Spring 2018

Research vs. Reality How School Districts Meet the Developmental Needs of School Principals

Catina Bullard-Clark
Old Dominion University

RESEARCH VS REALITY:

HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

CATINA BULLARD-CLARK
B.S. May 1994, Winston Salem State University
M.S. Ed. August 2002, Old Dominion University

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND FOUNDATIONS

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
May 2018

APPROVED BY:

DR. KAREN L. SANZO, COMMITTEE CHAIR

DR. STEVEN MYRAN, COMMITTEE MEMBER

DR. PETER BAKER, COMMITTEE MEMBER

Abstract

RESEARCH VS. REALITY: HOW SCHOOL DISTRICTS MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Catina Bullard-Clark
Old Dominion University, 2018
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Karen L. Sanzo

This study examined the shared experiences of elementary principals on the professional development provided to them from their district. The study population consisted of 16 elementary school principals in a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region. A general qualitative methods approach that was informed by phenomenology was followed. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a focus group with the participants and was then organized into themes to answer the following research questions: (1) What approaches to development are being implemented to support elementary principals in a district in a state in the Mid-Atlantic region? (2) Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective?

A major purpose of the study was to determine if the research on the development of principals aligns with the reality of how principals are being developed by the district in which they work. Three major themes and five subthemes were revealed by the research and concluded with the implications for practice and research. Five significant findings resulted from this work and shed light on the potential for school districts to adequately support the developmental needs of elementary school principals.

Research vs. Reality

How School Districts Meet the Developmental Needs of School Principals

by

Catina Bullard-Clark

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family and closest friends. I experienced feelings of doubt along the way and your encouragement and support helped me to reach this goal. You have been right beside me every step of the way and now we can all cross the finish line. To my mom for always telling me how smart I am and the prayers to keep pushing. To Jalen, Jacobe, Jasmine, Jamyah, Jawon, Kennedy and Kendall, the sky is the limit if you believe in yourself.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to my chair, Dr. Karen Sanzo, for her constant support and commitment. I am grateful for all of the extra pushing she gave me to complete this research. Her knowledge and wisdom were most valuable. A special thank you to the members of my committee, Dr. Steve Myran and Dr. Peter Baker. The extra push was needed and I am eternally grateful. I appreciate the support of my work family Brian Nichols, Nancy Sweat, Susan Tilley and Dr. Michele Mitchell. I must also acknowledge the principals who participated in my study. They all gave their time and insight to assist in making a much needed change.

To, Ricky Bell, who has been my constant inspiration throughout this process, I say thank you. Your strong work ethic, along with your brothers Ronnie Devoe and Mike Bivins, have been the example for me to keep going when I wanted to give up. You provided the music I needed at the right time when I needed to finish one more page and the breaks I needed when I went to see you in person. Keep inspiring others to reach their true potential, as you have done for me.

Lastly, I acknowledge the work of all school principals who impact the lives of students and families on a daily basis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this study I sought to answer questions focused on the development of elementary school principals. School reform measures and a growing emphasis on improving student achievement have changed the role of the principal. State and federal standards for learning have increased the pressure on all stakeholders to bear accountability for how well teachers are teaching and students are learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). In the analysis of 69 studies from 1978 to 2001, Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) summarized that a significant relationship exists between student achievement and principal leadership. Acknowledging this correlation exists is the first step of many to create a plan for principal development.

The role of the principal in leading instructional improvement is supported by numerous bodies of research (e.g.…Leithwood, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). As teachers participate in professional development opportunities to build their instructional capacity, the same is needed for principals; however, many principals do not have the skills and knowledge to be the instructional leaders that their schools need to be successful (Hill, 2002; Lashway, 2002;). Principal development can follow two paths: individual development and/or district leadership development to form effective leadership skills (Marzano et al., 2005). For the purposes of this study, I focused on district leadership development. Although research concentrated on the district's role in developing principals is limited, the influence of job-embedded growth remains vital in the performance of principals. The principals of schools today need a host of skills that are intricate, varied, and hard to develop.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and provide new information centered on the development of elementary school principals. The focus was specifically to determine if the research on the development of principals aligns with the reality of how principals are being developed by the district in which they work. Through a general qualitative approach that was informed by phenomenology, I attempted to document the lived experiences of elementary principals. The principals were located within a district in the same state in the mid-Atlantic region. I sought to provide new information in the field of educational leadership.

The development of principals was explored through the lenses of adult learning and andragogy theories as the conceptual framework. These theories offer a way of understanding decisions and implementation about professional development for adults. These theories presume that knowing how adults learn, what motivates adults to learn and providing some choice to adults in what they learn, will result in an increase in knowledge, productivity, and job-related skills. An adult learning theory approach offers a way to engage learners in training and career improvement without the precondition that they are ineffective. Furthermore, the theories also assert that learning for adults should be self-driven and goal oriented in order for the outcome to yield lifelong learning with individual benefits for participants (Knowles, 1998; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). I engaged adult learning theory and andragogy theory during the data collection process of interviews and the focus group discussion. The characteristics and variables of adult learning directly impact growth and should be included in the planning and implementation of professional development. The concept was extended in the literature review.

Research Questions:

1. What approaches to development are being implemented to support elementary principals in a district in a state in the Mid-Atlantic region?
2. Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective?

Rationale and Significance

Higher accountability standards for student achievement have forced a critical eye on school administration. Teachers and students need strong principals who are prepared to lead them to success (Waters et al., 2003). School leaders take this position with a variety of years of experiences, instructional expertise, and diverse levels of need related to development. A consensus is needed on what encompasses professional development for school principals to ensure consistent execution. Results of how school districts continue to prepare principals for the vital work that is needed is not readily available. In this study, I explored the beliefs of the elementary school principals about the professional development provided by their district and what other variables need to be present for the development to be the most effective.

My personal interest in this study is twofold. First, as an Executive Director of elementary school leadership, my job is to develop and evaluate principals. I am professionally vested in gaining the perspective directly from building principals on their development and what methods are most effective with adult learners. The results of this study will extend my knowledge of creating a long-range development plan. Attaining this knowledge based on this study ultimately assists in my individual growth and development. Second, this study seeks to fill the gap that exists on aligning research and practice in the area of professional development for principals.

Definition of Key Terms

The definition of key terms is included for readers to become acquainted with unfamiliar or unknown terms that will help to promote understanding and comprehension.

Andragogy- Andragogy is defined as the science and art of helping adults to learn (Knowles, 1990; Merriam, 1993).

School Level Team (SLT)- the collection of building level administrators that attend and participate in planned monthly activities

Central Office Team (COT)- the collection of district-level administrators responsible for organizing monthly leadership activities

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)- legislation established in 1965 that called for an increase in financial support to schools of low-income students, created special education centers, and provided funds to improve teaching and learning.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)- new legislation passed in 2015 that removes the federal sanctions and school ratings based on test results, increases state responsibility for student performance and school ratings and increases state developed interventions for low performing schools.

Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISSLC)- model leadership standards that outline what education leaders should know

Instructional Leadership- effective principals engage in systematic behaviors that promote academic achievement.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)- legislation established in 2004 that reauthorized the ESEA of 1965. Provided money for extra educational assistance for poor children in return for improvements in academic progress.

Professional Development/PD- refers to a variety of training, education or professional learning intended to help improve professional knowledge, skill, or effectiveness.

Limitations

The three specific limitations that I highlight relate to the sample used to conduct the study. Convenience sampling was used to implement this study in one school district, which allowed the collected evidence to be limited in its application to other school districts. Also, a strong dependency on the reflection of the participants on the professional development that was provided was used, when a more documented list of professional development experiences of the district could have provided a wider scope for reflections. Lastly, although 89% of the district sample participated, principals had the option to not participate, as two principals chose to do.

Delimitations

This study was focused on elementary school principals from a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region and did not include principals from high schools or middle schools. All elementary principals from the district were solicited to participate so that all voices would be included in the study. I did not include the perspective of the district leaders who provide development opportunities for the principals. Lastly, I also did not gather information from participants about past development received from other districts before their employment with the district used in the study.

Summary

School principals play a vital role in the achievement of today's students. As the role of the principal has changed over the years, legislation now exists that supports increased accountability standards for schools. This combination of thought strongly enforces the concept that the school principal has to be an instructional leader; however, a growing concern that continues to emerge is related to how are principals being developed to lead this complex work. Research exists that reflects how adults learn best, what concepts and skills are essential for principals to know and also who within a district could be responsible for this development. Conversely, a gap exists in determining if these philosophies are actually being implemented by school districts to develop the needed skills in principals. By hearing the voices of the principals on what they have experienced and what they perceived to be effective development practices, it was my hope to link the research of development and the reality of development for school districts and future studies.

Overview of Literature

The literature review for this study begins with how the role of the principal has changed by examining whose accountable for student success and why an adjustment in the process of developing principals was needed. Adult learning theory was included as it provided the framework of characteristics of adult learners. In addition, this study explored literature related to the specific concepts of development that principals need in order for them to be the most effective leader. Although this research was not all inclusive of developmental needs, it provided a conceptual framework from which development may begin for principals. Lastly, the nature and importance of supervisors was described. This section provided some understanding

of how this role is evolving as a possible solution to the question of who could be responsible for the development of principals.

Overview of Methodology

This study followed a qualitative methods approach to collecting data through interviews and a focus group. One district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region was selected for the study. Participants volunteered to be a part of the study and then the snowball sampling technique was employed to recruit more subjects. Adult learning theory was included in the literature as this philosophy is particularly applicable in this study of principal development. The more we know about how adults learn, the better we are able to structure learning activities that resonate with the adult learners in professional development (Merriam, 2008). The interview and focus group process was informed by phenomenology because the lived experiences that the participants shared were the basis for thematic development when coding the data. Repeated data triangulation, the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants, and the use of member checking increased the validity of the study.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction as to why this study is important and what research questions will be answered. Next, Chapter Two contains a review of the literature on adult learning theory, significant concepts of principal development and the role of principal supervisors. A step-by-step methodology was presented in Chapter Three on selecting participants and the collection and analysis of data. The examination of the data was described in Chapter Four followed by a summary of the study findings, and implications for research and practice in Chapter Five. The references used and appendices conclude the research study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

In this chapter, I display a review of the literature related to the context of this research. For the purposes of the study, I specifically explore (a) the changing role of the school principal, (b) the theoretical framework of adult learning and andragogy, (c) the conceptual framework of developmental needs, and (d) the nature of supervisors to include a fairly new concept of principal supervisors. These concepts will be presented to answer four guiding questions that will be presented in the introduction of the study.

Introduction

Effective school leadership is critical for schools to be successful and has been found to have an impact on student achievement, school culture, and climate (Hattie, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). In a 2010 study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, extensive research uncovered no evidence of schools transforming without effective leadership (Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). School leaders and their power to drive student achievement provide the catalyst for the continued and ever-increasing examination of leader preparation and development across PK-12. While the role of the school leader is critical to the success of schools, there is ongoing concern that not enough is being done to effectively prepare leaders for their jobs (Murphy, 2005; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002). As Kelly and Hess state, (2005) “There is growing evidence to suggest that the revolution in school organization, management, and curricular affairs may have left principals behind” (p. 35).

The purpose of this literature review was to provide a structure for understanding principal development that addresses three questions, which are grounded in the theoretical framework of adult learning and forms a comprehensive system of development. Initially this review sought to address the question, why does the professional development of principals' matter? As this question is answered, the changing role of the school principal during this time of higher accountability standards for student achievement was explored. This part of the review also examined the need for a change in the way principals are developed to support the increase in responsibility now required of school leaders. Lastly, this first section concluded by examining the theoretical framework of adult learning and including the characteristics of principals as learners, which frame how effective professional development should be structured for principals.

Secondly, the review will explore the concepts that compromise the theoretical framework. This framework outlines the specific development of principals in order for them to be the most effective leader. Although this research is not inclusive of all developmental needs, it can provide a conceptual framework from which development may begin for principals. The concepts also provide for an across-the-board structure to principal development.

Finally, this review will address the nature and importance of supervisors. The role of the principal supervisor has emerged as a popular title and notion in the field of PK-12 school leadership throughout recent years. This section will provide some understanding of how this role is evolving as a possible solution to the question of who is responsible for the development of principals. Furthermore, this section will conclude by defining and analyzing the selection, qualifications, job responsibilities, and measures of effectiveness of principal supervisors.

Changing Role of the Principal

Effective school principals are necessary for the successful operation of a school. Schools need principals who have the skills and knowledge to bring about school improvement. Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) state, "Reviews of research suggest that successful school leaders influence student achievement in several important ways, both through their influence on other people or features of the organizations, and through their influence on school processes" (p. 5). The need for a change in the role of the principal is further supported by school districts that face new accountability structures rooted in standardized test results. Critical to school achievement is a strong focus on the academic program by school leaders, the use and analysis of data, and professional development for teachers (Copeland & Knapp, 2006; Hoy & Hoy, 2002).

Principals are held to higher degrees of accountability than in decades past due to more rigorous accountability systems. There are demanding expectations, many new within the past years, on principals to improve educational achievements for all students. Redish, Webb, and Binbin (2006) report, "The role of the principal has been dramatically changed by school reform measures and a growing emphasis on increased achievement of all students especially in the context of No Child Left Behind Act "(pp. 283-284). Historically, principals were challenged with managing buildings and staff; now they must concentrate their efforts on instructional improvements and data-driven accountability. The principal is deemed the one responsible for the success of the school and now research has begun to support what practitioners have known all along; powerful school leadership on the part of the principal has a positive effect on student achievement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). A "one size fits all" approach to develop principals into strong instructional leaders is never appropriate; therefore, the challenge of finding the best

practices for principal development remains an important need. Current research connects the effectiveness of school leadership to student achievement; consequently, leaders must increase student learning and achievement in the schools they lead (Gill, 2013).

An Accountability Perspective

Traditionally, the principal's role focused on managerial and administrative tasks. Principals were largely responsible for retaining order and daily tasks that included maintain inventory, executing safety measures, and following district mandates. The effort to apply business and industry models to school has largely taken place without consideration for the drastically different needs of schools (Tyack, 1974). Many shifts occurred between the 1950's through the year 2000 that had a distinctive impact on the change in the organizations and implementation of schooling. These early practices set the stage for the accountability for student learning to begin.

As schools in the nineteenth century began to test students for mastery of the taught curriculum many students did not pass and were retained. If students failed to learn, it was their own fault (Ravitch, 2002). Thus the first concept of the relationship between student achievement and accountability emerged. This relationship focused on the student as the central body of responsibility. A series of legislative actions began to shift the accountability of student achievement from students to schools and school leaders. The first of those legislations created a major change in the way poor and disabled students were supported by the educational system.

The authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 (ESEA) began the policy-based changes to the way schools were being held accountable for student achievement in the twentieth century. Such legislation called for an increase in financial support to schools of low-income students, created special education centers, and provided funds to

improve teaching and learning; however, no specific changes to school leadership were addressed within this legislation. In the same nature as this statute, a landmark report in 1966 entitled *The Equality of Educational Opportunity* otherwise known as the Coleman Report, focused on how school resources affected achievement (Ravitch, 2002). This report helped to establish a growing conflict between educators and policymakers on the lack of resources and how critically important they were to the underachievement of students of different races. Education reform at this time tried to address both perspectives simultaneously by focusing on increasing school resources and searching for accountability results; however, as with the ESEA legislation, no specific changes to school leadership was indicated. In comparison to the above-mentioned legislation, 1983 saw the publication of *A Nation at Risk,* which focused on how poorly students were achieving in our nation's schools and the need to reshape education (Wirt & Kirst, 1989). *A Nation at Risk* called for a more rigorous curriculum, new standards, and improvements to teacher preparation programs, which consequently increased accountability for school leaders.

Accountability measures continued to lead educational reform. As a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that was authorized in 2001, schools as well as district leaders were expected to have the knowledge to increase the quality of education for all students. The need to train and recruit high-quality principals for the purpose of increasing student achievement began to lead the discussion (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This legislation included assessments each year to measure student achievement, annual objectives to close the achievement gaps, and highly qualified teachers for all students. Currently, another reauthorization of ESEA has been established to further emphasize student achievement. This new legislation, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), removes the federal sanctions and school

ratings based on test results, increases state responsibility for student performance and school ratings and increases state developed interventions for low-performing schools.

The changing role of the principal has been led by accountability systems as indicated by research. As the focus on student achievement has increased, the role of the principal has changed to one that is more inclusive of instructional leadership. Educational reform has led to the change in patterns of testing and accountability which has greatly influenced what principals need to be able to do (Tyack, 2000). The history of education clearly shows five "waves of reform" that supports an inconsistent relationship between testing and accountability systems. In the waves of reform, the principal's role was different each time. (Linn, 2000). As accountability methods began to change so did the role of the principal.

Changes to Principal Development

Over the past 20 years, a growing and varied body of research have emerged that informs how we develop principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders. Some influential works focused on school leader preparation and development include, but are not limited to, *Preparing School Leaders: Defining a Research and Action Agenda (*Murphy, 2006), the *Handbook of Research on The Education of School Leaders* (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009), *The Journal of Research on Leadership Education, Successful School Leadership Preparation and Development* (Sanzo, Myran, & Normore, 2012), and *From Policy to Practice: Sustainable Innovation in School Leadership Preparation and Development* (Sanzo, 2014). Policy implementation based on federal legislation also influences principal development. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other directives around student performance have led to a shifting in the way principals are developed, with a focus to increase student achievement. Lynch (2012) reports, "Today's principals must accept the responsibility of serving as their

schools' instructional leaders with the responsibility of learning for all students" (p. 42). Due to the changing role of the school principal and as many principals enter the position underprepared by pre-service programs (Gill, 2013), a closer look at their development is needed to ensure that principals are prepared to lead today's schools.

Professional development for principals historically utilizes one of three approaches: (a) a change in the way principals are inducted and evaluated in a district, (b) the use of professional development programs while on the job, or (c) an adjustment to the college preparatory program (Daresh & Playko, 2001). Ongoing and job-embedded professional development of principals is the focus of this review. Professional development for principals is how they continue to improve their leadership skills. Duncan, Range, & Scherz (2011) summarize from their study of 106 principals, that principals require ongoing, job-embedded opportunities for professional growth combined with formal training to ensure continuous improvement. Many questions remain regarding principal professional development. First, as the role of the principal has changed from one of school management to a focus on instructional leadership and its significant impact on student achievement (Davis et al., 2005; Fullan, 2002; Hallinger, 2003), development must include opportunities to learn new practices. As principals search for guidance and assistance in these efforts, who is available and responsible to assist in developing them remain unanswered as well. Next, a model of professional development that is integrated and targeted to individual needs is one that may yield the most effective results; however, the activities that would be included in this integrated approach are not comprehensive. A professional development program for principals to meet the demands of their changing role can be achieved if intentional integration of the principles of adult learning is implemented (Knowles, 1998; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1990). This framework will be examined next in the review. The

next section will emphasize how adults learn and what characteristics should be present in order for the learning to be of interest and to meet individual needs. As districts continue to look for ways to increase student achievement, the development of the principal is essential to leading this work.

Theoretical Foundations

Adult learning theory provides a framework to examine how adults learn best and also provides a path to structuring professional development for adults that is the most effective. This philosophy is particularly applicable in this study of principal development, as the more we know about how adults learn, the better we are able to structure learning activities that resonate with the adult learners in professional development (Merriam, 2008). Whether it is a child (pedagogy) or an adult (andragogy), attention has to be paid to the learning styles of the student in order for the teacher to be most effective. This section will highlight how the concepts involved in adult learning and andragogy can significantly impact the professional development of principals.

The research on adult learning yields a multitude of literature and theories (Caffarella, 1993; Knowles, 1990,1998; Merriam, 1993, 2008) but this review will focus on adult learning and the notion of andragogy. Malcolm Knowles leads the research focused on adult-centered learning and outlines several principals in his andragogy theory as to how to successfully teach adults which includes self-concept, experience, social role, time perspective, motivation, and purpose (Knowles, 1990). These principles work together to paint a picture of what an adult learner looks like. A quick review of these outlined principles will show their role in supporting the professional development of principals.

Andragogy is defined as the science and art of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1990; Merriam, 1993). One of the first components, where an emphasis is placed on the adult learner, is by way of their own self-concept and respective life experiences as keys to foster buy-in, participation, and success (Malik, 2016). This is particularly important in the developing of people for leadership positions in the field of education, more specifically principals and administrators. Principals serve as the proverbial "point persons" for their schools. Often wearing many hats in regards to how they interact, and being accountable to their staff, the students, parent, and the respective school division. The ability to be able to apply what has been learned is an integral part of the success of any person wishing to function in a school leadership role, and as someone who steps into the position of instructor, having a pulse on the dynamic of the person being developed for a leadership role is vital (Terehoff, 2002).

Also vital in adult learning theory, and therefore, important in principal development is attention to social practices and time expectations. Classroom and school atmosphere will either help or hinder the educational process for adult learners. The tendency to develop a mutual trust in the teacher to student dynamic is essential in being able to challenge plans and paradigms of the adult learner, as noted in Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Much like Knowles' Andragogy Theory, Mezirow places emphasis on the respective experience of the learner, but it also aims to question the foundation of those experiences, beliefs, and values (Merriam, Baumgartner, & Caffarella, 2007). Learning for adults becomes more problem-centered than subject-centered as they grow. Learning and leading changes through dialogue and discourse among adults, challenging adult learners to grow per Mezirow. Principals are charged daily with tasks from implementing new initiatives to improve school culture, to having to observe and make recommendations to novice and veteran teachers alike to better develop their

quality of teaching to students attending the school, making all stakeholders in the educational process responsible for the success or failure of the students.

The last factors present in adult learning according to Knowles are motivation and purpose (Knowles, 1990). Learners want to know why they are being taught specific concepts and how these concepts relate to real life problems, which launches their internal motivation (Mezirow, 1985). Principals must be able to not only relate to the work they are doing but must be able to have the people they supervise unleash their internal motivation and purpose. This can be accomplished by designing, planning, and implementing professional development that supports the specific needs of each learner. Additionally, this aids in the buy-in needed for adults to get excited about advancing their learning. Terehoff (2002) believes "professional development is a period of ongoing intellectual and cognitive growth" in adult learners (p. 70).

Concepts presented as part of Knowles' andragogy theory serve as anchors to the development of adults, mainly principals for the purpose of this review. The principal's increased knowledge from effective professional development allows them to also successfully lead the teams at their schools. The act of being self-directed is vital to the andragogy theory because it means a learner seeks support or development when the need arises (Caffarella, 1993), thus remaining in control of their learning. Most importantly, providing a safe and trusting environment conducive to developing the kind of administrators and principals that will, in turn, be developers of people enhances the development of the school division in which they work, as the leaders are responsible for the development of others. There is much research available on the responsibilities of principals; however, some attention to concepts that need development is required. This next section of the review will examine those identified developmental needs.

Conceptual Framework: Developmental Needs of Principals

An exploration of research focused on behaviors or characteristics that school principals should exemplify yield several studies in which a set of behaviors were identified for principal effectiveness. Hallinger and Heck (1999) referred to these practices as "purposes, people, structures, and social systems" (p.147). In a study conducted by Shirley Hord (1997) that focused on principal behaviors and professional learning communities, the results were in alignment with a set of behaviors that must be in place for principals to develop effective learning communities: (a) shared values and vision, (b) supportive conditions, (c) application of learning, and (d) supportive leadership. Fullan (2002) identified five leadership behaviors and three leadership attitudes critical to increasing student results. Lastly, a study in Chicago of the leadership in elementary schools found three common elements among productive principals as well (Sebring & Bryck, 2000). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) combine the results of multiple studies into very similar principles using broader categories, such as, (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) developing the organization. These broad categories have subsections to explore to further understand the framework of development for principals. It provides a context of improvement for school leaders to become the most effective.

Setting Direction: Articulating a Vision and Shared Meaning

School principals impact their schools through a multitude of practices; however, the most significant are the ones related to setting direction. In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2010, findings from this work point to specific indicators to setting direction (Leithwood et al., 2004). These strategies map out a clear understanding for everyone by articulating a vision and establishing a shared meaning. Mission and vision are often used synonymously in developing school culture.

A leader must implement the practice of developing goals for schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Identifying and articulating a vision is critical for school leaders. To influence others to share in a coordinated vision and establishing goals on achieving that vision is part of a leader's practices (Hallinger & Heck, 2002). Educational leadership standards can help keep leaders, particularly principals, in step with their teachers' priorities, skills, and curricular focus. Lack of such alignment can undermine the efforts of both school leaders and teachers. The 2008 education leadership standards emphasize both goal-and vision-setting, which helps align the expectations of education leaders, teachers, and students. In a study conducted in 2004, to investigate the links to improved student learning, one of the findings indicated the standards also call for leaders to take an active role in creating instructional programs that are conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (Leithwood et al., 2004). This standard can be used to develop and promote policies to improve educational leadership; which is a critical step toward transforming schools and classrooms.

Developing People

People are an integral part of any organization. The goal of the relationship of the principal to school staff is one in which effective leaders help the school to become a professional learning community to support the performance of all key workers, including teachers and students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). People must be trained and developed to achieve the mission and vision set forth by the principal. Development is accomplished in many ways but specifically through intellectual stimulation, individual support, and by providing an appropriate model for teachers and other staff.

Intellectual stimulation. Leaders are responsible for challenging their staff to reflect and increase their performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). The provision of resources to help staff

grow is a significant responsibility for school principals and is a reflection of the leader's knowledge. A study by Blasé and Blasé (2000) sought feedback from over 800 teachers on the characteristics that principals possess that influence them most in the classroom. Reports from the study highlighted the major themes as *talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth.* These themes support intellectual stimulation and emphasize instructional leadership but also hint at the type of collaborative relationship that must be present in order for teachers to develop. This study further maintained that instructional leadership incorporates reflective discussion, collaboration, and peer coaching to stimulate professional dialogue and growth. Although this study yielded a set of other characteristics, the lesson continues to be that people must be motivated and developed to grow. The findings not only lend themselves to instructional leadership but to an integrated leadership approach.

Research specifically identifies instructional leadership as a key element that has a direct impact on student achievement. Instructional leadership is founded on the belief that successful principals systematically monitor student progress, visit classes, observe teaching while providing feedback, and possess expertise in curricular development and teaching (Neumerski, 2012). Although there does not appear to be an actual definition of instructional leadership, Neumerski (2012) also credited the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) for creating the National Standards for School Leaders. Further research supports that instructional leadership characteristics have emerged, such as, setting clear goals to serve as a source of motivation, possessing a high degree of self-confidence and openness to others, tolerating ambiguity, testing the limit of interpersonal and organizational systems, being sensitive to the dynamics of power, maintaining an analytic perspective, and remaining in charge of their jobs (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1980; Vlentine & Prater, 2011).

Individualized support and providing an appropriate model. Another very important aspect of developing people is providing individual support and being responsible for appropriate models. School principals have a duty to model the preferred attitude, and goals of their school and district so that staff is able to learn from them. Staff members become more encouraged when the leader make opportunities available for dialogue, time to monitor performance, and show empathy for their personal feelings (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Setting appropriate examples by the school leader helps to provide specific leadership practices that lead to increased capacity in staff. Leaders communicate the mission and vision through the practice of setting examples and their own knowledge or "technical core" (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). To illustrate this point, the 2003 study by Huffman and Jacobson confirmed that, support for teachers in the form of professional learning communities and distributive leadership practices aided in their growth and development. This study credits the leadership behaviors of school principals as the driving catalyst for development.

Developing the Organization

Effective principals will develop rules and customs that manage how well the organization functions. These rules include how the members within the organization interact with each other and others outside the organization, modifying the structures within the organization when needed, building processes for people to collaborate, and managing the environment (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). These rules and customs shape the school culture. All stakeholders, internal and external share in the responsibility of establishing a positive school culture.

Strengthening school culture. A definition of culture has been attempted by many researchers which have resulted in varied and intricate descriptions. Henry Mintzberg (1989)

refers to culture as organization ideology, or "the traditions and beliefs of an organization that distinguishes it from other organizations and infuse a certain life into the skeleton of its structure" (p. 98). Edgar Schein (1992) debates that culture should be a deeper level of basic assumptions, values, and beliefs that become shared as the organization becomes successful. The basic thread that runs through all of the explanations of organizational culture can be combined into a working definition that can be used in a variety of settings. Hoy and Miskel (2008) present organizational culture as a system of shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinctive identity. Furthermore, the varied descriptions all include the idea that there are shared concepts that are present in the organization. These concepts can be categorized into the norm, shared values, and basic assumptions and can be viewed from a leveled perspective (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). In a culture that is strong, the work that is done is clearly defined and intentionally implemented. A professional learning community is an example of work that is defined and implemented to strengthen the academic culture of a school. As school leaders work together with their staffs, they create goals for the school learning as a whole and for individual staff learning. A professional learning community (PLC) breeds collaboration, inquiry, and results (DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010).

Modifying organizational structure. Organizational structure must be adjusted to meet the needs of the school. Those adjustments are seen in the use of time, space, resources, and the operating procedures of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The structure becomes the framework by which people do their work. Different situations require different patterns of thinking. Organizational change must focus on increased student achievement. Effective organizational change must require that some time is spent analyzing what influences learning (Hattie, 2009). The development of a structural frame is defined by Bolman and Deal (2008) as

"a coherent set of ideas forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day" (p.43). The practices implemented for organizational change are most authentic when studying the key activities of school principals (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010).

Building collaborative processes/managing the environment. Educational leaders are creating collaborative, caring and supportive conditions which contribute to student achievement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011). These conditions must be established with a focus on the outcome, the environment, the ability of the employees and the available resources in order to impact change (Bolman & Deal, 2008). School leaders cannot develop these systems if they lack the capacity, skill, and experience to cultivate these environments. The New Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 function as an outline to create environments that lead to increased student achievement as they were developed with a stronger emphasis on students and student learning (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011).

School leaders must work intentionally to establish collaborative practices. These practices provide the opportunity to participate in decision making about the school and empower staff to work in professional learning communities (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Collaborative practices also lend itself to other stakeholders in the school community. Managing the environment involves parents, members of the community, local businesses, and even bodies of government partnering with school leaders to support the school. The implementation of collaborative processes within the school community and along with outside stakeholders create joint problem solving, data sharing and analysis, shared decision making, and some distributed leadership (Waldron & McLeskey, 2010). School leaders establish collaborative practices by

modeling, presenting and discussing data, being student-centered and ensuring coherence of a well-established plan.

These developmental needs are focused practices that are relevant for all school leaders with various levels of experience. The development and implementation of these practices together as opposed to in isolation help to link the connection between student learning and the school leader. The intentional development of these concepts strengthens the principal's ability to lead and develop others. These collaborative procedures build teamwork, help shape the mission and vision which ultimately shapes the school culture.

The next section of this review will address the remaining question presented in previous sections. Research supports that professional development for principals is important to increasing student achievement, but who holds the responsibility in school districts of planning, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of principal development? The work of supervisors will be highlighted and introductory information on a fairly new concept of principal supervisors will be provided, school districts have responded by creating and redefining the role of the supervisor. Principals bring a varied system of needs into their role as the building leader, so to address those needs a differentiated approach is also warranted.

Supervisors

Supervisors have a multitude of tasks that they are required to do. The following list is not all inclusive of the responsibilities of supervisors but gives some comprehension to their job; knowledge about the job duties, mentor, train, motivate, discipline, promote, and evaluate the people under their direct care (Greer, 2013). Supervisors are essential to the monitoring of safety measures, the vision and mission, and the continued growth of the company. An effective supervisor is one that displays some key characteristics: (a) trust, (b) positive influence, (c)

strong people skills, (d) vision, and (e) a problem solving (Greer, 2013). The right people must be selected for the job and the necessary tools and skills must be provided for them to be successful. Supervisors are responsible for developing employees to be leaders as well. Supervisors are often seen as role models for newly hired employees based on their interactions and observations (Filstad, 2004).

The role of the principal supervisor. The role of the principal supervisor has emerged as a popular title and notion throughout the field of PK-12 school leadership within the past several years. The Wallace Foundation has most notably pushed the conversation around the role of the principal supervisor using some influential works, *Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisor, Oct. 2013 and Make Room for the Principal Supervisors, Dec. 2013,* along with other national organizations; Educational Leadership Institute and the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel). While popular in name and verbiage, there is very little existent research available to help the field understand the role of principal supervisors in the development of school principals. This section takes the first small step towards a broader understanding of this role and the connection to the development of effective principals. As districts continue to initiate reform efforts, principal development matters even more in improving student achievement. Districts have historically left the responsibility for principals in the hands of the superintendent and based on the number of principals a district employs, this practice can be overwhelming for one person. The responsibility for evaluation and other needs of the principal may get scattered to other/multiple leaders in the district. We assume that school leadership is important, but know relatively little about who continues to develop the leader's post-college development program. Principal supervisors are emerging as a major support vehicle for building principals. They are defined as "individuals who directly oversee and/or

evaluate the performance of principals" (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2013). They include directors, executive directors, instructional superintendents, principal coaches, area leadership directors, and zone superintendents.

The work of Denver Public Schools is noted, as being one districts that is rethinking the job of principal supervisors and the critical work they do with schools (Gill, 2013). The need for principal supervisors has grown out of a host of factors. The district needs that include, but are not limited to, following up on division initiatives, being a part of principals' meetings, and leading professional development sessions designed for principals. As the varied demands on principals increase and as districts ramp up the role they play in implementing key initiatives—including college- and career-readiness standards, common-core-aligned assessments, and new teacher- and principal-evaluation systems, district leaders say who principals' bosses are and what they do in that job are critical (Superville, 2015); however, according to Gill (2013), instructional superintendents (as they are called in Denver) are needed to help reduce the span of control, or reducing the number of people that a supervisor manages. Although there may exist different titles, the responsibility remains the same, which is to support building principals in improving student achievement by developing instructional leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015).

Qualifications. Principal supervisors have a varied list of qualifications from district to district. The research is limited on what qualifications principal supervisors should possess; however, the Wallace Foundation Reported in 2013, that modifications and consistency in responsibilities, training and increased professional development was needed to bring clarity to this position (Superville, 2015). A clearly defined list of standards for principal supervisors is being developed equally to the standards that have been developed for principals. The selection

of principal supervisors and the professional development practices districts employ to build capacity in them, aids in creating the profile of the principal supervisor and the qualifications they possess.

Selection of principal supervisors is inconsistent throughout the school districts that employ them. Presently, retired principals who have led successful schools, principals who have led successful schools, and principals eyeing to be promoted are leading the people occupying these positions. Corcoran, Casserly, Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall, & Simon, (2013) reported in a survey that was conducted, 97% of principal supervisors had least two years of experience as a principal and 42% had over two years of experience as a principal coach or mentor. Although student progress was important in the selection criteria, "people who can build relationships and ask questions, highly respected by peers and we have known them since they were teachers and principals…." were also sincere factors in selecting principal supervisors (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 26). On the other hand, a range of research maintains a number of leadership skills to include in the selection criteria of principal supervisors. Instructional expertise, school management experience, collaboration, the ability of an expanded leadership role, prior work as a school leader, and building a strong instructional team synthesize those necessary traits (Corcoran et al., 2013; Superville, 2015; & Gill, 2013). Due to the brief existence of principal supervisors and the few districts throughout the nation that employs this resource, an imbalance of selection practices has also resulted in an imbalance of skill among principal supervisors hired for the job.

Professional development provided by the school district on a regular schedule has been essential in increasing the level of expertise held by the principal supervisor. Corcoran et al., (2013) displays six school districts and their methods of providing professional development. Implementation of professional development was delivered during weekly or bi-weekly group

meetings, through the use of private consultants and executive coaches, development institutes, and professional conferences. The research did not indulge one method of professional development over the other but supported that professional development is driven by specific need. The research lacked though how the professional development of principal supervisors provided a cohesive development system. The professional development may be disconnected from district initiatives and not helpful to the leadership of principals.

Responsibilities. Superville (2015) describes the main responsibility of the principal supervisor is to focus on improving principals' instructional practices by guiding, evaluating, and coaching school leaders. The parallel relationship that exists in the school gives more support to the responsibility of principal supervisors; for example, the student is developed by the teacher, the teacher is developed by the principal, and the responsibility of developing principals belongs to the principal supervisor. There is a responsibility to develop the expertise in adults as well as students. Districts that were already using principal supervisors in roles to monitor compliance have begun to make adjustments in the job responsibilities to focus on instruction.

Responsibilities may be categorized into short-, medium-, and long-range duties. In a report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, principal supervisors engaged in the following activities: 1) conversing with principals about student performance data, 2) visiting classrooms with principals, 3) conversing with principals about their performance, 4) conversing with principals about teacher performance, and 5) assisting principals in responding to issues raised by parents or community (Casserly et al., 2013). These responsibilities of principal supervisors are also echoed by Gill (2013) to include visiting principals every two weeks, observing classrooms, coaching principals through difficult decisions, and reviewing student data. The Duval County District in Jacksonville, Florida has joined in the work of principal supervisors as

well. They have changed the role to focus on instruction and alignment with district goals (Superville, 2015). These responsibilities fit into the short range as they are confined to one year of influence in the school setting.

Medium-range responsibilities include participating in principals' meetings, providing professional development to principals, and assisting principals in differentiating professional development for their staff. These responsibilities are designed to model activities for principals for continuation, long after the principal supervisor is no longer being used. Long-range responsibilities have much more of a lasting influence on the district, school, and school principal. These responsibilities may include participating in the hiring of principals and assisting principals in the hiring of teachers and staff. Further tasks include training for the district to prepare new principals. Other districts realize that principal supervisors will play multiple roles in an attempt to provide support to principals while also bridging the gap to the central office.

A break that begins to surface between providing support and central office responsibilities is less time with schools and "principal supervisors identifying more coaching time and fewer meetings as the top two categories of additional support they need to improve principal effectiveness and student achievement" (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 28). The principal supervisor can be a critical aspect of the principal's ability to lead well. If the principal supervisor moves from compliance and control to improving instructional leadership traits of the school principal, they could increase the effectiveness of the principal (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015); however, a weakly established school culture, where compliance and control are lacking coupled with a narrow focus on instructional leadership may result in ineffective or inconsistent leadership from the principal.

Measuring effectiveness. The newness of the concept of the principal supervisor is a barrier to measuring its effectiveness. Current research does not yet indicate clear and consistent standards by which to evaluate the effectiveness of the position or the persons occupying the positions. The usefulness can be measured at the surface level; however; as one benefit identified is improved communication on district initiatives. One belief evaluates principal supervisors on "how well they lead, direct and support principals" (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 33). Some new thoughts include using school gains in performance as part of the measure of effectiveness. In the study conducted by the Wallace Foundation, it is indicated that some evaluation practices are presently being piloted, but strong evidence does not exist to establish one proven practice.

Corcoran et al., (2013) revealed that principal supervisors may be evaluated using the same instruments currently used to evaluate principals, such as self-established goals, school progress, and client or principal surveys. Currently, there is no data showing a direct link between student achievement and any principal supervisor model implemented in school districts. The inconsistency of how to evaluate principal supervisors weakens the established need for this valuable resource; however, in 2015, the Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards were released to target the work of the principal supervisor and to begin to measure how effectively this group of people work with principals.

The standards include the following: (a) principal supervisors dedicate their time to helping principals grow as instructional leaders, (b) principal supervisors coach and support individual principals and engage in effective professional learning strategies to help principals grown as instructional leaders, (c) principal supervisors use evidence of principals' effectiveness to determine necessary improvements in principals' practice to foster a positive educational

environment that supports the diverse cultural and learning needs of students, (d) principal supervisors engage principals in the formal district principal evaluation process in ways that help them grow as instructional leaders, (e) principal supervisors advocate for and inform the coherence of organizational vision, policies and strategies to support schools and student learning, (f) principal supervisors assist the district in ensuring the community of schools with which they engage are culturally/socially responsive and have equitable access to resources necessary for the success of each student, (g) principal supervisors engage in their own development and continuous improvement to help principals grow as instructional leaders, and (h) principal supervisors lead strategic change that continuously elevates the performance of schools and sustains high-quality educational programs and opportunities across the district. These standards, if adopted regularly, have the potential to show a clear link between improved school leadership and improved student achievement (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015). The standards can provide additional benefits to include leadership training, recruitment, and selection of school principals and bring clarity to the role of the principal supervisor.

Summary

The work of the principal today is vastly different than a decade ago. Principals are expected to function as instructional leaders and ensure student achievement for all. Redish, et al., (2006) stated, "The role of the principal has been dramatically changed by school reform measures and a growing emphasis on increased achievement of all students especially in the context of No Child Left Behind Act" (pp. 283-284). Historically, accountability measures have always had a major role in the changing responsibilities of the principal. The increased accountability measures for student success have resulted in a need to reimagine the way principals are developed. The following questions: Who from the district will take the charge

and lead the development of the principals? On what concepts should principal development occur?

The research in this literature review was abundant in defining the developmental needs of principals. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) synthesized principles using broader categories, which include (a) setting direction, (b) developing people, and (c) developing the organization. These principles are not all inclusive but provide a basic foundation from which development may begin for principals. These principles began with setting direction which includes articulating a shared vision. A shared vision maintains coherence for all stakeholders. The principles then move into developing people. The most effective leader realizes that to develop people, attention must be given to their motivation and intellectual growth, as well as provision of an appropriate model. Leaders also spend time developing the organization which includes the culture, structures, collaborative practices, and management of the environment. These developmental needs, once established, become the basis for the common growth of all principals. The role of any supervisor is to develop and monitor those employees under his or her care. The Wallace Foundation has been leading the work related to principal supervisors. School districts that are using this method of development are supportive of a model that is non-evaluative but more aligned to coaching. The new Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards were released to target the work of the principal supervisor and to begin to measure how effectively this group of people work with principals.

An abundant amount of research on why the development of principals is important and on which concepts principals should receive development was presented in this study, along with new research on who could possibly accept the responsibility for growing principals. The challenges placed on K-12 principals are demanding. Schools need principals who are

adequately prepared to lead effectively and ensure student achievement. The tenets of adult learning theory assisted in understanding the validity of the methods used to develop principals.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if the research on the development of principals aligns with the reality of how principals are developed by the district in which they work. This general qualitative study that was informed by phenomenology captured the collective experiences shared by participants about their development. I pursued elementary school principals in a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region to determine what the principals feel should be included in effective development. In this chapter, I describe the techniques implemented in the study of the development provided to principals. Also included are the research questions, the research design, participant selection, the data collection process and a description of the data analysis.

Research Questions

The literature review presented information on why the development of principals is critical by investigating the change in their role that has occurred over the last few decades. It also addressed what identified concepts generated by previous research that principals need consistently developed, to be successful and what is the role of the supervisor in implementing and evaluating this development. Adult learning theory and andragogy theory were explored as well, to learn what must be present for adults to learn best. This study focused on determining if the research presented on principal development aligns with the reality of principal development implemented by school districts. The research design chosen will answer the following two major research questions:

1. What methods of development are being implemented to support elementary principals in a district in a state in the Mid-Atlantic region?
2. Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective?

Research Design

The research design was a general qualitative study informed by phenomenology. The goal of this study was to determine if elementary principals are developed in the district in which they are employed using best practices as documented by research. The theoretical constructs of this study are based on Adult Learning and Andragogy Theories. This study was conducted using individual interviews and a focus group. Figure 1.1 displays the design of the study.

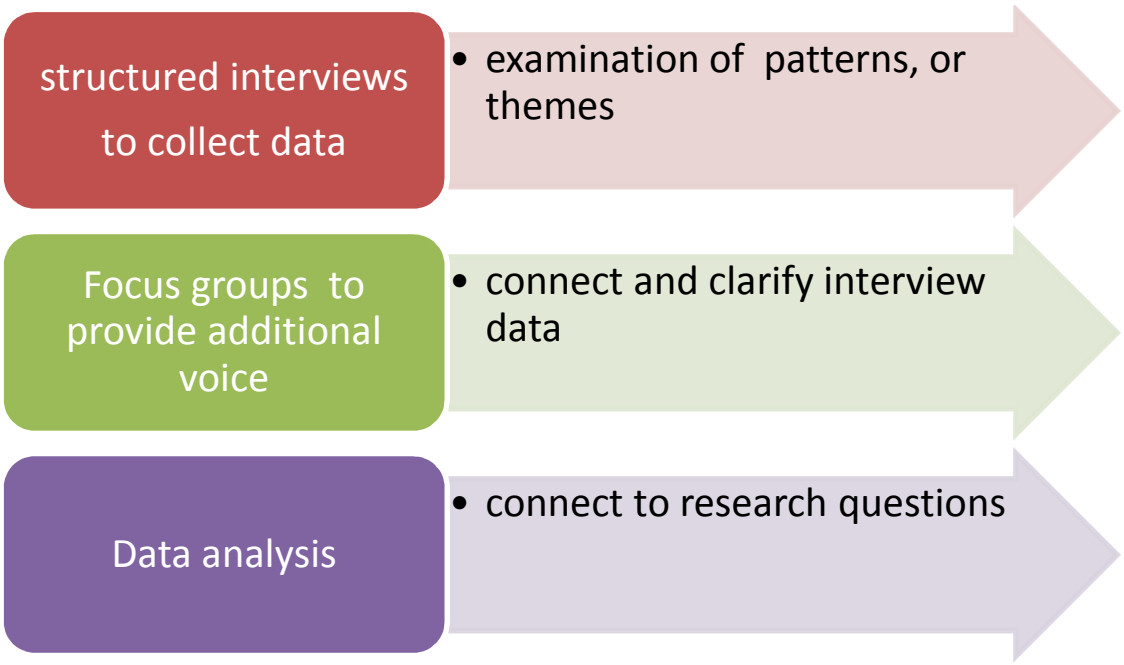

Figure 1.1

The purpose of this study was to seek to understand the experiences related to principal development in one school district. Creswell (2003) explains phenomenological research as; "research in which the researcher identifies the "essence" of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by the participants. An understanding of the lived experiences is

created through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meanings" (p. 15). This study aimed to determine and describe what development looks like through the eyes of the participants. A qualitative approach was selected to hear the voices of the participants as compared to a quantitative study which focuses on the impact of the experiences on the participants through their environment, conditions, and experiences (Harper, 2007). This framework supports the inductive process which allows the researcher to gather data and build theories into patterns and themes from being out in the field interacting with participants. (Creswell, 2009). I explored specific themes from the literature, specifically the conceptual framework (setting direction, developing people, and developing organization) and the theoretical framework of adult learning theory (Caffarella, 1993; Knowles, 1990, 1998; Merriam, 1993, 2008).

Participant Selection Criteria

Convenience sampling was utilized first to identify a district to take part in this research study. This form of sampling was chosen based on the location and availability of potential participants and also to establish quick contact with the potential study participants. Although convenience sampling was selected, the participants and their work were not known to me therefore, initial contacts in the participating school district were used to assist with identifying and selecting the potential participants. After initial participants were contacted, they were asked to recruit other participants for the study until 16 of the possible 18 participants were scheduled to take part. This technique is called snowball sampling. A total of 16 individual interviews and one focus group were held for the collection of data. Each participant is an elementary school principal with administrative experience ranging from one year to 14 years and represented various races, gender, and ages. The participants are all employed within the same school

district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region. As the research questions indicate an interest in determining the perception of principals around the most effective methods of development; elementary school principals were chosen as the participant group. The demographics of the sixteen principals who participated of the eighteen principals invited are included below.

Study participants.

1. Caucasian female, second year as a principal
2. African American female, second year as a principal
3. African American female, 6 years of experience
4. African-American female, 6 years of experience
5. African-American female, 4 years of experience
6. Caucasian female, 5 years of experience
7. Caucasian female, 4 years of experience
8. Caucasian female, second year as a principal
9. Caucasian female, 6 years of experience
10. Caucasian female, second year as a principal
11. African-American female, 6 years of experience
12. African-American female, 14 years of experience
13. Caucasian female, first year as a principal
14. African-American female, first year as a principal
15. Caucasian female, 10 years of experience
16. Caucasian male, 4 years of experience

This group of participants was assumed to be the most well informed regarding the development provided by the district in which they work and their perceptions of effectiveness were a vital part of the foundation of this study.

Procedures to Begin Study

This study was approved to be exempt to conduct human subjects' research, therefore, the process to begin in the selected school district was completed. The process for the selected district began with an online application. The application attachments had to include a summary of the study, the protocols for the interview and focus group, the study invitation and a copy of the exempt approval from the partnering university. Once the necessary paperwork was completed and submitted, an approval was received within 14 days.

Once the school district provided the approval to begin the study, I sent an email invitation to four elementary principals in the district where a previous relationship had been established. This invitation included the approval letter from the district's central office and an overview of the study. After agreeing to participate, interview protocols and a letter of consent were sent to each principal that responded. Those initial responders were also asked for other principals that they believed would be willing to participate and the process was repeated until each elementary principal in the district had received the invitation email. This snowballing sample was most effective as it resulted in 16 of the 18 total elementary principals responding and participating in the study. Phone calls and follow-up emails were made to establish the date and time to conduct interviews and the focus group.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this study encompassed interviews and a focus group conducted with the participants. This section will explain the procedure for each of the

collection methods. These methods align with qualitative collection approaches due to phenomenological studies seeking to describe the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The interview process and the focus group allowed for various responses and follow up questions from the open-ended questions that were asked. Prior to beginning the data collection process, all participants were asked to sign a letter of consent. They were explained the purpose of the study again, confidentiality criteria, their role, and the plan for how the data will be used.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person with each participant in their school office. They were scheduled to range in duration from 45 minutes to one hour, using a standardized interview guide (Patton, 2005). Participants were asked 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix B) to determine what methods of development for principals are being implemented in their district, which methods they perceive to be the most effective and any other concepts related to the development of school leaders. I reminded participants that their identifying information would be changed and that they could opt out of the study at any time. A separate file was created for each participant's data and experiences.

The recording of the interviews was completed using a digital recorder and a cell phone as a backup device. The recording was downloaded and saved into Microsoft Media Player. They were then transcribed and notes were taken to track data and discern patterns (Maxwell, 2013). Participants were emailed a transcribed copy of their interview to read, review and correct errors and misconceptions. The copies of all recordings were erased from both devices once the participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcribed interview.

All transcripts and documents were coded with all identifying descriptors removed. Results were reported in a manner that participants and the district cannot be identified. The data

is stored in an encrypted file and will be securely destroyed in five years. As stated previously, the questions were constructed to determine the effectiveness of principal development within the district in which they work. Also, how comparative the development is to current research on adult learning theory and the role of principal supervisors.

Focus Group

In order to further explore the questions posed by this study, I received consent from each participant to be a part of a focus group to obtain additional data if needed based on the analysis of data received from participant interviews. Once all data from the interviews were transcribed, a focus group with all participants was scheduled at one of the elementary school locations. The first focus group was canceled as only two participants arrived. The next focus group was held with four participants from the original group of elementary principals who were interviewed. The participants included the male principal with four years of experience, two African-American female principals with six years of experience and a Caucasian female in her first year as a principal. Time was allocated to read the focus group protocol aloud and to allow participants to ask questions to ensure a full understanding of their role. Members of the focus group all responded to the same five to eight follow up questions. The time for the focus group was scheduled for up to 90 minutes and was conducted in 60 minutes. The researcher recorded the focus group using a digital recorder and a cell phone as a backup device. Each participant was given a number to identify themselves when responding to a question. The recording was downloaded and saved into Microsoft Media Player. It was transcribed and notes were taken during the focus group to annotate the responses per participant. At the conclusion of the focus group, the participants were reminded that their responses will be kept confidential and that they

may clarify anything to ensure their voice was accurate. The audio was transcribed and the data coded to be compared with the responses/themes that emerged from the interviews.

Data Analysis

All data were analyzed in order to make connections between the methods and the research questions. This study followed Creswell's approach (2009) to data analysis, from organizing the data to interpreting the meaning and themes (see Figure 1.2).

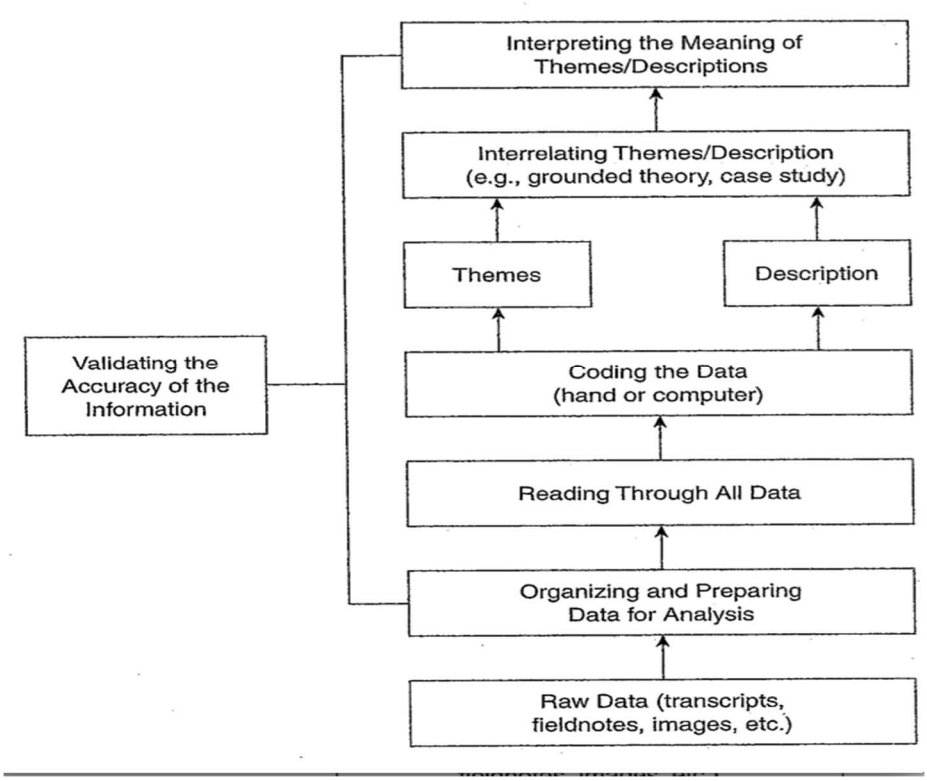

Figure 1.2. Creswell's data analysis in qualitative research. (Creswell, 2009, p. 185)

This approach involved all participant interviews and focus group data to be reviewed, organized, coded and triangulated. The data represented the comprehensive professional development for these elementary principals. The accuracy of their collective voices and experiences shared was essential to the research. The analysis process was complex and

repetitive to establish accuracy. Multiple attempts at how best to organize the data to be analyzed were started before a clear process emerged.

Interviews and the responses of the focus group were recorded and immediately transcribed. Member checking was employed before analysis began to check for any errors or incorrect information. The transcribed data was reread repeatedly to continue the process of highlighting statements and sentence parts that were then developed into clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2007). Using large poster paper and some sticky notes, the clusters of meaning were connected to buzz words and color-coded to show their relationship. Lastly, the clusters of meaning were then organized into themes and the developing themes were noted and recorded in a data notebook to keep all pertinent information in one, easily accessible place. This created the beginning list of themes. To safeguard the validity of the collected data, member checks were employed and a second person was used to review the coding of the data (Creswell, 2003).

Coding is the process of breaking data into parts that can be compared for similarities and differences for developing related categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The transcribed data was uploaded into the Dedoose data program, where categories were established. The data was then coded by this researcher into the pre-established categories to recognize themes. As the transcription was coded additional categories were included as needed. The coding of the data was continuous. In addition, to the Dedoose coding, I also read each individual transcript again and made handwritten notes so that a comparative analysis of the two systems could be done to establish cohesion.

The nature of analysis is a recurring process which was revisited as each data collection method was completed. Since, phenomenological research uses the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of an “essence” description

(Moustakas, 1994; as cited in Creswell, 2003, p.191) the triangulation of the data was most critical to the results of the study.

Data triangulation was ongoing. First, only two elementary principals declined the opportunity to participate in the study. The rate of participation was 89 percent based on the sixteen of the eligible eighteen participants. The high rate of participation assisted in the high levels of repeat information from the participants which in turn supports the validity of the information. The in-depth interviews, the follow up focus group and coding in Dedoose resulted in consistent information that was coordinated into the emergence of three major themes.

Confidentiality of Participants

To protect the anonymity of the participants, any and all data from the interviews and focus groups were de-identified immediately upon collection. A key was created and stored on an external drive and kept separate from the de-identified data locked in a safe in the researcher's home office. Basic pseudonyms were created and utilized for the names of all participants. All references to school districts, names of schools or colleges and universities were replaced as well. Researcher memos were created without identifying information and stored using Dedoose software which will be kept on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected. Back up files will be maintained for all data and will be kept in an electronic file under a password only known by the researcher. Any identifiers connected to the data will be kept for one year after the study is completed then destroyed.

Validity/Role of the Researcher

Creswell (1998) suggests that ensuring data verification, trustworthiness and credibility is the most important facet of data analysis. I used multiple data collection methods to include personal interviews and a focus group. I also implemented member checking by the participants

after the transcription of their interview. Lastly, I worked closely with a colleague who has had recent and successful experience with qualitative data collection to follow the outline of my work to confirm the validity of my research.

I treated each participant as a professional and was conscious of the time that I took them away from their daily responsibilities. I traveled to their location, to minimize the intrusion on their day. Also, I reiterated with each principal that their identities would remain confidential so that they were free, to be honest, and feel comfortable during the process. I was not familiar with any practices or procedures in this district so my assumptions were held to a minimum.

This study is relevant to me professionally, as I was previously a school principal for nine years and participated in my own professional development activities. Currently, I am responsible for the development of school principals and believe that they must be equipped to lead schools to be effective. This research will provide me with feedback that will influence the professional development that I plan, organize and deliver to the principals that I supervise. I also hope this research will accurately and adequately represent the principals' beliefs about effective professional development that meets their needs.

Summary

This study was conducted to assess the development of elementary principals. The focus was to specifically determine if the research on the development of principals aligned with the reality of how principals are developed by the district in which they work. The sixteen elementary principals made up the participant group from a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region. Once approval of the study was gained, primary contact was made with four principals to begin the data collection process. Snowball sampling was used to recruit remaining participants. All principals were contacted by email and phone to gain their consent to

participate. Once all interviews and the focus group were completed, the data was prepared to be analyzed. Member fact-checking by the participants and working closely with a colleague who has recently completed her doctoral degree helped to increase validity and reduce researcher bias. Creswell's approach to data analysis (2009) was implemented from organizing, coding and interpreting the themes that developed. The findings and interpretation of the collected data are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY FINDINGS

Overview

The researcher explored the perceptions of elementary principals related to the professional development received by the district in which they work. I studied one district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region to determine what 18 elementary principals feel should be a part of effective development. The outcomes that materialized as a result of the data analysis are described in depth in this chapter. This study involved the following two research questions examined through individual interviews and a focus group, both of which involved open-ended questions: What approaches to development are being implemented to support elementary principals in a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region? Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective? In this chapter, I discussed the findings that emerged from the shared experiences of the participants. Using a qualitative approach that was informed by phenomenology, three primary themes emerged and were explored in these findings.

Discussion of the Findings

Sixteen elementary school principals agreed to participate in the study from a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region. The participants all served as assistant principals before becoming principals and over half of them served as summer administrators either at a school site or as the overall coordinator of multiple sites. Additionally, eight of these participants also took part in series of professional learning activities for aspiring administrators. The intended goal of this study was to determine how the development of elementary school principals aligns

with the research on adult learning theory and the role of the principal supervisor. I shared the context, findings, and discussion of this study by interpreting the voices of the participants.

Three primary themes emerged after an analysis of the data (1) Early Inclination, (2) The Development Blueprint, and (3) Shared Accountability. All of the participants experienced the themes at different levels, which were explored in detail in this chapter. The first theme, Early Inclination was the most prevailing and set the tone for participants to share their experiences. Two subthemes occurred during analysis of this theme; relationship-based connections and inner voice. These subthemes further supported the participants' voice and shared experiences. The second theme, The Development Blueprint was the most inconsistent. The three subthemes that emerged here included the approach to development the district implemented, the method of delivery of development and the feedback pursued once development was completed. This theme displayed a variety of responses from participants. The third theme, Shared Accountability offered a glimpse into teamwork and how this district provided the needed development and who was included in providing the development.

Theme 1: Early Inclination

The descriptions shared by the participants led to the development of the themes; however, early inclination appeared to be the most personal of all shared. The researcher asked each participant to share how they got into education and became a principal. The purpose and intent of the question was to make the participants feel comfortable by sharing information about themselves that would be easy to answer and to help establish a professional rapport with each principal. As they shared professional institutions they attended and the route taken to become an administrator, an interesting pattern began to develop. Twelve of the 16 participants began to make references to who or what they felt was responsible for their interest in education. They

told personal stories with expression, laughter at recalling earlier memories and some sadness when including persons who have since died. The two subthemes that developed; relationship-based connections and inner voice, guided the shared stories presented in this first theme.

Through the individual interviews, the participants expanded on how these subthemes lead them to be inspired/motivated to become an educator. Participants articulated connections to other people which included school relationships, and rich family histories; while others struggled to describe an inner calling or a "born to lead" connection that led them to their current position. The recollections told ranged between 10 to 30 years old but were retold as if they were more recent, thus adding an increased level of credibility to the influence on the participants based on established relationships.

Relationship-based connections. The researcher considered further analysis of the early inclination into education that was shared by the participants. The analysis involved the grouping of similar memories and descriptions to show how the participants viewed the relationships that were established. The relationship-based connection was the most dominant and consistent subtheme that appeared based on the interviews and focus group, accounting for eight of the 12 possible reflections. The participants were forthcoming and openly shared the impact of these relationships on their professional lives. The participants shared descriptions of school-based relationships and family history that impacted their decision to follow an educational career path. The participants expressed a sense of pride and fulfillment while sharing their individual experiences. The stories shared about former principals, teachers and other school-based staff displayed an admiration and even an open statement by *Principal Barbara*, "I wanted to be like my teachers." She explicitly went on to explain this connection to

teachers in middle and high school, where students generally are not as eager to develop relationships with school staff. She stated,

> I had some good teachers and I wanted to be like my teachers, especially when I was in high school. I had one teacher that was with me when I was in junior high school, an English teacher, and she also was my high school English teacher, she moved up. I should have changed my mind right then because she was strict and she was tough, but I really loved her. And then my high school senior English teacher was good, so I fell in love with them, which made me want to follow in their footsteps. So when I went to the University I majored in Education.

A different school connection to highlight that is further supported by *Principal Margaret,* who categorized herself within a group of educators who work in the schools they attended as children. The phenomenon of teachers who return to the city/town where they grew up after college and secure a position in a school they once attended occurs often. They immediately have some already established relationships with former teachers/now colleagues and/or administrators that have remained at the school. A portion of her recollection explained,

> I am one of those, I went to this school, and this is actually the school I went to when I was little. And I have a distinct memory in second grade with my second-grade teachers, there was just like a moment where I knew that that was what I wanted to do. So it wasn't for me something I decided later on in life, it was just kind of a path that I took. So throughout school, you know, Middle School, High School, I was always in Girl Scouts, Key Club and anything I could work with kids. You know, that was just always my goal. So when I went to college I knew

> what I wanted to do, went straight, you know, started right off the bat and then came back to this town because I wanted to stay in this town.

Principal Opal agreed,

> It just really was a natural progression for me. I actually taught in the school that I attended as a student.

These shared memories signaled how the power of relationships within the school, inspired many of the participants to choose education even before they were sure of their future plans. Also, a strong sense of security appears to have been developed through these relationships that encouraged participants to return to their hometown and work in the school where they attended. Despite the prevalence of the influence of relationships, participants did not include if any measures had been taken by the district to use the relationship connection as a bridge to recruit future educators from local high schools and/or universities.

The relationships shared by participants were not limited to former teachers, administrators, or other staff within the school walls, but also included rich family histories as well. The participants reflected on how the support and influence from familial educators impacted their decision to follow a similar path. Several of the participants shared a family history of educators, one that even dated back to the early 1900s. The participants eagerly and often comically shared stories about their family links to education. An even smaller pattern coincidentally emerged of participants whose mothers specifically were educators and inspired them to continue the tradition. Noted in the recollections, a contrast existed between agreement with the family encouragement to enter education and some resistance of the same encouragement. *Principal Evans* smiled broadly as she shared the memories of her mother and how she guided her into this field;

> I really laugh and joke, but I'd say I was forced into education because my mother was a principal of a preschool in another state, so, you know, I have two younger sisters so I've always had kids. My part-time job was babysitting, my, you know, my part-time job when I got to college was working in a daycare. I often worked in my mom's daycare. So I've always been around kids and it's something that I love. My father wasn't real pleased because he wanted me to go into computer science and after I failed those two math classes we said, yeah, education is going to be it.

In contrast, *Principal Opal* fought against the family encouragement until the passing of a beloved family member led her to honor them through her educational career choice. At least three other participants described subtle guidance received from their maternal family members who also endured long careers in education. *Principal Paul* shared, "So it actually started with family. My mother was a teacher and so I just had a lot of experiences with her talking about the classroom. It was interesting." *Principal Anderson* and *Principal Caroline* agreed and also shared their personal experiences about their mother and grandmother who were educators and also allowed their children to experience time in the classroom with them as they were growing up. *Principal Anderson* stated,

> Okay, so education, that all stemmed from high school. My mom was a special education teacher assistant, so I started volunteering at her elementary school. And the principal came in and asked me if I would like to visit any other classrooms? And I started working and volunteering in a first-grade classroom, fell in love with it and that's where I got on the path on becoming an educator.

*Principal Laws*on provides the final display of the pride heard in the voice of all of the participants as their extensive family history in education were shared. Her history included educators that spanned generations and included slavery, emancipation and numerous siblings who attended college and majored in education.

> My grandfather was the first one who started at State University and he was the first black to go and he became a teacher. And he came back and taught in a one-room schoolhouse in the Community of Miller, State in the early -- in late 1800, 1900's. As a matter of fact, he taught my mother's mom. He taught my maternal grandmother. So that kind of got my appetite wet knowing that we had --you know, so all my dad's siblings from State, that's where they're from, there was nine of them, they all went to State or they all went into education, so I kind of continued it. And my dad thought it was important for us to do the same thing.

One discrepancy to note was the combination of family influence and the presence of an "inner voice" in the recollection *Principal Caroline* shared.

> I think I've always wanted to be a teacher per se. I played teacher, all my dolls set up for a classroom, and my comic books were their workbooks. My grandmother was a kindergarten teacher so I think that had a major influence.

Although she aligned with the other participants on the influence from her family, she was also the only participant who also included the thought, of always wanting to be a teacher as well. Her recollection could be included in both themes, but to protect the validity of the study, I only included it in one area. In this recollection, as shared in others, the sense of pride the participant conveyed was best captured in tone and voice inflection while she described her grandmother.

Throughout the interview process, as participants shared the stories and recollections that eventually developed into this theme, the climate of the interviews was light and open. All participants were comfortable and relaxed and many were interested in how their colleagues responded to the questions. It was apparent to me that the deep connections that were developed with former teachers, and administrators, the teaching and leading in the school attended as a child and the influence of family members who were also educators were points of pride shared from the participants. The recollections involving the family history of educators seemed to strongly steer those participants to further their education to become administrators and beyond. Furthermore, what was most noted was the power of relationships in the decision-making process and will be discussed further during the implications for practice section of this paper.

Inner Voice

After the analysis of the data from the interviews and focus group and the development of the first subtheme, this second subtheme almost lingered unnoticed. The responses that supported the first subtheme of relationship-based connections accounted for the reactions of eight of 12 participants. I explored the responses of the other four remaining participants to determine if they were relevant, related, or random. The investigation did reveal a related and relevant connection of the responses of the remaining participants that were categorized under the title of an inner voice. In this section, the subtheme of inner voice will be examined by listening to the words of the participants and finding applicable connections.

The participants that spoke of a pull towards education were vague in their descriptions. They repeated phrases that included, “I just knew” and “I guess I always wanted to make an impact” without being able to provide more details. Although vague, the responses all leaned toward having an inner understanding or “voice” that lead their career choice to that of education

from a very young age. I then began to question the concept of a "born or natural leader" to compare what the participants were describing. *Principal Jones* shared,

> I taught in kindergarten, second grade, and third grade and I guess I just always wanted to make an impact in somebody's life -- in somebody's life, you know, whether that be a child's life or a parent's life or even teachers.

Principal Kennedy also shared,

> You know, playing with dolls and all. So I went from trying to play the doctor/nurse to being the teacher. So it really was just an interest of mine as a young child.

The notion of being born with leadership qualities did not appear to completely align with the shared thoughts of the participants. With that in mind, I applied the idea of "being called to teach" to look for similarities to these references made by the participants.

Principal Hayes stated,

> Well, I guess it's one of those things, I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I didn't always know that I would be in an administrative role, but like third grade, there was a talent show and they ask you what do you want to be when you grow up? And I said I wanted to be a teacher. And that just kind of always stuck. And so it's one of those things I always knew.

The concept of "feeling strongly that you should do something", appears to better align with the descriptions the participants provided compared to the idea of a "born or natural leader" The feeling of "being called to teach" gives the impression that the phrases, "I just knew" and "I guess I always wanted to make an impact", are real and may not be as easy for the participants to explain or provide further details.

What emerged as a finding here from the shared experiences of the participants was a strong desire to educate children with or without an understanding of why or without a specific name or theory attached to the why. The interviews revealed the responsibility the participants felt they had to stay committed to their "inner voice" since it has been with them for all or most of their lives. None of the data analysis, review of notes, or shared stories from participants revealed any regret or "second thoughts" about the chosen career path. These findings also indicate some evidence of internal and external motivation among the participants.

The external motivation of the participants was supported by their expressed belief and commitment to familial and collegial relationships. The participants repeatedly revealed how these relationships shaped their belief systems, their work ethic, and ultimately their decision to become an administrator. The internal motivation of the participants found a home in service to others. The participants shared, as many in education do that their desire to make a difference and to inspire others fueled their interest in education. The "others" that are mentioned are students, families and the faculty that ultimately work alongside them. Participants were not always clear on "why" the motivation was there but they were always clear on "what" the motivation was grounded in; which was to make to impact the lives of children.

Theme 2: The Blueprint for Development

The second theme was formed from the recollections the participants shared on the professional development received within the last two years in their school district. This theme specifically examines the design of the development to include three subthemes; what approach to development was used, the methods used to deliver the development, and the opportunity to provide feedback after implementation of the development. This theme overall can be described as conflicting. Early in the analysis, it appeared to be the most consistent among the responses

received by the participants especially in the subthemes of approach and method. The responses in these two areas were most evenly answered. Feedback, however, was by far the subtheme that was extremely inconsistent among all of the participants. The responses here ranged from always to never but participants shared a collective understanding of the value of feedback. This theme based on the responses of the participants was underutilized by the division leaders and will be explained in more detail in a later section of this study.

The approach. All of the participants agreed on the leading approach to professional development designed to facilitate their learning during the past two years was the use of specific books or book studies. The book studies were frequently paired with consultants of the studied practice and/or the authors of the chosen books, who served as a supportive resource. Participants described the pattern of the two pieces being paired together as part of a "cycle of development". The perspective from the majority of the participants expressed a belief that the district's professional development alignment had improved, as a "thinning out" of the focus of professional development had begun to take place. However, some participants indicated some difficulties in sifting through the layers of work involved in the book study approach, the timing of the development and what really are the perceived benefits associated with the work. The researcher was unable to determine if the difficulties experienced were based on the chosen book or the practices to be implemented to align with the school district's vision.

Principal Ireland shared how the district has remained consistent in collaboration with book authors;

> So when PLCs came in they brought the authors here. When Leadership 101(book) came in, they brought the author of Leadership 101(book) here and had

> him train us. So sometimes they bring in the big guns and sometimes they look at the people, but it's usually different people along the way.

The majority of the participants shared that the book studies were a vital way for them to practice implementing information learned in a concise way. *Principal Green* summed up the last two years of the book study development by stating,

> We'll go two calendar years. We did Leadership 202 (book), which is some of Dr. Bell's work, my second year as a principal. And so that was all about developing me as a coach for teachers rather than just being evaluative and I found that very meaningful and worthwhile experience, and that was a yearlong month-by-month effort of building our efficacy in that coaching experience. And now this year, we're being developed under what's called Leadership 101(book), if you've heard of that, I'm sure you have from my colleagues by now.

Another participant*, Principal Day* specifically shared how the book studies have helped to assist in developing her instructional leadership skills.

> The current and most recent professional development we have been participating in is the Leadership 101(book) professional development. In which it takes a coaching perspective to really take back that lead as the instructional leader in the building and have a focus on what -- what are we truly here to do? And keeping ourselves dedicated to time management, organization, structure, and focus and not being deterred from the end goal. And so it's been really beneficial with that using that particular model to protect my time and what I need to do as well as make sure everyone else is doing what they're supposed to be doing.

She continued to explain how the work from the book study is organized to maximize her learning during their monthly principal time of development.

> I take the model of the gradual release. Even for me as an adult I like the presentations that are given to me in an, okay, let me show you how it should be done, then let's practice it together, I'll give you some feedback, and then you go and do it and then we get back together and move from there. So those types of professional developments for me have been most beneficial because I get a clear understanding of what should be done, what the end result should be and what the expectation of me in order to meet that end result is with someone giving me that feedback and very consistent without time gaps in presentations, that works best for me.

Principal Freeman further supports the use of book studies and described how it fit into her specific learning style**,**

> I like the onsite together type pieces. I like a smaller group, that's just my comfort zone. I like theory and it's, you know, backed up by research, you know, that helps, but I want to see it in action. And so being able to kind of -- and I think that's where, you know, that Leadership 101(book) fits, I really did enjoy because, this is what we do, this is why we do it, now watch a video of it, now practice it. You know, so that was kind of meaningful with that.

Further analysis of responses revealed a group of participants who were still grappling with how to implement and gain meaning from the work of the book studies. *Principal Paul* shared his perspective,

> Well, really I will say Leadership 101(book) has been a big piece of my life the last six months or so, I'm really trying to dive into what the looks like and there's also a second book that he has the Leadership 102 series so that's been a big piece that I've tried to understand. I'm really big on the effort piece that I talked about so I'm kind of learning about the how

Principal Paul also begins to slightly hint in his comments that not everyone is gaining the same benefit from this approach and additionally *Principal Evans* shares a similar assessment of the benefits of the book study approach,

> Well, I can describe the most recent which has been Leadership 101(book). That's the most recent. I think it's very rich work from what I'm understanding, but there's just so many layers to what that looks like and the actual practical implementation of what that looks like based on the building's needs.

The responses began to show some inconsistency in the beliefs of the effectiveness of the book study approach to development or perhaps the content of the chosen book was where the inconsistency should be sited; however, the participants did not distinguish between the two areas. At least one of the participants felt the timing of when the development was introduced played a part in how well they could learn through the book study approach. *Principal Evans* stated,

> I just think the timing of things is kind of off. Like the Leadership 101(book), I think is good, but we -- we come to a place for two days all day, we listen to this presenter and then you say go back to the building and do this. Okay, I still don't kind of know what the this is, you know what I mean? And I feel, you know, we have sessions and it's as we continue to go on with Leadership 101(book) we'll --

> we'll, you know, the next session is going to be -- okay, but you're telling me I need to be doing this now, there's a disconnect. So just the timing of it, you know. If we're going to start it or introduce it, can we introduce it in the spring and then carry it over through the summer since we're twelve month employees anyway, and then expect by September to start to roll some of that out and let me get some practical application with it maybe in the spring and then really dig deeper into it in the beginning of the year.

The participants all agreed book studies was the consistent approach to development carried out within the last two years. However, contradictions existed in the implementation and benefits of this technique. The finding that materialized here is the lack of participation that was noted as missing from the participants. The researcher was unable to find any patterns or connections in the responses to indicate that the participants had any input into selecting the books, or making suggestions for other books to be included. Furthermore, no evidence existed to show that the participants were involved in the planning of the development which could account for some lack of buy-in from the participants.

Delivery method. School level team (SLT) meetings for principals were stated by all of the participants as the dominant method of delivery for professional development. This method of delivery is described as a face to face professional learning opportunity for building principals that occurs in one of two locations once each month. The time is composed of two distinct pieces. The first portion of the meeting includes members of the division's leadership team working collaboratively with the elementary principals on professional learning activities which is how the School Level Team (SLT) acquired its name. The second portion of the professional learning is combined for all district leaders and also includes administrators from the high

schools and middle schools as well to begin part two with more of a division-wide focus. Although, participants did mention attending curriculum sessions with teachers on a voluntary basis they were clear in stating this was the only "organized professional development for principals". This method was used consistently each month and has only recently been implemented as a change to the "usual" principal meetings within the last two years. *Principal Lawson* stated, "so they've turned our principals' meetings into not just a sit and get, it's more of a collaborative time." This subtheme did not indicate the contradictions shared in the previous subtheme. The participants referenced school level team(SLT) meetings as a much-needed change to the method formerly utilized. *Principal Paul* shared,

> And those SLT meetings even though they're once a month, especially the hour and a half, the SLT timeframe of it is a pretty good discussion dialogue with your peers that you don't normally get, you know, when you're in your own building.

Principal Hayes also said how she has seen a change in the direction of the meeting by implementing the School Level Team method as their monthly meeting for the principals.

> This year I feel like and last year the meetings have gone a little bit differently as far as leadership meetings, our division-wide principal meetings, like we have one tomorrow and there's more time for us to SLT together as opposed to just being told and given new information every time, and that's been helpful because sometimes you need to just process something and do something for a while before you learn and try and implement something new. So when we have our principal meetings about once a month, there is something related to leadership or sometimes it can be curriculum, like last time they did go over a reading lesson.

Principal Freeman agreed and also shared how that time together could be even more effective.

> I think SLTs are more successful when we come with a thought process in mind; we're prepared to have that dialogue. So sometimes I think we sit down at the table and you hear who can brag the most when that's not going to help us grow together if we can't admit, you know, where we have weakness and we need to learn how to do that. And we have the best structure right there to do that!

This researcher included follow up questioning about further development to find some variety in delivery, however a pattern with participants that had three years of experience or less developed. First, one of the two principals *(Principal Margaret)* that is currently in her first year of experience shared "And I don't get anything specific to me just because I'm first year." Further probing with *Principal Nelson*, who is also experiencing her first year as principal resulted in her stating the following,

> "I have a mentor. So if I need anything I can always contact her, but there haven't been any like first-year principal seminars or sessions just for us. So there hasn't been anything along that lines to, you know, guide us any differently than anyone else."

Additional probing with principals Anderson, Barbara and Hayes, who were all completing the second year as elementary principals, was explored. I consistently looked for any noted differences in the development of novice principals throughout this study; however, no outliers were eminent and no differentiated approaches were reported that set apart any groups of principals or schools.

The development method used in this district is relegated to one; however, the stories collected from the participants supported the perspective that this School Level Team (SLT) model was an effective system. This system as reported by the participants was always the same with equal amounts of time given to both portions. The place and time also remained the same as no opportunity was provided for sessions to occur in actual school buildings, or to occur more than once a month. This delivery method does not appear to align with any research on effective practices of professional development and will be expanded in a later section of the study.

Feedback. The last subtheme to complete the blueprint for development category was the notion of feedback. Fourteen of the fifteen participants questioned, related that feedback is sought after development is implemented. This indicated the beginning of a strong consistency among the participants in terms of feedback. However, as I asked for more specificity, the participants began to differ in extremes in their responses. This subtheme recorded the largest indication of contradictions among participants. The extent of the language used by some participants included “every”, “sometimes”, and “rarely” when asked by the researcher, how is feedback on development sessions gathered from the participants? The intent and purpose of the question was to determine if participants were involved in designing their own professional development in any way. Participant responses ranged from readily sharing their experiences finalizing surveys and completing exit tickets to not giving any feedback at all. This subtheme was particularly conflicting due to the varied responses received.

Principal Anderson began with the following response when asked how is feedback gathered,

> "But I'm trying to think, like, okay, we had our monthly SLT, did we have a survey to fill out or an exit ticket to fill out? And I think maybe at one we had a plus, or a Delta, you know, something like that, but not consistent."

At least one participant tried to use feedback interchangeably with asking questions. *Principal Barbara* stated,

> Because Kim is always saying, please provide feedback on anything. So we can provide feedback on something. And I have to give it to her, if it's something that is troubling, we don't know or we need to know more about, I can honestly send an e-mail or a text or pick up the phone and somebody is right here to clarify it. So that I can honestly say, they never ignore you and no question is a bad question for them.

Upon receiving this answer, I asked a follow-up question to clarify, so you feel like when you give feedback it's used in a certain way? To which *Principal Barbara* answered, "I have never given feedback, so I can't honestly answer that question." In contrast**,** *Principal Day* described the following as her experience with feedback,

> We have surveys for everything. So after every PD session, we're required to do a survey whether it's digital or paper copy. And they do listen to our feedback about professional development because if there's something that we all don't think is beneficial then we get things that we need.

The inconsistencies presented based on the responses, led me to reexamine the data in search of an indication of any misunderstanding by the participants of the question being asked. Finding none, the responses led to an inference that a gap in regular and reliable feedback practices may exist. All participants displayed an understanding of the significance of feedback

but as a group did not convey that the district shared in that significance. Inconsistency remained the major depiction of this subtheme even as it related to how the participants felt when feedback was collected. *Principal Freeman* shared that if the development was focused on something specific, then they may be asked to provide feedback.

> Some sessions that are very focused on a particular piece just one piece in mind, we might have that little exit ticket piece whether we reflect or we give input. At the end of the year that's when we kind of said, okay, what is it that we're looking for in growth and that was kind of when they collected that.

Principal Ireland supported the inconsistencies already shared by including "some people" and "sometimes" when referring to her memories of feedback on development.

> There are some people that sometimes ask for us to give feedback in terms of, I mean, we've been to professional development where they've asked us to give feedback on an evaluation form.

Principal Nelson, who is one of two first-year principals in this district summarized the feelings of herself and fellow participants about the development received and why the need for feedback is there.

> And I've seen a lot of PD come and go. Right now I think we're getting on a better track with the PD. Even though the last one was a lot of sit and get. It's usually not a lot of sit and get. it's more -- before we would go and the whole PD would be just X, Y, Z, 1, 2, 3, this time they're breaking up a little bit of Language Arts, a little bit evaluation, a little bit of, you know. So I think we are getting on a better track, but I would like for them to at least give us a survey at the end just to see how we feel and make sure that, you know, a lot of people

> aren't going to say anything because they're name's attached. You know, we're not going to say anything with our name attached. We're not able to speak freely with our name attached. But some type of surveys or something just to find out how we feel about it, our comfort level with things. Because there could be some things that even myself, like, I want to know some answers to, but I don't want to ask because I feel like, you don't know that? They're going to say, you don't know that?

The findings here point toward a deficit in establishing and implementing effective practices as it relates to all aspects of feedback. Participants attending the same professional development sessions, shared vastly different experiences, feelings and even procedures that should possess more commonalities. Findings also show a lack of input from participants on their own development based on the inconsistency of collecting and utilizing the feedback once received. This theme provided a surplus of inconsistencies among the participants' responses. In this district the responses of the participants concluded, there was only one type of development implemented for principals, one method used, and a missed opportunity to collect feedback.

Theme 3: Shared Accountability

The appearance of a shared system arose as the roadmap for the planning and delivery of the development based on the responses of the participants. Shared accountability in education is often viewed as an effective way to "share" in the responsibility of building capacity, developing others and achieving an established mission and vision. The analysis of the data indicated that 100% of the participants listed the names of numerous central office staff as being involved in the planning and delivery of professional development sessions for principals.

Although a team approach to development is an effective current practice, the responses from participants were scarce on specificity. Participants appeared unsure of names, titles and even job responsibilities of persons they listed. To clarify, they did not answer that they were "unsure" of who participated and provided the development, however, the language the participants used could be classified as uncertain. "I assume" or, "I think" were the most commonly used phrases when trying to determine from the participants who provided input into designing and implementing their development. Furthermore, when asked explicitly, about the development for leaders, the Superintendent of schools was included and even more, names were shared. Consistency was present in this theme, however, defined roles and details were not. *Principal Hayes* struggled with remembering the title of the person; she thought was responsible for the planning;

> Mary Davis, which I'm trying – I'm struggling trying to find her title, but she's in Professional Development.

While *Principal Opal* included the authors from the book studies that were mentioned in Theme 2; as people who provided development as well;

> Our Executive Directors and some of the curriculum leaders and actually, you know, the author of the book.

Principal Evans, who consistently expressed thoughts that were conversely opposite to what other participants shared, goes on to explain who she believes was involved in planning the development for principals;

> I couldn't tell you. I would assume the curriculum leaders, but I would assume the Executive Director, the Central Office Team, that's just my assumption.

> For the Leadership 101(book) we had somebody come in from the outside, but we haven't seen him since.

Even *Principal Paul* had some ambiguity in expressing who he believed was responsible for development;

> Well, I don't know if I've ever really been told, but I'm going to assume that it's our Executive Directors are a big part of that. We have, you know, the curriculum leaders, I would assume have some, depending on the curriculum you're talking about, then we have, I forget her title, but Kari Weathers, she works a lot with our professional development so her role, I'm assuming, and of course the Superintendent, but I'm assuming that think tank kind of gets together and, you know, starts to work on the agendas for these sessions.

I attempted to make clear to the participants that the questions about development were all related to principal development and not teacher development. Although multiple responses included curriculum leaders as facilitators of the leadership specific development, the clarification did not change the responses the participants had given. *Principal Green shared*,

> I think it's the Superintendent's cabinet of folks who he is talking with all the time, which would be your grade level curriculum leaders, you know, division leadership team to include, you know, my boss, Dr. Oscar, and you know, all those people who are making curriculum decisions, they're also making leadership decisions and development decisions.

In addition to these factors, I also separately considered the development of participants who were beginning their first year as a principal. It is not uncommon for that group of

participants to have a differentiated experience in development by varying frequency, content, or level of support provided. *Principal Margaret* who began her first year with the 2016-2017 school year was asked by the researcher if she received leadership specific development as a first-year principal, to which she replied, "I don't get anything specific to me just because I'm first year." Additionally, she continued to discuss the support she receives.

> Other than I was given, myself and *Principal Nelson* were given a, I don't want to mess her role up, TSIS, I think is what they coin her. She's like, I can't remember all of those words. But she was assigned to us. She kind of goes elsewhere and does walkthroughs and things like that, but I've really kind of taken her on. When, my executive director introduced her, she was pretty much, this is your mentor, your sounding board, you know, your person.

I asked follow up questions that related to how much time is spent with the TSIS and is their work evaluative to gain more understanding of the role of the TSIS. *Principal Margaret* continued to share;

> So she's here roughly two days a week. I can show you my phone, we've been texting all day because, you know, I'll shoot her messages like, hey, give me feedback on this. So she's kind of my person right now –who I go to. She's not evaluative, so she's just purely give me your thoughts. She asks me questions and you know, we kind of have---I don't know if I would have made it without her so far. But she's just a good resource for me.

Principal Nelson who also began her first year with the 2016-2017 school year agreed and shared,

> I have a mentor. So if I need anything I can always contact her, but there haven't been any like first-year principal seminars or sessions just for us. Actually, it's only two new principals. So there hasn't been anything along that lines too, you know, guide us any differently than anyone else.

The findings here show the participants were most consistent in naming all central office leaders as the responsible structure for principal development, but did not specifically designate any one person or group over the other in reference to leadership specific development. Nevertheless, when asked about subject-specific development (reading, math, science, and history) for their teachers, the curriculum leaders were named without hesitation. The participants were able to readily speak of resources, professional development sessions, topics, and locations when making reference to the availability of development for the teachers in their buildings. However, when engaged in similar discussion related to their very own development, participants were grasping at straws to define those same categories that they were so readily able to share about teachers. The participants could also not communicate what factors or data points led the Central Office Team's (COT) decision on presentation topics or principal need as the shared accountability structure did not include the actual participants.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate and provide new information centered on the development of elementary school principals. The focus was specifically to determine if the research on the development of principals aligns with the reality of how principals are being developed by the district in which they work. This chapter presented findings of 16 elementary principals from one district about their perceptions of professional development received within the last two years. The 16 interviews and one focus group conducted, led to a thorough analysis

of data. Each interview was transcribed and examined separately to reduce and eliminate biases while coding continued. The three significant themes and five subthemes that emerged included (a) early inclination, (b) development blueprint, and (c) shared accountability.

Early inclination was the most prominent to emerge of the three themes. From an early age, participants recalled being prone to a career in education based on one of two causes. The power of relationships affected how they were inspired to begin a career in education based on close ties with former teachers and principals or family histories in education. Participants highlighted specific memories that shaped their future goals. Also, the guidance of an inner voice that resembles a "born to lead/natural leader" state of mind was shared as another basis for the early disposition of education. The opportunity to use these stories to develop a sense of strength, family and a foundation of support for future elementary school principals should be considered. Motivation was explicitly cited in the literature as a strong factor in adult learning; whether internal or external.

The design of the development for the participants yielded three subthemes to include approach, delivery method, and feedback. The book study approach was consistently shared by all participants and included a comprehensive process. Consultants and expert practitioners were incorporated to create a greater learning experience for principals. This work was delivered during the monthly SLT meetings that 100% of the participants referenced. The principals along with the COT used a variety of activities to understand the work. After the work was delivered and implemented feedback was sought; however, the participants related the solicitation of feedback was the most inconsistent. The stories from the participants reflected a top-down approach that focused on one method of delivery, one approach to development and the missed opportunity to collect consistent feedback to be used to plan differentiated development based on

individual need. Although many of the participants had numerous ideas they would like to see implemented, the inconsistency of collecting feedback and being able to speak freely about their needs, impacted their prospects of providing input.

In contrast, the theme that encompassed shared accountability did not specifically identify any one person or small group who was responsible for the development of the participants. A list of central office personnel was the result of the experiences shared which could be interpreted as a shared accountability system. Nevertheless, a true shared accountability system would include the principals in the plans for development.

The data suggests that the district utilizes a "one size fits all" approach in many areas of their development; however, the participants remain committed and motivated to leading and making a positive impact in the lives of students and staff members. The interviews and focus group brought together details that support a framework of inconsistencies that the district should explore and these results will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. Additionally, summary statements will be made for each research question, and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

In this study I examined the development of elementary school principals. The focus was specifically to determine if the research on the development of principals aligns with the reality of how principals are being developed by the district in which they work. Two central questions lead this study: What approaches to development are being implemented to support elementary principals in a district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region? Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective? The literature studied supported the tenets of adult learning and andragogy theory. Through a general qualitative approach that was informed by phenomenology, a focus group and interviews were conducted to gather, analyze and interpret data to present the voices of the principals based on their experiences. I will summarize the findings and discuss implications for further research and practice in this chapter.

Summary of Methodology

I employed qualitative methods for this study in the form of participant interviews and the facilitation of a focus group. Through the triangulation of those techniques I was able to collect, and analyze the resulting data. Sixteen elementary school principals from one district in a state in the mid-Atlantic region made up the convenience sample for this study. The participants included one male and 15 female principals with years of experience ranging from first-year principals to one principal with 14 years of experience. In order to ensure the accuracy of the data, member checking of transcripts was employed by participants before analysis began. Preliminary codes were established after examination of each transcript to determine if any patterns existed. Upon determination of patterns, the data was then examined for evolving

themes and related subthemes. A peer debriefer was used to read, review and ask questions about the themes that developed and subsequently presented in this study.

Summary of Findings

As the demand to increase student achievement is amplified, the need for an effective school principal rises in significance as well. The professional development of school principals is one way for districts to ensure the most qualified person occupies the top leadership position. This study supports the critical nature of the role the district plays in developing those qualified persons who will also lead others. A complete understanding of how districts align their development of school principals to the available research on adult learning theory and defined developmental concepts is necessary to inform and guide the persons who accept the responsibility for principal growth. This study gives voice to the participants to provide input on their individual development, which is often not included in the available research, by sharing their lived experiences.

The conclusions that resulted from my research on the development of elementary principals are presented in this chapter. The following three themes emerged from the experiences shared from the participants through the interviews and focus group conducted: *early inclination, blueprint of development and shared accountability*. Each theme was organized to paint a picture of the perceptions that school principals have about the development provided to them through their school district. Five significant findings developed from this study that shed light on the potential for school districts to adequately support the developmental needs of elementary school principals. I will organize the chapter into three segments: (1) findings summarized based on their connection to emergent themes and relevant literature; (2)

implications for future practice and research; and (3) summary and conclusion to include an overall connection to research questions.

Early Inclination

This first theme as indicated in Chapter Four, set the tone for participants to share their experiences. Surprisingly, the pattern that emerged unveiled an early inclination from the participants that education would be their career choice. The two subthemes that occurred during further analysis of participant responses, were relationship-based connections and inner voice. These subthemes described the reasons why the participants experienced these feelings.

Finding 1 Strong Desire to Educate The finding here that was represented by the shared experiences of the participants was a strong desire to educate children. The interviews revealed the continued responsibility the participants felt they had to stay committed to their "inner voice" since it has been with them for all or most of their lives. None of the data analyzed, review of notes or shared stories from participants revealed any regret or "second thoughts" about the chosen career path. These findings also indicate some evidence of internal and external motivation among the participants.

The desire to educate is also found within the actions of the district leaders. Although they were not participants in this study, the experiences shared gives some concrete examples of the level of commitment from the district leaders to educating the school leaders. The district leaders planned a yearlong calendar of development activities which included one day each month already indicated with time and location. Books were read, discussed and one chosen as the book study option for the year. Authors and practitioners were contacted, scheduled, and compensated for their facilitation and participation in development activities. A combination of content, leadership, and staff development teams was coordinated to lead professional

development activities during the monthly COT meetings. As stated in Chapter Four by one of the participants, the district has for the last two years, narrowed its focus and streamlined how the development of leaders is organized and delivered.

This finding had a strong connection to the principles of adult learning theory and andragogy; specifically, motivation and purpose. As evidenced in the literature, it is important to design learning opportunities for adults that reflect their specific needs which subsequently sparks internal motivation. When participants reflected and shared their experiences on relationships with school staff and family histories of education, this researcher heard in their responses and saw in their body language the sense of pride they felt in choosing education as a career and the purpose they had to continue the work. The participants referred to the examples set by others as motivation to be the same example for the staff they must lead in their buildings and the next generation of educators. This concept further relates to the tenets of adult learning and andragogy as the components of self-concept and life experiences are one of the first to be emphasized for adult learners to increase buy-in, participation and success (Malik, 2016). As one can imagine, these measures are most needed for principals as they lead and interact with all stakeholders.

A stark contrast emerged from the literature presented involving principal supervisors. Although the concept is fairly new and school districts throughout the nation are beginning to implement some aspects of this new structure; this district used a traditional approach. The outcome of this research revealed that a team approach to the design and implementation of the professional development was used. A group of district personnel was responsible for the development.

Blueprint of Development

This theme reflects the plan of the district to grow and develop school principals. This study supports the belief that an intentional plan of development is needed to maximize all opportunities for professional growth. The plan for how the professional development for principals is organized includes the type of development that was provided, the delivery method of the development and how feedback is gained to improve development which are the three subthemes of this category. The responsibility to design, develop and model the professional development activities to achieve the desired outcomes, lie with the district personnel. In this district the responses of the participants concluded, there was only one type of development implemented for principals, one method used, and a missed opportunity to collect feedback; when coupled together mirrors a top-down approach to leadership development. Although finding 2 and 3 are similar, they both are individually represented here but brought back together in their connection to the literature.

Finding 2 Absence of involvement or input by participants The finding that materialized here was the severe absence of involvement and input from the participants in the overall design of their own professional development. The district used a directive approach in their methodology to development compared to a more collaborative approach with the principals, which could account for some lack of buy-in from the participants. The book study approach to development was shared by all in this study as the approach used to facilitate new learning; however, no shared experiences provided evidence that participants gave any input into the initial or ongoing process of selecting the book or the planning of the activities to be implemented. There were also no definitive examples of participants knowing why a certain book was chosen by district leaders. In addition, the SLT meetings followed a similar pattern.

The meetings were held once per month in one of two locations that were previously established meeting sites. Participants were not involved in being able to offer an alternate location or suggest agenda items. The district missed an opportunity to schedule meetings for small groups of principals based on the needs demonstrated. On one hand the district shows a commitment to educating adults by designing the location, date, time and topic of professional development consistently but on the other hand, it severely impedes the opportunity for collaboration with principals to design their development by implementing a one size fits all approach.

Finding 3 Deficit in establishing and implementing effective practices The findings here point toward a deficit in establishing and implementing effective practices as it relates to all aspects of feedback. The reflections from participants on the feedback practices were the most inconsistent of any other theme and/or subtheme. The inconsistencies as shared in Chapter Four ranged from participants stating that a survey is completed after each session to another participant stating that feedback is never sought once a session is completed. Establishing and implementing effective practices allows one to determine which routines would be ideal and most able to implement with fidelity. Establishing consistent practices related to feedback would also allow participants to share their input which was also undersupplied and referenced in the previous finding but most importantly would put in place a tangible process for continuous improvement.

The two findings presented here align with the literature of the conceptual framework presented previously in Chapter Two. A number of studies have identified a set of behaviors or characteristics principals should possess to be effective. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identified broader categories of which, developing the organization was included. A subsection of this category was dedicated to building collaborative processes. This study revealed a significant gap

in the collaboration between the principals and district leaders. Their recollections show another failed opportunity to involve the participants. The focus of the collaboration is to share in the responsibility for decision-making, discussion of data and ensuring coherence. All district directed professional development was initiated by the Central Office. The practices of the district revealed in this study are in direct contrast by not including principals in the design, implementation, and collection of feedback as related to their own professional development.

The lack of connection to the literature presented on Adult Learning Theory and Andragogy is also important to note here. Caffarella (1993) reemphasizes that self-direction and motivation assist the learner in remaining in control of their learning. This is accomplished when learners are able to seek out their needs when they arise and not when directed by others. Although some feedback was gathered, as mentioned previously, the evidence is lacking or non-existent that this information was ever used to direct the next pieces to the development puzzle for these participants. This theme on the blueprint of development should display a natural alignment to the tenets of adult learning; however, the participants in this study did not communicate any opportunities to self-direct their learning. All development activities, even participation at conferences and workshops, were determined by the Central Office Team (COT) and "handed down" to identified participants. This approach did not appear to effectively convey trust or communication which are vital to establishing motivation and self-direction.

Shared Accountability

This theme directly aligns with the concepts of teamwork and the importance of collaboration. No subthemes emerged through the data analysis and no evidence was presented to support a shared system of accountability. The experiences shared by the participants revealed the district has an abundance of resources and support that were included in the

professional development activities; however, a shared outcome had not been established which is an essential component of a shared accountability system.

Finding 4 Lack of specificity in Leadership The findings here show, the participants were most consistent in only naming all central office leaders as the responsible structure for principal development, but did not specifically designate any one person or small group of persons over the other in reference to leadership-specific development. Participants were unable to articulate the who, or why of the monthly development they received. Nevertheless, when asked about subject specific development (reading, math, science, and history) the curriculum leaders were named without hesitation to include their role or title within the school district. The responses of the participants displayed deficits in levels of shared accountability as their thoughts and input were not included in designing the development. The lack of specificity in who is responsible for the development of the school leaders was clearly evident. Also, as mentioned previously, the missed opportunities to collect and use feedback could have provided another method for input.

The finding here relates to the research on the role of the principal supervisor. The literature related to this new role focuses on an individual person, whose responsibility is to support building principals in improving student achievement by developing instructional leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015). The research led by the Wallace Foundation celebrates this role as the catalyst that could increase the effectiveness of building principals; however, the literature also provides some caution about qualifications, evaluation and clearly defined role of such a position. This structure of development can now do away with the standalone design and align with the theme of shared accountability; however, the limited

research and the small number of held positions about this role have created difficulty in establishing credibility.

Finding 5 Lack of differentiation The finding here reflects a lack of differentiation in all aspects of the professional development described by the participants. This researcher probed further in each piece of data collected to determine if first or second-year administrators received any additional development in terms of content, frequency or delivery method. However, no evidence was present to indicate that years of experience, school and student demographics or principal need was used to design or provide professional development. As stated previously by Principal Nelson who is a first-year principal, "there haven't been any like first-year principal seminars or sessions just for us. Actually, it's only two new principals. So there hasn't been anything along that lines to, you know, guide us any differently than anyone else." The findings also represent this lack of differentiation in other areas as well. The approach that was implemented for the last two years was the use of a book study, the delivery method implemented was only the Collaborative Leadership Team Meeting and the place and frequency were always the same for all participants regardless of extenuating factors.

The findings here relate to the research in the Conceptual Framework around the developmental needs of building principals. Although the list of developmental needs presented is not all-inclusive, developing people is a concept that is represented on many lists. Individualized support for principals is highly important to maximize time and specificity for development. As stated previously in the research, people must be trained and developed if the mission is to be achieved. No organization is successful without changes in leadership development.

Implications for Practice

As districts review, update and refine practices to meet the challenging needs of all schools, the implications for practice that this research revealed, center around four not so new concepts. Establishing a shared vision, providing opportunities for principals to network, increasing differentiation, and understanding the power of relationships provide an initial place to begin to implement change. Effective leadership is vital to increasing student achievement, as a result, the development of principals and the role of the school district in their development is critical.

Developing a Shared Vision

The first recommendation focuses on mission and vision. Implementing practices to establish a shared vision of development by including input from all stakeholders, especially principals provides a framework of common language, practices, expectations, and outcomes for the building leaders. Intentionally seeking input from principals on the content, frequency and the desired outcome of development experiences increases the likelihood of implementation and effectiveness. The literature review conducted in Chapter Two supported this practice to align expectations, establish an academic culture and define results.

Provide Opportunities for Networking

The second recommendation is to develop networking opportunities among principals to visit each other to cultivate a support system. Networking has emerged in the literature as one of the major needs in attracting and retaining quality school leaders. Advice and insights gathered from veteran administrators on how to support the next generation of school leaders identified networking as a key recommendation for leadership development (Michael & Young, 2006).

The key element in developing leaders aside from strong collaboration was the provision of support and practical training through mentorship and real-world experience.

Differentiation

The third recommendation is to design a system specifically aimed at developing principals by including several representations of differentiation. The data from this study found that the one-size-fits-all approach was used in the development of all of the participants although one of the key elements in developing leaders is to determine their need, then build support structures. One example of differentiating development could be to use a cohort approach. Cohort approach has been used by colleges and universities as a way for students to learn for many years which leads one to believe that principals with one to three years of experience could possibly be familiar with this approach. Another example is to differentiate the location of development by including school buildings so that strategies may be practiced directly in the school setting. The practice of differentiating would serve to equip the principals with the development that works best for them and supports the tenets of adult learning.

Power of Relationships

The fourth and final recommendation is to seek ways to maximize the power of relationships. This study suggested that the greatest influence on the participants were linked to familial and collegial relationships. Districts developing a plan to use the strong bonds of relationships to attract and retain qualified leaders could be most effective by creating a sense of "fitting in" or "belonging". Building leaders emphasizing professional-learning communities and central office leaders establishing more collaborative practices with teachers and administrators factor into the continuation of strengthening relationships.

Implications for Future Research

This study exposes three implications for further research:

1. What do the leaders of principals believe about the development they provide to the principals?
2. How does the evaluation of principals impact the development they receive?
3. Is the district leadership qualified to plan, implement and follow up on principal development?

First, the leaders of principals were not involved in this study so their perceptions about the development the district provides are not represented. Further study will need to assess what data points guide the decision making on topics, activities, and the delivery method. Although the study provided important information about the experiences of principals relating to their development, there are limitations as no documents, written communication nor artifacts were examined to support their assertions on planning professional development activities.

Second, the impact of the principals' evaluation should be considered as a factor in designing differentiated development, as the research on adult learning indicates the significance of self-direction and purpose. It is necessary to explore deeper the concept of goal-setting, monitoring and data collection as it pertains to the evaluation process. As district leaders continue to plan for professional development they should allow the participants to give ideas about topics they want or need to learn more about and let them work on problem-based learning projects that are of interest to them or reflect an area of need.

Finally, the qualifications of the district level leadership to deliver professional development to school leaders should be studied. Further knowledge about district-level leadership's background in school improvement, instructional leadership, and providing quality

feedback among other concepts is valued as it relates to the professional development process for principals. A closer look still, at the ability of district-level leaders to build and sustain positive relationships with principals to design authentic experiences based on individual needs would also determine if the role of a principal supervisor is needed. The implications of these research findings may be applied and shared with school districts across the nation as a self-assessment of their professional development practices for school leaders.

Conclusion

The principals who participated in this study helped to display the perceptions related to their professional development implemented by the district in which they work. All participants were passionate about their work as a leader and felt chosen to be a part of this great work of shaping the lives of children. Their commitment to the profession drove their input about their experiences. They all knew the professional development goals they individually needed to be the most successful.

The purpose of this study was to explore the development of elementary school principals. The focus was specifically to determine if the research on the development of principals align with the reality of how principals are being developed by the district in which they work. The review of the literature and the evidence provided through this study exposed that the district and the employees share a strong desire to educate children; however, a clear vision of leadership development is not shared. The district missed the mark on including the perspective of school principals on the leadership development topics, how the development would be presented and the use of feedback to consistently improve the focus of development. The shared stories and focus group comments validated the need for the existing research even though, the strategies are not implemented in this district. The demographics of this district in

terms of years of service show over 50% of the participants have less than six years of experience. This statistic alone validates the need for a differentiated approach to development to meet the needs of the principals. Two central questions led this study: What approaches to development are being implemented to support elementary principals? Which methods of development are perceived by principals to be the most effective? This researcher will conclude this study by responding to these questions based on the findings presented earlier in this chapter.

The outcome of this research study showed that a one-size-fits-all approach was employed to provide development as no opportunities for differentiation were included in the planning, implementation or reflective practices of the district. The book study approach was the singular style used but was thoroughly planned and often coordinated with consultants and guest speakers. The principals shared stories and recollections that supported the book study approach to development and further explained that over the last two years this method had proven to be effective. The monthly SLT meeting that was delivered by the COT is also the singular delivery method practiced in this district as well; however, it is worth noting that for a majority of the participant population, this is the only method they had experienced and the possibility exists that a determination of effectiveness of methods cannot be made based on this population sample. The themes identified in the findings of this study need to be explored by all districts and should begin with a dedicated and collaborative team of building and district leaders who begin with the end in mind; identify a desired result for overall professional development of principals, identify strategies to achieve this result, and consistently execute the identified strategies until the measured outcome is achieved.

References

Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (2000). *Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 130-141.

Blumberg, A., & Greenfield, W. (1980). *The effective principal: Perspectives on school leadership.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Caffarella, R. (1993). *Self –directed learning. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *57*, 25-35. doi: 10.1002/ace.36719935705

Casserly, M., Lewis, S., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Palacios, M. (2013). *Principal evaluations and the principal supervisor: Survey results from the great city schools.* Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools.

Copeland, M. A., & Knapp, M. S. (2006). *Connecting Leadership with Learning.* Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Corcoran, A., Casserly, M., Price-Baugh, R., Walston, D., Hall, R., & Simon, C. (2013). *Rethinking leadership: The changing role of principal supervisors*. Washington, DC: Council of the Great City Schools.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2015). Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards 2015. Washington, DC: Wallace Foundation.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Daresh, J. C., & Playko, M. A. (2001). *Beginning the principalship*: *A practical guide for new school leaders* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *Review of research*. *School leadership study: Developing successful principals*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2010). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work* (2nd ed.). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Duncan, H., Range, B., & Scherz, S. (2011). From professional preparation to on-the-job development: What do beginning principals need? *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation. 6*(3), 1-20.

Filstad, C. (2004). How newcomers use role models in organizational socialization. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 16*(7)*,* 396 - 409

Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 16-20.

Gill, J. (2013). *Stories from the field: Make room for the principal supervisors*, New York: The Wallace Foundation.

Greer, M. (2013). Supervisors: Are they all they can be? *Professional Safety, 58*(9)*,* 72-74.

Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *33*, 329-351.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement, 9*(2), 157.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (1999). Next generation methods for the study of leadership and school improvement. *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration, 2, 141-162.*

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (2002). What do you call people with visions? The role of vision, mission, and goals in school leadership and improvement. *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration*, (9-40). Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer

Harper, S. R. (2007). Using Qualitative Methods to Assess Student Trajectories and College Impact. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 136*, 55-68.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning*: *A synthesis of 800+ meta-analyses on achievement*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Hill, P. T. (2002). *Authority and responsibility: A crucial combination for principals.* Seattle, WA: Center for Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington.

Hord, S. M. (1997). Professional learning communities: What are they and why are they important? *Issues about Change, 6*(1). Austin, TX: Southeast Department Laboratory.

Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (2002). *Instructional leadership: A learning-centered guide*. Boston: MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (2008). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (8th ed.). Manhattan, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Huffman, J. B., & Jacobson, A. L. (2003). Perceptions of professional learning communities. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 6*(3), 239-250.

Kelly, A. P., & Hess, F. (2005). The accidental principal: What doesn't get taught at ed schools? *Education Next, 5*(3), 34-40.

Knowles, M. S. (1990). *The adult learner: A neglected species*. (4th ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

Knowles, M. S. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (5th ed.): Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

Lashway, L. (2002). *Superintendents in the age of accountability*. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED468515)

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*? Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, Laboratory for Student Success

Leithwood, K., Anderson, S., Seashore-Louis, K., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning:* New York: Wallace Foundation.

Linn, R. L. (2000). Assessments and accountability. *Educational Researcher, 29*(2), 4-16

Lynch, J. M. (2012). Responsibilities of today's principal: Implications for principal preparation programs and principal certification policies. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *31*(2), 40-47.

Malik, M. (2016). Assessment of a professional development program on adult learning theory. *Libraries and the Academy, 16*(1), 47-70.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., McNulty, B. (2005*). School leadership that works: From research to results.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McColl-Kennedy, J. R., & Anderson, R. D. (2002). Impact of leadership style and emotions on subordinate performance. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*(95)*,* 545-559.

Merriam, S. (1993). Adult learning: Where have we come from? Where are we headed? *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 57,* 5-14. doi: 10:1002/ace36719935703

Merriam, S. B. (2008) Adult learning theory for the twenty-first century. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education,* no. 119, 93-98. Fall 2008. DOI: 10.1002/ace.309

Merriam, S. B., Baumgartner, L. M., & Caffarella, R. S. (2007) *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Mezirow, J. (1985). A critical theory of self-directed learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1985*, 17-30.

Michael, C. N., & Young, N. D. (2006). *Preparing the next generation of school administrators: Advice from veteran leaders.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Mintzberg, H. (1989). *Mintzberg on management.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Murphy, J. (2005). Unpacking the foundations of ISLLC standards and addressing concerns in the academic community. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 41*(1), 154-191.

Murphy, J. (2006). *Preparing school leaders: Defining a research and action agenda*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) (2011). Educational leadership program standards: 2011 ELCC building level. Retrieved from http://www.ncate.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=zRZI73R0nOQ%3D&tabid=676

Neumerski, C. (2012). Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we do know about principal, teacher, and coach, instructional leadership, and where should we go from here? *Educational Administrative Quarterly, 49*, 310.

Patton, M. Q. (2005). *Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ravitch, D. (2002). *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution

Redish, T., Webb, L., & Binbin, J. (2006). Design and implementation of a web-based portfolio for aspiring educational leaders: A comprehensive, evidence-based model. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, *34*(3), 283-295.

Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44*(5), 635-674.

Sanzo, K. L. (2014). *From policy to practice: Sustainable innovations in school leadership preparation and development*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

Sanzo, K., Myran, S., & Normore, A. H. (Eds.). (2012). *Advances in educational administration. Successful school leadership preparation and development* (Vol. 17). Bingley, UK: Emerald.

Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership (*2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Seashore-Louis, K., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K., & Anderson, S. (2010). *Investigating the links to improved student learning.* Washington, DC: Wallace Foundation.

Sebring, P. B., & Bryck, A. S. (2000). School leadership and the bottom line in Chicago. *Phi Delta Kappan, 81,* 440-443.

Sparks, D., & Loucks-Horsley, S. (1990). *Models of staff development. Handbook of research on teacher education*. New York; MacMillan.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Superville, D. R. (2015). Redefining the role of principal supervisors. *Education Week*, *34(*12).

Supovitz, J., Sirinides, P., & May, H. (2010). How principals and peers influence teaching and learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(1), 31-56.

Terehoff, I. (2002). Elements of adult learning in teacher professional development. *NASSP Bulletin, 86*(632), 65-77.

Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tyack, D. (2000). Reflections on histories of U.S. Education. *Educational Researcher, 29*(8), 19-20.

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *Improving teacher quality state grants*. (Title II, Part A). Retrieved July 11, 2006, from http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherqual/index.html

Vlentine, J., & Prater, M. (2011). Instructional, transformational, and managerial leadership and student achievement: High school principals make a difference. *NASSP Bulletin*, *95*(1), 5-30.

Waldron, N. L., & McLeskey, J. (2010). Establishing a collaborative school culture through comprehensive school reform. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 20,* 58-74.

Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement*. Denver, Co: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.

Wirt, F. M., & Kirst, M. (1989). *Schools in conflict: The politics of education*. Berkeley: CA. McCutchan Publishing Corp.

Young, M. D., Crow, G. M., Murphy, J., & Ogawa, R. T. (2009). *Handbook of research on the education of school leaders*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Young, M. D., Petersen, G. J., & Short, P. M. (2002). The complexity of substantive reform: A call for interdependence among key stakeholders. *Educational Administrative Quarterly, 38*(2), 137-175.

Principal Development

Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Principal,

You are invited to voluntarily participate in a research study about the development of elementary school principals. I would like to determine how districts develop principals compared to how the research states they should be developed. By participating in this project you agree to:

I agree to be interviewed as part of this research project. I have had the project explained to me, I have read the project description, which I will keep for my records and I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- be interviewed by the researcher either one on one, or as part of a focus group
- allow the interview to be audiotaped
- make myself available if further information is needed after the interview.
- I understand that my name or any other identifying information will be changed and access to the original taping and transcript will be restricted to only the researcher and supervisor to protect my identity from being made public
- I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research
- I understand the information provided by me will not be used in other projects without my permission.
- My participation is voluntary and I can choose not to participate in this interview. I can stop at any time without being penalized in any way.

Name: _____Signature: _____

If you have specific questions regarding any aspect of this study please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Karen Sanzo: ksanzo@odu.edu

Additional questions may be directed to the Chair of the Old Dominion University's College of Education Human Subjects Committee Chair, Dr. Petros Katsioloudis: ksatsiol@odu.edu

Interview Questions

1. I'm interested in learning about your pathway to the principalship, beginning with your interest in becoming an educator. Could you share with me why you wanted to get into education, and to become a principal in particular?
    a. Could you share your career path to the principalship? What steps did you take to become a principal?
    b. How long have you been a principal?
    c. Can you describe your preparation for the principalship?
2. I'm going to ask you questions about the types of professional development you receive as a part of your school system professional learning work.
    a. Could you describe the types of professional development you have received in the past two years?
        i. Could you share some examples?
    b. Do you receive content professional development around subject areas?
        i. Could you share some examples?
        ii. From whom?
3. Do you receive specific professional development around leadership?
    a. Could you share some examples?
    b. What types of professional development?
    c. Could you describe the delivery? (electronic, synchronous/asynchronous, in person, by whom)
4. How frequently do you receive professional development?
    a. Is it voluntary or mandatory?

   b. Do you receive professional development at a specific location?
   c. Is it held within your own building/outside of your district?
5. What methods of development, in your opinion are the most effective? Why?
   a. Could you give an example of an exemplary professional development initiative you have been a part of?
   b. If you were to design a professional development initiative for principals what would be the focus? Why?
   c. How would you design it? Why?
6. What professional development methods have your experienced in the past two years you have found to be ineffective from your division?
   a. Why?
   b. What would you change about it?
7. Do you know who the stakeholders are involved in planning the development for you?
   a. Do you know the people who deliver the professional development?
8. What steps do you take to include what you have learned in your development sessions into your daily work?
   a. Could you give some examples?
9. How is feedback on development sessions gathered from the participants?
   a. Could you give some examples?
   b. How is this feedback used?
10. What additional development have your pursued on your own?
   a. Could you provide some examples?
   b. Why?

11. What additional development do you feel is missing or should be added to your sessions?
    a. Why?

Wrap up question:

Is there anything else that you would like to add? Is there any area that we didn't include that we should mention?

Catina Bullard-Clark

723 Pilot House Drive Newport News, VA. 23606
(757) 713-1968 catinabclark@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Foundations and Leadership **May 2018**
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.
Dissertation title: "Research vs. Reality: How School Districts Meet the Developmental Needs of School Principals"
Committee Chair: Dr. Karen Sanzo

Masters of Science in Educational Leadership **May 2002**
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA.

Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education **May 1994**
Winston-Salem State University, Winston-Salem, NC.

Work History

Executive Director, Elementary School Leadership **July 2013-Present**
Newport News Public Schools, Newport News VA.

- Responsible for planning, administering, and directing the division's elementary school program. Formulates, interprets policies and procedures, ensures compliance with state and federal regulations, administers a budget and supervises department personnel to include school principals.

Elementary School Principal **July 2005-June 2013**
News Public Schools, Newport News VA.
An Achievable Dream Academy and Magruder Primary School

- Responsible for overseeing the instructional, cultural and financial needs of elementary age students while managing and implementing professional development for staff and building and maintaining relationships with families and community stakeholders.

Elementary School Assistant Principal **Jan. 2003-June 2005**
Newport News Public Schools, Newport News VA.

- Responsible for assisting the school principal in the planning, organization, administration, and management of the school. Assisted with supervising staff, creating a safe environment, monitoring curriculum, and other duties associated with the successful operation of a school.

Standards of Learning Instructor **July 2002- Dec. 2002**
Newport News Public Schools, Newport News VA.
Epes Elementary School

- Responsible for coaching, supporting and guiding teachers in best practices for SOL achievement. Conducted training, classroom visitation and demonstrated instructional techniques. Also instructed small groups of students.

Elementary School Teacher Grades 1st, 2nd, and 5th **Aug. 1994-June 2002**
Newport News Public Schools**,** Newport News VA.
John Marshall and Carver Elementary Schools

- Responsible for creating a classroom environment favorable to learning and personal growth of every student, establishing rapport, motivating students to develop skills, attitude and knowledge needed to become a responsible citizen.

Professional Experiences

Adjunct Instructor **Jan. 2016-Present**
Longwood University, Farmville VA.

- Responsible for teaching classes to educators who are seeking licensure in school administration. Classes taught include, Educational Leadership, Supervision and Evaluation, and School Operations and Management.

Founder and Principal Consultant- **Jan. 2015- Present**
Comprehensive Educational Solutions, Newport News VA**.**

- Coaching principals, providing development to staff and performing classroom observations to increase student achievement**.**

Principal Consultant **June 2010-April 2012**
Urban Learning and Leadership Center, Hampton VA.

- Collaborated with principals on school improvement practices by providing onsite coaching at elementary and middle school sites

Professional Development and Technical Skills

- Monthly facilitator for Elementary Principals' and Assistant Principals' Development
- Division Policy, Budget, Safety and Elementary Report Card Committee Member
- Technology Tools for Leaders Professional Development
- DDI Training Sessions: **Working Through Conflict, Building Trust, Coaching for Improvement**
- Closing the Achievement Gap Focus Group
- Excellence through Equity Conference
- 21st Century Leading and Learning Conference
- Trauma Informed Care Training
- Effective School-wide Discipline Training (ESD)
- Book-"Time to Learn" **(contributing source)** by Christopher Gabrieli, Warren Goldstein
- A Framework for Understanding Poverty Trainer, Diversity Conference Presenter (2002, 2003)
- Academic Review Team, Virginia Department of Education

Professional Organizations

- ASCD – Association of Curriculum Development
- Virginia Association Elementary School Principals
- National Association Elementary School Principals

References

- **Brian Nichols**, Chief Academic Officer Newport News Public Schools (757) 272-7338 brian.nichols@nn.k12.va.us

- **Michael Hickman,** Retired Executive Director Newport News Public Schools- (757) 930-2781

- **Nancy Sweat,** Executive Director of Curriculum and Development PreK-12 Newport News Public Schools (757) 283-7850 ext. 10208 nancy.sweat@nn.k12.va.us