

Principal Perceptions of the Relationship Among Principal Preparation Programs, Professional
Development and Instructional Leadership Confidence in One Urban
School Division in Virginia

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative analysis of principals' perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. Levine (2005) argued that the principal has a salient effect on the instructional programs within schools, and the preparation and professional development of the principal affects the degree to which they maintain and improve instruction. To examine principal perceptions on feelings of confidence toward instructional leadership, four research questions were investigated: What are principals' perceptions concerning the instructional confidence needed to lead schools in one school division? What are principals' perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division? What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division? What type of additional training do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division? The researcher sought to ascertain principal perceptions concerning the construct, instructional leadership efficacy, based on their academic training and professional development.

The findings were as follows: a) interviewed principals in one urban school division described instructional leadership efficacy in terms of one's capacity to provide instructional leadership and one's knowhow to foster home-school relations; b) interviewed principals in one urban school division believe that the principal must act as an instructional leader to facilitate learning in the building; c) interviewed principals from one urban school division reported that the course of greatest significance to instructional leadership was school law; d) interviewed principals from one urban school division were unable to identify the most beneficial professional development in terms of that which is needed to be the instructional leader; e) there was no recommendation for specific coursework in the principal preparation program that was supported by the majority of the interviewed principals.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this body of work to my children: Brenea Elysse Thomas and Brysen Reis Thomas. Every day that I rise to take on the challenges of the day, I do so in support of my children. I love them both with every fiber of my being. I am so proud of them and the persons they have become today.

I would also like to dedicate this work to the mother of my children, Tomaudrie Brenea Thomas. Tomaudrie faithfully watches over my kids...she loves them unconditionally. I am grateful of the care Tomaudrie has taken in ensuring that my children are safe, happy, and healthy, each and every day.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this research to my mother, Diane Bracey Thomas Bradshaw. My mom instilled a love and respect for education in me as a child. When no one else could see my potential, my mom told me I could achieve my dreams.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

School reform advocates across the nation have questioned whether public schools are capable of developing and maintaining instructional programs and practices that advance student achievement (Levine, 2005). The increased scrutiny of public schools has likewise resulted in the close examination of the principal's role in leading the school transformation process when achievement indicators reflect the need for improvement (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Similarly, stakeholders of all types have debated whether principal training in instructional leadership results in schools meeting state and federal student achievement benchmarks (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

In this research study, the instructional leadership acumen of principals was examined for the confidence in which principals lead the instructional programs within their schools. Styron and LeMire (2009) maintain that principals must possess a depth of knowledge of curriculum and student learning to facilitate the school dynamics of continuous student learning. According to scholars, Urick & Bowers (2011), principal perceptions concerning instructional leadership confidence is defined as the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning. The fundamental tenet of this research effort is principals' perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. Ultimately, the setting for this research investigation took place in an urban, racially diverse school division located within the central region of Virginia.

Overview of the Study

The following reflects the framework of the research study conducted. The scientific methodology of this investigation entailed a qualitative, phenomenological design in which the lived experiences of the subjects were examined. An historical overview of the principalship and the evolution of public education in the United States has been presented. Next, the problem statement has been detailed. The significance of the study within the body of literature on education leadership and the principal as the instructional leader has been provided. Thereafter, the purpose of the study was explored for its significance within contemporary research. Next, an explanation describing justification of the study has been provided. The research questions and

research process has been documented. This introduction has been presented so the reader can acquire a sense of the conceptual framework, which included the hypothesis of the study. Finally, the limitations and delimitations of the study are shared in addition to assumptions formulated during the research process.

The methodology of this study is qualitative in nature to ascertain principals' sense of their preparation for the instructional leadership demands of school governance. The setting for this study was an urban, racially diverse school system. Again, the purpose of this study was to examine principal perceptions of the relationship among his/her preparation programs, professional development endeavors, and their perceived confidence to lead schools instructionally. This approach analyzed principal perceptions that have been constructed about the knowledge and skills associated with instructional leadership; in effect, their instructional leadership confidence (Merriam, 1998). More specifically, this methodology examined the extent to which principals' felt confident about their role of instructional leader, provided their administrative training. All data collected as part of this study were examined and analyzed using a constant comparative method. This methodology informed the analysis of themes by comparing pieces of data (Merriam, 2009). Constant Comparative Methodology entails the juxtaposition of data elements to determine likes and dislikes among the data segments (Merriam, 2009).

Historical Overview

During the latter years of the industrial revolution, schools began to transition from simple to more complex organizational entities (Kafka, 2009). Prior to that time, schools were one-room houses with a single teacher charged with delivering a rudimentary curriculum for students (Kafka, 2009). As the United States expanded and as industrialization required a more skilled workforce, schools were increasingly impacted by administrative, clerical tasks, and systemic challenges, to produce the type of students needed in the workforce for the new economy (Kafka, 2009). As an increasing number of Americans sought education for their youth, schools evolved to become more sophisticated and such conditions created the need for principal-teachers. Eventually, principal-teachers lost their teaching assignments altogether and assumed duties and responsibilities as supervisors, managers and instructional leaders because of

the increases in student enrollment (Kafka, 2009). As time progressed and as society expanded, the citizenry wanted more education to acquire and maintain employment.

By the 1920s, a clear majority of Americans were sending their students to school as a result of the changing economic conditions of the United States (Kafka, 2009). During this time, 71% of school-aged Americans were enrolled in some formal system of education (Kafka, 2009). Schools were gaining societal significance as they began replacing the church as the apex of socialization for adolescent youth (Kafka, 2009). With the employment opportunities associated with industrialization and flight to the cities, education increasingly became more essential in American life. Furthermore, industrialization and the opportunities of America facilitated immigration from Europe; those arriving from abroad were illiterate and desired education as a means for their families to access the United States' economy (Kafka, 2009). Many of these occurrences increased societal expectations of schools and thereby increased the significance of the principalship (Kafka, 2009).

In the 1940s, law enforcement and school officials began to enforce compulsory attendance (Kafka, 2009). Approximately 80% of youth ages 14 through 17 attended school with regularity (Kafka, 2009). With an increasing number of students seeking formal education, schools acquired status, and likewise principals gained significance within the local communities.

On October 4, 1957, with the launch of *Sputnik*, the Soviet Union was the first nation to successfully orbit the globe's elliptical path (Telzrow, 2007). This event was widely publicized in the United States and implications of space travel included the world-wide approbation of the Soviet system of public education (Telzrow, 2007). By contrast, the American government realized that the U.S. educational system required an overhaul with a renewed focus on mathematics and science (Telzrow, 2007). Principals were now faced with the first elements of accountability and demands for the educational system to regain superiority in mathematics and science (Telzrow, 2007). These changes represented a departure from past practice as principals were historically given great discretion on school operations; such independence allowed principals to manage their assigned schools based on their immediate and unique needs and that of the immediate community (Kafka, 2009). The nation's calls for action to improve science and mathematics resulted in efforts by principals to standardize curriculum delivery based on the science and mathematics needs of government and private industries (Telzrow, 2007).

In 1965, United States President Johnson signed into law the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act. ESEA (1965), in its initial form it, provided funding for public education and delineated resources for children impacted by poverty (Forte, 2010). The NCLB Act of 2001 was essentially a reauthorization of the 1965 law.

In the intervening years since *Sputnik*, scrutiny of school systems across the country eventually waned; however, by the 1980s, the American public was once again dismayed by the shortcomings of the United States' system of education (Romer, 2008). In 1983, President Reagan commissioned a study by the U.S. Department of Education entitled: *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Education Reform* (Scherer, 1983). Then Secretary of Education, Bell, argued that the American education system was failing to meet the nation's need for a skilled and competent workforce. The principal was tasked with the challenge of reforming the school and curriculum to focus in such a manner as to meet the needs of America's labor force (Romer, 2008).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was the next major iteration of accountability and school reform to impact principals throughout the nation. NCLB 2001 was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and essentially represented the United States' educational policy during the George W. Bush presidency (NCLB, 2001). NCLB (2001) requires school districts to ensure annual progression of student achievement.

Forte (2010) argued that elements of NCLB have resulted in the improvement of certain education systems as minority student progress became a priority. Further, the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision of the act required schools to meet annual achievement benchmarks for designated subgroups, many of which were considered minority students (Forte, 2010). NCLB addressed annual achievement of subgroups as a means of evaluating the overall effectiveness of a school (Forte, 2010). Consequently, principals in schools otherwise designated as effective were required to develop plans for improvement if subgroup benchmarks were not met over the course of two consecutive years. The charge, AYP, related to one of the principals most inadequate skills, instructional leadership efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Notwithstanding the aim of focusing on disenfranchised youth, NCLB targeted schools for improvement due to a requirement matrix, which focused on achievement benchmarks of subgroups within a school's population (NCLB, 2001). The calls for reform of the NCLB Act by

education practitioners and politicians resulted in the Obama Administration's education initiative, Race to the Top (Ungerer, 2010).

Education researcher, Ungerer, argued that NCLB was punitive as it applied sanctions to schools out of compliance, while the Race to the Top Program provides incentives for schools to innovate and improve their academic programs (Ungerer, 2010). President Obama's education initiative, Race to the Top, authorized of \$4.3 billion dollars to states and school divisions who enact innovative school reforms (Ungerer, 2010). The Race to the Top Program includes the following components: Performance pay for teachers who improve student achievement; the use of standardized assessments to gauge student progress; school takeovers; longer school days and school years; alternative routes to teacher certification; the addition of innovative charter schools; and measures and evaluative instruments to improve teacher performance (Ungerer, 2010). The shortcoming with the Race to the Top initiative is the inability of proponents to demarcate a concrete construct of a school with the desired attributes (Ungerer, 2010). Historically, elements of accountability began in the 1950s with the launch of *Sputnik* and continue through today with the Race to the Top's focus on innovation and reform.

Statement of the Problem

Levine (2005) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) argued extensively that principal licensure programs and other principal professional development activities fail to foster instructional leadership confidence. Levine (2005) reported that education leadership schools need to offer rigorous and relevant curriculum, vital in leading academic programs of the public schools. Lashaway (2003) reported that a survey found that 69% of principals indicated that their preparation programs were inconsistent with the realities of operating schools. Hess and Kelly (2007) found that 2% of 2, 424 course weeks within education leadership programs focused on preparing principals for student achievement accountability. Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) found find five exemplar principal preparation programs in the country; such a number is an indictment of Principal Preparation Programs across the nation. According to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), principals who possess strong confidence about instructional programs within their school are highly motivated and vigorously pursue instructional goals that are established. As principals closely monitor classroom instruction and become familiar with the

type of learning that enhances student achievement, then likewise the confidence for instruction develops (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Significance of the Study

Education research conveys the effect of the principal on the school setting; however, the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to dramatically improve the quality of instruction remain unclear (Grissom & Harrington 2010). The aim of this scientific investigation is to examine the relationship among principal preparation programs, post-graduate professional development activities, and instructional leadership confidence. The researcher analyzed principals' perspectives about experiences in principal preparation programs and professional development experiences, which have translated into feelings of confidence as principals approach instructional leadership (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Grissom and Harrington (2010) reported that efficacy regarding principals' sense of instruction leads to instructional leadership. Given national mandates such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), political leadership sentiment to improve school performance and the need to create a globally competitive workforce, quality education leadership training is essential to equip principals with the skills to academically reform schools.

Literature on instructional leadership has been written in response to the Federal Annual Measurable Objectives (FAMO) of the No Child Left Behind Act (Taylor and La Cava, 2011). FAMO has replaced AYP as an accountability measure for schools in states that have been approved for a waiver from the original requirements of NCLB (VDOE, 2012). The Federal Annual Measurable Objectives pertain to per annum accountability in terms of incremental gains in student achievement, and thus have become a focus of leaders in districts and schools, particularly in urban areas (Taylor & La Cava, 2011). Failure to meet the prescribed benchmarks of FAMO results in schools being required to develop plans for academic improvement, in addition to a myriad of other corrective actions (Taylor & La Cava, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine principal perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. The goal of this research pursuit was to

examine the perceptions of practicing principals regarding their efficacy for instructional leadership. Principals' perceptions concerning instructional leadership efficacy is defined as the extent to which principals' perceive their ability to influence student learning (Urick & Bowers, 2011). The researcher examined perceptions of instructional leadership efficacy; perceptions of coursework completed in preparation programs; and perceptions of professional development and the confidence associated with instructional leadership.

Justification of the Study

Efforts to improve public education are contingent on corresponding improvements in principal preparation programs, as principals are charged with improving the instructional programs within schools (Levine, 2005). In keeping with the aforementioned sentiments, government mandates to transform primary and secondary schools have resulted in increased scrutiny of school principals, and thereby the training of principals, as instructional leaders (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). According to Grissom and Harrington (2010), improvements in principal preparation programs and professional learning experiences will affect principals' confidence for instructional leadership. Improved instructional leadership confidence will improve the quality of public education through enhanced instructional learning opportunities for students (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Enhanced leadership of instruction and facilitation of robust student learning opportunities in the classrooms of the nation's schools will address required student academic growth requirements per the No Child Left Behind Act (2001).

The matter of principal effectiveness is salient as principals are required to ensure school performance as reported through accreditation ratings (Virginia Department of Education Accreditation, 2014). Currently in Virginia, only 22 of the more than 130 school divisions have full accreditation status (Virginia Department of Education Accreditation, 2014). The intent of this research study was to examine principals' sense of their confidence to lead instructional programs such that student performance falls within the accreditation requirements. The researcher gathered principals' perceptions as to the coursework completed in their principal preparation program and professional development and the associated confidence when undertaking instructional leadership tasks.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research study:

1. What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one Virginia school division?
2. What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
3. What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
4. What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

The Research Process

Review of the relevant literature entailed utilizing the Virginia Tech online library. Specifically, the university research database, Ebscohost, was employed to examine scholarly reviewed articles on education research. To focus and narrow the review process, keywords such as instructional leadership efficacy, principal effectiveness, and education administration were queried. A date range between the years 2003 through 2013 was initially employed as the planned period of time to ensure timely and relevant research. However, the time period was extended into the 1990s in order to acquire readings to support the historical overview section of this chapter. By researching the previously mentioned keywords, research articles presented instructional leadership and efficacy separately. Most of the research articles found and reviewed were specific to efficacy or instructional leadership. Finally, the researcher examined dissertations and theses from the Virginia Tech online library to capture critical writings on principal efficacy and instructional leadership.

The research process for this study involved interviewing nine principals: Three elementary, three middle, and three high schools. The investigative process entailed examination of principal preparation programs, professional development experiences, and the presence of instructional leadership confidence. In order to establish context for the reader, given the litany

of mandates promulgated by NCLB, the concept and practice of leadership in education was also examined. The researcher scrutinized the professional standards that govern the work of practicing principals in the role as instructional leader. The investigator analyzed the intended outcomes of principal licensure programs and the success principals experienced with the preparation they received. A critical review of principal licensure programs and reform advancements to principal licensure were also explored. Leadership of instructional programs and feedback about teaching practices were examined with this study. Furthermore, the capacity to provide leadership of teaching practices within a school was examined based on the principal preparation program and professional development experiences of principals.

The No Child Left behind Act of 2001 was reviewed and revisited throughout this work as NCLB is the most contemporary factor to challenge the quality of schools throughout the nation (Levine, 2005). Additionally, criticism of principal preparation programs within the framework of authentic instructional leadership was studied. Alternative principal preparation programs were reviewed based on the work of Levine (2005) and Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012). Lastly, the concept of instructional efficacy is presented according to the preeminent researchers who have propagated scholarly work on the topic.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that underpins this research study is based on the work of Levine (2005). Levine's research (2005) advanced the belief that significant numbers of practicing principals are incapable of leading schools instructionally. Levine (2005) further noted that principals are poorly prepared to lead schools instructionally because principal preparation programs are inadequate. Levine argued that principal preparation programs and post-graduate professional development fail to prepare principals to properly diagnose achievement challenges and provide effective solutions given the complexities of twenty-first century classroom environments (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) reported that the academic curriculum in education administration programs did not align with instructional leadership needed to guide, alter and transform teaching practices in schools, such that student achievement dramatically improved (Levine, 2005).

As a result of NCLB (2001), school districts across America have undertaken reform and transformation to meet the achievement benchmark for designated students (Gentilucci & Muto,

2007). The Federal Annual Measurable Objectives (FAMO) provision of the NCLB Act (2001) requires schools to meet annual academic benchmarks for student subgroups or face sanctions (Taylor and La Cava 2011). Styron and LeMire (2009) shared that principals must possess a depth of knowledge of curriculum and student learning to facilitate the school conditions of continuous student learning. Authentic instructional leadership efficacy is essential if principals are to reform schools in order to raise student achievement for all.

Provided the research findings of Levine, coupled with the high number of public schools cited for academic improvement, the researcher hypothesized that current principal preparation programs and professional development offerings are inadequate in the formulation of confidence for instructional leadership. For example, in 2014 there were 22 school districts out of more than 130 in Virginia in which all of the schools are fully accredited (Virginia Department of Education, 2014). Given the sheer number of schools cited for improvement, the focus of this investigation included the confidence for instructional leadership, provided the subject's preparation programs, and professional development experiences. More specifically, the relationship among the three variables, principal preparation, professional development and the associated confidence for instructional leadership, were studied through the perceptions and accounts of practicing principals.

Definitions of Key Terms

Instructional Leadership Confidence

As reflected in the research of Levine (2005), the belief in one's capacity to guide and alter instructional programs to raise student achievement.

Instructional Leadership Efficacy

According to scholars, Urick & Bowers (2011), principal perceptions concerning instructional leadership efficacy is defined as the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning.

Principal Preparation Programs

Includes the location of the program and all included coursework required to meet graduation or licensure criteria.

Professional Development

As indicated by Spillane, Healy, and Mesler (2009), professional development for principals is a process whereby new skills and knowledge are acquired for the purpose of improving student learning.

Limitations

To provide the reader with full disclosure about the limitations of the study, the following conditions were beyond the control of the researcher-The validity and reliability of the investigation were subject to the voluntary self-disclosures of the respondents. The settings in which the interviews were conducted were in the midst of school business activities, any of which could have influenced the attentiveness of the participants. The nature and extent of the disclosures were subject to the respondent's comfort level with the interview questions and the presence of the researcher. Lastly, it is quite difficult to completely remove bias as one attempts to conduct a scientific investigation. The researcher may have viewed the wording of the interview questions, reaction by the interviewer, or perceived intended outcomes of the research study with an element of bias.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations to note concerning the manner in which this study was arranged. The public school setting was an urban locality within Central Virginia. The perceptions of principals in other regions of the state and nation were not considered. The setting under study was selected as the researcher is familiar with the governing accountability system and due to the number of NCLB (2001) designated subgroups within the school division. The subjects were all African-Americans; perceptions of persons with differing ethnic backgrounds may not be considered as a result of this study. There were only nine subjects included in this study; such a limited number of persons mitigated the findings.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that this study may be helpful to districts and schools as NCLB requires per annum school improvement-even in cases where states have been granted waivers from certain accountability elements of the act. The researcher assumes that the revelations of this study will encourage school districts to provide innovative and meaningful professional

development activities to more adequately prepare administrators to be insightful instructional leaders. Lastly, the results of this study may be instructive for principals who serve diverse student populations that include students of low socio-economic status and students within urban areas. Principals in these settings must provide instructional leadership that is as varied as the demographics present in the schools they serve.

Organization of the Study

The following details the structure and overall scope and sequence of this research study. Chapter One is an overview of the tenets of this research effort and the leading concepts studied. Chapter Two is a review of the literature associated with school accountability, challenges of education leadership, the role of the principal, principal preparation programs, and instructional leadership efficacy. Chapter Three delineates the methodology employed, population sample, data collection, instrument design, data treatment, data management and analysis of the data. Chapter Four provides the results of the study. Lastly, Chapter Five provides the reader findings, implication, suggestions for further research, summary, conclusions and reflections.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The increased scrutiny of public schools resulted in the close examination of the principal's role in leading the school transformation process (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). More specifically, the principal's capacity to increase student achievement through instructional leadership is being closely analyzed (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Comparatively, stakeholders of varying types, question whether principal preparation in instructional leadership results in sustained gains in student achievement (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). This study investigated principals' perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development, and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia.

The successive paragraphs within this literature review examine scholarly writings on the effects of principal preparation and professional development on instructional leadership confidence development. Literature spanning the years 2004 through 2014 were reviewed relating to the principalship and instructional leadership confidence development reflect the following themes: Schools and accountability; the challenges of education leadership; education leadership standards; an historical overview of principal preparation programs; principal preparation programs; criticisms of principal preparation programs; reform of principal preparation programs; professional development and instructional leadership efficacy. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has shifted the emphasis of the principalship from that of management and supervision to leadership of the instructional change process within schools for all students and specifically designated segments of the school population (Forte, 2010).

The United States Mandate for Accountability

The federal government of the United States has sought to improve student achievement in schools by improving the quality of public education (NCLB, 2001). Education leadership scholars have argued that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has facilitated school improvement activity across the nation (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). School reform became the mandated aim of local, state and federal education entities, particularly in cases where schools are cited for improvement (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). In the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Department of Education has been granted a waiver, which altered the student accountability

calculations (http://doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/flexibility/index.shtml). This provided respite has resulted in the amendment of reform sanctions, which have reduced the original student achievement benchmarks of the No Child Left Behind Act (http://doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/flexibility/index.shtml). Nonetheless, as the continued mandated requirement of NCLB, failure to meet even the revised student achievement goals has resulted in the sanctioning of schools throughout the Commonwealth (http://doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/flexibility/index.shtml).

With the reauthorization of ESEA (1965), the call for high quality school principals has reached alarming levels (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). Taylor and La Cava (2011) argue that as the country becomes increasingly preoccupied with lagging student achievement in schools, principals and school organizations will receive more attention for their roles in improving education. According to Taylor and LaCava (2011), skills that principals must possess and develop include creating the dynamics for a culture of learning; making decisions relevant to student learning; and stimulating intellectual growth and collaboration. Such a range of skill-sets represent an inability by that of contemporary principal licensure programs to adequately prepare school leaders for the varied challenges of operating complicated school facilities (Taylor & LaCava, 2011). In keeping with these concerns, principal preparation research suggests a theoretical shift regarding the methodology of teaching, guiding and preparing principals so that aspiring administrators have a greater academic and technical sense of instructional leadership (Taylor & LaCava, 2011).

Scholarly writings of Levine (2005) reflect the idea that the evolution of the principalship requires strong instructional leadership in an environment where administrators must ensure substantial increases in student achievement. Consequently, creating a climate of high student success is also thereby hampered by the requirement to outfit schools with personnel that must adhere to lofty licensure requirements (Taylor & LaCava, 2011). O'Donnell and White (2005) maintain that the mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) to attain extraordinary levels of student achievement and to staff schools with highly qualified teachers are indeed among the most serious challenges schools have faced historically. With regard to the evolution of the responsibilities of the principalship, researchers such as Taylor & LaCava, (2011) also underscored the idea that the principal must lead the faculty and student body to affect per annum achievement trends.

The principalship requires an array of talents and abilities to ensure adequate oversight of the instructional program, while managing the complex operations of a school facility.

According to researcher Protheroe (2011), principals must possess the following skills and abilities: Setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the instructional program. Grissom and Harrington (2010) argue that mentoring is the most effective approach in developing the intangibles of instructional efficacy for administrative personnel. This academic work notes the variability of the academic knowledge, skills and dispositions scholars lament are needed to transform classrooms of today and tomorrow.

There are specific management practices and knowledge that principals must develop to align a school to meet accountability requirements (Taylor & LaCava, 2011). Taylor and LaCava (2011) argue that there are seven leadership responsibilities that are specifically tied to annual accountability gains in student achievement: Knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; staff and student motivation; professional learning; facilitator of change; monitoring and evaluating; flexibility; and possession of certain ideas and beliefs relating to student learning. Gentilucci and Muto (2007), contend that the following patterns directly correlate to improved effectiveness in meeting accountability demands: Visiting classrooms consistently and with regularity; interacting with students to foster positive relations; publicly acknowledging accomplishments, and establishing a presence of high visibility around the campus.

In review and analysis of the literature, there is considerable variance about the leadership skills principal preparation programs deem important. Through surveying principals about management behaviors and habits most essential to effective leadership, Borgemenke (2011), maintained that the respondents reported that budgeting, motivating staff, and leadership are among the most important skills sets. Comparatively, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), indicated that the most important task principals should develop include facilitating goal attainment by developing and fostering an environment of positive culture and morale. Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), - contended successful school leadership entails the use of social influence processes to arrange, direct, and motivate the behaviors of personnel. Notwithstanding the differing courses of study and training methodologies of principal licensure programs, the number of schools failing to meet the accountability benchmarks of NCLB is indicative of the litany of poor principal licensure programs (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004).

Education researchers such as Levine (2005) have written extensively about the inadequacies of modern educational leadership programs; however, there are emerging studies on principal training that suggest promising alternative approaches to current principal licensure programs. According to Borgemenke (2011), due to the questionable track records of college and university principal licensure training programs, said higher learning entities should partner with local school districts to allow principals to develop vital, job relevant skills and proficiencies. Hunt (2010) argues that regardless of the reform approach undertaken by principal licensure schools, the element of mentoring must exist in every principal preparation program to ensure principal confidence for leadership in instruction, supervision and management.

Challenges of Education Leadership

The contemporary school accountability debate raised the question of school quality, and is being examined within the framework of twenty-first century societal challenges (Levine, 2005). The government has intensely questioned public school effectiveness and as a result, principal performance has become a significant focus for school reform (Green, 2012). Today, principals must advance student achievement in schools with diverse student learners with cultural and language barriers (Green, 2012). According to the researcher-Green (2012), principals must accept students into their facilities with significant home challenges, augmented by academic deficits, which are indicative of academic skills far below grade level. Still, principals must ensure students are prepared for academic benchmarks within a school year, which reflect grade level content on year-end assessments. Green (2012), an education leadership advocate of school reform, argued for robust leadership, essential for enhancing student achievement of underrepresented youth. Leadership in the schools requires principals able to transform school organizations to meet the accountability demands of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for students with different world views, background and cultural perspectives (Griffin & Green, 2012).

Researcher Reginald Leon Green of the University of Memphis conducted a study on effective leadership in schools (Green, 2012). The setting for the research was the College of Education, Department of Leadership at the University of Memphis. This research study was conducted in association with schools within the Memphis metropolitan area. The participants in the study were practicing principals in the Memphis School District (Green, 2012). The study

examined the practices, procedures, and processes of 172 national Blue Ribbon award-winning school leaders through a qualitative research methodology (Green, 2012). The study delineated specific behaviors that were vital in turning around underperforming schools. Green discovered that effective principals were astute at developing relationships with staff; vital in transforming the organization (Green, 2012). Finally, principals were found to be intentional regarding establishing a structure that allowed for collaboration between teachers and staff (Green, 2012).

Studies on the effectiveness of principals have also examined student perceptions. Gentilucci and Muto (2007) studied meta-analysis data of student impressions of principal effectiveness and found that students were quite perceptive of the kind of practices that have a positive effective on student achievement. Student accounts indicated that when principals were focused on classroom instructional across the building, there was a direct influence on student learning (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007). Student feedback indicated that principals that focused on more of the administrative kinds of tasks such as announcements, scheduling meetings, enforcing dress codes, had a lesser effect on instructional practices in the classrooms (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium

If schools and districts are going to meet the daunting challenges of accountability systems, education leaders must possess the appropriate knowledge, perspectives, acumen and dispositions (Johnson & Uline, 2005). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which developed professional standards for school leaders in 1996 and revised these standards in 2008, informs the training and professional learning of school administrators, The ISLLC standards are intended to guide the administrators' work as follows.

1. Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
2. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth;
3. Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment;
4. Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources;

5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

The ISLLC Standards are professional practices that guide the work of school principals, and are among the desired knowledge and skills, training programs seek to develop. Some would argue that provided the work of researchers such as Levine (2005), the ISLLC Standards were re-written due to the continued misgivings of principal training programs across the nation. Although in spite of the ISLLC standards were revised in 2008, Hunt (2010) argued that principal preparation programs fail to adequately prepare principals for the realities of the principalship today. If one is to evaluate the current status of principal licensure programs, one must examine the principles that trigger such programs and their effects on instructional leadership efficacy development (Levine, 2005).

History of Principal Preparation Programs

The first known courses in the United States in education administration were offered between 1879 and 1881 (Levine, 2005). Thereafter, from approximately 1890 through the early 1900s, graduate courses in education leadership were offered in response to society's interest in public education. By the end of World War II, there were over 125 colleges and universities with doctoral degrees in education administration offered in the United States. (Levine, 2005). The general public's intrigue about formal education resulted in a corresponding increase of those who sought education administration credentials; such interest resulted in higher learning entities competing for professionals aspiring to become school administrators.

With the success of high schools and the analogous increases in public school enrollment, education schools began to compete for distinction (Levine, 2005). The lure of offering academic programs for principals and superintendents was much more appealing to schools of education because of the prestige and noteworthiness such degrees lend (Levine, 2005). However, notwithstanding the growth in schools of education, fundamental flaws regarding the curriculum began to appear. Researchers like Levine (2005), Hunt (2010), Acker-Hocevar and Cruz-Janzen (2008) argued that there was no uniformity or agreement regarding the content taught in education schools; such variability affected the capacity of principals to lead schools

instructionally. Nevertheless, the presence of curriculum structure was not necessary given the overwhelming interest by the public for school enrollment and need for credentialing personnel to staff the schools.

Meeting the requirements of NCLB (2001) is notably challenging in urban areas and principal preparation regarding instructional leadership is vital in these localities (LaCava & Taylor, 2011). For example, Haberman (2003) reported that graduation rates for African-American and Hispanic students in urban areas across the county are lower than those of students with handicapping conditions such as those with blindness (48%), language impairments (66%) or those with orthopedic impairments (68%). The graduation rate of students is an indicator of federal accountability within the FAMO provision of NCLB (2011). Taylor and LaCava (2011) reported that principals in urban areas often have to make dramatic changes in schools in order to meet the student achievement requirements of NCLB. Taylor and LaCava (2011) documented that principals in urban areas, particularly Title I schools, have to monitor teaching and learning in classrooms with greater frequency than non-title one counterparts. Klar (2012) indicated that principals in urban areas must have the capacity to reform schools into teaching and learning organizations for both students and the faculty members charged with instructing these students. Effective monitoring of quality instruction is a significant standard that principals must meet to ensure the success of urban schools (Styron and LeMire, 2009).

Principal Preparation Programs

According to the ISLLC standards, principal preparation programs must essentially focus on five domains. School principals must work with the staff within the building and establish a shared vision to include values, mission, goals, and objectives. Schools must focus effort, time and resources on creating a nurturing environment where staff can grow professionally. The principal must work to ensure that the school is operated efficiently, effectively and through a myriad of assessments, enable school personnel to create and foster an effective learning environment. Principal preparation programs must emphasize to aspiring principals the need to collaborate with the community and respond to the differing needs of the neighborhoods in which the students live. The principal must learn to develop an academic community within the faculty and engage the immediate community toward developing a compelling vision for the school (Styron & LeMire, 2009).

Researchers Styron and LeMire (2009) conducted a study of principal preparation programs and perceptions of practicing principals regarding their satisfaction with their training. The setting for the study was four southeastern states and the subjects were 374 practicing principals in the aforementioned area (Styron & LeMire, 2009). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequency of participant response rates, means and standard deviation from 13 questions relating to the principalship (Styron & LeMire, 2009). The principal respondents offered mixed feedback about their preparation; however, most of the subjects indicated inadequate preparation on matters concerning special education (Styron & LeMire, 2009).

According to Styron & LeMire (2009), principal preparation programs are challenged to prepare principals with the acumen to restructure schools, learn new responsibilities, implement reform measures, and serve as the catalyst for change. Not only are principals required to carry out management responsibilities such as organizing, budgeting, and scheduling, principals must develop, guide and coach teachers to ensure success for students. Additionally, principals must be adept at curriculum, assessment, and student learning in order to advance continuous student achievement. Styron and LeMire (2009) maintain that as of 2009, 450-500 universities offered principal leadership preparation programs. These researchers argue that such a number of education administration programs are having a troubling effect on graduates. Despite of the intended goals of the ISLLC Standards and efforts of the most progressive principal licensure programs, there appears at best variability, perhaps at worst, discrepancies regarding the knowledge, skills and overall capabilities of practicing principals (Styron & LeMire, 2009).

Levine (2005) maintained that the required skill-set of the principal has been impacted by demographic, economic, technological and sociological shifts in the United States and across the globe. The United States of America and other advanced nations have evolved from industrialization to information-based economies (Levine, 2005). Schools are being increasingly scrutinized about the competence and employability of their graduates toward preparation for the new information-based economy; this dynamic has forced education institutions to become exceedingly transparent about student achievement. Superintendents and principals must forego tendencies to supervise and manage their staff members and facilities; they must now lead in a manner that expedites the restructuring of schools to prepare students for jobs that do not even exist today (Levine, 2005). Due to the new American and global economic realities, principal preparation programs will have to consider shifting methodologies so that graduates have a keener

sense of instructional leadership and thereby develop instructional leadership confidence (Levine, 2005).

During the spring of 2010, researcher Borgemenke conducted a study of school administrators on their perceptions of self-efficacy relating to the principalship (Borgemenke, 2011). The setting for the study was a north Texas Independent School District (Borgemenke, 2011). The participants held valid Texas Principal Certifications and were employed by the school district in question (Borgemenke, 2011). All certified principals were issued a survey about the perception of their self-efficacy relating to the leading skills of the principalship (Borgemenke, 2011). Then, senior administrative staff within the division, were directed to select six administrative personnel to serve in a focus group (Borgemenke, 2011). The six administrators were given the results of the survey and asked to provide reasoning, explanation, and rationale for the results (Borgemenke, 2011). Focus group participants reported that principal licensure programs offered coursework that was disconnected from the actual skills and knowledge needed to conduct the daily tasks of an administrator (Borgemenke, 2011). Finally, respondents argued that principal preparation programs need to incorporate an emphasis on instructional leadership (Borgemenke, 2011).

Criticisms of Principal Preparation Programs

During the 1960s, concurrent with much of the societal unrest such as the civil rights and voting rights movements, schools and therefore principal licensure programs were mandated to reform (Levine, 2005). Scholars and researchers alike have reported on a myriad of imprudent licensure requirements, such as mandating coursework be completed on campus, that discouraged viable prospective candidates from seeking administrative endorsements (Levine, 2005). Other reform edicts included schools of education being pressured to open their doors to racial and ethnic minorities and women. Thereafter, with the publication of the *Nation at Risk* school performance and school leadership underwent the most significant scrutiny by the public since the launching of *Sputnik* (Levine, 2005). In 1987, a National Commission on Excellence in Education Administration found that fewer than 200 of the nations' 505 graduate programs in education administration were capable of meeting prescribed standards of excellence; the remaining education leadership schools should be closed. Many of the historical disagreements

about the structure and focus of education administration schools had not subsided (Levine, 2005).

Researchers Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen (2008) conducted a study on principal preparation effect and the linkage to sustained, high performance learning in high poverty schools. The study was an extension of a prior scientific investigation conducted by Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen (2008), which examined three years of data pertaining to student performance of all public elementary schools across the state of Florida (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). Only nine of the elementary school studied were identified as having sustained high achievement during the intervening years since the prior study (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). In this research, interviews were conducted with the administrators of the nine schools on the tasks performed by the administrators that attributed to the success of the schools. The study examined the values and culture inherent within high performing schools. Among the findings and conclusions of the study was the notion that principal preparation programs need reform (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). Principal training needs to focus on how isolated functions of the school impact the collective effect of the entire operation (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). Principals must understand how schools represent human systems; administrators need to understand how to create an environment of problem-solving, effective collaboration, and authentic teamwork (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). Staff in these schools clearly understood the jobs and responsibilities of other members of the organization; staff members within these school environments were cross-trained and could easily step into the job assignment of others (Acker-Mocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008).

Styron and LeMire (2009) argued that principal licensure programs range from inadequate to appalling. As colleges and universities compete for students, admission requirements are being lowered, and curriculum has become less rigorous for the sake of accelerating the graduation process (Styron & LeMire, 2009). Levine (2005) contended that low standards in education programs began to proliferate with the only admission requirement being one's ability to pay tuition.

One of the many criticisms of current principal preparation programs is that coursework is offered primarily in non-traditional means for expediency, irrespective of quality and relevance to the field (Hunt, 2010). For example, classes are offered online or student cohorts are fashioned off campus for working professionals. Education leadership programs across the

nation offer disjointed curricula, no means of self-assessment, and are among the lowest admission standards of American graduate schools (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) further opined that the clinical and mentoring components of the education schools were, at best, afterthoughts.

The range of criticisms assigned to principal licensure programs includes the absence of academic rigor and otherwise significant and relevant curriculum (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) maintained that there was an abundance of useless education courses in colleges and universities. Levine (2005) contended that school leadership preparatory programs offer academic coursework that resembles very little of what principals encounter in the field. Additionally, the courses offered from one education administration program to another are so very similar and useless. More than 80% of the principal preparation programs offered the same types of courses such as research methods, historical foundations of education, curriculum development, and child development (Levine, 2005). From curriculum relevancy to academic program quality, there is an abundance of evidence justifying the need to reform the format of existing principal licensure programs.

Reform of Principal Preparation Programs

The state of Illinois recognized the shortcomings of national and state-wide principal preparation programs by undertaking a process to revise the Illinois University principal licensure programs (Hunt, 2010). Hunt (2010) contends that the state of Illinois initiated principal licensure reform action due in part to the Levine Report (2005), which issued an indictment of the quality of national principal preparation programs. The other catalyst for reform was the revelation that the state of Illinois issued 2,402 administrative endorsements when there were only 400 school administration positions; an indication of the ease with which individuals were obtaining principal licensure (Hunt, 2010). Institutions of higher learning appeared to have a greater interest in increasing enrollment and receiving tuition and less interest in focusing on exiting qualified principal aspirants.

Hunt (2010) maintained that the work initiated by the state of Illinois included addressing the matter of principal licensure programs by revising the structure and framework of principal licensure at the state level and focusing on the standards and intended outcomes of specific principal licensure programs. In light of the ISLLC standards, state policies must establish higher standards for principal certification to include mentoring, ongoing professional learning

opportunities and master principal standards (Hunt, 2010). Hunt (2010) argued that institutions of higher learning must arrange formal agreements with school districts to ensure a seamless application of theory to practice. Principal licensure programs must establish and rigorously assess the knowledge and skills of aspiring principals with content proven to facilitate change and reform within troubling schools (Hunt, 2010).

Regardless of the predominance of inadequate principal licensure programs, there are emerging new programs that appear to offer content and program methodologies that align closer with the expectations of the principalship. For example, the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) offered two to three year seminar-focused course programs for aspiring principals (Levine, 2005). Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) documented successful principal preparation programs that often entail partnership with state education agencies, universities and school districts. The seminar approach offered course work in assessment, communications, relationships, diversity and a litany of other non-traditional education administration courses. The aforementioned academic experiences are in keeping with the demands and fundamental expectations of contemporary public schools. Other non-traditional training methods are being spearheaded by school districts directly.

School divisions are also electing to compete with institutions of higher learning by offering more relevant and practical training experiences for administrators (Levine, 2005). For example, Chicago Public Schools offer customized courses for their administrators; coursework is delivered in a manner that corresponds to administrators' professional needs throughout their tenure in a school division. Additionally, job specific mentoring and workshops, which are instructed by veteran administrators, are being provided in school districts. Collectively, these efforts may increase the preparation of principals in a manner that positively affects the efficacy of these school leaders.

Professional Development

As outlined in the ISLLC Standards (2008), principals are vital in developing teacher capacity as a means for raising student learning. In a research investigation conducted by Saelen (2008), it was noted that professional development is essential to remain current of best practices on teacher pedagogy, strategies for student learning, and effective formative and summative

assessment development. Lutz (2008) reasoned “principals are expected to be the instructional leaders with a collective goal of improving student achievement” (p.7).

Notwithstanding the value of continued learning for principals, literature on the professional development principals seek is often anecdotal and difficult to quantify or measure empirically (Nicholson, Harris-John & Schimmel, 2005). Nicholson et al. (2005) suggested that compiling data on professional development patterns of principals is quite limited. Additionally, Nicholson et al. reported there is “a virtual absence of any scientifically based research linking professional development to changes in administrator behavior, school functioning, or student learning.” (p. 3).

Barth (2001) reported that professional development for administrators is poor and fails to ensure preparation for instructional leadership. Barth (2001) documented that conventional professional development for administrators include courses taken at universities, arbitrary in-services, and ill-conceived workshops. Hallinger and Murphy (1991) noted inconsistent practices among states across the nation on professional development requirements for administrators to maintain licensure.

Despite NCLB (2001), states have been slow to offer professional development that adequately prepares principals to meet accountability requirements (Vitaska, 2008). Approximately half of the states around the nation offer professional development opportunities for administrators that meet state license renewal standards (Vitaska, 2008). Inadequate professional development is a contributing factor to persistent school failures and poor principal readiness (Vitaska, 2008).

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) defined professional development as “a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 12). The NSDC indicated that professional development

- fosters collective responsibility for improved student achievement;
- is aligned with rigorous student achievement standards;
- is conducted among educators at the school level and facilitated by well-prepared school principals or other key leaders;

- occurs several times per week among established teams of teachers, principals and other instructional staff members;
- evaluates student, teacher and school learning needs;
- defines a clear set of the educators' learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of data;
- achieves the educator's learning goals by implementing sustained, and evidences-based learning strategies;
- provides job-embedded coaching to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom;
- assesses the effectiveness of the professional development in achieving identified learning goals regularly; and
- informs on-going improvements in teaching and student learning (Hirsh, 2009, p. 12).

Lutz (2008) reported that surveyed principals surveyed articulated professional development needs with great specificity. Principals have expressed need for professional development that allowed collaboration and networking with peers and colleagues (Lutz, 2008). Principals reported a need to share daily occurrences and scenarios with colleagues (Lutz, 2008). Additionally, to properly monitor classroom instruction, principals expressed a desire to learn content being taught by the teachers being monitored (Lutz, 2008).

School transformation, in keeping with the accountability mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), requires strong confidence for instructional leadership (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) argued that good schools have effective principals that are confident in their capacity to facilitate change. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the fundamental capacity to positively effect change within a given setting (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) argued that one's efficacy is contextual; persons do not feel efficacious about all areas of one's work. Accordingly, one of the intended outcomes of this research is to examine feelings of efficacy and/or confidence about instructional leadership.

Albert Bandura of Stanford University has developed scholarly writings on self-efficacy and the impact of individual self-efficacy on the academic environment of schools (Bandura, 1993). Perceived self-efficacy governs one's belief about self; how one behaves, reasons, even

how one motivates oneself (Bandura, 1993). The beliefs that educators have about their capacity to motivate and to create robust learning environments is akin to one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). The perceived self-efficacy of teachers has a salient effect on the classroom setting and ultimately impacts the academic progress and achievement of the students in said setting (Bandura, 1993). Furthermore, the collective efficacy of faculty members across a school also impacts the aggregate achievement of the students within that school environment (Bandura, 1993). The self-perception of the principal in overseeing the education of youth within a student body is ostensibly the principal's instructional leadership efficacy (Bandura, 1993).

Instructional Leadership Efficacy

The major indictment of principal licensure programs is the inability of practicing principals to advance instruction such that student academic achievement dramatically improves (Levine, 2005). Student performance should meet state and federal benchmarks, as measured by a common system of assessment. Today's schools are required to meet continuous improvement goals as benchmarks for performance increase on a per annum basis (Acker-Hocevar & Cruz-Janzen, 2008). In this research investigation, principal efficacy with regard to the improvement of the instructional programs will be analyzed. The improvement of instruction is vital to achieve and maintain prescribed student achievement goals. According to Styron and LeMire (2009), instructional leadership efficacy refers to principals' beliefs about knowledge of curriculum and student learning to foster an academic setting of continuous student achievement. According to scholars, Urick & Bowers (2011), principal perceptions concerning the efficacy for instructional leadership is essentially the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning. Fundamentally, the main tenet of this research effort is the effect of principal licensure programs and other post-graduate professional development activities on instructional leadership efficacy.

The concept of instructional leadership efficacy or the self-efficacy of a principal to attain student achievement benchmarks mandated by the NCLB is quite daunting (McCullers and Bozeman, 2010). In a research study conducted by McCullers and Bozeman (2010), principals revealed that achievement goals, established by the state accountability system in Florida were attainable. However, in that same survey, principals disclosed that the goal of 100% proficiency regarding NCLB was unlikely to be attained (McCullers and Bozeman, 2010). Furthermore,

McCullers and Bozeman (2010), reported that the principal respondents conceded that they lacked the leadership acumen, efficacy, or confidence to achieve the 100% passing rate by the federal deadline of 2014.

Summary

NCLB (2001) has served as the US Government's responses to inadequate student achievement in schools across the nation. Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium provides standards for administrators to include the role of the principal in creating a learning atmosphere in the school. As school quality has been challenged so has the principal's effectiveness as the instructional leader (Grissom & Harrington, 2010). As the role of the principal has evolved from manager to instructional leader, the principal's capacity in this regard has been scrutinized. (Levine, 2005). Principal preparation programs have invited inspection as principals struggle to meet accountability expectations related to the instructional leadership charge (Levine, 2005). Principal preparation programs have been criticized in terms of the coursework intended to prepare principals for leading instructional programs and practices in schools (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). As such, the intent of this research investigation is to analyze perceptions of principals of their preparation programs, professional development experiences and the confidence that develops as a result.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to examine principal perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. The intended outcome of this study was to examine the perceptions of practicing principals regarding their confidence for instructional leadership. The researcher sought to capture the opinions of principals based on their assigned schools through the use of an interview protocol.

An interview protocol was developed as a means to gather perceptions of the study participants. The interview protocol was designed to analyze principals' perceptions about the course work and experiences in their principal licensure programs; professional development activities undertaken as practicing principals, and the confidence that developed as a result. Nine research participants were selected from each public school level: Three elementary, three middle and three high schools.

Research Design

This research design involved a qualitative methodology. The method of study was phenomenological in which the lived experiences of principals were investigated (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Interviews were conducted of nine principals concerning their beliefs and perceptions about their capacities to lead and facilitate the instructional programs of their schools. There were 37 principals in total across the district. The decision to interview nine principals, given the total number of elementary and secondary principals in the entire research setting, is in keeping with the qualitative research literature documented by Roberts (2004). The rationale for utilizing a qualitative methodology was to obtain an authentic view of the preparedness of principals to lead schools' instructionally. A phenomenological approach was the desired methodology because the researcher intended to make sense of the thought process of practicing administrators as they wrestled with instructional decisions (Pugsley, 2010). The employment of a qualitative method of study allowed the researcher to analyze beliefs of principals in their buildings, the natural setting in which they work (Pugsley, 2010). The researcher sought to examine the lived experiences of the principals in the most genuine manner possible (Pugsley, 2010). Furthermore, this methodology was employed to allow subjects the

opportunity to describe their perceptions about instructional leadership based on their individualized experiences, background, training and view of the field of education leadership. For the purpose of assigning meaning to interpret sentiments, and to greater understand behavior, the qualitative approach was implemented.

As previously outlined, the data collection method for this scientific investigation was interview protocol. The interviews were administered on a one-to-one basis to ensure a heightened level of forthrightness and candor. Background content was obtained about the education and professional development of principals pertaining to instructional efficacy for the purpose of establishing context and to facilitate analysis of responses. The interview questions were developed to be general enough to get open-ended responses, yet specific enough to maintain alignment with the research questions.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the direction of this research study:

1. What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?
2. What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
3. What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
4. What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

Sample Collections

The study was conducted in an urban school system within the central region of Virginia. The setting is approximately 100 miles south of Washington, D.C. The median household income of the city's residents is approximately \$44, 000 dollars a year. The selected locality has an overall population of 214,000 residents. The total student population of the school district is 23, 957. The student demographics are as follows: African-American 85.09%, Asian 0.70%,

Hispanic 5.64%, White 8.15%, and 0.37% unspecified. Seventy-five percent of the students district-wide are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

The rationale for studying principals in the targeted region was based on the presence of student subgroups propagated in NCLB (2001). The federal education statute requires schools to attain annual progress benchmarks for student subgroups (NCLB, 2001). Virginia submitted and was granted approval for a waiver, which adjusted the accountability calculations of NCLB (VDOE, 2012). Prior to the adoption of the waiver, the Adequate Yearly Progress provision or AYP detailed the annual achievement benchmarks. With the waiver in place, annual progress benchmarks are outlined within the Federal Achievement Measurable Objectives (FAMO) provision of NCLB (2001); this change entails per annum increases in the student achievement outcomes for all of the designated subgroup members. Failure to meet any of the achievement goals for any of the subgroups shall result in the sanctioning of a school (NCLB, 2001).

Given the diversity of the selected setting, the principals are tasked with meeting the achievement requirements of many of the students subgroups promulgated in NCLB (2001). In effect, principals in urban settings, such as that which was under study, must demonstrate high levels of instructional leadership (Klar, 2012). Strong instructional leadership is essential in urban schools as the variability of the instructional needs of diverse learners is proportional to the variance of the racial and ethnic groups present in a given school (Haberman, 2003). The researcher intended to evaluate the perceptions of principals in terms of meeting the noted instructional leadership demands that are inherent in diverse student populations (Haberman, 2003).

The participants of the study were selected from elementary, middle and high school levels, with three principals chosen from each level. While the researcher has predominantly secondary professional experience, it was prudent to include elementary principals in the investigation. The principal subjects who were chosen to participate were selected at random. With the assistance of an aide, all of the principals within the selected locality were assigned a number. Dice were used to ensure that the selection process was random. With regard to each public school level, elementary, middle and high, principals at each level were assigned a number that corresponded to a particular value following the rolling of dice. The dice were rolled in three successions for each of the academic levels under review. This process resulted in the principals who were ultimately selected to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Gathering

Nine subjects were studied for this review and the method of collecting data occurred through interviewing. Three of the subjects were elementary principals, three of the subjects were middle school principals and three of the subjects were high school principals. Every effort was made to confer with the subjects in their assigned schools to ensure their comfort. Fortunately, all of the principal subjects honored their interview meeting times, and there were no instances where interviews needed to be rescheduled.

The researcher requested and was subsequently granted permission to conduct the study in the desired setting by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech. The researcher completed the required human subjects protection training as evidenced by the Certificate of Completion in Appendix A. The Researcher's IRB Application Approval Memo is listed in Appendix B. Next, the researcher submitted a written request to the selected division to conduct the investigation. Permission was granted by the division's executive director to contact the principals within the system to solicit their participation in the study. To secure permission for subject participation, the researcher issued a letter to all principals who were randomly identified. The letter was used to obtain permission to conduct the study in the division, may be found in Appendix C. The letter, which was used to request the participation of the research subjects, may be found in Appendix D. A participant response notice was issued to all subjects to confirm their intent to participate in the study; this document may be found in Appendix E. Notifications of informed consent were sent to each participant and a signature reflecting agreement with the terms of participation was obtained prior to the subjects' actual interview. The informed consent notification was reviewed in detail with each participant prior to the start of the interview. In full disclosure of the confidential and thorough manner in which informed consent was obtained, a letter reflecting written acceptance and agreement of the particulars of the study may be found in Appendix F. There were five instances in which potential subjects declined to participate; in response, the original list of principals was revisited and subsequent subjects were identified through the random selection process. Finally, nine study participants were selected: three elementary, three middle and three high out of a total number 37 principals from across the district.

Instrument Design

The interview protocol was the instrument used to solicit responses from the research subjects. The researcher assumed the primary role of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2009). The interview protocol was developed directly from the research questions.

Instrument Validation

The data collection instrument was developed by the researcher and was field-tested for ease of understanding and presence of bias. The protocol was presented to practicing principals in a separate district for the aforementioned, field-test examination. The feedback provided resulted in the revision of the list of interview questions. The interview protocol and the types of questions developed were based on the research of Merriam (2009). There are six types of effective question categories that can be utilized when developing an interview research instrument: Experience and behavior; opinion and values; feeling; knowledge; sensory; and background and demographic questions (Merriam, 2009). The aforementioned question categories are effective in terms of stimulating responses from research participants (Merriam, 2009).

In this research study, the investigator sought to develop a research interview protocol from three of the question categories: Experience and behavior; opinion; and perceptions. The researcher wanted to analyze the thought process of the research participants as evidenced by the behaviors revealed in terms of the concept of instructional leadership. Secondly, the researcher intended to gather beliefs in terms of why the participant behaved in certain ways given the charge of instructional leadership. Lastly, the investigator attempted to identify the effect of the subject or the perceptions associated with the decisions made by the subject.

Data Treatment and Management

All research subjects were informed that the information disclosed in the interview would be kept in strict confidence. For example, all of the subjects' names have been withheld and disclosures are presented under the guise of pseudonyms. All of the participants were given a consent form that outlined the purpose of their participation in the study, procedures, and the expectation of the researcher. The consent process also conveyed the assurance that identity of the participants and the content presented would be held in strict confidence. All participants

were informed of their rights, including option to decline participation in the study at any time before or during the interview. The researcher made every effort to ensure that the respondents felt respected and comfortable to optimize forthright disclosure about each research question.

The interviews were conducted with nine principals within an urban school system within Central Virginia and accounts of the interviews were taken and maintained through a recording device. The researcher explained that the purpose of the recording was to ensure accuracy of responses provided by the research participants (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, the retrieval of responses from the recording device allowed careful analysis of the revelations made by each respondent. The recordings were maintained under the control of the researcher in a locked manner inaccessible to all other persons. Research participants were informed that the interview responses would be maintained on the recording device for one calendar year following the defense of this dissertation. The research subjects were also informed that a transcript of the interview would be developed for closer examination at a later time. Lastly, all research subjects were informed that analysis of the transcript would be made part of the developed dissertation. An invitation was extended to all research subjects to examine the written transcript concerning accuracy of their disclosures. None of the research subjects expressed a desire to review the final transcript that was entered into this dissertation.

Data Analysis

The method employed to provide analysis of the interviews was verbatim transcription in which the researcher conducted word and utterance recordings of all disclosures made during the interview process (Merriam, 2009). The format of each transcription entailed a listing of identifying information at the top of each transcript page detailing the subject (pseudonym) and the date in which the interview took place (Merriam, 2009). Additional formatting features included line numbering down the left hand-side of each page; the account of the subject was single-spaced, with double-spaces between the interviewer and the interviewees (Merriam, 2009).

A coding system was implemented in order to conduct analysis of the interview transcription. The system of coding allowed careful review of patterns and common themes. The coding system that was utilized is regarded by Merriam (1998) as a constant-comparative methodology of data analysis. An organizational chart was developed such that keywords and

phrases could be noted. The frequency of keywords and or phrases observed allowed the researcher to ascertain patterns and themes.

Timeline

The interview protocol was developed during the month of August. The interview protocol was submitted for review to a qualitative methodology professor at Virginia Tech by September 1, 2014. Afterwards, the interview protocol was submitted to the researcher's committee chair for review. Upon acceptance, the interview protocol was submitted to the entire dissertation committee. Members of the dissertation committee asked the researcher to submit the interview protocol to classmates for feedback. Classmates provided feedback and the interview protocol was revised accordingly. Lastly, the researcher submitted the interview protocol to Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board in September 2014. The researcher interviewed the principal subjects during the month of October and November, 2015. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by December 2014.

Summary

The research design for this investigation entailed a qualitative, phenomenological methodology in which the lived experiences of the research subjects were investigated (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The research questions developed for this study guided this investigation. The study was conducted in an urban school district in central Virginia. Nine subjects participated in this research: three elementary, three middle, and three high school principals. An interview protocol was developed based on four research questions. The research protocol was field-tested for the presence of bias and clarity of understanding. All research participants were provided an informed consent notification and subject disclosure were presented under pseudonyms. Data collected were secured and only accessible by the researcher. The method of data collection and analysis entailed verbatim transcription in which the researcher recorded subject disclosures and developed a transcript for examination and analysis.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine principal perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. This investigation reviewed the perceptions of principals regarding their preparedness for instructional leadership, provided their formal licensure training and professional development pursuits. In order to establish context for this research study, principal perceptions concerning instructional leadership efficacy were defined as the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning (Urick & Bowers, 2011). Moreover, additional subtopics examined included isolating the knowledge and skills that are salient in advancing instructional leadership confidence. The results documented in this chapter reflect the responses of nine principals – three elementary, three middle, and three high school, from one urban school district to interview questions associated with the research questions for the study. The research questions are as follows:

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the direction of this research study:

1. What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?
2. What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
3. What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
4. What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

Description of Sample Data

The data collection process for this research study involved interviews of the aforementioned administrators from a school district within Central Virginia. The administrators were randomly selected from the elementary, middle, and high schools across the district. Three elementary, three middle and three high principals served as the research subjects. The subjects were interviewed regarding their perceptions of confidence toward instructional leadership; they were questioned about feelings of preparedness for instructional leadership as a result of their preparation program; and they were queried about perceptions concerning impact of professional development on efficacy for instructional leadership. The interviews were conducted beginning in October 2014 and November 2014. Each interview was recorded on Apple iPhone device and was approximately thirty minutes in duration. All of the interviews were later transcribed for the purpose of theme analysis and empirical examination. The Research Questions may be found in Appendix G. The Interview Questions may be found in Appendix H.

Data Reporting

The principal subjects chosen to participate were selected at random. With the assistance of an aide, all of the principals within the selected locality were assigned a number; there were 37 principals within the school district under study. Dice were used to ensure that the selection process was randomized. Principals at each level were assigned a number that corresponded to a particular value following the rolling of dice. The dice were rolled in three successions for each of the levels under review: elementary, middle and high. This process resulted in the nine principals who were ultimately selected to participate in the study.

The research investigator contacted the identified school division to obtain permission to solicit study participants from across the school district. Once permission was obtained, the investigator sent correspondence to the principals to request their participation. The principals contacted were issued a notice to consider participation, a confirmation notice and informed consent documentation. At the time of the interview, the informed consent notification was reviewed and the subjects were asked to provide a signature in agreement with the terms of the study. Lastly, demographic information was collected to include: Age, gender, ethnicity, years as a principal, and school level.

Demographic Data

The demographic information found within Table 1 reflects the characteristics of the population sample that comprised the study group. All of the participants were African-American; 4 females and 5 males. The years of experience ranged from zero to 16. There was some concern regarding the population sample comprising all African-American subjects; however, the principal subjects who were chosen to participate were selected at random. There were five instances in which selected subjects declined to participate and subsequent subjects were also selected at random; these individuals were also African-American. The predominance of African-Americans in this study reflects the characteristics of the overall population of principals within the setting.

Table 1

Demographics of the Population Sample

Principal	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Years as Principal	School Level
E1	59	Female	African-American	15	Elementary
M1	43	Male	African-American	2	Middle
H1	49	Female	African-American	4	High
E2	53	Male	African-American	16	Elementary
M2	39	Female	African-American	<1	Middle
H2	44	Female	African-American	4	High
E3	40	Male	African-American	6	Elementary
M3	35	Male	African-American	5	Middle
H3	69	Male	African-American	16	High

The research study participants were presented with six interview questions. All of the principal subjects were interviewed at their respective school buildings. The principals were advised to answer each of the interview questions based on their perceptions of their principal preparation programs, their professional development experiences and the extent to which

efficacy developed as a result. The accounts of the principal interviews are presented in the remaining sections of this chapter. The disclosures by the research subjects are presented in association with the relevant research questions.

Table 2

Distribution of Principals by Ethnicity and Gender in the Division

Sample Size: N=9

School Level	Female	Male	African-American	Caucasian	Other
Elementary	33%	66%	100%	0%	0%
Middle	33%	33%	100%	0%	0%
High	66%	33%	100%	0%	0%

The following table reflects the alignment of the research questions and the interview questions that were presented to the research subjects.

Table 3

Alignment of Interview Question by Research Question

Research Question	Interview Question
<p>What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?</p>	<p>Please describe, in your view, the concept of instructional leadership efficacy in urban public schools today.</p>
<p>What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?</p>	<p>How would you explain the role of the principal in facilitating learning in a school building? What are your perceptions in this regard?</p>
<p>What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?</p>	<p>Please detail the extent to which coursework undertaken in your principal preparation program enabled you to facilitate instructional leadership in your school as principal.</p>
<p>What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?</p>	<p>What type of coursework do you feel should be offered in principal preparation programs that would prepare one for the instructional leadership demands of the principalship?</p>
<p>What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?</p>	<p>Please explain how professional development activities undertaken during your career as a school principal, enables you to manage the instructional leadership demands of the principalship.</p>
<p>What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?</p>	<p>What type of professional development experiences should one undertake to facilitate feelings of efficacy concerning instructional leadership as principal of a school?</p>

Research Question 1: What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?

Two interview questions were asked in response to this question. Interview question #1 and interview question #2 were associated with research question #1. Interviewee responses are as follows:

Interview Question 1: Please describe, in your view, the concept of instructional leadership efficacy in urban public schools today. From the outset of the interview process, principals were questioned as to their perception of the concept, instructional leadership efficacy. Principal E1 indicated that from her perspective, instructional leadership efficacy means principals must have the belief that they are able to improve, sustain and expand student learning within the school. Principal M1 reported that his perception of instructional leadership efficacy is one who believes he has have the capacity to create an orderly and disciplined environment with high morale where quality instruction can then take place. Principal H1 reported that her perception of instructional leadership efficacy is a belief that the principal must value and understand the importance of visibility in the academic setting; to be present and engaging in the classrooms across the school. Principal E2 maintained that from his perspective, instructional leadership efficacy means that the principal must know his clientele to inspire the students; that the leader must be aware of the home circumstances of the students that are being served. Principal E2 further opined that instructional leadership efficacy means the principal must be extremely organized in terms of the curriculum and learning outcomes for the students. Principal M2 contended that her perception of instructional leadership efficacy is that a principal must have the belief that she can motivate and inspire teachers to meet the varying academic needs of the students she serves. Principal H2 reported that her perception of instructional leadership efficacy is the sense that the principal understands accountability and guides the school in a manner that the student achievement needs are determined based on the school accreditation and accountability data. Principal E3 indicated that his perception of instructional leadership is that the principal must be an effective communicator in terms of connecting with members of the student body. Principal M3 argued that his perception of instructional leadership is when a principal understands the importance of culture and climate in a school setting in order to meet the instructional needs of students. Principal M3 further explained that instructional leadership

efficacy is the belief in self to create a school environment where the whole child is understood and valued. Principal M3 indicated:

I have to think about instructional leadership efficacy in urban public schools
I think that a person or that leader has to be a person that understands culture,
understands the idea of climate as it relates to the urban public schools child. (Principal
M3, line 4)

Principal H3 indicated that instructional leadership is about one's perspective to develop meaningful relationships with students, faculty, staff; the individuals in the building must have the sense that you care for them and their success and that will facilitate student achievement.

Table 4 summarizes primary as well as secondary themes that emerged when principal subjects were queried about their perceptions regarding the concept of instructional leadership efficacy. Themes were identified as the researcher reviewed the transcripts of each subject and identified topics of emphasis, content that was repeated and topics that were emphasized and underscored among the subjects.

The data from Table 4 illustrate the range of perspectives regarding the concept of instructional leadership efficacy. The two themes that emerged with the greatest frequency were Home School Relations and Instructional Leadership. Research subjects mentioned Instructional Leadership as they described their perception of instructional leadership efficacy. While the subject responses demonstrated an association between the theme Instructional Leadership and the concept, instructional leadership efficacy, the theme, Home School Relations was also mentioned by respondents. The Home School Relations theme, however, reflected the importance of a strong connection with the home of the students served and the academic performance of these students; particularly those designated as disadvantaged.

Table 4

Principal Perceptions Regarding the Concept of Instructional Leadership Efficacy (ILF)

Perception of ELF	Principals								
	E1	M1	H1	E2	M2	H2	E3	M3	H3
Commitment	✓				✓				✓
Belief in Capacity	✓						✓		
Student Learning	✓			✓					
Knowing Clientele				✓					
Home Situation				✓				✓	✓
Home-School Relations			✓	✓			✓	✓	
Knowledge of Curriculum				✓					
Character Development				✓					
Effective Communication					✓		✓		
Instructional Leadership		✓		✓		✓			
Discipline Management		✓							
Teacher Supervision		✓							
Culture and Climate		✓			✓			✓	
Motivational					✓				
Whole Child							✓	✓	✓

Interview Question 2: How would you explain the role of the principal in facilitating learning in a school building? What are your perceptions in this regard? As a follow to the question on instructional leadership efficacy, the subjects were then asked how they perceived the role of the principal in terms of creating an atmosphere of learning within the school setting. Principal E1 indicated the principal's role is multifaceted; the principal is a manager of many duties and responsibilities and good management has a positive effect on instruction. Principal M1 maintained that the primary role of the principal is to provide resources for the teachers.

Principal M1 also argued that the principal should know the faculty and be able to appropriately differentiate the type of support to staff provided the varying needs of the staff members.

Principal M1 also stated:

Well I think it is important that, I know I have heard it said before, if teachers are not asking you questions about instruction, then you are not an instructional leader. I think the biggest piece is being able to go in observe and um giving feedback that is timely and appropriate. (Principal M1, line 23)

Principal H1 stated that the principal is a resource to the students and teachers within the building. Principal H1 also said that the principal has the responsibility of instructional leadership, but the principal must be a manager and a community leader as well. Principal E2 reported that the role of the principal is to lead the fundraising efforts of the school. Principal E2 also argued that in order to provide an academically enriched environment for the students and staff, financial resources need to be acquired to support the myriad of enrichment programs needed by the school. Principal M2 indicated that the principal is the instructional leader.

Principal M2 additionally suggested that the principal should be able to effectively identify quality instruction and have the capacity to coach teachers on effective and rigorous instructional strategies. Principal H2 shared that the principal should be the instructional leader; however, she finds herself managing and addressing disciplinary matters with great frequency throughout the day. Principal E3 opined that the role of the principal in facilitating an environment of learning is that of the instructional leader. Principal E3 further argued that the principal should have sound teaching ability and be a school-wide advocate and proponent of education. Principal M3 maintained that the principal is the lead instructor in a building. Principal M3 also indicated that data on instruction should be the determining factor regarding the achievement success of students within the school building. Principal H3 described the role of the principal as a manager of instruction. Principal H3 also reported the importance of high visibility in the classrooms of the school; engaging the students and monitoring the teachers. The frequency of the variety of responses is indicated in Table 5.

Table 5

Principal Perceptions of the Role of the Principal in Facilitating Student Learning

Principal Roles	Principals								
	E1	M1	H1	E2	M2	H2	E3	M3	H3
Instructional Leader	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Effective Communicator								✓	✓
Resource			✓	✓					
Manager			✓						
Lead Trainer		✓			✓	✓			
Disciplinarian						✓			
Financial Manager	✓								
Change Agent	✓								
Operator	✓								
Community Leader			✓	✓					
Fundraiser				✓					
Motivator				✓					
Advocate						✓			
Role Model						✓			
Instructional Specialist		✓		✓					
Professional				✓					
Establishes Expectations								✓	✓

The data in Table 5 reflect the idea that the principals surveyed perceive the role of the principal as the instructional leader. The secondary theme reflected in the data is the role of lead trainer. Three of the research subjects described the role of instructional leader as Lead Trainer in that the principal must be a teacher of teachers within the building. Lastly, Table 3 details 16 additional themes, which reflect the various roles the principal should demonstrate as one endeavors to facilitate learning within the school building. The role of the principal was

described by the participants, who were in agreement, regarding the importance of instructional leadership, but in less agreement regarding other associated responsibilities.

Research Question 2: What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?

Two interview questions were asked in response to this question. Interview question #3 and interview question #5 were associated with research question #2. Interviewee responses are as follows:

Interview Question 3: Please detail the extent to which coursework undertaken in your principal preparation program enabled you to facilitate instructional leadership in your school as principal. The third interview question examined subjects' preparation for instructional leadership as a result of the coursework completed in their principal preparation program. Principal E1 indicated the most relevant and beneficial courses taken in her preparation program were School Law and School Finance. Principal E1 did not, however, indicate how the School Law and School Finance courses related to the task of instructional leadership. Principal M1 maintained that none of the courses taken while training to become a principal prepared him for the instructional leadership demands of the principalship. Principal M1 shared that most of the courses taken during his principal training consisted of courses on operations management, financial management, and master schedule development. Principal M1 indicated that he would have benefited from courses that examined teaching practice and methods on supporting teachers who were unable to provide quality instruction. Lastly, Principal M1 reported that he developed a sense of instructional leadership through on the job experiences. Principal H1 noted that the courses completed in her principal preparation program did not prepare her for instructional leadership as the building principal. Principal H1 further explained that the collaborative discussions with her colleagues in her principal training program were more beneficial than any of the courses she completed in preparation for the principalship. Principal E2 reported that the most important course taken in his principal preparation program was school law. Principal E2 argued that the school law course was important and relevant to instructional leadership because it informs the principal about what is required and permissible concerning instruction and the education of students within a school building. Lastly, Principal E2 indicated that school law

provided him with guidance on the requirements for the education of exceptional or special needs students. Principal M2 shared that none of the coursework completed in her principal preparation program prepared her for the instructional leadership responsibility of the principalship. Principal M2 also replied that a sense of instructional leadership came about as a result of on the job training. Principal M2 shared that while you are an assistant principal, if you happen to have a principal supervisor who knows instruction, that experience would provide better training than any required course in a principal preparation program. Principal H2 reported that her principal preparation coursework was not helpful. Principal H2 also commented that experience as an assistant principal and the mentorship of her principal-supervisor was most beneficial in her training toward becoming an instructional leader. Principal H2 stated:

I would say the initial coursework did not assist me; it's like baptism by fire.

I was assistant principal at X high school for three years, that prepared me, I was under a good leader, Ms. X and just learning from her, I learned more from her than the instructional piece definitely, you know, you learn more when you are in action.

(Principal H2, line 49)

Principal E3 indicated that the most salient and pertinent class undertaken in this principal preparation program was school law. Principal E3 stated:

I have to say, the most important, one of the most important classes I remember taking is, school law. School law prepared me for not only the ethical pieces that come with leadership, but, knowing guidelines, where to go, how far to go with certain things.

(Principal E3, line 30)

Principal E3 reported that school law prepared him for instructional leadership with a greater understanding of laws pertaining to the operation and supervision of a school. Principal E3 contended that school law enabled him to understand ethical matters relevant to the leadership of a school as well. Principal E3 stated that courses such as administration and curriculum development were essential in developing a sense of what to look for when conducting classroom observations. Principal M3 opined that the most relevant course completed in his principal preparation program was also school law. Principal M3 reported that school law enabled him to understand how teachers are held accountable. Principal M3 reported that other

courses of relevance included instructional leadership and financial management. Principal H3 shared that the course of greatest benefit was school law. Principal H3 opined that school law was useful in that it prepared him for all elements of the school environment. Principal H3 also conveyed that his methods course was preparatory in his training for instructional leadership. The data in Table 6 reflect subjects' perceptions regarding the relationship with the coursework completed in their principal preparation program and the charge of instructional leadership.

Table 6

Principal Preparation Coursework and Instructional Leadership

Coursework	Principals								
	E1	M1	H1	E2	M2	H2	E3	M3	H3
School Law	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Instructional Leadership								✓	
School Finance	✓	✓						✓	
Community Relations								✓	
None of My Courses		✓	✓			✓			
Supervision	✓								
Curriculum Development							✓		
Administration							✓		
Management		✓							
Master Scheduling		✓							

The course regarded as the most salient to instructional leadership, based on the number of instances mentioned, was school law. The subjects who indicated school law was the most helpful and relevant course to instructional leadership made that claim because of exceptional education or the instruction of special needs students. The next two course themes of note were finance and none of my courses. Those who reported finance as an important course, did not argue the relevance of financial matters to instruction. In terms of the None of My Courses response, respondents reported that the coursework offered in the principal preparation program did not prepare them for the instructional leadership responsibilities of operating as school.

Interview Question 5: What type of coursework do you feel should be offered in principal preparation programs that would prepare one for the instructional leadership demands of the principalship in one school division? The fifth question presented to the research subjects examined coursework that should be offered in principal preparation programs that would yield feelings of efficacy for instructional leadership. Principal E1 suggested that principal preparation programs should offer courses in data analysis. Principal E1 also indicated that a course in communication skills for effective writing should be offered. Lastly Principal E1 maintained that courses in human relations, high-level thinking, planning, and organizational skills should be offered as well. Principal M1 replied principal preparation programs need to provide courses with a greater emphasis on curriculum and instruction. Principal M1 further explained that he did not recall any courses that allowed the students to reflect on the attributes of a high performing class; when one conducts a walkthrough observation, what does one expect to see in a class setting that reflects high achievement? Principal M1 further argued:

I think we definitely need to focus more on curriculum and instruction. More observations of teachers being reflective thinkers, strategic thinkers as far as how we do things but also how we reflect on our practice. I think back on my master's degree, I don't recall it being a whole lot, when you walk into a classroom here is what you expect to see. (Principal M1, line 85)

Principal H1 responded that principal preparation coursework should include effective communication; such a course would entail effective communication with parents, faculty members, and with colleagues throughout the system. Principal E2 reported that he feels his course in school law benefitted him and such courses should continue to be offered. Principal E2 indicated that courses in instructional leadership should be offered because he was unprepared to provide such leadership as a school principal. Principal E2 finally reasoned that the following course topics would be of great benefit to administrators: Organization, customer relations, and enrichment instruction. Principal M2 reported that principal preparation programs should offer classes on building relationships with people. Principal M2 also shared that courses designed to inform staff on building professional learning communities should be offered. Principal M2 reported:

I think very important work would; if there could be some type of course on building relationships with people. I think the piece of being able to go into build relationships yourself but to even have coursework on how to teach others to and build relationships and I think that is the most important piece of any good principalship. (Principal M2, line 95)

Lastly, Principal M2 shared that a course on motivating and inspiring staff would be of great benefit as well. Principal H2 reported that principal preparation programs should offer coursework in data analysis. Principal H2 also argued that coursework in coaching for quality instruction should also be offered. Principal E3 reported that principal preparation programs need to do a better job with the instruction of school law. Principal E3 also indicated that preparation programs should offer courses on policies and procedures, and a course on curriculum-based instruction. Principal M3 communicated that principal preparation courses should be differentiated based on the type of school experience one seeks. For example, Principal M3 indicated that if a principal aspirant desires to serve in an urban setting, like courses should be available to that person, provided all that the urban principalship entails. Principal H3 maintained that all of the following courses should continue to be offered in preparation programs: leadership, finance, and management. Principal H3 also argued that a course in interpersonal relations should be provided given the variance of personality types one encounters as the principal of the building. Principal H3 finally explained that an interpersonal relations course would be beneficial in that it would teach students about varying personality types, to motivate and inspire people; to be able to ascertain needs of the students. Table 7 details major themes reported by principal subjects when asked about principal preparation coursework that should be offered.

Table 7

Principal Perceptions of Essential Coursework to Increase Instructional Leadership Efficacy

Coursework	Principals								
	E1	M1	H1	E2	M2	H2	E3	M3	H3
Data Analysis	✓					✓			
Instructional Coaching		✓		✓		✓	✓		
School Law				✓			✓		
Interpersonal Relations	✓		✓		✓				✓
Instruction/Curriculum		✓				✓	✓		
Communications	✓		✓						
Planning/Organization	✓			✓					
Fundraising				✓					
Policy							✓		
Learning Communities					✓				
Student Demographics								✓	
Diversity			✓						
Leadership									✓
Finance									✓
Management									✓

The data in Table 7 reflect subject responses on the topic of courses that should be offered in principal preparation program that would facilitate feelings of efficacy regarding instructional leadership. Instructional Coaching and Interpersonal Relations were the most predominant themes. Four of the nine principals indicated a weakness in the area of improving the teaching performance of faculty members; an inability to effectively coach said staff members to improve instruction. The Interpersonal Relations theme pertained to the importance of relating to and motivating faculty and staff members with a myriad of personalities and dispositions.

Research Question 3: What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?

One interview question was asked in response to this question. Interview question #4 was associated with research question #3. Interviewee responses are as follows.

Interview Question 4: Please explain how professional development activities undertaken during your career as a school principal, enables you to manage the instructional leadership demands of the principalship. The fourth interview question examined the relationship between professional development activities completed during the subject's tenure as principal and the effect on his/her capacity to provide instructional leadership to the school. Principal E1 indicated that professional development is of paramount importance to ensure that your faculty members stay abreast of cutting-edge instructional strategies. Principal E1 argued that current professional development training experiences have been focused on ensuring that classroom instruction is academically rigorous and reflects higher order thinking skills. Principal E1 explained that the professional development opportunities that have been afforded to her by the division have been of high quality and that she otherwise seeks professional development experiences where classroom teaching practices result in student skill development needed for employment. Principal E1 stated:

I think X school system prepares its leaders in a wonderful way. You know, because we want to be on the cutting edge, we want to be in front of that curve, so that we are prepared for students that are coming and that they are prepared to, you know, apply those skills that we are teaching them, though, you know. I have been fortunate and I have been pleased. (Principal E1, line 43)

Principal M1 suggested that professional development that is offered at the division level reflects the values perpetuated by the Central Office administration. Principal M1 indicated:

I have served in an administrative capacity in three urban school districts and the manner in which professional development is offered is very much distinctive of the values encouraged by Central Office leadership and senior management. (Principal M1, line 57)

Principal M1 also reported that recently, professional development that has been offered to administrators in his current division has focused on using data to provide feedback about instruction; to ensure that teaching and learning is aligned with the standards. Principal H1 recalled that some of the most impactful professional development improved the quality of instruction in the classrooms across the school building. Principal H1 stated:

To unpack the data that, that's extremely important. You have to understand and as a principal all the dynamics of the building, but when it come to the so many, the SOLs, assessments and benchmarks, we need to know how to unpack the data, better than anybody else in the building. (Principal H1, line 64)

Principal E2 reported that the most beneficial professional development experiences to date have been offered by the Virginia Department of Education. Principal E2 also indicated that the professional development of the principal should be guided directly by the instructional needs of the school. Principal E2 finally expressed dismay about the evolution of the Standards of Learning as indicated by the considerable time devoted to understanding the shape and scope of the standards as a means of professional development; rather than pursuing enriching teaching and learning experiences.

Principal M2 reported that her professional development training was specific to becoming an administrator following completion of her principal preparation program: The program was entitled: *Associate Principal Program*. Principal E recalled that the A.P.P. contained experiences very similar to the training in her principal preparation program. Principal M2 also indicated that the A.P.P. offered quality, in-the-field scenarios in a manner that afforded practical administrative experiences that were exactly what an administrator would encounter on the job. Principal H2 reported that she also participates in professional development workshops offered by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Principal H2 further recounted that many of the VDOE trainings examined instructional look-fors regarding classroom observations. Principal H2 reported that other worthy professional development experiences from the Virginia Department of Education include *Datacation*, a data analysis software package and the *Virginia Early Warning System*, a program that forecasts high school dropouts. Principal H2 finally argued that no professional development activities have provided her with the acumen needed to dramatically improve the quality of instruction in her school. Principal E3 explained that his

The data reflected in Table 8 indicate the relationship between instructional leadership and the professional development experiences during the time the subject served as principal. The two most notable themes observed were the Virginia-Based and Data-Driven professional development. The two themes reflect an association because many of the professional development trainings facilitated at the division level were about data analysis. The principal subjects that responded indicated a necessity to focus on data given the significant number of No Child Left Behind (2001) subjects present in the schools within the school system. The setting in which the research investigation took place reflected majority minority demographics.

Research Question 4: What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

One interview question was asked in response to this question. Interview question #6 was associated with research question #4. Interviewee responses are as follows:

Interview Question 6: What type of professional development experiences should one undertake to facilitate feelings of efficacy concerning instructional leadership as principal of a school? The sixth question presented to the investigated subjects inquired about their perceptions on professional development activities that would yield feelings of instructional leadership efficacy. Principal E1 argued that it is important that principals self-reflect on their skill-sets related to instructional leadership. Principal E1 indicated that, *Strength-Finder*, professional development allows one to focus on areas of strengths and how such areas impact the entire school organization. Lastly, Principal E1 reported that leadership inventory professional development would benefit administrators as they approach the work of education leadership. Principal M1 reported that he has participated in, *Standards-Based Feedback* professional development. Principal M1 suggested that, *Standards-Based Feedback*, professional development trains the administrators to specifically examine academic standards and the essential understandings of those standards in terms of classroom observations. Lastly, Principal M1 maintained that the most impactful professional development concerning instructional leadership efficacy entails meeting with other principals and discussing leading instruction in school settings that are diverse with substantial numbers of academically at-risk students.

Principal H1 indicated that professional development in instructional leadership should involve training on unpacking the data. Principal H1 further argued that professional development should ensure the principal understands the standards of learning particularly as that data is reported through benchmark assessments and the assessments of the Standards of Learning. Principal E2 mentioned that professional development should be based on the needs assessment of the school. Principal E2 further opined that professional development offered by the Virginia Department of Education allowed him and his administrative team to monitor and guide instruction in a manner that prepared the staff for the year-end SOL assessments. Principal M2 challenged the premise of the question. Principal M2 argued that efficacy associated with instructional leadership could not be developed through professional development. Principal M2 maintained that either a principal has it or not; she expressed doubt that it could be developed through professional development. Principal M2 also stated:

Now, professional development opportunities, I guess you could have workshops to where you maybe go through and do mock assessments or mock skits, so to speak, of how you would handle situations to maybe show others, like this is how you can handle situations or this is how you can go in to reassure that people trust in the ability that you have. (Principal M2, line 118)

Principal H2 contended that meaningful professional development would include visiting schools with similar demographics where the students are meeting the achievement benchmarks set by the state and federal departments of education. Principal E3 replied that professional development in the area of team building and management of teams would enhance the instructional leadership capacity of the administrative team. Principal E3 finally shared that professional development in evaluation and assessment is key in terms of providing leadership to the instructional staff of the school building. Principal M3 reported that professional development in terms of instructional leadership should be practical, not theoretical. Principal M3 further communicated that the training received by the principal should be transferable to the assistant principals as well. Principal M3 reported:

I think that leaders, you got to have professional development opportunities that speak to the idea of instructional leadership; and what I mean by that not just the theory, but the

actual practice of it. And then how, how are you able to bring that back to your school to train your assistant principal and your teachers to be leaders? (Principal M3, line 79)

Principal H3 shared that professional development on the learning styles of the staff in his building would be of great benefit. Principal H3 further reasoned that professional development on the topic of student engagement would be beneficial in terms of observing classroom instruction. Table 9 details major themes reported by principal subjects when asked about professional development experiences that would facilitate feelings of efficacy concerning instructional leadership.

Table 9

Professional Development that Facilitates Instructional Leadership Efficacy

Professional Development	Principals								
	E1	M1	H1	E2	M2	H2	E3	M3	H3
Role Playing	✓				✓			✓	✓
Leadership Styles	✓								✓
Personality Styles	✓								✓
Instructional Leadership		✓						✓	✓
Mentoring		✓				✓			
Data Analysis			✓						
Capacity Building									
School Law				✓					
Team Building							✓		
Evaluation and Assessment							✓		
Human Resources Management							✓		

The data in Table 9 illustrate professional development topics that were disclosed by the subjects when the parties were asked about professional development that advances instructional

leadership efficacy. Scenario Simulations professional development was reported by four of the nine subjects. Instructional Leadership professional development was reported by three of the nine participants. When the subjects spoke about Scenario Simulations, they spoke about the disconnect between their principal preparation program training and the realities of the job duties of the principalship. Professional development training that would allow principal aspirants to role play scenarios in cases like personnel disagreements and to be afforded the opportunity to exchange feedback about conflict resolution decision making, would be valuable professional development as reported by the subjects. Finally, research subjects reported that Instructional Leadership professional development continues to be necessary as school accreditation challenges persist.

Summary

Chapter Four provided data on the perceptions of principals of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. This chapter provided accounts and perceptions of the interviewees delineating the relationship among these variables to determine which, if any, advance feelings of confidence for instructional leadership. Data was presented on feelings from principals about instructional leadership. Details were shared about subjects' beliefs about the role of the principal in promoting student learning within a school setting. Data was furthermore presented on subjects' view of coursework from principal preparation programs. Lastly, participants shared feelings about professional development most impactful for confidence for instructional leadership. The data associated with each of the research questions led to findings, implications and ultimately recommendations for additional research.

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine principal perceptions of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. The goal of this research pursuit is to examine the perceptions of practicing principals regarding their preparedness to lead their schools instructionally. For the purpose of this scientific investigation, principal perceptions concerning instructional leadership efficacy is defined as the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning (Urick & Bowers, 2011). Further, other examined subtopics of this research include isolating the knowledge and skills that are salient in advancing efficacy in terms of instructional leadership.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the direction of this research study.

1. What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one school division?
2. What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
3. What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
4. What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

Throughout this investigation, the researcher sought to examine the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and the confidence for instructional leadership. After conducting a review of the contemporary literature on the referenced variables, the researcher hypothesized that principal training and professional development were

insufficient concerning the formulation of instructional leadership confidence. The researcher therefore analyzed the perceptions of principals regarding their preparedness to provide instructional leadership based on their licensure training and professional development experiences.

Summary of Findings

The successive paragraphs within this chapter entail findings and revelations based on the disclosures of the research subjects interviewed for this study. The findings were reported based on the transcripts of the interviewed subjects. These discoveries were presented in juxtaposition to the relevant research literature, for analysis.

Finding One

Interviewed principals in one urban school division described instructional leadership efficacy in terms of one's capacity to provide instructional leadership and one's knowhow to foster home-school relations. Of the nine principals who were interviewed, the following were reported:

Principal M1, H1, H2, and E3 described the principal as the instructional leader as they provided perceptions about the concept of instructional leadership efficacy. Principals H1, E2, E3, and M3 argued that Instructional leadership efficacy is present when one as the acumen to develop relationships between the school and the families of the students served. Instructional leadership and Home School relations were the predominant topics as the subjects described the idea of instructional leadership efficacy.

Instructional leadership efficacy is derived through a belief that one has the capacity to effectively lead instructional programs and practices such that student learning improves. This sentiment is supported by researchers Urick and Bowers (2011) who reported principal perceptions concerning instructional leadership efficacy is defined as the extent to which principals perceive their ability to influence student learning. However, the idea of intentionally developing Home-School Relations as a means of improving student achievement in the school setting was reported less frequently in the literature on principal training. Nevertheless, the interviewed administrators emphasized the importance of the home in providing instructional leadership that improved student achievement.

Finding Two

Interviewed principals in one urban school division believe that the principal must act as an instructional leader to facilitate learning in the building. Eight of the nine principals reported that the principal must serve as the instructional leader to facilitate student learning within the school building. These findings indicate agreement among the research subjects concerning the principal as the lead of instructional programs and practices. However, disagreement was noted about roles beyond the instructional leader designation that facilitate learning in the school building. There were sixteen additional roles, beyond the instructional leader designation, identified that the principal must assume to facilitate learning within the school setting.

Scholars such as Levine (2005) argue that principals should operate schools as instructional leaders. Beyond the role of instructional leader, subject responses were varied and lacked cohesion; such findings are consistent with the research of Levine (2005) who argued that principal preparation programs have curriculum that are irrelevant and incoherent, which have resulted in a lack of consistency of perspective in terms of roles principals should undertake to positively impact student learning.

Finding Three

Interviewed principals from one urban school division reported that the course of greatest significance to instructional leadership was school law. More than half of all surveyed principals indicated that school law prepared them for the challenges of instructional leadership. Principals E1, H1, E3, M3, and H3 reported that school law prepared them for the instructional leadership challenges of the principalship. There was no consensus as to the relevance of school law to instructional leadership reported by the subjects.

The inability to link coursework to the responsibilities of the instructional leader is affirmed by the research of Styron and LeMire (2005), Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), Levine (2005), and Grissom and Harrington (2010). These scholars have documented specific skills and knowledge principals should possess to lead the instructional programs of schools; said researchers have furthermore outlined the types of courses principal preparation programs should offer to adequately train principals to become instructional leaders.

Finding Four

Interviewed principals were unable to identify the most beneficial professional development in terms of that which is needed to be the instructional leader. Principals E1, M1, and M2 indicated that professional development, as designated, Division-Based, was most significant to the role of instructional leader. Principals M1, E2, M3 mentioned that Data-Driven professional development was most beneficial.

In review of the literature on instructional leadership efficacy, there is limited research on Division-Based professional development in comparison with other professional development offerings in terms of developing instructional leadership skills. However, researchers such as Taylor and LaCava (2011) have provided numerous accounts on the necessity of principals to analyze data and make data-driven decisions that are relevant to prescribed student learning goals. The Taylor and LaCava's literary accounts were supported by the subject disclosures as participants shared that Division-Based professional development on Data Analysis was very impactful.

Finding Five

There was no specific recommendation for coursework in the principal preparation program that was supported by the majority of the interviewed principals. Principals M1, E2, H2, and E3 all indicated that a course on Instructional Coaching would further enable them to execute the duties of the principal as the instructional leader. Principals E1, H1, M2 and H3 argued that a course on Interpersonal Relations would be beneficial; a school faculty comprises many differing dispositions and one must be able to adapt and relate to dissimilar personalities.

The reporting of study participants on the idea of Instructional Coaching and Interpersonal Relations is aligned with the scholarly work of Grissom and Harrington (2010) who have maintained that the skills necessary to improve instruction remain unclear. The necessary coursework for instructional leadership and the number of quality principal preparation programs is quite flawed according to education leadership scholars Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012). Therefore the findings and the literature in this respect reflect in similar ways.

Discussion of Findings

Following the interview of the study participants, minimal consensus was discovered about the competencies necessary for instructional leadership efficacy and the roles vital in facilitating learning in the school setting. There were fifteen topics reported as participants shared their perceptions of the concept of instructional leadership efficacy. Study participants maintained that feelings of instructional leadership efficacy developed as they undertook the role of instructional leader as principal or after having observed a principal who was able to model effective instructional leadership. Participants furthermore noted that experiences in their principal preparation program offered little toward preparedness to meet the student achievement challenges for the student population served. Lastly, respondents mentioned seventeen roles that are necessary in facilitating learning in schools; the noted responses of the participants lacked cohesion in this regard as well.

Subjects responded affirmatively about professional development opportunities offered by the district in which they worked. Interview subjects indicated that professional development in the area of data analysis, offered by the employed division, have been useful as the content focused on the students within the system. Division and school-specific review of achievement data also allowed administrators to collaborate on appropriate administrative actions taken to alter and ultimately improve instructional practices.

Principals that were studied within this investigation offered insight on the types of courses that should be offered in principal preparation programs. Research participants indicated the principalship requires problem solving, mediation and conflict resolution. Subjects maintained that principal preparation programs need to provide opportunities for administrators to demonstrate conflict resolution in a manner that provides feedback and guidance. Additionally, schools of education that offer principal preparation programs need to give thought about the preparation and coursework offered to principals to meet specific elements of instructional leadership. For example, education leadership schools need to train principal aspirants to problem solve appropriate academic intervention following data analysis in a classroom or to offer technical advice on coaching faculty members toward improving the instruction of complex teaching strategies such as shared or guided reading groups.

Implications for Practitioners

The implications reported in this study are based on the findings of this research and should inform the work of principals toward becoming instructional leaders of public and private schools. That which is implied and documented in this chapter should be considered for principal preparation program leaders and principals who seek professional development that promotes feelings of confidence toward instructional leadership.

Implication One

Principal preparation programs and professional development organizations should develop greater consensus of the roles beyond instructional leadership, which facilitate student learning within a school building. Finding two within this chapter revealed sixteen roles in addition to instructional leadership, when subjects were asked about the role of the principal in facilitating learning within the school setting. The absence of a consistent point of view in this regard impedes efforts by scholars and practitioners to propagate habits and competencies that are vital for principals to improve student learning.

The indistinctness about instructional leadership and effect on student achievement discovered in this study resonates with the research literature on the role of the principal in advancing student learning. Levine (2005) argued that role of the principal is that of instructional leader and such leadership occurs when there are substantial increases in student achievement. Taylor and LaCava (2011) reported on the importance in shaping a culture of learning in terms of the principal's role within the school setting. O'Donnell and White (2005) referred to salient principals' roles in terms of the importance of acquiring highly qualified faculty members. The diversity of viewpoint concerning what is necessary to improve student achievement is consistent in education leadership literature.

Implication Two

Principal preparation programs should examine the discrepancy between what they are teaching and the perceptions of the administrators regarding the value of those classes in fostering instructional leadership confidence. One-third of the administrators interviewed indicated that None of My Courses were preparatory in nature to the instructional leadership

demands of the principalship. Additionally, the six other principals indicated that School Finance or School Law was relevant and preparatory for instructional leadership.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) and Levine (2005) have generated literature documenting the failings of principal preparation programs to train principals to lead the instructional programs and goals of a school building. This investigation supports the research of the aforementioned scholars, and provides evidence that school divisions and state boards of education must work collectively to alter licensure programs to prepare students to be instructional leaders. Continued misalignment between education leadership course work and competencies needed to provide instructional leadership will result in schools continuing to miss student achievement standards mandated by No Child Left Behind (2001).

Implication Three

Schools and school divisions should take an active leadership role in providing targeted professional development for their administrators. One-third of the principals surveyed indicated that professional development offered by their school district was helpful in meeting the instructional leadership demands of their assigned school. The principals reported that division based professional development was beneficial as the data reviewed and analyzed pertained to the students within the district. Growth and mentoring of future principals should not be deferred to professional development organizations. School divisions are well aware of the professional needs of the personnel within their system and training can be customized according to the student achievement realities of the schools within that system.

In order to illustrate the sentiment previously stated, Hunt (2010) has written on the state of Illinois' quest to restructure principal licensure policy. Hunt (2010) has furthermore reasoned that institutions of higher learning and school divisions should work collaboratively regarding licensure of principals. As school divisions and higher learning institutions work more effectively together, principal preparation graduates will be better able to meet the accountability demands of the state and federal education departments.

Implication Four

Principal preparation programs and professional development organizations should consider a variety of professional development techniques that include role playing in

leadership development. As the lead of the organization, with notable direct reports assigned to the school building, the principal may be required to mediate conflict. Conflict mediation can occur in a variety of different ways and is an expectation of the principalship. Role playing professional development should be offered in a manner that allows the education leadership students to receive feedback about their approach in resolving conflict.

As the principal endeavors to lead the instructional programs and practices of the school, disagreement sometimes emerges when teachers are evaluated and criticized about teaching practices. Protheroe (2011) indicated that effective principals are skilled at developing the staff members in the building; to improve pedagogy so that student achievement advances. The principals surveyed in this investigation reported that as instructional is scrutinized and as conflict arises, principals need to have the skill-set to objectively manage such difficulties with staff in order to ultimately improve the instructional acumen of faculty members.

Suggestions for Further Research

The implications outlined in this chapter offer three suggestions for further research, and should provide contribution to the field of education leadership. First, completing this study with a group of principals from several different urban school divisions could provide additional insights regarding beneficial professional development and principal preparation experiences that support instructional leadership confidence.

Second, a study on the relationship of principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence for assistant principals would be a viable extension of this work. A focus on the development of the assistant principal could indeed be even more meaningful than this study in that such an examination would ensure a greater preparation of the assistant principal to provide impactful instructional leadership upon transition to the role of principal.

Third, studies on other roles of the principalship could be examined, such as the confidence associated with managing discipline, facilities management, communication or community involvement. The confidence developed in the aforementioned respects could provide principal preparation programs feedback on their effectiveness of training and developing such skills for aspiring persons entering the field of education leadership.

A final recommendation for study would be to examine the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership as it pertains to a rural or suburban setting. It was disclosed within the findings section of this study, the idea of principal preparation programs intentionally preparing principal aspirants for particular settings. Urban, rural and suburban environments are quite different and entail clientele with distinctly different needs. Principal preparation programs could perhaps offer elective coursework within licensure requirements as an opportunity to acquire additional insight to the challenges, circumstances and realities of the various settings of public schools.

Summary and Conclusions

This scientific, phenomenological investigation sought to examine the perceptions of principals of the relationship among principal preparation programs, professional development and instructional leadership confidence in one urban school division in Virginia. The theoretical basis for this inquiry is derived from the work of Levine (2005), who argued that significant numbers of practicing principals are unable to provide instructional leadership to the schools they serve. The methodology employed in this research included the interview of three elementary, three middle and three high school principals in one school division.

The discoveries of this investigation are noteworthy to the field of education leadership and most notably to the professional development pursuits of aspiring and practicing principals. As suggested by the research findings, roles of the principal beyond the instructional leader designation need to be defined regarding that which is salient in facilitating student learning. Principal preparation programs should scrutinize the discrepancy with what they are teaching and the views of administrators regarding the value of those classes in developing instructional leadership confidence. Education leadership schools and school divisions should take an active leadership in providing targeted professional development for their administrators. Principal preparation programs and professional development organizations should contemplate a range of professional development techniques that include role playing in leadership development.

Reflections

Following the completion of my Prospectus Examination and after reflecting on the guidance provided by my committee, I was excited about my intended research methodology. I

felt the method was manageable, would allow me to stay within the prescribed timeframe necessary to graduate, and most importantly, yield intriguing data. I was enthusiastic about gathering the perceptions and perspectives of principals as they recounted their preparation program and professional development experiences. I wanted to know how these experiences shaped their approach in leading their schools. After conducting my research and collecting the data, I discovered that my findings were indeed limited.

As I have contemplated undertaking this process again, I would modify my subject pool to obtain a wider, perhaps more diverse perspective. I would solicit research participants from multiple divisions throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Surveying a larger group of principals might result in greater credibility and generalization of findings.

Some of the disclosures offered by the research subjects in my study reflected consistency; this observed pattern might possibly be attributed to the limited number of research subjects and the population sampling of only one division. For example, the perceptions about division-based professional development or concerns regarding lack of support in the home setting were similar amongst certain subjects. Collecting data from a wider population- from multiple divisions might have provided different findings or allowed more confidence in the findings that were revealed. Collecting accounts from subjects of differing divisions might have also resulted in different implications as well.

Finally, this investigative journey peaked my interest about principal preparation programs with national acclaim. As an educator, I am quite inquisitive about those academic and professional development experiences that result in greater confidence for instructional leadership. My own professional work entails supporting principals and I want to properly guide them as they take on instructional leadership in their schools.

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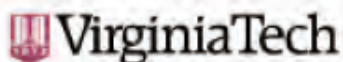
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Appendix A
Certificate of Completion of Training in Human Subjects Protection



Appendix B

Instructional Review Board Application Approval Memo



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4808 Fax 540/231-0959
 email irb@vt.edu
 website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 2, 2014
TO: Ted S Price, Harry R Thomas III
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Relationship between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development and Instructional Leadership Efficacy
IRB NUMBER: 14-916

Effective October 2, 2014, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7
 Protocol Approval Date: October 2, 2014
 Protocol Expiration Date: October 1, 2015
 Continuing Review Due Date*: September 17, 2015

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

* Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

Appendix C
Sample Introduction Letter

Harry R. Thomas III
10207 Hyde Park Drive #302
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553
Email-Harryt5@vt.edu
540.226.1688

Date
Participant's Name
Participant's School Address

Dear _____ :

I am a doctoral student within the Education Leadership and Policy Studies Program of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; otherwise known at Virginia Tech. I am currently undertaking a dissertation study entitled: "The Relationship between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development, and Instructional Leadership Efficacy".

I am requesting the participation of principals in your division in a study. I would like to interview three principals at elementary, three at middle and three at high for a total of nine. Their participation will entail being asked a few questions, lasting no longer than thirty minutes. Enclosed you will find the interview questions that will be presented to the subjects. All interviews will be audio-taped and the results from the study will be used in a dissertation.

The principals will be informed that all identifying information such as name, school, school division, etc., will be withheld; pseudonyms will be used to present the data in the dissertation. The principals will be informed that participation in the study is indeed voluntary. Further, all subjects will be informed that any decision not to participate in the study has no bearing on his/her employment status with your school division. All subjects will be given an informed consent notice to review before participating in the interview as well.

I am confident that the conclusions and recommendations from the study will be beneficial to school divisions and principal preparation programs around the state and perhaps across the nation.

As a former principal myself, I understand your time and the time of your principals is exceedingly valuable. I highly appreciate your consideration regarding the participation of various principals in you district in this study.

Respectfully,

Harry R. Thomas, III

Harry R. Thomas III
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech

Appendix D
Sample Introduction Letter

Harry R. Thomas III
10207 Hyde Park Drive #302
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553
Email-Harryt5@vt.edu
540.226.1688

Date

Participant's Name
Participant's School Address

Dear _____ :

I am a doctoral student within the Education Leadership and Policy Studies Program of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; otherwise known at Virginia Tech. I am currently undertaking a dissertation study entitled: "The Relationship between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development, and Instructional Leadership Efficacy".

The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship among principal preparation programs, post-graduate professional development activities, and instructional leadership efficacy. The results from the study will be used in the researcher's dissertation. Participation in the study is voluntary. Any decision not to participate has no bearing on your employment status with your current school division. Conclusions and recommendations from the study will be beneficial to principal preparation programs around the state and perhaps across the nation.

I write to you in hopes you will agree to participate in this study which will entail a face to face interview. The interview will be audio-taped and will take 30 minutes of your time. Identifying information such as your name, your school division will not be used. All such identifying information will be confided under pseudonyms.

As a former principal myself, I understand your time is exceedingly valuable and highly appreciate your consideration regarding participation in this study. Enclosed you will find a participation response letter and an envelope for the returning response. Also, enclosed is contact information should you have questions or any concerns.

Respectfully,

Harry R. Thomas III
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Tech

Appendix E
Participant Response Letter

Participant's Name
Participant's School Address

Date:

Harry R. Thomas III
10207 Hyde Park Drive #302
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553
540.226.1688-Cell Phone

Dear Mr. Thomas:

My name is _____. Please contact me at the following number
_____ to set up a time and date to participate in your research study.

Sincerely,

Research Study Participant

Appendix F

Informed Consent Agreement

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Research Title: “The Relationship between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development, and Instructional Leadership Efficacy”.

Principal Investigator: Harry R. Thomas III

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship among principal preparation programs, post-graduate professional development activities, and instructional leadership efficacy. The results of this scientific investigation will be used for the development of a dissertation.

Participation in the study: As a participant in this study you will spend thirty minutes in a face to face interview. The interview will be scheduled at a time and venue convenient for you. Your responses in the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed. Following the interview, you will be provided an transcript to ensure accuracy of the responses you have offered.

Anticipated Risks: There are no apparent nor anticipated risks to persons who participate in the study.

Time Period: The interview will take thirty minutes of your time.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to participants in this study. However, findings from this research investigation may be instructive to principal preparation programs within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Confidentiality: All information disclosed during the interview process will be held in strict confidence. The data generated from the interview and that which will be included in the dissertation will contain no identifying information regarding the participants, the participants’ school or school division. The interviews will be transcribed and coded. Information disclosed in the interview will be held under lock and key only accessible by that of the research investigator. Lastly, the content disclosed in the interview via audio recording device will be held for approximately one year following the defense of this dissertation.

Participation: Your participation in this research investigation is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: As a participant in this study, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time of your choosing. Your interview and transcript will be destroyed at the time of withdrawal and the data will not appear in the final dissertation.

Research Title: “The Relationship between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development, and Instructional Leadership Efficacy”.

Process for Withdrawal: If you elect to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher at any time at the phone number and address provided within this document.

Payment: There will be no financial compensation for participation in this study.

Questions/Comments/Concerns: Should you have any questions or concerns in any regard concerning this study, please contact the researcher below:

Harry R. Thomas III
10207 Hyde Park Drive #302
Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553
Phone: (540) 226.1688
Email: Harryt5@vt.edu

Committee Chair:
Dr. Ted Price
Virginia Tech Richmond Center
2810 Parham Road, Suite 300
Richmond, Va 23294
Telephone: (804) 662-7288
Email: pted7@vt.edu

Virginia Tech's IRB
Dr. Moore
moored@vt.edu
540.231.4991

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A copy of this form with your signature will be provided to you for your records.

Appendix G

Research Questions

Harry R. Thomas III, Doctoral Student, Virginia Tech

Dissertation: The Relationship Between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development and Instructional Leadership Efficacy

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the direction of this research study:

1. What are principal perceptions concerning their instructional confidence needed to lead their school in one Virginia school division?
2. What are principal perceptions regarding the coursework undertaken in their preparation program and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
3. What are principal perceptions concerning post-graduate professional development and the associated confidence developed for instructional leadership in one school division?
4. What type of additional professional development do principals believe would enhance their confidence toward instructional leadership in one school division?

Appendix H

Interview Questions

Harry R. Thomas III, Doctoral Student, Virginia Tech

Dissertation: The Relationship Between Principal Preparation Programs, Professional Development and Instructional Leadership Efficacy

Interview Questions

1. Please describe, in your view, the concept of instructional leadership efficacy in urban public schools today.
2. How would you explain the role of the principal in facilitating learning in a school building? What are your perceptions in this regard?
3. Please detail the extent to which coursework undertaken in your principal preparation program enabled you to facilitate instructional leadership in your school as principal.
4. Please explain how professional development activities undertaken during your career as a school principal, enables you to manage the instructional leadership demands of the principalship.
5. What type of coursework do you feel should be offered in principal preparation programs that would prepare one for the instructional leadership demands of the principalship?
6. What type of professional development experiences should one undertake to facilitate feelings of efficacy concerning instructional leadership as principal of a school?