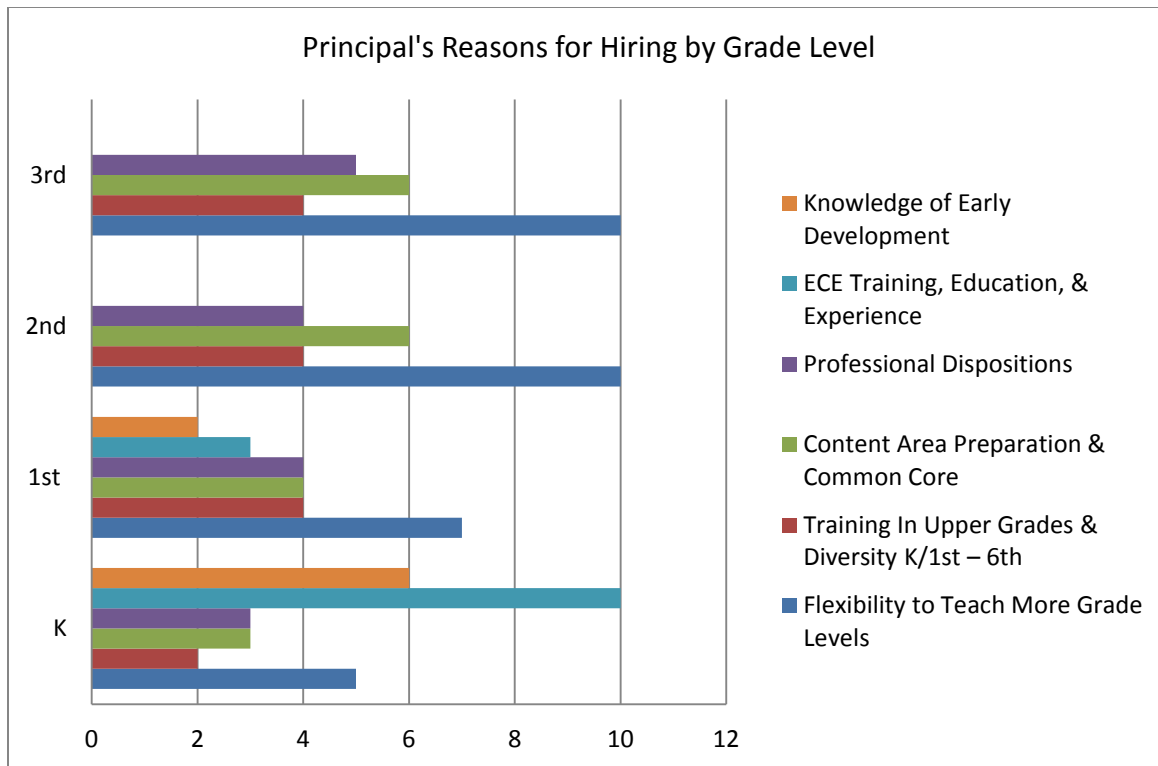


Figure 1 Principal’s Reasons for Hiring by Grade Level

Consideration for the well-being of children was not the prominent reason for hiring teachers with one certification over another. Although ECE training, education, and experience was the main reason found for hiring Kindergarten teachers, “flexibility” was close behind as the third highest consideration (Albers-Biddle, 2013). Content knowledge was second in importance for hiring in 2nd and 3rd grades. While it might be understandable to feel that 2nd and 3rd grade teachers might not need as much ECE training, the main reason guiding decisions for 1st through 3rd grade hiring practices was listed as “flexibility to teach more grade levels,” not “content area preparation” or “training in upper grades.” The issue at hand is that principals did not perceive the overlap in certification and their hiring practices as a problem but rather as a prudent way to hire faculty. A large majority of principals in NSD are filling classroom positions based on flexibility and not considering the type of education their teachers receive. I feel that having the

“marketability” to teach more grade levels is not a rational purpose for placing EE-degreed teachers in the primary grades.

History of ECE in the District

According to “Jane,” a Pre-kindergarten Program Specialist in NSD, principals have always done what is convenient for them when it comes to staffing (personal communication, September 23, 2013). For the most part, they do not consider what is best for young children. For over a decade the push down of curriculum and pressure to use inappropriate practices such as worksheets has been used to compel teachers in kindergarten to do the work of 1st grade. More recently, the pressure has extended to push down even more to Pre-kindergarten as well as forcing Common Core of K-12 to fit PreK (personal communication, September 23, 2013).

The PreK Program Specialist also revealed that a constant battle seems to take place between her and the teachers she supports in PreK when principals with a secondary education background supervise elementary school teachers. Many principals have never taught primary grades and are certified only in secondary education, so early childhood is out of their expertise range (Bornfreund, 2011). Illogically, administrators with no training in elementary (much less early childhood) evaluate these teachers and pressure teachers to fit into upper-grade expectations (personal communication, September 23, 2013). This process, which forces teachers to comply in order to keep their jobs, leads to students’ receiving inappropriate teaching practices for their age and development.

Organizational Background

According to the district website, the Nomad School District serves more than 40,000 students and has over 5,500 employees. The superintendent assumed her position in 2008 after a national superintendent search was conducted. She has local experience as a teacher and

elementary and high school principal, Director of a Vo-Tech, Assistant Superintendent, Senior Director, and Associate Superintendent. According to its website, the district is accredited through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools under the parent organization of AdvancedEd Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS/CASI). There are 25 elementary schools in the district, with four listed as conversion charter schools.

The NSD Board includes five districts, with one school board member residing in each district. This governing body is responsible for the control, operation, organization, management, and administration of the schools in the district according to Florida Statutes and State Board of Education rules. School Board Policy states that the administrative head of each school is the principal, who is appointed by the Superintendent and approved by the Board.

Chapter Two will review the literature on national trends in the field of ECE and principal preparation in primary education. In Chapter Three I will describe the methodology used to interview and analyze principals' staffing practices as well as dispositions, beliefs, and knowledge of ECE. Chapter Four will reveal the results of the survey and relate the findings to the research questions. Chapter Five will report the findings of the study and make recommendations based on those findings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I review and critique the research and scholarship on the effectiveness of elementary school principals' teacher-staffing practices in primary grades and the implications for a PreK-3rd continuum. Although studies on the leadership roles of principals have examined the effects on student achievement, these studies have not examined the trend of staffing Elementary Education (EE)– over Early Childhood Education (ECE)–trained teachers in primary grades. As such, this literature review provides additional insight into the rationale for staffing ECE-trained teachers and implications for PreK-3rd continuums. The analytic focus on teacher qualification in primary grades provides another insight. This study analyzes principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers. In addition, although numerous studies of principals' hiring practices and teacher quality have identified implications for policy, little analytic attention has been paid to the difference in ECE and EE pre-service training. I address this issue by suggesting that most principals hire EE-trained teachers for flexibility reasons and may not consider or understand the value of specialized training in ECE. Therefore, recommendations found in PreK-3rd initiatives to place highly trained ECE teachers in PreK through 3rd grade should be considered.

Search tools such as EBSCOhost, ERIC, PsycInfo, Google, and Google Scholar were used to locate key sources. The following search terms were used to find research studies on the differences between ECE and EE teacher preparation degrees and student achievement: early childhood education, elementary education, pre-service teacher preparation, four-year degree undergraduate training, higher education, teacher certification, teacher qualification, teacher effectiveness, teacher qualifications, and primary grades. Studies on teacher quality and

comparisons of education levels with student outcomes were found (Early & Winton, 2001; Goldhaber & Brewer, 1996; Pianta et al., 2005), but no studies specifically comparing ECE to EE training were cited.

I then developed and conducted a survey with principals in the Nomad School District (NSD), asking their preferences when hiring teachers in the primary grades (Albers-Biddle, 2013). Thus more search terms were added to include the following: principal perceptions and teacher quality. After the survey results revealed that the majority of principals in my study preferred to hire EE trained teachers, new terms related to staffing and policies to address hiring in the primary grades were added. As my research continued, I found that the majority of articles and reports that addressed early childhood education requirements were connected with PreK through 3rd grade or P-3 initiatives; therefore, the following terms were discovered: P-3, PreK through 3rd, continuum, accountability, and achievement gap. This literature review comprised history, background information, and current trends in the field of early childhood education, along with staffing practices and preparation for principals.

Principals Hiring Practices and Preparation

Principals play a critical role in elementary schools, especially in the early grades, because they are responsible for hiring faculty (Bornfreund, 2011; Guernsey et al., 2014; Mead, 2011). The impact of high-stakes testing and the pressure to improve student achievement from legislation such as NCLB is a key factor driving principals' staffing practices. Frequently resources are directed toward the tested grades, which leads to remediation in upper grades. For example, teachers in the lower grades of K-2nd in North Carolina were found to be of poorer quality than the quality of those in upper grades (3rd-5th) (Fuller & Ladd, 2013).

Three sources were reviewed to examine the inclusion of requirements covering child development or requiring specific understanding of primary-age children PreK through 3rd grade. The first was the educational leadership policy standards developed by The Council of Chief State School Officers (2008). These national standards represent the latest policy standards for education leadership used to guide states in leadership preparation, licensure, evaluation, and professional development. It addresses demands on education leaders to raise student achievement. Of the six standards, none addresses coursework or understanding of child development. The only standard that might apply to PreK-3rd continuums would be under Standard 6 Function C, which states “Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 15). PreK-3rd continuums are an emerging initiative, and many organizations have recommendations for leaders. (Mead, 2011; NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011; Szekely, 2013)

The (2012) *Competencies and Skills Required for Certification in Educational Leadership in Florida*, 4th edition, were developed for the Florida Educational Leadership Examination (FELE), which comprises three subtests: leadership for student learning, organizational development, and systems leadership. None of the skills includes coursework in child development, but under subtest 2, competency 1, skill 1 a recruitment practice was described as “Analyze and assess processes and methods of recruiting and employing a diverse faculty with the instructional proficiencies needed for the school population being served” (Florida Department of Education, 2012, p. 7). This advised practice vaguely addresses the idea of staffing faculty with “instructional proficiencies” and could be interpreted as a reason to staff specialized teachers in primary grades.

The Florida Department of Education's Principal Leadership Standards sets core expectations for effective school administrators based on research. Ten standards are grouped into four domains of student achievement, instructional leadership, organizational leadership, and professional and ethical behavior. None of the standards addresses knowledge of child development, but standard 10 states that "The leader engages in professional learning that improves professional practice in alignment with the needs of the school system" (Florida Department of Education, 2011a, p. 4), which could be used to defend the need for professional development in primary grades when supervising teachers in the primary grades. The majority of principals do not have training in EE much less ECE. All are required to complete leadership coursework to develop leadership qualities. Their background experience and complete degree programs vary greatly and include such fields as secondary teaching, music education, counselor education, and others.

History of Early Childhood Certification Nationally

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2004) perceived ECE teacher licensing as a challenge to preparing high-quality teachers for a changing society and recommended professional preparation of ECE teacher be distinct from EE to ensure appropriate preparation to work with children in the primary grades. The issue has been consistent and has actually been gaining more attention. Bredekamp and Goffin (2012) defined current ECE credentials and certifications, highlighted the high-stakes decisions that result from the systems, and provided a vision for improving quality in the *Handbook of Early Childhood Education*. They stated,

No other time in history has seen ECE as high on the national agenda as it now is.

Preschool education, in particular, is widely touted for its short-term ability to enhance

school readiness and its long-term potential to close the achievement gap, lessen crime, and improve the school and life success of children from low-income families. (p. 585)

Early Childhood Education and teacher certification issues are evident nationally, as a nationwide dialogue was called after No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements implemented standards such as highly qualified teachers, which ironically might reduce quality (Hyun, 2003). NCLB requires highly qualified teachers but does not delineate characteristics of highly qualified kindergarten teachers in the legislation (Marxen et al., 2008). Efforts to increase the scope of grades included in certification types, such as adding kindergarten to the EE certification, does not automatically make a teacher highly qualified to teach kindergarten.

For example, members of the Minnesota Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (MAECTE) were concerned when the state changed the scope of EE licensure from grades 1-6 to K-6 and eliminated the separate kindergarten endorsement (Marxen et al., 2008). They conducted a study to explore their concerns about the changes made in higher education institutions' modifications to their teacher education programs. Online surveys, phone calls, and catalog searches of universities and colleges in Minnesota produced results that questioned the ability to consider graduates highly qualified kindergarten teachers (Marxen et al., 2008). Only two programs required field experience in kindergarten, and 80% of the EE degree programs did not offer a separate course in kindergarten curriculum and teaching methods. While most institutions stated the study of child development levels of young children was to be integrated into coursework, some individuals stated it was not happening in reality, only in theory (Marxen et al., 2008).

The State of Florida Statute (2002) that changed the elementary certification structure from 1-6 to K-6 has been criticized for allowing “unqualified teachers [to become] qualified

teachers when they took the certification test” (Hyun, 2003, p. 121). Adding kindergarten to EE certification automatically certified people to teach kindergarten with no regard for training and changed the numbers on paper to look as if more teachers were in field (Hyun, 2003, p.121). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2004) recommended the ECE degree provide curriculum that is specific to the field of working with young children and not just adapting the EE degree. Teachers trained in EE often have comparatively little training in early childhood development (Guernsey & Mead, 2010). A credential that allows teachers to work with any grade K-5 or K-6 is very broad. “The skills required to successfully teach first graders to read are very different than those required to teach fifth grade science and social studies” (Guernsey & Mead, 2010, p. 8).

Teacher Qualifications in Primary Grades

The National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) Position Statement on Early Childhood Certification for Teachers of Children 8 Years Old and Younger in Public School Settings (2009) supports teacher certification specific to early childhood for PreK and primary grades. The position statement was endorsed by several other professional organizations, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Association of Childhood Education International (ACEI).

Various sources recommend the elimination of the K-5 or K-6 omnibus elementary license and explain there is a difference in skills and preparation for working with young children in PreK-3rd (Rice & McLaughlin, 2007; W. K. Kellogg Foundation & Education Commission of the States, 2009). Because elementary curriculum has a tendency to sneak down into primary grades, an age 3 through 3rd-grade certification is recommend to promote developmentally appropriate and effective practices (Bredekamp & Goffin, 2012).

Staffing ECE-Trained Teachers

Early childhood advocates believe that primary teachers require a specialized knowledge base in such areas as child development, the value of play, working hands-on, and family involvement (AACTE, 2004; ACEI, 1997; Bornfreund, 2011; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; NAEYC, 2009). Training for teachers of young children, especially PreK through 3rd grade, should be grounded in child development (Guernsey & Mead, 2010). For that reason, ECE programs are designed to prepare students to work with young children with the understanding that children in these developmental years (PreK-Primary) have different learning and social emotional needs than older children (Ehrenberg et al., 2012). Typically EE does not include child development nor family, school, and community (Johnson, Fiene, McKinnon & Babu, 2010).

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collected information from a national representation of kindergarten teachers and found that 88% of kindergarten teachers in public schools were certified in elementary education contrasted to 53% in early childhood (Percentage equals more than 100 because some teachers held both certifications) (Germino-Hausken, Walston, & Rathbun, 2004). I imagine a higher percentage of teachers held EE certification for 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-grade classrooms in this study if such data had been collected. In the report of the Early Education Initiative at the New America Foundation, Bornfreund (2011) asserted that 14 states require kindergarten teachers to obtain a license with an ECE focus. Only four require an ECE license for K-3rd grade (Arkansas, Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania). When EE majors are placed in primary grades, there is a high chance that the teachers are untrained in child development and the special needs of young children and their

families (Johnson et al., 2010). They are not equipped to handle the social and emotional needs that play a major role in teaching young children.

Certification Overlap

Just as the survey conducted in the NSD exhibited, the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE, 2008) reported most administrators tend to favor hiring elementary-certified teachers when ECE and EE certifications overlap and allow both to teach kindergarten. “Current teacher licensure practices discourage unique early childhood teacher preparation in most states” (NAECTE, 2008, p. 26). Florida is one such state, and a probable cause is that principals do not consider ECE the preferred degree in primary education. This situation presents a quandary, because specialized training is not considered or valued. These licensure requirements may leave many new teachers unprepared to teach the primary grades (Bornfreund, 2012).

The Erikson Institute reported that the configuration of teacher certification has the ability to support high-quality teaching in PreK through 3rd grade. Teacher certification that overlaps elementary education and early childhood may cause a reduced incentive for teachers to pursue early childhood degrees (Manvell, Maxwell, & Fleming, 2011). “A P-3 certification that does not overlap will demonstrate state support for the idea that early childhood is an established learning period of time for young children. The existing overlap dilutes that notion” (Rice & McLaughlin, 2007, p. 8).

Ohio recognized the problem of certification overlaps and persuasion away from early childhood preparation. To support greater continuity and teacher effectiveness and align teacher preparation with the developmental levels of young children, Ohio created an early childhood certification and required it of teachers of PreK through 3rd grade. Pennsylvania followed by

eliminating the K-6 certification and instituted a Pre-kindergarten through 4th grade certificate (W. K. Kellogg Foundation & Education Commission of the States, 2009). The Penn State Study of Early Childhood Teacher Education Report recommended no overlap in elementary certifications and asserted that further research is needed “concerning how teacher education programs are changing in response to PreK and PreK-3rd” (Johnson et al., 2010, p. 12).

Differences in ECE and EE Pre-Service Training

ECE teacher preparation programs are distinct from EE and should be respected as a specialized discipline (AACTE, 2004). ECE emphasizes child development through age eight year (or 3rd grade) and engagement with families, while EE stresses teaching academic content areas with more emphasis on upper elementary grades (Mead, 2011). Approaches to educating young children should include the whole child and embrace social/emotional development and family involvement along with the academic areas. The National Education Goals established in 1990 by President George H. W. Bush and 50 state governors developed five dimensions and noted they should be considered as a totality (Kagan, Moore, & Bredekamp, 1995). Inherent in the whole-child notion, the dimensions include (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches toward learning; (4) language development; and (5) cognition and general knowledge. Similarly, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) adopted a position statement about building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age eight (2003). The statement includes all aspects of child development—cognitive, physical, social, and artistic activity—from birth through 3rd grade.

The New America Foundation Report emphasized the unique development of Pre-kindergarten through 3rd-grade children as they acquire critical foundational skills not only in academics but in social/emotional development, and promoted teachers' solid understanding of child development (Guernsey & Mead, 2010). In general, EE training currently does not include coursework in non-academic areas of development (AACTE, 2004; Bornfreund, 2012). The result of so many EE-certified teachers working in kindergarten and primary grades is teachers who have little specialized knowledge of how children learn in early grades (Manvell et al., 2011).

Curriculum disputes in early childhood education can be explained by defining two opposing positions that compare (a) the academic or instructivist approach to (b) the constructivist approach (Katz, 1999). The constructivist belief assumes that "child-initiated exploration" with proper scaffolding from adults is the "developmentally appropriate way to support children's learning" while instructivists believe "formal academic instruction" is beneficial for "internalizing the transmitted knowledge and systematically practicing the literacy and numeracy skills to be learned" (Katz, 1999, p. 1). One study where ECE and EE pre-service teachers were compared concerning their beliefs on primary classroom teaching practices found "potentially conflicting paradigms" (File & Gullo, 2002, p. 126). ECE students when compared to EE students favored constructivist approaches in several areas such as teaching strategies, expectation of children, and child-directed activities (File & Gullo, 2002).

Principals who support instructivist approaches may be more inclined to hire teachers with an EE degree. There are some who believe constructivists allow children to "play" without any academic guidance. When the constructivist approach is misconstrued to allow free play

with no adult interaction, the environment may not provide sufficient experiences for spontaneous learning of basic skills (Katz, 1999).

Comparing ECE vs. EE at UCF

I looked at the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum requirements for the undergraduate degree programs in ECE and EE at the University of Central Florida (UCF) and articulated a nuanced synthesis of each. Differing opinions as to which degree/major best suits students in the marketplace prompted this review. My focus was on the theoretical faction of curriculum requirements for each to prepare pre-service teachers to teach young children (with a focus on the Kindergarten grade level). The purpose was to define the similarities and differences in the course of study for both majors using Schwab's (1973) commonplaces used for curriculum development. He described the four commonplaces that need intentional representation when developing curriculum as (1) subject matter (2) the learner, (3) milieu, and (4) the teacher.

A side-by-side comparison of the courses required for a degree in ECE and EE was conducted to discriminate the differences (University of Central Florida, 2013). General education requirements were the same for both programs of study, the first five prerequisite courses were the same, and four advanced-level core requirement courses were identical (Appendix C). These requirements suggested that students in each degree program receive the same *subject area* training in prerequisites, ESOL, and one reading course. There were some slight variations with the remainder of prerequisites, with ECE requiring two more courses than EE, but both had comparable courses within the EE advanced requirements (Appendix D). There were a total of 11 equivalent courses covering a variety of foundational information as well as content areas.

Appendix E illustrates courses that are unique to each program. EE offered three content-area courses that ECE did not: one social sciences course, one literature course, and an additional reading course. This again focused on and fulfilled the *subject area* commonplace (Schwab, 1973). In contrast, ECE required a course in assessment and evaluation as well as three non-academic courses covering social/emotional development, which assisted in fulfilling the *learner* commonplace; parent involvement, which fulfilled the *milieu* or context from home and community; and creative planning, which focused on developing creativity (Schwab, 1973).

Instructors in EE tend to focus on kindergarten through 6th grade to deliver the subject areas. This large range of age requires the content knowledge and ability to teach content for children five to 11 years of ages. For example, math objectives beginning at number sense for Kindergarten to complicated division for 6th grade. The content focus ends up covering mostly the intermediate grades, and the primary grades tend to get less (Mead, 2011). ECE focus is on PreK through 3rd grade, a much more focused group of *learners*. Learners in these grades are more closely related in the stages of intellectual development. For example, children around age two through seven years are functioning at the pre-operational stage of Piaget's cognitive development theory (Morrison, 2012). Therefore, ECE curriculum can focus on how young children learn and develop number sense to build a strong foundation. ECE focuses more on child-directed methods while EE may rely on teacher-directed, content-area, large-group instruction (File & Gullo, 2002).

Comparing EE curriculum and ECE curriculum at UCF adopting Schwab's (1973) four commonplaces as a framework found that both programs of study strongly embody *subject matter*, with EE providing even more focus than ECE in subject matter for 3rd grade and above. Both courses of study include the *teacher* element through their courses of study. The ECE

program gives a much stronger focus to the *milieu*, with parent involvement and the context of early childhood environment. The *learner* is better attended in ECE with the study of social/emotional development of young children and cognitive development such as how the brain develops rapidly in the first five years of life.

The Developmental Sciences

Many reform movements focus on increasing student achievement based on academic performance. However, a combination of social, emotional, and academic performance is needed, especially with the new Common Core Standards (NCATE, 2010). Developmental research denotes better school performance with mastery of social-emotional competencies, while failure is more associated with personal, social, and academic issues (NCATE, 2010). A meta-analysis of 213 school programs providing social and emotional learning (SEL) found an 11 percentile-point gain in student achievement along with a reduction in disruptive behaviors and an increase in pro-social behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011).

Research has shown the influence of child development on how children learn, with the four foundations for young children's development of self-regulation, representation, memory, and attachment (Maxwell, Ritchie, Bredekamp, & Zimmerman, 2009). "Developmental psychology and education have grown apart. Too often, advances in developmental science are unrelated to educational programs for young children, and early childhood educational practices tend to either ignore scientific finding or reflect outdated theories and research" (Maxwell et al., 2009, p. 2). Teachers and administrators need training in developmental sciences to make the most of policy reforms, but there is no consistency in preparation programs (Pianta, Hitz, & West, 2010).

Implications for PreK-3rd Continuums

Kauerz (2009) explained P-20 education as becoming a prominent vision of an integrated system of education, and within the broad spectrum of services P-3 is the first level of this seamless system. The definitions and scopes of P-3 are unclear but embrace some commonalities within their scope of age levels. Initiatives that concentrate on quality services for children and families from birth and follow through age eight years are commonly referred to as the P-3 Continuum. Another perspective using a narrower structure employs the terms PK-3 or PreK-3rd (Kauerz, 2009). For the purpose of this study, I use PreK through 3rd grade (PreK-3rd) as the definition of choice.

The continuum aspect of these initiatives is of importance, because the focus is throughout the entire range, not just pre-kindergarten or transiting into kindergarten, which is where previous studies or programs have focused (Guernsey et al., 2014; PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group, 2013). Movements that include an emphasis on quality instruction for Pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade focus on bridging the disparities between the early childhood field and K-12 systems (Howard, 2008; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009). The goal is to create an aligned, high-quality system, starting with early learning programs, which may include childcare facilities as well as school systems that offer PreK and cross over into elementary education until 3rd grade in order to establish a strong foundation. “P-3 is a vision that transcends the traditional boundaries of early care and education (ECE) and elementary school, emphasizing the interdependence of the two and suggesting the need to integrate and align programs, policies, and priorities” (Kauerz, 2009, p. 11). One common element of all PreK-3rd designs is teacher quality and training. All require training specific to the developmental needs of young children instituted within ECE preparation programs.

Examples of how PreK-3rd continuums can flourish are the programs in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC), which were publicly funded, early-intervention sites that commenced services at age three years for children from low-income families. Services were provided through the 3rd grade, and data were collected on participants up to age 26 years. The Chicago Longitudinal Study found a cost benefit of \$10.83 per dollar spent (Reynolds et al., 2011). The main benefit to society was in increased earnings and decreased criminal justice system costs. A teacher-directed and child-initiated instructional approach was associated with positive children's outcomes as part of the curriculum approach used in CPCs (Graue, Clements, Reynolds, & Niles, 2004). Teacher-directed and child-initiated instructional approaches embrace the philosophies of the PreK-3rd continuum initiative and developmentally appropriate practices of ECE training (Copple & Bredekamp, 2013).

Efforts to Advocate for Young Children and the PreK-3rd Continuum

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute (n.d.) partners with schools to improve PreK-3rd grade experiences specifically for African American, Latino, and low-income children and families in a program named FirstSchool (Ritchie & Gutmann, 2014). Housed at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, they work in collaboration with districts, schools, administrators, and teachers in four schools in North Carolina and four in Michigan to address the struggle to produce equitable outcomes.

In March 2009, more than 200 educators and child advocates met to develop policies to link ready kids to ready schools in an effort to improve learning for young children (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009). The forum, spearheaded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and co-sponsored by the Education Commission of the States, Voices for America's Children, the Children's Leadership Council, and select members of the Learning First Alliance, was

considered to be the first to focus on the dual needs of preparing children for schools as well as preparing schools for children plus extending the age continuum through third grade (not just to PreK). The two-day event demonstrated a growing consensus on the importance of early childhood education and the link between early learning and long-term achievement. U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan noted the cost benefits of quality early childhood programs and stressed the importance of continuity between them and early elementary school (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009).

Recommendations for Leadership to Align PreK-3rd Continuums

“Because the long-term effect of early education depends on high-quality teaching, it is critical that elementary school principals have the capacity to boost P-3 teacher effectiveness” (Szekely, 2013, p. 3). The National Governors Association acknowledged two of the most important determinants for student success to be effective school leadership and high-quality PreK through 3rd-grade education (Szekely, 2013). Specific recommendations included changing principal-preparation programs and standards and licensure requirements and providing professional-development opportunities that incorporate early childhood education content (Szekely, 2013). A limited number of states are starting to recognize the importance of improving principal quality by requiring early childhood–related content into preparation programs and professional development for principals (Haynes, 2009; Manvell et al., 2011). The state of Florida is not one of them at this time.

Organizational Theory Framework

In previous research and interview with the superintendent, principals did not suggest that they viewed the issue of staffing ECE or EE majors in primary grades as a problem for the organization; however, it may be helpful to analyze the topic of staffing teachers within the NSD

using Bolman and Deal's (2008) four-frame organizational theory framework to better understand it. Bolman and Deal (2008) introduced the concept of viewing organizations from different viewpoints in order to manage or organize a group of people such as a business, school, or any type of an establishment. They developed four separate perspectives in which these attitudes can be categorized and identify them as "frames." A frame can be described as a window or lens to view different perspectives; reframing refers to the ability to rethink situations in different ways (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The four frames are identified as political, human resources (HR), symbolic, and structural.

The political frame views organizations through a non-traditional lens so as to perceive establishments as "coalitions" or groups of individuals who endure "power and conflict" as a consequence of "scarce resources" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 209). Scarce resources are frequently a common source of conflict within the political structure, and politics becomes more salient during difficult times. If principals hire teachers based on their budgets and allocation needs, then their choices would be politically motivated. Goldman and Smith (1991) stated, "The political frame reminds us that organizations are constrained by outside forces and beset by internal differences about ends, means, and rewards, and that these must be managed even if they cannot be overcome" (p. 3).

The human resource frame as described by Bolman and Deal (2008) theorizes that an organization's sole purpose is to serve "human needs" (p. 122). The organization and the people who work in the organization rely on each other and function best when a good "fit" is made between them. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the human resource frame evolved from the work of Mary Parker Follett and Elton Mayo, who contended that people along with their dedication, skills, and abilities are vital to the success of an organization. Douglas McGregor

believed that people self-fulfill a manager's expectation and only attain the minimum level of achievement especially when they are regarded as lazy (Bolman & Deal, 2008). His proposed theory advocates for treating people with respect. Theory Y, which is built upon Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, is based on upholding high expectations as opposed to assuming the worst (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Analyzing principals' behaviors through the HR frame, I would want to investigate whether ECE is considered important and a good fit. We should evaluate whether staffing decisions are based on staffing the right person for the job and whether the principals know or care to know the differences between ECE and EE training.

Another lens that can be useful for interpreting an organization is the symbolic frame. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), symbols take many forms in organizations, including myths, visions, and values. One supposition of the symbolic frame is that "What is most important is not what happens but what it means" (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 253). Educational issues take on considerable meaning to the public, making the symbolic content high (Goldman & Smith, 1991). Organizational culture develops over time and aids in developing "shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that knit a community together" (Owens & Valesky, 2007, p. 142). Principals who value all children and develop a culture of caring are coming from the symbolic frame.

Among the many interpretations of the field of ECE, the public perception of teachers trained in ECE is a symbolic issue. Many perceive teachers of young children as glorified babysitters and not as professionals (AACTE, 2004; Kane, 2008; Marxen et al., 2008). Some believe that students majoring in ECE do not receive enough training in content areas such as reading, math, and science. When principals share this view, they are using the symbolic frame with a negative aspect of understanding ECE.

The structural frame is founded on a belief that prescribed job positions work together to reach common goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). One belief is that “organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives” and “structures must be designed to fit an organization’s current circumstance” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 47). Assumption number four of the structural frame maintains that individuals must coordinate efforts for the good of the whole organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Owens and Valesky (2007) explained that the German sociologist Max Weber had an impact on changing the view of administrative systems into effective bureaucracies using highly trained experts. Principals who strive to increase the efficiency and value specialization operate in the structural frame. Therefore, ECE training and certification would be important for teaching in the primary grades.

David Cohen (1990) added another perspective, which could be described as a cognitive frame. His essay probed the relationship between an instructional policy and the teaching practices of a math teacher who truly believed she had made the necessary changes to her teaching to meet the new policies of teaching mathematical understanding when in reality, she had not. Even when policy seems to be the leading force for changing practice, if the chief agents implementing the policy do not understand the fundamental change, then the policy is limited (Cohen, 1990). The cognitive frame would determine whether a principal understands how to implement practices that are best for young children.

Summary

Principals’ decisions of who to hire to teach children are critical to the success of the children attending their schools. Principals’ staffing practices are vital to student achievement. Trends show that principals prefer staffing teachers with EE training over ECE training for primary grades. Considering that children in the primary grades learn differently from children in

older grades and the notion that developmentally appropriate practices can improve student achievement, teachers in the primary grades should receive training in ECE. Numerous sources recommend alignment of PreK-3rd continuums, but such efforts requires the support of administrators. Support will exist only when principals in charge of schools are educated in the development of children in PreK through 3rd grade. PreK-3rd initiatives permeate the need for teachers trained in ECE, but certification practices undermine the feasibility of ECE training.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This study used an interview research method to collect qualitative data with the intention of determining principals' beliefs, knowledge, and dispositions on staffing teachers in the primary grades. I conducted interviews with principals in the Nomad School District (NSD) to interpret their attitudes, wisdom, and outlook on Elementary Education (EE) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) training. It had been determined through a previous interview with the superintendent that NSD's hiring policies allowed principals full discretion to hire teachers for all grade levels at their school, and there was no county-wide policy differentiating staffing teachers for K-3rd grade (personal contact, NSD Superintendent, October 10, 2013). The superintendent was very open to discussing the policies and practices when presented with the results of the principal survey that found the majority of principals tend to hire EE-trained teachers in place of ECE teachers in the primary grades (Albers-Biddle, 2013).

In actuality the policy is that "there is no policy" that directs the hiring of teachers for primary grades as opposed to upper elementary grades. The superintendent stated that principals probably would not view a policy specifying different requirements for primary teachers as feasible unless there were proof of a "return on investment." Most principals do not want to limit their flexibility to move teachers around to all grade levels; therefore the preference for hiring is usually given to EE-certified teachers and viewed as the preferred business model (personal contact, NSD Superintendent, October 10, 2013). The National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE, 2008) reported that most administrators nationally tend to favor hiring elementary certified teacher when ECE and EE certifications overlap, allowing both to teach kindergarten. The configuration of educational certifications that overlap between ECE and EE results in differing opinions as to which degree/major best suits students in the marketplace.

Purpose of the Study

Academic success of students depends on the effective operation of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). Principals are crucial as academic leaders of their schools. They make vital decisions about staffing personnel as well as budgets, school policies, curriculum, assessment, materials, and training, all intended to improve student achievement. As it is the responsibility of principals to hire faculty, their preferences impact the successful operation of the schools they lead.

The purpose of this study was to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers and inquire about their knowledge and value of preparation programs of ECE and EE teacher certification. ECE and EE degrees embrace different philosophies (Johnson et al., 2010). They have separate histories and traditionally different teaching practices (File & Gullo, 2002). When principals hire EE-degreed teachers to work with PreK, K, 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd- grades, young children in the foundational years of their education may be receiving instruction from teachers with content knowledge focused on middle- to upper-elementary grades and not specialized knowledge of early childhood development and how young children learn (Bornfreund, 2012; Marxen et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, many school leaders may not be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively supervise teachers who teach the earliest grade levels (Mead, 2011). This study focused on the practices of principals in the district I refer to as the Nomad School District (NSD). An analysis of the interviews conducted illustrated the dispositions, beliefs, and knowledge of these instructional leaders concerning teachers in primary grades.

Research Questions

The following research questions were proposed in this study:

What factors affect principals' staffing decisions in primary grades in the NSD?

- (a) What grade level(s) do elementary school principals value, and where do they place their highest quality teachers?
- (b) Do principals understand the differences between ECE teacher preparation and EE preparedness?
- (c) Why is flexibility important to the majority of principals when hiring teachers in primary grades?

Participants

Participants in a qualitative study are selected based on their prior experience on a topic to gain multiple perspectives and diverse views (Creswell, 2013). The views of stakeholders can inform the topic of a study and inform qualitative approaches of an investigation (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Therefore, principals of elementary schools were premier candidates to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas by participating in this research study.

Upon approval through UCF's Institutional Review Board and the school district (see Appendixes F, G, and), a purposive sample of participants was solicited via email to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a method used when selecting individuals who possess desired information of a research study (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). All 25 principals were sent an email inviting their participation in the study. A separate attempt was made through a second email request to those who did not respond to the first. (See Appendix I) Participation was completely voluntary and scheduled with only those who responded to the email.

Interview Procedures

Interviewing provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of people's behaviors and put behaviors into context (Seidman, 2006). Principal interviews served as the primary data collection for this research study. Each participant was presented with and signed

the adult informed-consent form at the request of the school district. Participants were asked specific questions along with prompts to guide the interview process, and sessions averaged 30 minutes in length. With permission from the participants, dialogues were recorded using an audio recording device for transcription to capture the data.

Interview appointments were arranged with each participant, and interviews took place in the location of the principals' choice. Many appointments took place at the school in the principals' office, which was a natural setting when collecting data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Guided interviews were conducted with a diverse group of seven out of 25 (28%) of the elementary school principals in the NSD as demonstrated in Table 2. The distribution of gender and race among principals in NSD was covered in the study. Table 3 compares percentages of the district to the percentage of participants in the study.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

ID	Gender	Race	Years in Admin.	Levels of Experienced as Administration	Previous Teaching Experience
1	Male	White	22	District Office, Middle School & Elementary School	Secondary Science
2	Male	White	15	Elementary, Middle & High School	K-12 Music
3	Female	White	8	Elementary & Middle School	Math – All grade Levels
4	Male	White	11	AP (Proxy for Principal) Middle & High School	ESE (K-8)
5	Male	Hispanic	10	Elementary & High School	Secondary Math
6	Female	White	24	Elementary School, District Office	Early Childhood (K & 1 st)
7	Female	Black	13	Elementary & High School	Elementary (1 st & 2 nd grades)

Table 3

Comparison of District Race and Gender Distribution to Study Participants

Race/gender	District %	Study %
White/male	20	43
White/female	52	29
Black/male	4	0
Black/female	16	14
Hispanic/male	4	14
Hispanic/female	4	14

Interview Protocol

The Interview Protocol found in Appendix J was followed with each participant. Open-ended questions were developed to implement an interview-guided approach where the researcher is permitted to vary the wording of questions depending on the participant's responses (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). The questions were built on the quantitative and qualitative information garnered from the previously completed principal survey. The survey revealed that principals prefer EE over ECE training mostly because they consider flexibility to move teachers into upper grades to be important (Albers-Biddle, 2013). Those results prompted speculation about their knowledge or understanding of the differences between the two types of training. It also led me to wonder whether upper grades were considered more valuable.

The list of questions, rationale for asking each question, and expected data to be obtained, along with additional prompts, were used as a basis for guided interviews. Questions and prompts were used to extract information on principals' preferences without directly asking them whether they preferred EE- or ECE-trained teachers. Prompts such as "Please tell me about your most recent staffing changes, hiring, or rearranging that affected primary grades and why" were used to obtain information on what is most important to them. "Which grade level(s) do you place your highest quality teachers?" was asked to determine whether FCAT-tested grades get priority. This question was based on a study by Fuller and Ladd (2013), which found that accountability pressure increased the tendency to move higher quality teachers to grades 3-5. If questions or prompts did not produce the intended information or create opportunities to inquire specifically about their preferences, the scenario that was used in the prior survey was included for use.

To determine beliefs about teachers' skills, I asked what skills they thought were important for teaching lower grades such as kindergarten as opposed to upper grades such as 5th grade. To ascertain their knowledge of the different degree programs and their knowledge of social/emotional development, child development, and family involvement in ECE preparation, I asked them if they knew the difference between EE and ECE teacher-preparation programs. I ended each interview with a member check by paraphrasing what I heard on central ideas about their values and priorities, dispositions, preferences in hiring, beliefs about teachers' skills, knowledge of degree programs, and comments that arise about flexibility. Principals were thanked for their participation at the conclusion of each session, and recordings were downloaded to my private computer for descriptive transcription.

Data Analysis

The data analysis focused on answering the research questions and, more broadly, addressing the purpose of the study. A limited amount of note taking took place during the interviews so as to promote rapport with the participants (Seidman, 2006). Descriptive transcription was used to as the method of data management for this study (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Each step of the process was built on the audio recording and concurrent note taking of the interview session. Post-interview reflective journaling and revisions of field notes took place after listening to the audiotape. Some portions of the interview recordings were documented verbatim to capture quotations. A common way to analyze interview data is to organize excerpts into categories (Seidman, 2006). I used open coding to develop major categories of information and worked with an external reviewer to develop the following categories:

- Academic standards/ content in primary grades

- Administrator's concerns and views
- All grade levels are important
- Benefits of ECE
- Benefits of EE
- Certification/degree is irrelevant
- Current issues/movement of staff
- Departmentalized
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Flexibility is important
- Flexibility is unimportant
- Impact of FCAT on tested grades
- Miscellaneous (non related topics)
- Nurturing skills & patience important in primary
- Primary grades are the foundation
- Routines and expectations in primary grades
- Value of teachers of young children
- Want what is best for school, children, and teachers

Next I evaluated the categories for relevance and decided a number of them were not applicable to the research questions for this study. The final categories for use in the study are found in Figure 2 along with the number of principals who addressed each of the areas during the interview.

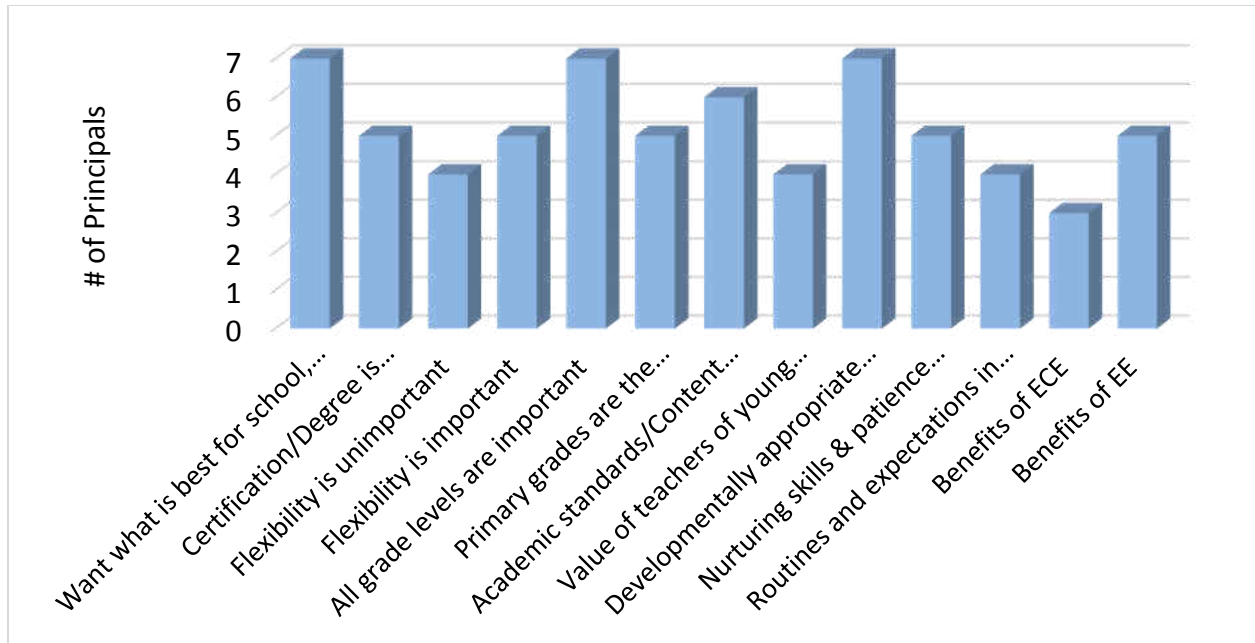


Figure 2 Categories and Total Number of Principals Addressing Each

Next I searched for patterns and connecting threads conduct a content analysis to elicit common themes using axial coding (Creswell, 2013) Four themes emerged. The first topic covered staffing practices that the principals discussed. Then a theme about all the different grade levels in elementary schools emerged. The next theme developed from the many categories that encompassed their remarks about how primary teaching is specialized. The fourth theme was about their opinions on the benefits of ECE and/or EE. Figure 3 charts the themes and outlines which participants mentioned information within each category.

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	%
Hiring Practices								
Want What is Best for School, Children, & Teachers								100
Certification/Degree is Irrelevant								71
Flexibility is Unimportant								57
Flexibility is Important								86
Grade Levels								
All Grade Levels are Important								100
Primary Grades are the Foundation								71
Academic Standards/ Content in Primary Grades								86
Primary Teaching is Specialized								
Value of Teachers of Young Children								57
Developmentally Appropriate Practice								100
Nurturing Skills & Patience Important in Primary								57
Routines and Expectations in Primary Grades								57
Opinions on ECE and EE								
Benefits ECE								43
Benefits of EE								71

Figure 3 Profile of Themes and Categories

Trustworthiness

In order to assure trustworthiness of any qualitative research, naturalistic investigators such as Guba (1981) proposed criteria to insure credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility addresses internal validity through numerous strategies to promote accurate recording (Shenton, 2004). Through previous employment opportunities and personal involvement in the NSD, I was familiar with the district and the culture of the elementary schools. Familiarity with the organization met the criteria for credibility and produced both positive and negative outcomes. Principals who recognized my name might have been more forthcoming to volunteer for the interview, which assisted in prompt responses. Greater

participation than normal may have been obtained through this credibility. On the other hand, principals who recognized my name most likely associated me with ECE. In order to avoid responses that might have been prompted by principals' trying to answer to my perceived bias, I made it clear that I work with both ECE and EE programs and have certification in both areas. My background, qualifications, and experience also provided credibility not only to the participants but to the research (Guba, 1981).

The overlapping methods of surveying and interviewing established dependability for the study (Shenton, 2004). Every elementary school principal in the NSD was contacted by email to take part voluntarily in the previous research (survey) as well as this study (interviews). This voluntary tactic ensured genuine willingness to participate. Iterative questioning was used to elicit detailed data and offer information for possible discrepancies (Shenton, 2004). A member check was used to rephrase and confirm understanding of responses that the participants made during the interviews. Frequent debriefing sessions with my committee chair and mentor took place, providing both a sounding board and an external reviewer for the coding.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Purpose of the Study

Principals are crucial as academic and instructional leaders of their schools. They make vital decisions about staffing personnel as well as budgets, school policies, curriculum, assessment, materials, and training, all intended to improve student achievement. Academic success of students depends on the effective operation of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). As it is the responsibility of principals to hire faculty, their preferences impact the successful operation of the schools they lead. The purpose of this study was to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers and to inquire about their knowledge and their perspective on the value of preparation programs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Elementary Education (EE) teacher certification.

ECE and EE degrees embrace different philosophies (Johnson et al., 2010). They have separate histories and traditionally different teaching practices (File & Gullo, 2002). When principals hire EE-degreed teachers to work with PreK, K 1st-,2nd, and 3rd- grades, young children in the foundational years of their education may be receiving instruction from teachers with content knowledge focused on middle-to-upper elementary grades and not specialized knowledge of how young children learn (Bornfreund, 2012; Marxen et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, many school leaders may not be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively supervise primary teachers (Mead, 2011). This study focused on the practices of principals in the district I call the Nomad School District (NSD). An analysis of their interviews illustrates dispositions, beliefs, and knowledge of these instructional leaders concerning teachers in primary grades.

Research Questions

The following research questions were proposed in this study:

What factors affect principals' staffing decisions in primary grades in the NSD?

- (a) What grade level(s) do elementary school principals value and where do they place their highest-quality teachers?
- (b) Do principals understand the differences between ECE teacher preparation and EE preparedness?
- (c) Why is flexibility important to the majority of principals when staffing teachers in primary grades?

Research Question Results

The themes and categories that developed during the analysis were used as a guide to answer the research questions. In Appendix K I grouped similar statements by interview questions. In addition, I grouped participant responses within each theme and category. The sub questions were analyzed first before returning to the main question. Other themes that emerged from the data were addressed at the end.

Research Sub Question 1(a)

What grade level(s) do elementary school principals' value and where do they place their highest-quality teachers? The interviews with principals in the NSD did not offer the data needed to answer this question directly. Principals denied placing better teachers in any particular grade. When asked in which grade level(s) they placed the highest quality teachers, all principals (100%) replied that every grade level was important, and 100% made references about primary teaching's being specialized. The following statements were made about equality for every grade:

- We put people in places with a purpose—for student success.
- There isn't a grade level that gets the highest quality.
- Every grade level is critical.
- I count on K, 1, & 2 to set that firm foundation so that 3,4, & 5 can build upon it.
- You want quality teachers throughout.
- I place quality teachers in every grade level.
- I think I equally distribute them. I feel like I have balance.
- I do not put my highest quality teachers in the FCAT grades.

Overall, principals said they value all grade levels, and their comments were consistent with placing quality teachers in all grades. Seventy-one percent of principals interviewed made reference to how primary grades are the foundational years. Statements such as “I count on K, 1st, and 2nd grades to set the firm foundation so that the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades can build upon it” were frequently addressed. But the type of certification or preparation to teach those foundational years was not a factor to the majority when it came to hiring for primary grades, as 71% stated at least one reason why EE certification is beneficial and 85% supported the flexibility of EE.

Research Sub Question 1(b)

Do principals understand the differences between ECE teacher preparation and EE preparedness? When asked whether they knew the difference in teacher preparation between ECE and EE, all but one said they did not (86%). The participant who was an ECE major and kindergarten teacher in the past said she had an idea of the training from her personal experience.

The following statements were the verbatim answer to the question:

- No, my perception is that...ECE is on the liberal side.
- I do not know what college programs are doing.
- I do not know the preparation. I can only imagine.
- No. Not as much as you would think. I don't know the differences in prep programs.
- I don't know the specifics in coursework. It never crossed my mind. I figure if the accrediting university gives them the degree, they should be prepared.

- I have a sense of it because of my background.
- I don't think there are a lot of principals that think there is a difference between the two degrees—just the age range but not really the content.
- I have not looked at the specifics of that. I have not put too much thought to that. Do you mean the test?

Many of the principals spoke of developmentally appropriate practice and that there was a difference in skills needed to teach primary grades, but the majority did not know the differences in the two teacher preparation programs. When asked what skills they thought were important for teaching the younger students, all but one principal (86%) stated multiple ways in which primary teaching is specialized. Statements such as those listed above in sub question (a) were made about their valuing teachers who work with the younger children. Every principal interviewed (100%) made statements about the use of developmentally appropriate practices such as the following:

- I moved a teacher because I didn't think he/she was developmentally appropriate.
- Kids at that age are like sponges, and they can absorb things.
- Teachers need the skill set to know how to teach children individually.
- Primary grade teachers need to understand the developmental needs of young children more than the upper grade teachers.
- You need to teach content to young children for how young children learn.
- I ask questions to determine if they are developmental or academic.
- Upper grade teachers have a hard time understanding the developmental needs of K – 3rd.
- Social skills are very important.
- Young students need time to be able to grasp things and then [be] monitored
- ECE degree is understanding child development.
- There are differences with the curriculum and the instructional practices between EE and ECE.
- Young children need a lot of repetition.

The one participant who did not state specific skills were needed in primary did acknowledge that the difference in training between the two degrees probably was “looking at the developmental need of the child.”

Three of the principals interviewed (43%) made statements implying that it is the accrediting body that is responsible for knowing the differences in the two programs, which was not much of a concern to them. Some principals seem to trust that the teacher testing and accreditation processes ensure that ECE teachers are properly trained, but the same people clearly prefer EE teachers, despite not knowing the differences.

Two participants (27%) stated frankly that they preferred EE over ECE for all grades, including the primary grades. One made numerous comments about ECE training being “on the liberal side” and having lower expectations of children. The other seemed completely unaware that there was a difference between ECE and EE as she thought there was a just a test to take in order to earn ECE. Another participant valued ECE only for kindergarten and gave the impression that PreK and K classrooms were more like preschool so ECE training was appropriate.

Research Sub Question 1(c)

Why is flexibility important to the majority of principals when hiring teachers in primary grades? A previous survey on hiring practices conducted with elementary school principals in the NSD found that flexibility scored high as a reason to hire EE-trained teachers (Albers-Biddle, 2013). The results of that study provided a rationale for the interview to extract additional information about the importance of flexibility, and in many cases I took the opportunity to ask participants about this quality directly. Principals were asked about flexibility and many equivocated on the issue, but the data collected did not give any insights into why they value it other than it is or is not important.

There was an overlap in answers as three (43%) of the participants stated that flexibility was both important and unimportant throughout their comments on hiring practices. For

example, the participant that said, “I would not necessarily hire the K-5 over the ECE just because of the versatility because I still have some versatility with the ECE” also stated “ECE is more limited should a need occur that you have to move teachers around.” The participant who said, “Flexibility is important to me but not when I am actually hiring” also stated that it was an issue of not being able to move an ECE person to 4th grade. The same participant that said, “I’m not one to just start moving people unless I have a really good reason” later said, “EE is more beneficial for the teacher than it is for the school.”

Overall the majority of principals preferred flexibility and therefore preferred EE. Of the three participants who made statements on the benefit of ECE, one participant favored ECE for kindergarten only and said “Kindergarten children are in so many places developmentally at that age, having the PreK part could help with that transition.” Evidently for this participant the value of ECE only pertained to PreK and kindergarten because the same participant made several references about “All teachers should experience the upper grades to see what is expected and the rigor of tested grades.” Another participant stated many benefits to having primary teaching experience and training but also said, “With K- 6 certification you have the flexibility to move them wherever you want.” In the long run, only one participant (14%) was adamant about staffing ECE teachers for primary grades. She stated that when she interviews for kindergarten through 2nd grade, “the questions are the same but I am looking for different things” which all were developmentally appropriate practices for young children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2013).

Additional Themes Emerging from the Data

Superficial Understanding

One theme that emerged from the data is that although principals are savvy with their answers concerning the importance of primary grades and the skills it takes for teaching them, by

probing deeper and analyzing data, I found that they are not knowledgeable or forthcoming in their answers. According to this study’s data, 100% of teachers could identify developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades, and the majority (57%) demonstrated even more understanding of specialized teaching in primary by making other comments about primary teaching being specialized. But the two who were adamant about staffing only EE commented on developmental practice. (Table 4)

Table 4

Primary Teaching is Specialized Category

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Value of Teachers of Young Children		X		X	X	X	
Developmentally Appropriate Practice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nurturing Skills & Patience Important in Primary		X	X	X		X	
Routines and Expectations in Primary Grades		X		X	X	X	
% of Category by Participant	25	100	50	100	75	100	25

Some of the statements about primary teaching being specialized but perhaps superficial are the following:

- Nurturing skills are important especially in primary.
- In the young grades you’ve really got to love children.
- I thank my K teachers after observations—because I don’t know if I could do it.
- It takes a special person to teach K and have the children love you.
- 4th and 5th grade can say “Here’s your assignment; do your homework.”
- Social skills are very important
- The child that does not have fine and gross motor skills should have more experience in it.
- K are developmentally all over the place
- Kids at that age are like sponges and they can absorb things

- Classroom management is different for primary
- Children need a lot of repetition

If principals actually understood ECE as specialty they should have a preference in the type of training a person must have in order to work with primary-age children. An interesting phenomenon is demonstrated in Table 5, as 50% of the people who stated flexibility was unimportant—thereby implying some value for ECE training—also contradicted themselves with statements about the importance of flexibility to move EE teachers to 4th and 5th grades. Another interesting fact can be derived from statements made about certification being irrelevant but flexibility being important. This demonstrates either a lack of assumed importance of the different degrees or lack of knowledge about the differences in preparations. It also demonstrates a perceived value for flexibility, as all but one person who thought certification was irrelevant thought flexibility was important, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Comments on Flexibility and Certification by Participant Number

Participant	Flexibility is Unimportant	Flexibility is Important	Certification/Degree is Irrelevant
1	Not necessarily hire K-5 over ECE just because of the versatility—I still have some versatility with ECE	Need K-5 certification to move teachers around Need versatility. Hiring only a K teacher restricts you. ECE is more limited ...need to move teachers around	
2	I don't hire with the thought that I am going to be moving them all over the place	I would not be able to move a teacher to 4 th grade next year with ECE. Flexibility is important to me but not when I am hiring.	Matters to me that the preparation is effective as possible Important that they are well trained and well prepared How I feel about that person after the interview
3	Not one to just start moving people unless I have a really good reason or just because you are K-6	EE is more beneficial for the teacher than it is for the school	
4		What if teacher is a dynamic math person? ...I can't put ECE in 5 th grade PK/3 certification limits us as administrators- ECE limiting so I would probably prefer a K-6	As long as they are certified and they are passionate and have the ability, certification doesn't matter I would like to say I would hire the best person for the job so ... certification it really doesn't matter
5		K- 6 you have the flexibility to move them where ever you want	Degree would be secondary to me - I would not hire an EE person over ECE person Attitude of that person and if they can work with my population of students
6	EE certification is not better because of flexibility		4 th grade teacher didn't keep me from hiring her at the time she only had an early childhood degree
7		I prefer the K- 6 because K-3 certification limits where I can place you Interview ECE and will consider, but they need to get EE added	It is individualized not just something that they have on paper

Low Opinion of ECE

While most of the principals admitted to not knowing much about ECE teacher training, the study elicited data to support fairly low opinions of ECE. Some made comments directly negative towards ECE. Some who stated specialized skills were needed to teach primary grades only included the socialization portion as if the training did not include academics.

The following comments came from the majority of principals:

- If both candidates were equal and had to choose ECE vs. EE, I would probably go with the EE certified because somewhere in their preparation there was probably more about the upper primary grades.
- Having EE certification is helpful for teachers, especially for those who don't have a job and there only an opening in 4th grade.
- It is to your advantage to have the K-6 instead of the PK-3.
- Two philosophical thoughts in PreK . One lets them play and interact and checks off when they see a skill. The other sees skills that are not being developed and creates opportunities for those skills to be developed. I tend to like that teacher over the first.
- ECE can be compared to ESE, they have a perception on the liberal side of the house – child is doing the best they can. They are like ESE and see the handicapping condition as a justifiable reason why not developing at the certain rate.
- I think the ECE philosophical standpoint might lend itself to justifying it when it really lowers expectations
- Nurturing group and there is nothing wrong with that but sometimes that nurturing needs to be blended with high expectations.
- I moved a 5th grade teacher to 2nd and 4th to 2nd because I was taking from a tested grade down to a traditionally non-tested grade
- I moved the upper grade teacher so hopefully the rigor would increase in the lower grade level. All teachers should experience the upper grades to see what is expected/ rigor of tested grades
- You have to have instructional strategies for delivering to children who are not used to school culture such as walking in line, raising hands, ask to go to the bathroom.
- Young children need to know how school operates before they can ever begin to learn content.
- Get them to want to learn as opposed to students in 3rd – 5th grade who know the routines and know what is expected of them.
- So much more “teaching school” to those kids than there is in the older grades where they have already learned the routines and expectations.

The following statements were made by 86% of the principals interviewed to express how academic standards have changed or to add comments about content in primary grades. It is not clear whether they were implying that ECE teachers would not be prepared because of the changes, but I sensed that some based the statements with that underlying thought.

- Things have really changed over the last few years of what is expected of K and 1st students.
- I moved a K teacher to VPK position because they had a better understanding of the social and academic needs of children moving into K these days.
- The academic side of K raised the bar quite a bit with FCAT and NCLB.
- The day when K was teaching routines and learning to sit still ended with FCAT and NCLB.
- The skills have shifted in PK and K. I think it should be skill specific, which should be identified as standards and the teacher should provide opportunities for those skills to be developed thus monitored with specific interventions would be done.
- Expectations for the primary grade have been raised a great deal—kindergarteners have to write before they move to first grade.
- Nowadays there is very clear content to be delivered in those grades (K-2), and so you have to be able to know and understand that content.
- They need to be able to teach reading. All elementary school teachers should be reading endorsed. They need to be able to teach reading and some in the language arts area.
- May be some research that says EE teachers are pedagogically more gifted or strong but it doesn't mean you don't need that in K. They are working with a more basic and fundamental level of curriculum.

Politically Astute Answers

The data gleaned from the interviews not only support a superficial understanding of the primary grades but uncovered politically astute answers from skilled political participants. They knew the right words when offering short answers but did not back up those words with explanation of their practices. Nader (1972) explained the importance of “studying up” people in senior positions of organizations and in society to gain valuable insight. Principals have responsibility and are accountable at the highest level, but many times they know the right

answers to make it appear that their social power is being used for the betterment of the school as an organization (Nader, 1972).

Although 100% of principals interviewed recognized specialized aspects of teaching in the primary grades, it was clear from statements made to other questions that the majority of principals preferred to hire EE-degree-trained teachers for primary grades. For example, one participant that said, “There isn’t a grade level that gets the highest quality” and “All grade levels are important, but kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade are your foundation” also stated at another point, “You need K- 6th grade certification to move teachers around. You need versatility.” Only one participant (14%) would hire ECE-trained teachers in the primary grades because “they are experts in early childhood.” Statements about primary teaching’s being specialized included the following:

- There are two different types of teachers—primary or intermediate.
- Takes a special person to teach kindergarten.
- Just because you are certified in K-6 does not make you able to teach in K.
- In primary grades teachers need to understand the developmental needs of young children more than the upper grade teachers.
- There are differences in the type of person when they focus on ECE and those who focus on K-6.
- ECE degree is understanding child development.
- Someone might be certified for kindergarten but it doesn’t mean you can teach it.

Forty-three percent of participants felt ECE was beneficial for teaching primary while 71% felt EE was advantageous. (One participant included both degrees and differentiated for each: ECE for kindergarten and EE for grades 1-3.) One participant stated she would not rule out an ECE candidate for hire, but in order to be considered for hire the employee would be required to obtain EE certification. Other comments to support EE over ECE were as follows:

- In elementary school you have to be able to teach all grade levels (K-6).
- K-6 certification is most appropriate for primary grade.

- Upper-grade experience is needed to teach primary grades.
- Primary teachers have lower expectations; they are too developmental.
- ECE philosophical standpoint might lend itself to justifying behaviors when it really lowers expectations.
- If both candidates were equal and had to choose ECE vs. EE, I would probably go with the EE certified.
- It is to your advantage to have the K-6th instead of the PK3.
- I do not have a need for K-3 teachers every year.

Of the three participants (43%) that found benefits of ECE, one stipulated the benefit was only for teaching kindergarten and one other still embraced EE for flexibility by saying “With K through 6th grade certification you have the flexibility to move them (teachers) wherever you want.” Again, only one participant (14%) was consistent in comments to reflect a true value of ECE, while 100% made politically correct statements saying that teaching in the primary grades was specialized.

Main Research Question

The summaries of each participant’s interview found in Appendix L were analyzed to answer the research question. Each sub question was addressed initially to determine *What factors affect principals’ staffing decisions in primary grades in NSD?* Overall, the only sub question that was directly answered through the collection of data was 1b *Do principals understand the differences between ECE teacher preparation and EE preparedness?* Eighty-six percent of principals interviewed did not know the difference between ECE and EE. While admitting inexpert knowledge of the differences many of the same people made comments that exemplified a low opinion of the ECE preparation. Additional themes emerged from the study to demonstrate dispositions, beliefs, and knowledge. Along with the low opinion gleaned from the data, a superficial understanding of ECE and politically astute answering were revealed. The

flexibility to move teachers was of a great value according to the data (86%), but the reason why was not uncovered through the research of this study.

Summary

The data strongly suggest that principals do not understand the foundations of early childhood practice. In addition, they do not understand the differences between early childhood education and elementary education. The principals tend to hire teachers with EE certification as opposed to ECE training. This is partially due to their lack of understanding of ECE and to their reported benefit of placing teachers in a wide range of grade levels. Although all principals stated that primary teaching requires specialized knowledge, most principals consider flexibility to move teachers into the upper grades more important. While most of the comments made by principals indicate some knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades, the interviews did not suggest a deep or sophisticated knowledge.

Most principals in the sample contradicted themselves by making comments about both sides of flexibility. Many of them acknowledged specialized skills to teach primary-age children but then did not know or care to know what preparation is included to develop those skills in the degree program. They seem to be skilled in answering direct questions with the politically correct answers, but with additional probing their knowledge seemed superficial. One participant (14%) was pessimistic about people in the field of ECE. Statements such as “They are a nurturing group and there is nothing wrong with that, but sometimes nurturing needs to be blended with high expectations. ECE people tend to excuse the expectation without realizing they are subconsciously using philosophical nurturing” were made. Five participants (71%) said that the degree was irrelevant at one point but all had a preference for one or the other in the end.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers and inquire about their knowledge of and value of preparation programs of ECE and EE teacher certification. ECE and EE degrees embrace different philosophies (Johnson, Fiene, McKinnon, & Babu, 2010). They have separate histories and traditionally different teaching practices (File & Gullo, 2002).

Principals are crucial as academic leaders of their schools. They make vital decisions about staffing personnel as well as budgets, school policies, curriculum, assessment, materials, and training, all intended to improve student achievement. Academic success of students depends on the effective operation of a school (Marzano et al., 2005). As it is the responsibility of principals to hire faculty, their preferences impact the successful operation of the schools they lead. When principals hire EE-degreed teachers to work with PreK, K 1st-,2nd, and 3rd- grades, young children in the foundational years of their education may be receiving instruction from teachers with content knowledge focused on middle-to-upper elementary grades and not specialized knowledge of early childhood development and how young children learn (Bornfreund, 2012; Marxen, Ofstedal & Danbom, 2008). Unfortunately, many school leaders may not be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively supervise teachers earliest grade levels (Mead, 2011).

Summary of the Findings

This study focused on the practices of principals in the district I refer to as the Nomad School District (NSD). It analyzed principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers, specifically focusing on the early grades. Adding to previous research,

I found that the majority of principals interviewed (71%) gave preference to teachers with EE certification even when they stated awareness of the social/emotional differences of children in primary grades and the specialized skills needed to work with them (57%-71%). The results of this study confirmed that principals in the NSD need training in ECE to better act as leaders in a manner that supports young children.

There are many challenges to instructional leadership in PreK-3rd during this era of test-based accountability (Mead, 2011). Accountability pressures may encourage schools to make staffing decisions that disadvantage children in the lower grades. The pressure to concentrate on preparation in subject-area content and the tendency to devalue training in social and emotional development might be alluring to administrators in elementary schools because of high-stakes testing. However, recommendations of a national expert panel commissioned by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010) asserted that in order to maximize student achievement teachers must implement the developmental sciences to effectively address a combination of social and emotional development along with academic/cognitive competencies.

Training in ECE includes the developmental sciences by including child development, which differentiates the degree from EE. In Chapter Two I compared preparation programs for ECE and EE majors. When principals were asked whether they knew the differences I found that there is an issue with current school leaders' lack of knowledge of the degree programs. Through the interview process I found that most principals did not know the differences between the two programs of study (86%). Most did not have a desire to know more.

The interviews with principals in the NSD did not offer the data needed to answer directly what grade level(s) elementary school principals' value and where they place their

highest quality teachers. Principals simply denied placing better teachers in any particular grade. Next, although principals seemed to be able to articulate the differences in skills needed to teach primary grades, the majority (86%) did not know the differences in teacher-preparation programs. Principals were asked about flexibility, and many equivocated on the issue, but the data collected did not give any insights into why they value it other than it is or is not important. Additional themes emerged from the data: principals may have a superficial understanding of ECE, many have low opinions of ECE, and principals can provide politically astute answers to questions about ECE. My goal is to create a new awareness of the differences and contribute information that will build on principals' knowledge of the skills required to teach in the primary grades.

Organizational Theory

To analyze the topic of staffing teachers within the NSD, Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frame organizational theory framework and Cohen's (1990) cognitive frame were used to better understand the responses of principals during interviews. The four frames or lenses were broken down and responses analyzed accordingly. I also discussed professional discretion (Boote, 2006) to evaluate the ability of principals to make full decisions for staffing teachers in primary grades with little or no training in the ECE field.

Human Resource Frame

The Human Resources (HR) frame highlights the need to serve people and meet their needs along with striving for a good fit between the organization and individuals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). "Human resource issues are the essence of education" and schools are "people oriented, and a willingness to work with people is a [prerequisite] for making education a career choice" (Goldman & Smith, 1991, p. 4). Building human capital is a valued approach that

emphasizes the potential for improving the organization and becoming more effective as the people grow and develop (Owens & Valesky, 2007). All principals in this study (100%) stated in some form or another that they want what is best for the school, children, teachers, or some combination of these. Many comments such as “I want what is best for the students” or “I want my teachers to be happy” were made during interviews. Statements referring to a “right fit” were also very common, and all principals made it clear that they made staffing decisions based on hiring the right person for the job.

There are clear implications found in this study that principals come from an HR perspective, but the data suggest that elementary principals may not know enough about primary education to hire, mentor, and supervise primary teachers. Specialized training is essential for teachers to meet the unique developmental and educational needs of young children and to use that knowledge in their teaching techniques and assessment of children age three to eight, according to many early childhood experts and associations (AACTE, 2004; ACEI, 1997; Bornfreund, 2011; Bredekamp & Goffin, 2012; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Haynes, 2009; Howard, 2008; NAECTE, 2009; Pianta, 2012; Rice & McLaughlin, 2007; Takanishi, 2010; W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009). Only one principal (14%) stated that a degree in ECE qualified teachers as experts in the primary grades. Two additional principals (43%) stated the importance of ECE training in certain situations but were not specific when it came to staffing in primary grades.

Principals have many demands made on them from day to day, so I assume that learning more information is overwhelming to them. It is not because they do not care; it is that they do not know what they might learn if they had the time to find out, and they do not know what benefits might accrue to having that knowledge.

Structural Frame

The structural frame assumes that organizations work best when rationality triumphs and structures fit the current circumstances (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Two different levels in the organization can be examined within the structural frame: the school level structure and the district level. Among the characteristics of an ideal bureaucracy in the structural frame is the division of assignments based on specializations and a “well-defined hierarchy of authority” (Owens & Valesky, 2007, p.47). Principals embracing the structural frame put people in positions to accommodate both the overall goals of the school and personal differences. The prevailing administrative policies in the NSD favor decentralization, and most HR decisions are delegated to the lowest level possible. This means schools operate as functional groups based on knowledge or skill, thus creating units that focus on their separate priorities (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The majority of principals in the sample did not express structural frame ideas when discussing the staffing policies for teachers in their school. Seventy-one percent of the principals in this study said that the certification or degree was irrelevant. All but one principal (86%) thought that flexibility to move teachers into upper grades was important, consequently stating that specialization is unimportant.

The structural separation in decision making between the school level and the district level within the NSD can also be viewed from the structural frame as the frame embraces autonomy of schools. The organizational structure being used gives a great deal of autonomy to principals with regard to HR decisions, yet the data collected found that 86% of principals did not know the difference in the preparation between ECE and EE. They want what is best for their schools from an HR frame, and the divisional form of organizations assumes that every division has the expertise it needs to run as an autonomous unit, but the data give reason to question that

assumption. Principal-preparation programs, licensures, and professional-development requirements do not require an understanding of the developmental needs of primary age children (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Florida Department of Education, 2011b; Florida Department of Education, 2012). It was evident from the interviews that principals knew and understood their personal area of expertise but did not have background knowledge of ECE unless they majored in it. One principal out of 17 (6%) in the survey (Albers-Biddle, 2013) and one out of seven in the interviews (14%) received background training in ECE.

Political Frame

The political frame is inevitable in most organizations because of the interconnections between members and ongoing differences (Bolman & Deal, 2008). “Enduring differences put conflict at the center of day-to-day dynamics and make power the most important asset” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 195). The NSD is made up of various individuals, and each has areas of interest. The desire of school principals to retain the power to hire whom they want is of importance to the principals wanting to keep that power. The superintendent in her interview said she did not want to get into that fight unless she had convincing data (personal communication, October 10, 2013). To approve a district policy on hiring practices in primary grades would require bargaining and negotiation among the stakeholders, who would compete for their own interests (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Among the many ongoing issues that need to be addressed, bargaining and negotiation are seen as possibly the most important within the district.

Scarce resources are frequently referred to as another common source of conflict within the political structure (Bolman & Deal, 2008). With decreasing budgets and the stress on accountability, principals’ views on staffing seem to focus on what they perceive as getting the most benefit for their dollars. Many believe the EE certification gives more flexibility to move

teachers around because they have 4th and 5th grades added to their certificate. The flexibility to move teachers was important to 86% of the participants. This is a political assumption that values the budget and allocates scarce resources (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

I agree with Bolman and Deal (2008) when they say “at the heart of organizational politics” the issue to ask is “Do political dynamics inevitably undermine principles and ethics?” (p. 194). Political dynamics are a feature of organizational life, but leaders should learn how to acknowledge, understand, and manage political activities (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Most principals do not have knowledge of early childhood development in general (Bornfreund, 2011; Mead, 2011), but they have the power to assert their beliefs, values, and perceptions, a power that becomes economically motivated in the political arena. They may not perceive staffing teachers as an ethical decision in the way that an expert in early childhood development believes they should.

Symbolic Frame

The symbolic frame views the “culture” of organizations and considers its beliefs and values as the foundation that guides the vision of an organization (Bolman and Deal, 2008). All principals interviewed (100%) stated that all grades are important and did not consider putting their highest quality teachers in any certain grade level. From the symbolic frame they are creating a culture of equality. Most principals (71%) asserted that the primary grades are the foundation for children, with comments such as “We count on K, 1, & 2 to set that firm foundation so that 3, 4, & 5 can build upon it.” These comments are symbolic claims of valuing the primary grades, but according to Bolman and Deal (2008) what is most important is to find out “what it means” (p. 253). When principals make these statements but subsequently state they

will hire only EE people in primary grades, they are symbolically stating that they do not know about ECE, and what they do know is not positive.

A negative impact of culture in the symbolic frame is found in the myths or misconceptions within the field of early childhood. A common societal perception is that teachers in ECE are unimportant (Bornfreund, 2011; Mead, 2011). Although every principal interviewed (100%) summarized how teaching primary is specialized in some form or another, 71% felt that EE was a better fit for staffing teachers in the primary grades. One principal in particular stated many times that ECE teachers tend to have “lower expectations” and are “too developmental.” Another participant said that ECE would be of benefit for kindergarten because of the PreK training but then said that all other primary teachers should not only have EE training but have experience in teaching the upper grades. Another participant stated that in order to be hired, ECE-trained candidates would be required to add EE to their certification. This perception of ECE symbolically falls in the realm of thinking the training is good only for children before school age or maybe kindergarten, when in reality the training is designed for children up to eight years old into 3rd grade.

Cognitive Frame

The cognitive frame addressed by David Cohen (1990) brings to question whether principals understand how to implement best practices for primary-grade children. Cohen (1990) argued that many important educational policies are not implemented correctly because the policy actors simply do not understand the intent of the policy, how to enact it properly, or what it would look like when enacted correctly. Every principal mentioned at least one category under the theme of “primary teaching is specialized.” All principals (100%) made comments in the category of developmentally appropriate practices. Two participants (29%) mentioned only

developmentally appropriate practices, such as knowing and understanding child development in the “primary teaching is specialized” theme, but the majority (71%) mentioned more than one area of specialization. Although the ECE degree is specialized with training in child development, 71% still preferred EE training. If principals truly believe that the primary grades need specialization, then they would put ECE-trained teachers in them. The data from this study suggest that principals have a superficial understanding of ECE and teaching in the primary grades.

The cognitive frame could determine whether a principal understands how teachers should implement practices that are best for young children. Do principals have the ability to implement the knowledge that they possess about specialized skills in primary when hiring, mentoring, and supervising teachers? The cognitive frame looks at the relationship between instructional policy and the true understanding of implementation (Cohen, 1990). As chief agents implementing hiring practices, if principals do not fundamentally understand ECE, then successful staffing practices are limited (Cohen, 1990).

Professional Discretion

The district policy for hiring primary teachers (or any teachers) leaves sole discretion to the principal of each school in the NSD. Although this policy gives full autonomy, the decision-making ability of principals is at the lower level of authority within the organization. Two philosophical views can be used when viewing professional discretion. Contrasting views can be explained as “opposing social forces” that may possibly give more responsibility while removing authority (Boote, 2006, p. 462). One view considers teachers and principals as the best people to make decisions because they are at the heart of the classroom and school. The other point of view believes that centralized decisions should be based on research and therefore mandated

based on best practices. This opposing view takes into account the fact that teachers or principals may lack the capability to make appropriate decisions (Boote, 2006).

Next would be to find whether there any informal policies within the district such as an encouragement to review criteria and consider specialized training for any elementary grades. From my interview with the superintendent, an informal policy does not exist. But the data from this study suggest that principals in the NDS have too much discretion over hiring in the primary grades, given that they do not know or understand the training. Budgetary restraints seem to drive staffing decisions at the school level when flexibility is significantly important.

Many supporters of autonomy feel that the leader of each school knows what the individual needs are for that population of students, teachers, and community. Although it may be true in some cases, most principals face barriers with day to day administrative demands to effectively lead PreK through 3rd grade teachers, resources, and education strategies (Mead, 2011). Without specialized training that includes child development and information on how young children learn, principals are not equipped with the knowledge to make those decisions responsibly.

Implications for Practice

Three main implications for practice are suggested based on recommendations for advocacy and public education for young children within PreK–3rd continuum initiatives. (1) Professional development in ECE should be implemented at the district level for principals to learn and understand the differences in preparation between ECE and EE teacher preparation and to demonstrate the importance of the early years of child development and education. (2) Curriculum enrichment in ECE needs to be added to higher education, graduate teacher leadership programs to demonstrate the importance of the early years of child development and

education. (3) The policy for hiring should be centralized at the district level and require teachers with training in ECE for the primary grades.

Advocacy and Public Education

The Executive Summary developed for the Ministry of Education in New Zealand explains the significance of advocating and developing public education programs that promote the critical times of development in young children as important (Kane, 2008). Advocacy efforts might include programs such as Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has worked in seven states and the District of Columbia with SPARK programs to enhance community involvement between early education providers, K-12 teachers and principals, parents, and the community for the development of smooth transitions from birth to grade 3. One goal of SPARK initiatives is to establish common early childhood education credentialing, which recommends K-3rd–grade teachers be required to take child development courses and engage with parents (W. K. Kellogg Foundation & Education Commission of the States, 2009).

Another model is the Institute for Youth, Education & Families. This special entity of the National League of Cities (2012) helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of young children. One common element among cities ensuring that more children are succeeding at the end of 3rd grade is ECE-qualified teachers and administrators (National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, 2012). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2009) report of the first national forum of 35 states also focused on the dual needs of preparing children for schools as well as preparing schools for children. Roger Sampson, president of the Education Commission of the States, cautioned that “if early learning is not overhauled and aligned with elementary school, educators will be unable to improve fourth-grade reading proficiency,

increase high school and college graduation rates, or close the achievement gap” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2009, p. 6).

PreK-3rd Continuums

Creating a model to build PreK-3rd networks is not a new concept. Over 20 years ago the New School Foundation, pioneered by a wealthy Seattle businessman, created a new model to link PreK with K through 3rd grade, and after six years of work opened the first PreK-3rd models (Nyhan, 2011). He assembled an advisory group that formally incorporated in 1998. Working with the community and local school board, the New School Foundation opened two alternative elementary schools. Reading, writing, and math scores of 4th-grade students at T. T. Minor Elementary and New School at South Shore increased between 1998 and 2005 because of the initiative (Nyhan, 2011). As another example, the Foundation for Child Development (FCD) is a New York City philanthropy that developed a framework for children to succeed in school by 3rd grade that was initially called P-3 but renamed PreK-3rd in 2009 (Nyhan, 2011).

The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group (2013) is a consortium of national organizations that focuses on the full PreK-3rd Grade continuum and promotes high-quality learning experiences. The group is committed to building an understanding and knowledge about PreK-3rd policy and practices with an emphasis on instruction. From 2012 through 2013 they hosted a series of eight webinars on the work that was conducted across communities, school districts, and states to bring awareness of their PreK-3rd approach. The 2014 webinar series focused on all components that support effective efforts in operational programs, such as FirstSchool, the New School Project in Chicago, and the Erickson Institute (The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group, 2013).

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2006) examined the current state of PreK through 3rd grade and recognized the need to build an aligned system for early learning between public schools, early childhood programs, and families. The NAESP (2005) standards for effective principals stated the need to embrace early childhood learning and support children’s learning from age three to 3rd grade. In 2010 a task force was convened to discuss principals’ roles and increased responsibility for children in the early grades. The impact of high-quality early learning was identified, and the group developed 10 action steps incorporating all aspects of early childhood development and learning rather than subject areas evaluated by high-stakes testing (NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011). Action Step 6 recommended, “Create an aligned continuum of research based, age-appropriate standards for young children that include a focus on social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development, and creative learning, as well as school related skills” (NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011, p. 7). Implementing these standards should help persuade principals to hire ECE-trained teachers.

Implementation 1: Professional Development and Education in ECE

Viewing hiring practices through the lens of professional discretion suggests a few possible solutions to the lack of knowledge of ECE in principals’ staffing practices for primary grades. One possible solution would be to educate principals so they are capable of making better informed staffing decisions for the primary grades. The majority of preparation programs for principals do not prepare principals to be effective leaders in PreK and primary grades (Levine, 2005; Mead, 2011). Most states do not require principals to demonstrate an understanding of child development for the critical role of overseeing the youngest students (Mead, 2011; Szekely, 2013). Adequate professional development and the need to review

curriculum policy to determine the degree of professional discretion should be based on demonstrated competence (Boote, 2006). If principals' professional discretion for staffing is to be based on competence, they would need to have a working knowledge of how young children learn and develop. Professional development in ECE would enhance principals' capabilities when it comes to staffing primary-grade teachers. Many times decisions to hire teachers are based on the flexibility to move them from year to year instead of the type of teacher certification earned (Manvell et al., 2011).

The data gathered from this study show that principals are unaware of the differences between ECE and EE preparation programs. Only one principal interviewed (14%) possessed knowledge of ECE training and preparation. There are two means to explain why principals may not know or care about the differences. They may think both degrees cover the same content and experiences so specialization does not matter. The other view might consider the ECE degree as considering purely social/emotional development or practices for PreK, but not the academics or content areas needed for 1st through 3rd grade. Principals may view the early-grade teachers as an

either/or scenario [where] young children either have a teacher who understands how they learn but lacks subject-area expertise (ECE), or they have a teacher who understands what knowledge and skills they need, but lacks insight on how they soak up new knowledge and skills (EE). (Bornfreund, 2012, p. 37)

The American Association for Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE, 2004) recommends that "ECE be respected as a specialized discipline distinct from EE" (p.12).

The status of early childhood teachers needs to be promoted in order to improve perception of the field (Kane, 2008). The Executive Summary of Perceptions of Teacher and Teaching found challenges in early childhood teaching and declared that "Early childhood

teachers are concerned about the degree to which their role is widely misunderstood by both members of the general public and, perhaps more importantly, their colleagues in primary and secondary schools” (Kane, 2008, p. 1). Educating principals on the preparation may take many different forms. One suggestion would be to allow guests from accrediting universities to speak at district-wide principal meetings. Another might be in the form of a flyer comparing the differences in the certification programs.

The current context of PreK-3 reforms in Illinois was summarized to provide research on improving early education and improving child outcomes (Manvell et al., 2011). Preparing principals to be PreK-3 leaders and preparing teachers to teach PreK-3 are addressed and could be used as a guide. Mandated workshops in the district might influence principals’ decisions and differentiate their staffing practices for primary grades. Online training could be developed by early childhood professionals for principals in the NSD to complete at their own pace. The training should focus on developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2013) to educate principals on the ways that young children learn differently from children in the intermediate grades. A grant from organizations that support PreK-3rd initiatives, such as the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (<http://www.wkkf.org/>) or Annie E. Casey Foundation (<http://www.aecf.org/>), might help fund efforts to develop these trainings. A teacher observational assessment training should also be developed to offer training for principals on the observational assessment of teachers in the primary grades, training that emphasizes developmentally appropriate practice.

Pre-developed online sources could also be used. The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group (2013) is a consortium of national organizations that focus on the full PreK-3rd grade continuum. They have hosted a series of eight webinars titled Reducing the Achievement Gap by

4th Grade: The PreK-3rd Approach in Action. The webinars were recorded and are available for viewing. The series is developed to build knowledge of PreK-3rd grade practices and incorporates effective teaching and learning for those grades (The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group, 2013).

A more concentrated effort could involve a national program such as the Creating Architects of Change (CAYL) Institute. The purpose of this group is to “organize, equip, and empower people to create change on behalf of children” (mission statement at <http://cayl.org/>). They believe it is the right of all families to obtain high quality early education. They offer fellowships to principals to help them better understand and implement developmentally appropriate practices through summer institutes, visits to other schools and programs, and workshop opportunities (CAYL Institute, 2009). The intense one-year cohort program brings principals and communities together regionally to create networks. It also brings together a national network of elementary school principals at the CAYL annual conference. Although this program is extensive and may not be feasible given the time and travel requirements, it could be used as a model to develop a similar program locally.

Implementation 2: Curriculum Enrichment in Higher Education

The National Governors Association (NGA) believed that most states do not prepare school principals to evaluate PreK through 3rd grade teachers or support teachers in the primary grades. The association advocated for reforms to build elementary school principals’ capacity to lead high-quality PreK-3rd grade education (Szekely, 2013).

Expertise in early education can also help elementary school principals avoid practices that can be harmful to early learning. Principals without appropriate training may

unknowingly promote classroom strategies that mimic those used to teach older students but are developmentally inappropriate for younger students. (Szekely, 2013, p. 3)

In addition to professional development at the school district level, I recommend that higher education's graduate programs that train principals should enrich their curriculum with the foundations and research in early childhood. This should include child development in terms of brain development, social development, and language and literacy development. Rather than telling principals in training that these areas of development are important, higher education needs to teach them why they are important. If the principals knew why brain development at the age of five years (Kindergarten) is different from the age of 9 years (4th grade), the principals may then determine for themselves to hire a teacher who understands the brain development of a five year old.

Although principals as administrators are responsible for guiding curricula, supporting teaching, and learning and evaluating teachers in PreK through 3rd grade, only one state, Illinois, requires child development coursework in principal-preparation programs (Szekely, 2013). State policy to redefine state leader standards and licensure requirements, accreditation criteria for preparation programs to embed PreK-3rd pedagogy, and professional development for existing principals on promoting high-quality PreK-3rd instruction are all recommended by the NGA (Szekely, 2013). Principal preparation programs should train candidates in ECE and the Florida principal leadership standards. (Florida Department of Education, 2011b). should include objectives in ECE that are tested in the Florida Teacher Certification Examination (FELE). If these policies were put into place, the principals would have the professional discretion needed to make hiring decisions for primary grades.

As redefining state leadership standard and requirements would be a major change, the task should include a comprehensive view of current requirements. Presently, Florida principal certification encompasses all grade levels from PreK through 12th grade. It would be sensible to explore different certifications or at least different endorsements for principals to be school-level leaders at the different school levels. Principals with a background in secondary education and high school teaching experience solely, should not be allowed to be the leader of an elementary school without at least some specific training in elementary and visa versa. To add policy requirements to higher education leadership programs for such additional training, an effective way might be add-on endorsements for different school levels. Elementary endorsements would encompass ECE and EE to cover primary and intermediate grades. Secondary endorsements would encompass middle and high school.

Implementation 3: Centralization of District Policy

Another recommendation is to create a policy to require ECE teacher certification and training for teachers in the primary grades. The opposing view to giving autonomy to principals would be to give less discretion to principals by creating a district-level policy to guide decisions for hiring in the primary grades. Policies based on research should be developed through a committee of experts at the district level who gather data to compose an informed procedure for hiring in primary grades. PreK- 3rd initiatives such as those at Seattle's PreK-3rd Partnership should be a resource for information (Seattle's PreK-3rd Partnership, 2010). In addition, the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (2012) developed a set of case studies on emerging city strategies for educational success and alignment with early care and education programs with K-12 education systems. They highlight 10 common elements of

effective systems, and several feature PreK-3rd practices on school quality and organization as well as qualified teachers and administrators.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study could be duplicated in other districts to find transferability. In order to understand the process of how power and responsibility are implemented, “studying up” needs to take place in elementary schools (Nader, 1972). Instead of studying the children and families of students who are low achieving to find out causes, research should look at the administration to evaluate its knowledge and practices with primary grades. As discovered in this study, principals are skilled politicians and know the “right” answers, so some of the questions may need rewording to better extract the intended information.

One suggested change to future studies would be to analyze and reword some of the questions in the protocol for better clarification and data collection. First the beliefs about teachers’ skills for kindergarten 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade should be separated. The present question is worded as “What skills do you think are important for teaching K as opposed to (let’s say) 5th grade?” I believe each primary grade should be included in separate questions. I tried to open up the conversation to all primary grades but found that most of the participants focused on kindergarten with their answers (because of the way it was worded). Some might have had different opinions for each grade level. Next, the question about where principals place their highest quality teachers should also ask them define “high quality” in their own terms. The definitions may reveal important skills, knowledge, and beliefs.

Subsequent studies should include a larger sample of participants and include principals across the state of Florida. Another possible duplication of the study could take place in a

different state that has separate teacher certifications for ECE and EE that do not overlap. A location that separates certifications may reveal different data.

Additional future studies should involve in-depth analysis of principals' knowledge of ECE, possibly in the form of a survey or questionnaire but in reality to evaluate their knowledge. It could ask specific questions about child development and appropriate teaching practices specific to primary-age children. The study could analyze their knowledge based on ECE sources such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as well as recommendations from organizations such as NAESP.

A helpful quantitative study of children's test scores comparing those who had teachers with ECE to those with EE would be of great interest. If scores were different between the groups, there would be ammunition to advocate for the more successful approach. If no differences were found, current practices could be supported.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for staffing primary teachers and to inquire about their knowledge and how they valued the preparation programs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Elementary Education (EE) teacher certification. ECE and EE degrees embrace different philosophies (Johnson et al., 2010). Numerous organizations and reports define the role of administrators in supporting effective programs in primary grades and advocate for principals' being crucial instructional leaders for PreK through 3rd grade (Mead, 2011; NAESP, 2005; NAESP, 2006; NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011; Schultz, Arnold, David, Keegan, & Fraser, 1997). Organizations such as the National Governors Association, National Association of State Boards of Education, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Foundation for Child

Development focus on school-based public school programs specifically to analyze the important role of principals.

To ensure the delivery of high-quality programming for students in pre-K through third grade, we must provide teachers and leaders, including principals, with a broader base of knowledge to understand child development and what effective teaching and learning should look like in classrooms with children ages 3-8. (NAESP Foundation Task Force on Early Learning, 2011, p. 7)

Using Bolman and Deal's (2008) four frame organizational theory framework and Cohen's (1990) cognitive frame to better understand the responses of principals during interviews, I analyzed the data extracted in this study. The majority of principals reported that they acted in a way that makes it easiest for them when staffing teachers and did not consider specialized training as important. They want what is best from an HR perspective, but from the structural view they do not have the background knowledge to make those decisions. They are not aware of the information on ECE and need to be educated on matters that they may not understand.

Although all principals interviewed expressed some form of understanding about the differences in children in primary grades and the skills needed to work with them, some attached little to no value to the ECE degree or training. Others who seemed to value ECE still reported favoritism in EE certification primarily for the flexibility it afforded.

I found overall practices were embedded within the political frame. Other themes and categories fell within the symbolic and human resource frames. Very few comments from the principals were structural, although most of the rationale for hiring ECE teachers in primary grades is entrenched in the structural frame. Exploring professional discretion (Boote, 2006), I

found the ability of principals to make full decisions for hiring teachers in primary grades with little or no training in the ECE field should to be addressed for the betterment of children and the district.

The results of this study confirmed that principals in the NSD need training in ECE to better act as leaders in a manner that supports young children. Recommendations include professional development in ECE for principals to be implemented at the district level and enriching the curriculum in higher education's graduate programs that train principals. All principals need to be educated on the differences in preparation between ECE and EE training to better understand that ECE includes child development and family involvement as well as subject-area content specific to the primary grades. Finally, advocacy to demonstrate the importance of the early years of child development and education should take place in the form of public education programs such as those in PreK-3rd initiatives. This advocacy should include a policy to hire ECE teachers in primary grades and eventually petitioning the legislators to make it mandatory at the state level for PreK through 2nd or 3rd grade have teachers certified in early childhood education, not elementary education.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY PRINCIPAL/SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

ID	Gender	Yrs. Exp	BA Degree	MA /Specialists/ Dr. Degree	Number of Students	* School Population
1	Female	6-10	Guidance	Ed. Leadership/ Ed.D.	500-999	B,W, ED, ESE
2	Male	6-10	Secondary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,ED,EL L,ESE
3	Male	1-5	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,ED,EL L,ESE
4	Male	1-5	Secondary Ed.	Ed. Leadership/ Ed.D.	1000-1499	B,W,H,ED,EL L,ESE
5	Female	1-5	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,ED,EL L,ESE
6	Male	1-5	Health Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	W,ED,ELL
7	Female	11-15	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,ED, ELL,ESE
8	Female	1-5	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A,AI,E D,ELL,ESE
9	Female	1-5	Elementary Ed.	Elem. C & I/ Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A,AI,E D,ELL,ESE
10	Female	21+	Elementary Ed.	Early Childhood/ Ed. Leadership	1000-1499	blank
11	Female	6-10	Early Childhood	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A, ED,ELL,ESE
12	Female	6-10	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,EC,ELL, ESE
13	Male	11-15	Music Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A,AI,E D,ELL,ESE
14	Female	6-10	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	W,H,ED
15	Female	1-5	Elementary Ed.	Ed. Math, Science/ Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A,ED,E LL,ESE
16	Female	6-10	Exceptional Ed.	Ed. Leadership	500-999	B,W,H,A,ED,E LL,ESE
17	Female	11-15	Speech/English	Mentally Handicap/ Adm. Supervision	500-999	B,H,A,ED,ELL ,ESE

* B= Black, W=White, H=Hispanic, A=Asian, AI=American Indian, EC=Economically Disadvantaged, ESE= Students w/ Disabilities

APPENDIX B: SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Data	Question	Product
Ice Breaker/Personal History	What is it like being Superintendent?	Set friendly environment
Values and priorities	How important do you feel the primary grades (pk-3) are to the overall future success for children?	Her personal values for early childhood
Beliefs about teacher skills	What skills do you think are different for teaching K as opposed to (let's say) 5 th grade?	Does she think anyone can teach any grade?
Knowledge of degree programs	What do you believe are the differences in teacher preparation for ECE vs EE?	Her knowledge of the social/emotional, child development, family involvement in ECE.
Impact of policies	When hiring teachers for elementary grades, what are the policies or expectations for hiring primary grades vs upper elementary grades in the district?	Are there different requirements for placing teachers? How she would feel if the state changed certification requirements to split PK-3 from upper elementary grades?
Member check	Paraphrase what I hear as the central ideas about: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Value and priority of primary grades 2. Beliefs about teachers' skills 3. Knowledge of degree programs 4. Impact of the policies or lack of 	

**APPENDIX C: IDENTICAL EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Early Childhood Education Courses	Elementary Education Courses
General Ed Requirements - Prerequisite	General Ed Requirements - Prerequisite
EDF 2005 Prerequisite Introduction to the Teaching Profession	EDF 2005 Prerequisite Introduction to the Teaching Profession
EDF 2085 Prerequisite Introduction to Diversity for Educators	EDF 2085 Prerequisite Introduction to Diversity for Educators
EME 2040 Prerequisite Introduction to Technology for Educators	EME 2040 Prerequisite Introduction to Technology for Educators
EDF 2130 Prerequisite Child and Adolescent Development for Educators	EDF 2130 Prerequisite Child and Adolescent Development for Educators
MAE 2801 or MAC 1105 Prerequisite College Algebra or Elementary School Mathematics	MAE 2801 Prerequisite Elementary School Mathematics
TSL 4080 - Theory & Practice of Teaching ESOL Students in Schools	TSL 4080 - Theory & Practice of Teaching ESOL Students in Schools
TSL 4240 – Issues in Second Language Acquisition	TSL 4240 – Issues in Second Language Acquisition
RED 3012 – Basic Foundations of Reading	RED 3012 - Basic Foundations of Reading
EEC 4943 - Internship II	EDE 4943 - Internship II

**APPENDIX D: EQUIVALENT EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY
EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Early Childhood Education Courses	Elementary Education Courses
EEC 2732 (3 hr) Prerequisite Health, Safety, & Nutrition for Young Children	PET 2081 (1hr) – Prerequisite Wellness, Children & Schools
EDF 2720 Prerequisite Children in Schools: Legal, Ethical & Safety Concerns	EDF 4603 – Analysis & Application of Ethical, Legal, & Safety Issues in Schools
ARE 2000 or MUE 2211 Prerequisite Early Childhood Art and Creativity or Early Childhood Music & Movement	EDE 4223 – Integrated Arts & Movement in the Elementary School
EEC 4661 – Early Childhood Education Theory & Practice	EDF 4467 - Learning Theory & Assessment
EEC 4604 – Classroom Management & Guidance of Young Children	EDG 4410 - Teaching Strategies & Classroom Management
EEX 3450 – Young Children With Special Needs	EEX 4070 – Teaching Exceptional Students
MAE 4300 – Math Curriculum & Assessment in Early Childhood	MAE 4326 - How Children Learn Mathematics
SCE 4304 – Teaching Science & Technology to Young Children	SCE 3310 - Teaching Science in Elementary School
EEC 4235C – Early Childhood Seminar: Bridging Theory to Practice	EDE 3942 – Internship I
RED 3310 – Early Reading, Writing & Language Arts	RED 4942 - Practicum for Assessment & Instruction of Reading
RED 4311 – Primary Reading, Writing, & Language Arts Curriculum & Assessment	LAE 4314 – Language Arts in the Elementary School

**APPENDIX E: UNIQUE EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Early Childhood Education Courses	Elementary Education Courses
EEC 4207 - Assessment and Evaluation of Young Children	*
EEX 4751 - Parent Involvement in Education	*
EEC 4268 - Curriculum Activities in Early Childhood	*
EEC 4303 - Planning Creative Activities in Early Childhood Education	*
EEC 3700 - Social & Emotional Development of Young Children	*
*	SSE 3312 – Teaching Social Science in the Elementary School
*	LAE 3414 – Literature for Children
*	RED 4519 – Diagnostic and Corrective Reading Strategies

*Notes no equivalent course

APPENDIX F: UCF IRB APPROVAL LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Laura June Albers-Biddle**

Date: **March 20, 2014**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/20/2014, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: PRINCIPALS' HIRING PRACTICES OF TEACHERS IN
PRIMARY GRADES
Investigator: Laura June Albers-Biddle
IRB Number: SBE-14-10141
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 03/20/2014 03:05:56 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX G: SCHOOL DISTRICT RESEARCH REQUEST APPROVAL LETTER

May 5, 2014

Ms. Junie Albers-Biddle
University of Central Florida
South Lake Campus
1250 N. Hancock Road
Clermont, FL 34711

Dear Ms. Biddle:

This letter serves as final approval to conduct your research study entitled, "Principals' Hiring Practices of Teachers in Primary Grades."

Per information submitted in your request, please note/adhere to the following:

- This research will be conducted to fulfill requirements for a doctoral degree through the University of Central Florida under the direction of Dr. David Boote.
- All procedures set forth in the approved research request must be followed as approved by [REDACTED] County Schools.
- The confidentiality of the district, schools and administrators will be maintained at all times.
- The district will be identified as a "district in Central Florida" or a similar identifier.
- Participation in the interview process is strictly voluntary on the part of elementary principals in [REDACTED]
- Interviews must not interfere with the educational process or principal responsibilities.
- All participants must sign the approved consent form to participate in the research interview.
- Participant are to be fully informed about audio taping interviews.
- All Florida statutes and district policies and procedures must be followed at all times.
- A copy of the results of the research must be provided to the district upon completion.

Should you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] I wish you much success with this research project.

Yours truly,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

C: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

"Equal Opportunity In Education and Employment"

APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT



PRINCIPALS' HIRING PRACTICES OF TEACHERS IN PRIMARY GRADES

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator(s): Junie Albers-Biddle, M.Ed.
Faculty Supervisor: David Boote, Ph.D.

Investigational Site(s): University of Central Florida
[REDACTED]

Introduction: Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 25 people. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are currently a principal at and elementary school in [REDACTED]. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Junie Albers-Biddle of the UCF Department of Education and Health Sciences. Because the researcher is a graduate student he is being guided by David Boote, a UCF faculty supervisor in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership.

What you should know about a research study:

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for hiring primary teachers.

What you will be asked to do in the study: This is a qualitative research design using interviews to collect information for dissertation in practice in the EdD program. The researcher will use audio recording of all interviews to capture the data accurately and completely.

Location: Interviews will be conducted at a location of the participant's choice to include a classroom or office at the school or separate location.

Time required: The interview should last approximately 30 minutes.

Audio taping: You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio recorded, you can still participate in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be maintained only until the completion of the study and the results are finalized.

Risks: There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study.

Confidentiality: We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to: *Junie Albers- Biddle*, Graduate Student, Doctor of Education Program, College of Education and Human Performance (352) 536-2170 or Dr. David Boote, Faculty Supervisor, David.Boote@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Withdrawing from the study: If you decide to leave the study, contact the investigator so that the investigator can select another participant. The person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include determination by the researcher that you do not meet the selection criteria or the research study is no longer in your best interest.

Results of the research:

You will be notified when the research is completed and may review the results upon request.

Your signature below indicates your permission to take part in this research.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

Printed name of person obtaining consent

APPENDIX I: E-MAILS SENT

1. Initial Email communication for participation

Hello,

As part of my doctoral dissertation at UCF, I am conducting interviews of principals in Lake County Schools. Dr. David Boote, PhD in the College of Education and Human Performance is my faculty supervisor and the purpose of the study is to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for hiring primary teachers. The interview will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and can be conducted at your choice of location and time. If you are interested in participating, please let me know your availability by responding to this email or calling me at 352-267-2175.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Junie Albers-Biddle

Junie.albers-biddle@ucf.edu

2. Follow-up email communication for participation

Hello,

About a week ago, I sent you an email asking for participation in an interview as part of my doctoral dissertation at UCF. Please consider sharing your knowledge as part of this study. The purpose is to analyze principals' dispositions, beliefs, knowledge, and practices for hiring primary teachers. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be conducted at your choice of location and time or by phone. You may contact me by responding to this email or calling me at 352-267-2175 to let me know your availability.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have further questions or concerns you may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. David Boote, PhD in the College of Education and Human Performance at david.boote@ucf.edu.

Sincerely,

Junie Albers-Biddle

Junie.albers-biddle@ucf.edu

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Data	Question	Product/Prompts
Ice Breaker/Personal History	1.) How long have you been in your current position? And what other positions have you held?	Background information. How much experience in elementary/primary grades?
Values and priorities	2.) What top concerns do you have about the school at this current moment? AND Please tell me about your most recent staffing changes, hiring, or rearranging that effected primary grades and why.	What is most important? What are you spending most of your time doing and/or thinking about? Are primary grades included or considered?
Dispositions	3.) Which grade level(s) do you place your highest quality teachers? <i>If participant does not seem candidate or is uncomfortable with this question then use Fuller & Ladd (2012) study to ask their opinion on the results.</i>	Do FCAT tested grades get priority in terms of quality? Fuller & Ladd (2012) found that accountability pressure increased the tendency to move higher quality teachers to grades 3-5.
Beliefs about teachers' skills.	4.) What skills do you think are important for teaching K as opposed to (let's say) 5 th grade?	Does he/she think anyone can teach any grade?
Knowledge of degree programs.	5.) Do you know the differences in teacher preparation for ECE vs EE?	Knowledge of the social/emotional, child development, family involvement in ECE.
Preferences in hiring primary teachers	<i>If previous questions allowed opportunity to find out or ask specific questions to find out which candidate they would likely hire for PreK-3rd grade without using the scenario below, use those opportunities.</i>	OR <i>If NO opportunity to ask specific questions, then use the scenario below...</i>
	6.) Given the following scenario - You are interviewing for a teaching position and have eliminated all but two candidates. Both have equal qualities and qualifications except one has a degree in Early Childhood Education and the other in Elementary Education from the same university. Which candidate would most likely hire for the following grades? PreK, K, 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd	Preference and reasons why.
Member check	Paraphrase what I hear as the central ideas about: 1. Values and priorities 2. Dispositions 3. Preferences in hiring 4. Beliefs about teachers' skills 5. Knowledge of degree programs 6. Preferences for either ECE or EE 7. Comments that arise about flexibility	

APPENDIX K: THEMES AND CATEGORIES BY QUESTION AND PARTICIPANT

Hiring practices

Want What Is Best For School, Children, and Teachers – 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Q2.

- Want teachers to feel comfortable – 4,4,4
- Do what we feel works best for the school – 4
- We make sure it is the right fit- 4,3,4
- Putting people in the right place -3,4
- Make sure student's needs are being met-5
- Look at the specific teacher and where their strengths -upper grades or lower grades-7

Q3.

- We put people in places with a purpose - for student success-4,4
- Chemistry of the team is an important factor-2

Q5.

- Moved a 3rd grade teacher to 4th grade because she wanted to loop with her kids- 6

Q6.

- I want them to be happy-3,1,1
- Hire the best person for the job-1,1,1,5,
- Usually the person has his strong suit-1
- Always goes back to the interview -2,1
- Some primaries will never be good intermediate and visa versa-1,1,3
- Fit with that team-2,2,2
- Have to find where the teacher best fits-3,5,5

Certification/Degree is Irrelevant – 2,4,5,6,7

Q2.

- It is individualized not just something that they have on paper 7

Q5.

- Training, experience, and well prepared-2,2,2
- ECE degree didn't keep me from hiring a person who moved to 4th grade —6

Q6.

- Degree is secondary -5
- Trust the accrediting university gives them the degree/ any certification works as long as they are prepared -4,4, 5
- I would not hire an EE person over ECE person or visa versa -5, 5, 5
- Experience matters -2
- Passionate and ability most important – 4,5
- Certification would not make a difference as much as the interview-2,2,2,2

Flexibility is Unimportant – 1,2,3,6

Q6.

- Still have some versatility with the ECE-1
- Don't hire with the thought that I am going to be moving -2
- Flexibility is important to me but not when actually hiring-2
- Don't want to haphazardly move just because you are K-6th grade -3
- Not one to just start moving people unless I have a really good reason-3
- EE certification is not better because of flexibility -6

Flexibility is Important – 1,2,3,4,5,7

Q2.

- Need K-5 certification to move teachers around -1

Q6.

- Need versatility -1
- PK/3 certification limits us as administrators- 1, 2, 4, 4,7
- Hiring only a K teacher restricts you-1
- EE is more beneficial for the teacher than it is for the school- 3
- Might want to move a good 3rd grade teacher but we can't put ECE in 5th grade.-4
- K- 6 you have the flexibility to move them where ever you want. 5

Grade Levels

All grade levels are important 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Q2.

- FL Standards - in all grades level and not just 3rd through 5th -5

Q3.

- There isn't a grade level that gets the highest quality. Every grade level is critical - 1,2,2,4,4,4,5
- You want quality teachers throughout. 4
- Place quality teachers in every grade level. 5,5,6,7
- I think I equally distribute them. I feel like I have balance. 6
- I do not put my highest quality teachers in the FCAT grades -3, 6

Primary Grades are the Foundation 1,3,4,6,7

Q.2.

- Primary grades are the foundation -4,4,4,3,3

Q3.

- Count on K, 1, & 2 to set that firm foundation so that 3,4, & 5 can build upon it. - 1,1,1,1,1,1,3,3,7
- Primary is the foundation of reading- 6

Q4.

- Building that foundation. That I love school.-6

Academic Standards/ Content in primary grades – 1,2,3,5,6,7

Q2.

- Things have changed over the last few years of what is expected of K and 1st students – 3,3,3

Q3.

- K teachers are working with a more basic and fundament level of curriculum. -2

Q4.

- The academic side and expectations of K raised the bar quite a bit with FCAT and NCLB-1,1,1,5
- Clear content to be delivered in primary grades - have to know and understand -2
- Start critical thinking at a very young age -5
- To teach children how to read is such a big part of primary – 6,7

Primary teaching is Specialized

Value of teachers of Young Children – 2,4,5,6

Q3.

- It's more than just what they know that makes them a good teacher. -2

Q4.

- 2 different types of teachers – primary or intermediate -6,6,6, 3,3
- Takes a special person to teach K -4,2,2,5
- Need to have an understanding of K – 5,5
- Just because you are certified in K-6 does not make you able to teach in K -5

Q5.

- Difference in the type of person when they focus on ECE and those who focus on K-6 -5

Q6.

- Might be certified for K but doesn't mean you can teach it -6,6,6,6

Developmentally Appropriate Practice – 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

Q.2

- Moved a teacher because I didn't think he/she was developmentally appropriate 3,3,3,6
- Kids at that age are like sponges and they can absorb things -3

Q4.

- Teachers need the skill set to know how to teach children individually 1,2,4,4,4
- Primary grade teachers need to understand the developmental needs of young children more than the upper grade teachers 1,4,5,5,5,6,6
- Teach content to young children for how young children learn-2
- I ask questions to determine if they are developmental or academic- 6,6
- Upper grade teachers have a hard time understanding the developmental needs of K -5,6
- Social skills are very important -5
- Young students need time to be able to grasp things and then monitored -5

Q5.

- ECE degree is understanding child development -3,6,6,6,6,7
- Differences with the curriculum and the instructional practices between EE and ECE - 4,4,4

Q6.

- Children need a lot of repetition. -6

Nurturing skills and patience of teacher important in primary grade – 2,3,4,6

Q3.

- Caring factor important the makes a high quality teacher. -2

Q4.

- Nurturing skill important especially in primary-2,3,6,6,6
- Intermediate teachers are more used to students being able to do things on their own -3
- Different level of patience in primary-2,3,4,6
- Building that love of school and relationships in primary – 3,6,6

Q5.

- Meet safety needs before the learning can take place-3

Q6.

- In the young grades you've really got to love children-6

Routines and expectations in primary grades – 2,4,5,6

Q4.

- Children who are not used to school culture and what is expected of them-2,2,2,2
- 3rd – 5th grade who know the routines and know what is expected of them. -2,4
- All K-5 classrooms need structure but prek and K need more -5

Q5.

- Work with children without back ground of going to school -2

Opinions of ECE and EE

Benefits of Early Childhood Education 4,5,6

Q2.

- Primary experience important for upper grades also 5,5,5,5,5,5

Q4.

- Interview for a kindergarten or 1st grade teacher, second grade teacher/ questions are the same but looking for ECE specialization-6

Q5.

- I look at degree type when narrowing down candidates for K-3rd /ECE degrees are experts – 6,6

Q6.

- For K position – probably hire ECE because it has the Prek component-4,4

- Look for experience working with young children-6,6

Benefits of Elementary Education -1,2,3,4,7

Q2.

- In elementary school you have to be able to teach all grade levels (K-6) -7
- Upper grade experience is needed to teach primary grades -4,4,4,4

Q3.

- Primary teachers have lower expectations – too developmental -1,1

Q5.

- ECE philosophical stand point might lend itself to justifying it when it really lowers expectations-1,1,1,1,1,1

Q6.

- K-6 certification is most appropriate for primary grades-1,1
- If both candidates were equal and had to choose ECE vs. EE- probably go with the EE certified -2
- It is to your advantage to have the K-6th instead of the PK3 -3,3
- I do not rule out ECE for hire but candidate will need to get EE certification to be considered for hire -7
- I do not have a need for k-3 teachers every year -7

Do you know the difference in prep ECE/EE?

Q5.

- No – my perception is -1
- Do not know what college programs are doing-2
- I do not know preparation -3
- No. Not as much as you would think -4
- Prep programs – I don't know the differences when they get on one track or the other -4
- I don't know the specifics in coursework -5
- I have a sense of it -6
- I don't think there are a lot of principals that think there is a difference between the two degrees - just the age range but not really the content -6
- I have not looked at the specifics of that. I have not put too much thought to that. Do you mean the test? Had to explain – EE and ECE -7

APPENDIX L: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SUMMARIES

Participant 1

I met with participant 1 in his office at school where we sat at a large conference table away from his desk. Although his door was closed, we were interrupted once for just a minute to transfer some paperwork. He has 22 years of experience as an administrator, 15 of which have been in elementary and he was previously a secondary science teacher. My overall impression was that he was of the opinion that people in the field of ECE tend to have lower expectations. He also felt that principals need versatility to move people around but also thought it was important to place people into grade levels that they prefer and where they have strengths. Although he stated kindergarten was the foundation grade, he did not specify what skills were important in the early grades other than to say those teachers are nurturing.

When asked about concerns and staffing changes that effect primary grades he said most of his concerns revolved around portable situations and moving teachers. Because this is a magnet school, they do not have open enrollment for students. There is limited access and therefore the county is not required to meet the demands of usual capacity issues. Class size reduction requirements have left the school with uneven amounts of each grade level. The domino effect of moving current children to the next grade will require eight teacher changes next year. The only consideration about primary grades was that he was going to lose a teacher in kindergarten and add a 1st grade teacher.

When asked which grade level(s) he places his highest quality teachers he stated, "There isn't a grade level that gets the highest quality. I do not look at it that way." But then he went on to say, "Some people would justify 3rd grade as the significant grade, some people would justify 4th grade because of Florida Writes and so on." He also said that kindergarten was the foundation and said, "The rest are band aids. If you simply threw all your reinforcements to 3rd grade you

are band aiding the problem. It begins in kindergarten. K's job is to adequately prepare them for 1st grade, 1st grade prepare them for 2nd. If you get all the way into 5th grade and you are reading on a 2nd grade level, it doesn't matter how many quality teachers you put in 5th grade."

His answers to the question of what skills do you think are important for teaching K as opposed to (let's say) 5th grade, focused more on the academic side of kindergarten and raising the bar of prek and K. He said, "I've seen two philosophical thoughts in PreK. One lets them play and interact and checks off when they see a skill. The other sees skills that are not being developed and creates opportunities for those skills to be developed. I tend to like that teacher over the first." He never really addressed the difference in the skill sets of teachers between EE and ECE.

When asked about the difference in teacher preparation for ECE vs. EE, he compared the field of early childhood to professionals in exceptional student education (ESE). He said their perceptions were on the "liberal side" and they believe the child is doing the best they can but only "because they are seeing the handicapping condition as a justifiable reason why he is not developing at the certain rate". He said the ECE and ESE sides need to very cautious not let that view take away from the normal side of the child that says "I'll only do what you tell me and I won't necessarily push myself because I don't have higher expectations." He went on to say "I think the ECE philosophical stand point might lend itself to justifying it when it really lowers expectations. I think ECE tends to excuse the expectation without realizing they are subconsciously using the philosophical nurturing ... they are a nurturing group and there is nothing wrong with that but sometimes that nurturing needs to be blended with high expectations." He contended that EE teachers tend to be weak in some areas because the degree

is a general knowledge degree. He said teachers tend to teach what they like best. I am not sure why he was saying that only of EE teachers or if he meant to include ECE.

Because he never really addressed it, I asked his preference for hiring in the primary grades. He said for the most part a K-6 degree was most appropriate and that he needs the versatility to move people around. He also emphasized that he hires the best person for the job. He said, "I would not necessarily hire the K-5 over the ECE just because of the versatility. I would hire the best person, because I have some versatility with ECE. I have four grade levels that that I can put that person in." He also said he hires the best person for the job. For example, "There are times I've interviewed people for a K position and even though they were EE I did not hire them because they were not a K person, but a 5th grade person. You can tell from the interview. There is some truth in that some primaries will never be good intermediate and vice a versa." He also said that, "I tend to look at low, med., high preference (K-2, 2-3,4-5). It also goes back to the idea that I want my employees to be happy if I can do it. But just not at the expense of the school. So you are also looking at putting them where they want to be. I like for my employees to be happy and place them where they want to be."

He ended saying, "If ECE certification covers kindergarten through 3rd grade, that is still four grade levels". I stopped him and told him PreK was part of ECE and he said, "That also comes in handy from time to time. I'm OK; I just wouldn't hire 19 ECE. I won't have a need for 19, which is also worse by the way, to have to let someone go." Then he said, "It really isn't about that. It is about (pause) some people don't need to be where they are at and some need to be moved. You need versatility".

Participant 2

I met with participant 2 in his office at school with no interruptions. I sat across from his desk with his office door closed. Overall I felt like he did not hire with the intention of moving teachers to other grades and feels that all grades are equally important. He is a music education major who had previous experience teaching mostly at the high school level but experienced one year in elementary. He has a total of 15 years as an administrator mostly in secondary but is now in his second year in elementary. He stated, "I have very little experience with elementary. I'm sort of learning as I go with elementary school about everything. It is quite different at this level."

His only concerns at the present time and staffing issues in the primary grades were shifting teachers around to fill positions and worrying about allocations. When asked which grades he places his quality teachers he said, "Every grade level is so critical now. I need to have high quality teachers in every grade level. One is not more important than the other. The chemistry of the team is an important factor for me." He went on to say, "I think some people might say it is important to put them in FCAT tested grades."

When asked what skills were important for teaching kindergarten as opposed to 5th grade, he said, "There's so much more 'teaching school' to those kids than there is in the older grades where they have already learned the routines and expectations. So you have to have a lot of patience. Then of course you have to have parenting skills, mom skills, to be able to help guide children through all that." He emphasized "culturalizing" children to do things such as walk in a line, raise their hands, and ask to go to the bathroom. "They need to know school how operates before they can ever begin to learn content. They are used to doing whatever they want. They are not used to being accountable and they don't understand it." He also made a point to saying

quality in the primary grades is important because to teach content to young children it needs to be done how young children learn and a good teacher knows instinctively how to deliver content in “little chunks”. He also said, “Now a days there is very clear content to be delivered in those grades (K-2) and so you have to be able to know and understand that content, you have to have instructional strategies for delivering that to children who are not used to school culture. That is a huge factor.”

When asked if he knew the difference in teacher preparation for ECE vs. EE he said no but he said, “When I interview a teacher I ask them question about what kind of training they have had and their experiences”. He said, “I hope they give attention to what I said before of how to work with children without the background of going to school in addition to all the curriculum and assessment stuff.” He was quick to point out that it is important to have well trained and well prepared candidates and said, “I am going to hire someone who is as effective as possible for success in the classroom”.

When asked if he had a preference in certification when hiring in primary he said, “I don’t know that certification would make a difference to me as much as the interview. If everything else was equal it would get down to the interview for me. If they are EE or ECE they are both qualified for the position. I look at how they present themselves in the interview”. When pressed to answer the scenario question that states if all things were equal except for the degree and you had to choose a third grade teacher he said, “I would probably go with the EE certified because somewhere in their preparation there was probably more about the upper primary grades. I would look at experience as well and if they had experience in 2nd grade – that would matter too”. He continually stressed that he would always go back to the interview and fit for the position. When I asked if he thought the flexibility to move teachers into 4th and 5th grade was

important he said, “That is important to me but I don’t know if that is a decision I am making when I am actually hiring. If I am interviewing you for a 2nd grade position my mind is focused on what you can do for that 2nd grade group. I don’t hire somebody with the thought that I am going to be moving you all over the place. I look at the grade I am hiring for. It may come from being a high school principal for many years. I am not used to moving teachers around because they are compartmentalized.”

Participant 3

Participant 3 requested a phone interview which took place after work hours. She has a total of 9 years’ experience as an administrator in elementary and middle schools. She was a math major but has had the opportunity to teach at every single grade level during her teaching career. Overall, I believe she values the skills and qualities that are different in the primary grades and feels that the specialized training is beneficial. She did give some value to the flexibility of the EE degree as an asset for new teachers. She very strongly believed in finding the right fit for each candidate.

When asked about staffing changes she stated the following:

I moved a K teacher to VPK position because I felt like she had a better understanding of the social and academic needs of children moving into K these days. I know there is a curriculum for VPK but to strengthen their needs and to make sure they are ready when they enter K. He was all about the social. As far as I knew he had never been in kindergarten and as you well know things have really changed over the last few years of what is expected of K and 1st students. I would sit and talk with him and he wouldn’t understand some of the requests I had for him. It wasn’t a right fit.

During the member check she wanted to clarify and stated, “I don’t want to come across like I’m all academic in VPK but kids at that age are like sponges and they can absorb things. The VPK teacher I have now – the work coming out from there is unbelievable. There is still the play, the social development; she just knows how to intertwine the two.” Another example she gave was

in reverse. This year there was a teacher that I moved from K into 1st grade and the reason was, she's a really good teacher but I thought she was better placed in 1st. I'm all for setting high expectations but sometimes I think it was a little over their head. She has loved being in first grade this year and thanked me for moving her." She was happy that the teacher was gracious about the change and said, "Some take it personal and think they did something wrong. It's all about learning the strengths and weaknesses of your teachers and making sure you are putting them in the right place."

When ask where she placed her highest quality teachers she said, "Of course you always look at your FCAT grades but I have to say that I take all the positions seriously. To me the primary grades are just as important as the FCAT grades as they are the building the foundation. We count on K, 1, & 2 to set that firm foundation so that 3,4, & 5 can build upon it." She said it was unfortunate that there is so much pressure on scoring and the FCAT grades but maintained that is still comes down to the early grades. "You can't expect the 3rd grade teacher to do everything." She also said, "If you don't have that strong foundation in your primary it makes it that much harder for 3rd, 4th, and 5th."

An interesting point she made when asked about the skills to teach primary grades was that "When you look at EE there truly are two schools within a school. You got your primary and your intermediate. You want all your teachers to be nurturing but those primary teachers, especially K and 1, are responsible for building that love of school, knowing their social needs, and how to walk in a line. You need someone with patience, very nurturing and just knows pedagogically what their needs are. Versus your intermediate teachers; they are more used to students being able to do things on their – tie shoes, walk in line." She considered primary to be

PreK through 2nd and intermediate to be 3rd through 5th. She stated that primary emphasizes reading and math while 4th and 5th add science and social studies as graded content. Because of that they departmentalize those grades to get teachers who know the content well.

When asked if she knew the difference in teacher preparation between EC and EE she said, “I do not. I can only imagine. I assume EC is teaching the needs of the child at that age level. If you are not meeting the safety needs and making them feel safe, secure, and loved - it has to take place before the learning can take place.” When I asked her thoughts about the flexibility to move teachers into 4th and 5th grade with EE she said, “I personally feel you have to find where the teacher best fits. I want them to be happy. If you’re a good teacher I don’t want to haphazardly move just because you are K-6.” But she continued on and said, “I do feel that having EE cert is helpful for teachers, especially for those who are low man on the totem pole. If you don’t have a job and there only an opening in 4th grade, it is to your advantage to have the K-6 instead of the PreK-3. I think it is more beneficial for the teacher than it is for the school.” So she gave some value to the flexibility notions but still maintained, “But personally for me, I’m not one to just start moving people unless I have a really good reason. Maybe only if you are stronger in one area or the other.”

Participant 4

Participant 4 acted as a proxy for the actual principal of the school. The principal was too busy to meet but said her Assistant Principal (AP) could talk on her behalf. He has 11 years experience as an AP and was an ESE teacher for seven years working with emotionally handicapped children. This school is looking for a “good fit” and values teachers with experience in the tested grades because they know “the rigor”. His comments on which degree is preferred were conflicting. He seemed to prefer ECE for kindergarten only. Although he continually

referenced a good fit and placing teachers in the best place, he would always go back and reference ECE as limiting and the EE as a good option. I believe he was holding back because he knows me personally and was saying what he thought I wanted to hear as an early childhood professional.

The current concerns and staffing that effect primary grades deal with moving forward to next year and putting people in the right places according to their area of certification. “We want to put teachers where they feel most comfortable but as administrators of the school, having a global perspective of the school, we make sure it is the right fit.” In the past they moved a 5th grade teacher to 2nd and a 4th to 2nd. “Ms. ___ said she did that because you are taking from a tested grade down to a traditionally non-tested grade so hopefully the rigor would increase in the lower grade level. Those teachers have seen the importance of K-2.” They also will be moving a 5th grade teacher back to 1st because she wanted to test the upper grades but felt the lower was more her calling. They seem to value the “comfort level” of their teachers. He said, “I feel like if teachers are where they want to be and more comfortable you will get more out of them instead of making them go somewhere.” But he also contended that, “The moves are really based on the need where we feel like the teachers would most benefit the students academically.” Participant four also thinks K-1st teachers do not understand how rigorous and different it is in the upper grades and thinks that all teachers should experience the upper grades to see what is expected and the rigor.

He said that their highest quality teachers are throughout the grade levels. “We don’t want to believe that we have any teachers that aren’t high quality but we do know that some teachers are really high quality, dedicated, passionate teachers and then some that aren’t quite there. Every grade level is important.” He also said, “We move teachers just like the district

moves people so we put people where it will benefit the system the most. We have to make sure we are successful. We put people in places with a purpose. That is ultimately to get the best student achievement that we can get.” Next he said, “If we see a teacher during walk throughs and observation who are great in one area we will move them to a departmentalized area.” They departmentalized 4th grade this year with a reading teacher, writing teacher, math teacher, and students rotate throughout the day. Participant 4 said, “We hope to get a return on 4th grade writing scores” this year from incorporating a writing teacher.

Although he stated that they distribute their high quality teachers throughout the grades, when I mentioned the Fuller and Ladd (2012) study about principals placing their highest level students in the tested grades, he responded with, “It does happen. Traditionally I will say ... in my experience that is what all the grading formulas are based on and we tend to put our most phenomenal teachers in those tested grades because we think we are going to get our best bang for our buck.” I took that as they might lean towards those grades. He did come back and contradict himself by saying, “But if we do not have good teachers in the non-tested grades we are going to see a detrimental impact down the road when they are tested so we have to have dynamic teachers throughout.” During the member check he did the same thing when I paraphrased that they place their quality teachers throughout. He came back with “But I do understand why you might want to, because of the focus on scoring and school grades and the tested grades, we want good quality teachers there.” Then he added, “But we want to make sure there are good quality teachers throughout.”

When I asked about the important skills for teaching kindergarten vs. an upper grade he immediately replied, “A different level of patience”. Followed by, “They should have high expectations for their student but students at that point are developmentally all over the place.

Teachers need the skill set to know individual children and not do overall teaching of the content areas. Know what each one needs.” He also made a point to say “It takes a special person to teach kindergarten. The children have to love you.” He compared kindergarten to upper grades by stating, “You have to get them to want to learn as opposed to students in 3rd through 5th grade they know the routines and know what is expected of them. It is still individual (in 3-5) but not as much.”

This participant does adjunct work at a local college so I assumed he would know more about teacher preparation and the course work than he did. When I asked if he knew the difference between ECE and EE he said, “No. Not as much as you would think since I teach education courses at the college. I have them for the Introduction to Education course and I know they pick a track in either ECE or EE. I think there are differences with the curriculum and the instructional practices because it is different with the younger ones. It’s a lot more extrinsic and multi-modality instruction. With the younger ones you can just have the desks in a row. Classroom management is also different.”

Since I did not get a real sense of a preference for hiring in the primary grades I asked him the scenario which forced a choice. He said it was hard to say but if all else was equal for kindergarten, “I probably would say I would like the early childhood because it has the PreK component. Because they are in so many places developmentally at that age having the PreK part could help with that transition.” He did not specify for 1st through 3rd but when on to say, “I would like to say I would hire the best person for the job so I would say as long as they have certification it really doesn’t matter.” He then contradicted himself and said, “But with those certified PreK-3 ... (pause) we are limited as administrators. What if that 3rd grade teacher is a dynamic math person? Because math is so critical in 5th grade we might want to move her but we

can't put that teacher in 5th grade." He continued by saying, "I know some people do that on purpose because they don't want those grades. But it is limiting. So I would probably prefer a K-6 just because it opens up our placement opportunities more if we felt like they would be better in a higher grade level." Another contradiction came about when he said, "But I don't think when it comes to hiring, as long as they are certified and they are passionate and have the ability I don't think the cert matters. Other than kindergarten – I would want the early childhood."

Participant 5

This participant was being shadowed by an AP from the district so we had another person observing as we met in his office. We had one interruption when the front desk called to ask a question. He has been an administrator for 10 years. Eight years in elementary and two years as an AP in high school. His teaching experience was as a secondary math teacher. This principal seems to have an appreciation of the training and abilities of primary teachers. He feels that upper grade teachers may not know the strategies to remediate struggling students. He plans to hire a primary teacher to coach upper grade teachers. He has strong opinions about the skills needed to teach young children and does not believe just anybody can teach them. Although he did not have a preference for hiring a certain degree in the primary grade, he mentioned EE has more flexibility.

His top concerns at the school now were space and hiring due to a growing community. He wants to make sure the student's needs are being met. When asked about staffing, hiring, or rearranging issues that affect primary grades he said because of Title I funds he is able to budget for personnel. He said, "I believe in human capital and for what it can do for kids, not so much a program. So most of my money from Title I will be earmarked for coaches." They already have a K-2 Literacy coach but he said, "Because of the Florida Standards and because of the need we

see in all grades level and not just 3rd through 5th, we are going to have a new K-2 Math Coach next year.” So he is looking for somebody in the K-2 math coach spot who really knows good teaching the primary grades and what it takes. Then when discussing the need to fill a literacy coach position he said, “I am going to be hiring for a new Literacy Coach for 3rd, 4th, & 5th because the one I have is leaving. I think people automatically think that I want a 3rd, 4th or 5th grade teacher for that job. To be honest with you I don’t want to rule them out but I’m really looking for a K, 1, or 2 teacher for that job. I really want a primary person. The reason being is that when you’re looking at a really strong literacy coach teachers need help with remediating students who are behind grade level, they need help with the phonics, and those types of things. 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers are not always trained in that area unless they taught the primary grades. So I may move a K, 1, or 2 teacher into that 3rd -5th literacy coach position.”

He continued to rationalize the reason for hiring a primary teacher for coaching position for 3rd through 5th grade by saying, “My present literacy coach for 3rd through 5th taught 2nd grade, kindergarten and PreK. When I got her as a literacy coach here for K through 5 I know she had a learning curve but she’s done a fantastic job. That first year when she came in my lower quartile gain was 44%. After she put things into place that gain went to 77% and she has been able to sustain that with the teachers. As far as that foundation piece, she had all that.”

Another example he gave was, “Another person I know at the county office as a program specialist for reading was a literacy coach for her school and always had experience in 1st grade.”

He also referenced movement of teachers and how he’s getting ready for next year by saying, “Right now I basically know where I want people from what I have seen all year long and for those who have been with me for years and I have data. But I will wait for my data to come in to figure out if that is the right spot for them. They will have a job here but I may move

them from what I see.” He also said, “5th grade is departmentalized and has given me a good return on my money. 4th grade wants to meet with me and I know they want to departmentalize. I won’t make any decision until I see where the strengths are.”

He said he places quality teachers in every grade level. But my question reminded him of the past and he said, “Once upon a time there used to be this notion that your weakest teacher should go to 2nd grade. Third grade can catch them up, 1st is reading, k is foundational.” He strongly stated, “I feel that all grade levels need strong people. My strong teachers are all spread out. I try and get rid of my weak people.”

When I asked him what skills he thought were important for teaching kindergarten he asked if I was looking for more than just academics. I stated yes. Then he said, “I think they need to have that background knowledge of how students develop over time. You have students that don’t learn at the same speed not because they are slow but because developmentally they are not there.” He explained it by saying, “If you have a kid who doesn’t know his letters or sounds it doesn’t mean you have to put him on RtI. They need time to be able to grasp these things and then monitor him. If you do not have someone who understands that, and I think your upper grade teachers have a hard time, you have your whole class on RtI.” Maintaining that all grades need structure he emphasized the importance in primary grades by saying, “But in the beginning those prek/kindergarten teachers really need to show them the ropes of ‘this is how we do things at school; you’re not at home any more’. The social skills are very important with developing that with students. Especially now when you are going into the whole thing where students should be able to turn and talk to their partner; they need to be able to justify what they are doing and think critically among a group of students. You need to start that off at a very young age.”

Speaking of current day in education he said, “I think expectations for the primary grades have been raised a great deal so now you have kindergarteners that have to write before they move to first grade. So those skills on how to teach these little ones when some of them know their letters, some of them know their colors, some of them have gone to preK that is an issue itself. If you plop someone who doesn’t understand that in K...” You will have to imagine what he said what an upper grade teacher would say because he said I could not quote him on that statement. To make the case for early childhood teachers he said, “You really need to have an understanding of all that and I don’t know that just because you are certified in K-6, if you have not really gone in to see that age level and observed and work I don’t know if they’ll know what they are getting themselves into. It takes a special person to do that and be successful at that.”

When asked if he knew the differences in teacher preparation for ECE vs. EE, he said, “I don’t know the specifics in coursework. I would think it is heavy on child development side for ECE. I just know there is a difference in that type of person when they come in from those who focus on childhood and those who focus on K-6.” Giving full authority to preparation programs he said, “I figured that they have the degree and if they have the right attitude to work with my kids, that is what I am going to look at.”

When asked if he gives preference of one degree or certification over another, he said, “I would not hire an EE person over ECE person. I would look at the attitude of that person brings in and if they can work with my population of students. The degree would be secondary to me. If the accrediting university gives them the degree then it comes down to ‘What can you bring to the table with me and my students and are you a good fit for this school?’” He did though mention that K- 6 certification has flexibility to move people around and said, “Whereas if you only do Prek-3rd ...” and stopped the comment. He went on to say, “For me, if I have a K,1, or 2

advertised, I want them to come in and see me but then again, I want to make sure they are the best fit for the school. I would not rule out a K-6 because I have an early childhood, I will bring everybody in and make sure they have the right certification. Then I will pick the best person for that job.” I asked if he would rule out an ECE person for 3rd grade, he said, “No, I have met some good early childhood people who are great in 3rd grade.”

Participant 6

I met this participant in her school office and after she closed the door she asked me to join her at a small table off the side of her room. We had two short interruptions with assistant principals knocking to tell her something very quickly. I know this person very well and she is a true early childhood person. She has 24 years experience as an administrator, all in elementary schools. She has held a position at the district office in elementary curriculum and has taught only kindergarten and 1st grade. She gives preference to ECE teachers in primary grades and feels the degree makes them an expert. She equally distributes her quality teachers but does not think that just anybody can teacher the lower grades. She believes in the different abilities of primary teachers and the passion it takes to work with them. She requires her teachers to be developmentally appropriate and is very knowledgeable of ECE.

She could not think of any current changes but said that in the past, “I had a teacher that I moved because I didn’t think she was developmentally appropriate with the students. I thought her expectations about academics, the drill and practice, that part of it was too demanding. I told her that there is an academic side and there is a developmental side and I think you are more academic and would do better in the upper grades. I placed her in 3rd grade and she left.”

When asked where she placed her highest quality teachers, she said, “I think I equally distribute them. I feel like I have balance. I’m not the kind of principal that says I have to put my highest quality teachers in the FCAT grades. I believe you should have strong teachers in every grade level.” Thinking of her current teams she said, “I have a very strong 1st grade team and they could teacher higher grades but the basis and foundation or reading you have to have some of your best teachers there too.” A comment she made about the misconception that upper grade teacher have about moving down was intriguing. She said, “I think it is interesting that I’ve had 3rd or 4th grade teachers tell me that they want to get out of teaching the FCAT grades. They’ve said, ‘I’d love to teach kindergarten.’ And I’m thinking, do you think it is that easy?”

When asked the skills that are important for teaching kindergarten, she said the following:

I think that you really have to know the developmental aspects of 5 and 6 year olds. You have to build that relationship with the children. I mean you have to in all the grades but there is one thing, no matter what you do, no matter how you structure your curriculum or what you are doing with your kids during the day, they have to feel that they love school. It’s like building that foundation. That I love school. That they feel trusted and supported by the teacher. It’s that nurturing. A real sense of nurturing. I think in the older grades you are helping the children to be more independent- not that you shouldn’t know developmentally what 9 year olds are thinking but particularly you have to have that nurturing aspect to you. They have to be the nurturers of the children. I really believe that.

This principal has a master’s degree in ECE and she felt that she had a sense of the differences in teacher preparation between EE and ECE. She believes the ECE degree is about “really understanding the whole child and the developmental aspect of it. You get more into child development, family relations, and that kind of thing, which is really important.” She continued the support of the training by saying, “It would do the elementary education program

well to have some courses on developmental levels and parent involvement, family structure, and that kind of thing.”

She continued with talking about what she looks for when hiring and the differences of what she looks for according to the position. She said, “When I interview for a kindergarten or 1st grade teacher, second grade teacher, it is different (than 3rd-5th grade). My questions are the same.” She has 12 questions that she asks all teachers which she believes are basic to the foundation of a quality teacher. She said, “When I say give me your three best attributes for a teacher, I’m looking for different things in those teachers.” She also said, “One of my questions when I am hiring for K is (I actually ask all my applicants) ‘Tell me what life is like or walk me through the day in the classroom. Tell me what you would be teaching and tell me what your classroom arrangement looks like.’ So I get the sense of, are they developmental or academic? Are they doing center time with children? What does it look like? How are their centers set up? What’s their daily schedule look like?” She ended by saying, “A teacher on the EE level is not going to do a very good job of telling me what a K classroom looks like, unless they have done their senior internship in K.”

When I asked her if she looks at degree type when narrowing down candidates for K-3rd and does it have an impact on who she decides to interview, she said, “Yes it does. It makes an impact on me because if they have been in an ECE degree, you do know I have my masters in early childhood so (ha ha), I really feel like they are the experts in early childhood. It doesn’t inhibit me from saying they can teach 4th or 5th grade. I moved a 3rd grade teacher to 4th grade because she wanted to loop with her kids. She took the subject area test. There was not a problem. It didn’t keep me from hiring her – at the time she only had an early childhood degree and I needed a good 3rd grade teacher.”

A point that she made about the two degrees was that, “I honestly believe that (pause) I don’t think there are a lot of principals that think there is a difference between the two degrees. It’s just the age range but not really the content.” When I asked if she felt it was an advantage to have the EE degree since you have the other two grade levels and flexibility to move, she immediately said, “No. I have 4th and 5th grade teachers that there is no way they can teach K. They might be certified but they don’t have the temperament, they don’t have the nurturing, they don’t have the dispositions.” She added that, “Another thing that I look at when I am hiring, particularly in those early childhood years, I want to see; to me it is an advantage if they have had experience working with young children.”

Although her next statements really answered the question about the skills needed to teach in primary grades, I think she was trying to explain the differences needed when hiring different grade levels. “Because in the young grades you’ve really got to love children. I mean in 4th and 5th grade you can say, here’s your assignment, do your homework. It’s not that I don’t want teachers to love their children at any grade but you’ve got to have a lot of patience, a lot of understanding. Children need a lot of repetition. You’ve got to want to do that with them.” She looks for experience also and said, “It is always an advantage to me if I see teachers have worked in day cares or at their church. I mean it’s fine if they waitressed at Gators because they need a job and are making money and it shows they are independent. But when I see they have worked with children – I encourage students that I know in college to try and have a job with children. You get a really good look to see if you want to work with children.” She also said, “You know what? Most of the time the teachers really, that want to teach in the lower grade, they have had experience with young children. That is where they started.”

During the member check she made some different points that are worth including. “I see that my kindergarten and 1st grade teachers who want to teach K and 1st. My 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade teachers generally do not want to teach early childhood but they would go 3rd, 4th, or 5th. I know my K, 1, and 2 teachers are the ones that want to teach children the love of reading. The 3rd, 4th, or 5th want the kids to be able to read. To teach children how to read is such a big part of learning and when they have that passion for that and their children, it is wonderful.”

Participant 7

Participant 7 set up a phone interview with me during the school day. She has been in administration for 13 years in elementary and high schools. All her teaching experience was in 1st and 2nd grade. This administrator only valued the K-6th grade certification and was not concerned about the differences in training between ECE and EE. She almost seemed unaware there was a difference in training as I had to explain differences in the certifications. She requires all her teachers to possess the K-6 certification in order to be hired.

When I asked about her top concerns she stated that she was looking at allocations and in the planning stages for next year. She was taking care of staffing issues and said that she sends out a survey to see how many teachers want to remain. When I asked if there were any concerns in the primary grades specifically she said, “Not necessarily because in EE you have to be able to teach all grade levels. You look at the specific teacher and look at where their strengths are. If they teach the upper grades better or the lower grade better. It is individualized not just something that they have on paper.”

When asked where she placed her highest quality teachers she said, “I place them on all grade levels. I don’t just put them all in the testing grades because [children] need the foundation

before they get to the testing grades. So they are spread evenly through all the grade levels.”

When I asked what skills are important for primary grades as opposed to an upper grade, she said, “They need to be able to teach reading. Then she said, “All EE teachers should be reading endorsed. They need to be able to teach reading and some in the language arts area.” So I’m not sure that she was distinguishing ECE from ECE.

When I asked about the differences in preparation between ECE and EE she said, “I have not looked at the specifics of that. I have not put too much thought to that.” She asked if I meant the test so I explained that ECE covered PreK through 3rd grade and EE was K-6 with different course work. She said that she thought ECE would cover more of the developmental and “looking at the development of the child.”

I asked her if she considered the certification type when interviewing candidates for the primary grades and if she had a preference. She said, “I consider certification and I prefer the K-6 because if you only have K-3 certification it limits me to where I can place you. There may not be a need for you- I do not have a need for K-3 every year.” I asked her if she ruled out even interviewing someone with ECE and she said, “No I do not rule them out. I interview them and if it’s a candidate I will consider, I let them know that they will need to get the other certification (EE).”

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