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Self-Efficacy Development of Aspiring Principals: The Perceived Impact of Principal Preparation Programming

Jennifer Ann Allen

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Self-Efficacy Development of Aspiring Principals:
The Perceived Impact of Principal Preparation Programming

by

Jennifer Ann Allen

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Leading and Learning

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2020

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Impact
of Principal Preparation Programming

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Jennifer Ann Allen

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education
(EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

Good principals are the foundation of good schools and are important to student achievement. The principalship is becoming more complex due to increased student diversity, changing family dynamics, an increased reliance on technology, economic conditions, accountability measures, and changing cultural factors. At the same time there is an increased demand for principals due to retirement rates and a decreased number of applicants for the role. The purpose of this instrumental case study utilizing a mixed methods approach, was to investigate the impact of a school division's principal preparation programming on the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship in a large urban division. A survey was distributed electronically to potential participants, all of whom had completed a division's Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP) over a three-year period. Of 85 potential participants, a return rate of 79% provided a final *N* value of 67 participants. Twelve survey participants were chosen to participate in two focus group interviews. The findings of the study were summarized in three themes related to the development of self-efficacy by aspiring principals: (1) leadership identity, (2) process and content: critical components, and (3) context. These themes contain elements related to Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy development and the tenants of Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory. This study informs the design of principal preparation programming to ensure that participants develop not only the skills and knowledge needed to be successful in the principalship, but the self-efficacy to put the skills and knowledge into practice. Keywords: principal preparation, self-efficacy, adult learning, Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey, leadership identity, Canada, Leadership Quality Standard

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my doodle Shasta and equine partner Benny – you provided me with much needed stress relief and therapy when I needed it the most!

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wonderful parents. To my dad, Terry Grainger, who I lost just before finishing my first two courses of this program. I know you remained by my side dad, were with me in spirit, and continued to believe in me. And to my mom, Jean Grainger, thank you for your daily support and encouragement. Thank you both for your faith in me and for all your love. You kept me going...

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Chapter One: Introduction

Much has been written about the importance of the principal in terms of school and student success (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Heck & Hallinger, 2010). Effective principals are the foundation of good schools (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004), but according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) it wasn't until the early 2000s that policy makers began to recognize the importance of principals in creating conditions that will positively influence student outcomes. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the influence of strong leadership is the most important factor contributing to student learning except for quality teaching and curriculum. Schools' performance rarely surpasses the quality of its leadership (Barber, Whelan, & Clark, 2010). Furthermore, the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) and Canadian Association of Principals (CAP), (2014) and others (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Day & Sammons, 2014; Kruse & Seashore-Louis, 2009; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Levine, 2005; and Ryan & Gallo, 2011), report that the role of the principalship is becoming increasingly challenging and complex.

Increasing Complexity of the Principalship

A research study by the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) and the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP) (2014) concluded that Canadian principals have an increasingly complex role. Not only do they need to fulfill managerial and administrative roles, it is expected that they act as innovative change leaders within a culture that challenges traditional models of leadership. This Canadian view is similar to that of Levine (2005), who completed a study of America's Schools of Education. They found that principals and superintendents have to both manage schools and lead schools through increasing social change. These concurrent roles require a shift

in thinking related to what schools really need to do and how they can best do it. Levine also concluded that school leadership requires skills that few candidates for the role of school or system leader have been well prepared to do. According to Leithwood, et al., (2004), there is an increasing need for principals to become more flexible and responsive to specific school and community contexts. Principals need to be able to create conditions in their schools to promote student learning through setting appropriate goals, creating a positive growth oriented culture, increasing participation in decision making, and developing relationships with parents and community. The question becomes, how do they acquire the skills to be flexible and responsive?

Kruse and Seashore-Louis (2009) described increased complexities and pressures of day-to-day operations in schools which require principals to influence the culture of their schools in relation to teaching and learning which requires an integration of servant leadership, instructional leadership, and distributed leadership into what the authors call intensified leadership. Intensification of leadership requires principals to recognize, enhance, and develop the leadership in their schools to better meet the challenges and create a network of influence (Kruse & Seashore-Louis, 2009). The principal must develop strategies to distribute leadership throughout the school in order to bring subcultures together, and in doing so, positively influence conditions leading to enhanced teaching and learning. Intensified leadership as defined above, is a complex skill set to be acquired, and one that arguably is needed to meet the needs in leading most if not all Alberta schools.

Increased Diversity of Student Population in Alberta

Also contributing to the increasing complexity and challenges of the principalship is an increased diversity of student population in Alberta. The diversity is experienced culturally, linguistically, behaviorally and socio-economically. In terms of increased cultural diversity, there

is a growing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student population in Alberta. According to the 2016 Census of Canada Highlights – Aboriginal People (Alberta Government, 2017), the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit population in Alberta grew by 37% in the 10 years between 2006-16. Furthermore, the Aboriginal population was young compared to the non-Aboriginal population. High school completion rates for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students are much lower than completion rates for the non-indigenous school population. The Alberta Accountability Pillar Survey results for 2018 showed that just 53% of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students completed high school in three years compared to 78% of students in the general population (Alberta Education, 2018a).

Rising English language learner population. Increased cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta schools is evidenced by the increasing number of students whose first language is not English. This is in large part due to increased immigration to Alberta which has almost doubled from the five year period from 2006-11 to the five year period from 2011-16 (Statistics Canada, 2018). In the large urban school division where this case study was undertaken, the English Language Learner (ELL) population rose from 24% in 2014 to 26% in 2018 which was an increase of over 5,000 students in just four years (Hanson, 2019). Canadian principals identified diversity of student needs, including an increasing number of ELL students, as one of the factors making it more challenging to meet student needs overall (ATA & CAP, 2014). These principals attributed the challenges in this area to limited resources and limited training of teachers to meet student needs. Furthermore, many ELL students who are also refugees have experienced trauma which further compounds the challenges of meeting their needs effectively. Most principals see cultural diversity as a positive aspect of their school populations, but struggle in terms of how to

help their teachers gain the necessary skills and knowledge to program for ELL students effectively.

Behavioral diversity. Behavioral diversity in students and the associated supports needed to address these behaviors is also increasing. The population of Alberta students in Grades 1 – 12 with identified special needs grew by 13% from 2012-17 (Alberta Education, 2018c). This increase requires improvements to inclusive services such as access to psychologists, occupational therapists, speech language therapists, and mental health professionals and other supports such as behavioral supports, social workers, and school resource officers. With limited financial resources to provide these required supports and services, principals experience teachers that are not able to cope with the range of needs of their students and become overwhelmed with the challenges they face (ATA & CAP, 2014). Principals are often at a loss as to how best to assist these teachers knowing that they have insufficient resources at their disposal.

Poverty and socio-economic diversity. Language diversity and behavioral diversity contribute to complexity in the principalship and so too does increased poverty and socio-economic diversity which create both human and financial challenges in meeting the needs of all students. In Edmonton, Alberta where this study was conducted, 33,000 children are living in poverty and foodbank usage increased by over 17% from 2015-16 (Canada Without Poverty, 2016). Gaps between high income earners and low income earners have increased substantially in Canada over the last 20 years (Corak, 2015) in all provinces including Alberta. Students living in poverty often are not as prepared as their more affluent peers when they begin school based on factors such as lower levels of vocabulary, ability to communicate, understanding of numbers, and ability to play cooperatively with other children, and thus are disadvantaged before they

even begin (Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller, 2007). Student poverty often increases challenges for principals as they work to support students and teachers in cases where parents are unable to meet the social, psychological, and basic physical needs such as nutrition, clothing, and shelter, of their children (ATA & CAP, 2014). This study went on to report that families living in poverty are not always able to be as engaged in schooling, they may be more transient and as a result, community ties are often not as strong. As well, families living in poverty may be more prone to mental illness and/or substance abuse (ATA & CAP, 2014). Students living in these families may have a more difficult time focusing in school and may have higher levels of anxiety. While students from all families, regardless of socio-economic status, may experience these challenges, they are often more pronounced in families living in poverty (ATA & CAP, 2014). Without increased financial and human resources to support these students, the challenges are left for principals, teachers, and other school staff to navigate (ATA & CAP, 2014). All of these areas of increased diversity in student population add to the challenges faced by schools and principals, and will contribute to the complexity and importance of effective preparation of new school principals.

Increasing Demand and Associated Shortage of Principals

Along with the increasing complexity of the principalship and diversity of student population, there is an increasing shortage of individuals to fill principal positions in Canada (Ryan & Gallo, 2011). Factors contributing to the shortage include retirement rates and growing student populations.

Retirement rates. A Canadian study by Ryan and Gallo (2011) called for immediate action to address the principal shortage in the province of Ontario due to the retirement rate for current school principals and a shortage of new principal candidates. Statistics from a report prepared for

the Ontario Institute for Educational Leadership (Armstrong, 2014) stated that the average age of a principal in Ontario was 50 years old and that as of 2008, 37% of elementary school principals and 50% of high school principals were eligible to retire. As far back as 1998, the number of principal retirements exceeded the number of candidates who completed the Ontario Principal Qualification Program (Ryan & Gallo, 2011). Various international studies were cited by Ryan and Gallo (2011) which showed similar challenges in other countries including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. They went on to predict that this crisis of principal shortages would only worsen in the upcoming years. A Learning Partnership (2008) study in Ontario predicted that by 2018, 53% of elementary school vice principals and 39% of secondary school vice principals would be eligible to retire, and thus not transition into a principalship. A shortage of principals has the potential to stifle school improvement initiatives as principals are key contributors to establishing and maintaining schools with high performance levels (Ryan & Gallo, 2011). While there is evidence of a shortage of candidates for the principalship, what is perhaps more important is understanding why the shortage exists. Why are so few choosing to apply for the principalship and how should this inform principal preparation programs in the province? According to Ryan and Gallo (2011), the increased demands and changing expectation of principals call for an evaluation of principal preparation programming to ensure adequate ongoing support for those aspiring to the role as well as for individuals currently serving in the role.

Growing student population in Alberta, Canada. In Alberta, where this study was conducted, beyond retirement rates, a further factor contributing to the demand for more principals is the rising school age population. According to Statistics Canada (2018), the Alberta population rose by 10% in the years from 2012-17. According to Alberta Education (2018c), the

number of students enrolled in school from kindergarten through Grade 12 rose by 9% from 2013-18. Population growth within the province has prompted the Alberta government to build and open new schools to accommodate the growth. From 2010-18, 150 new schools were built and opened across the province (Alberta Infrastructure, 2018), increasing the demand for principals.

In the 2017-18 school year alone, 11 new schools opened within the large Alberta urban division which was the focus of this study. Since 2010, 23 new schools have opened in this division and only two schools have been closed due to shifting demographics in older communities. The division currently has 101,865 students enrolled which is an increase of 15% (over 15,000 students) from the 2012-13 school year. Currently 27% or 57 out of the division's 213 schools have principals in their first or second year of the principalship (Edmonton Public Schools, n.d.). The increased student population, in addition to retirement rates, is another factor contributing to the demand for principals and the urgency around preparing new leaders for the principalship.

Once engaged in the role, the supports and training provided to beginning principals to enhance their skills through ongoing professional learning opportunities is important to secure their continued service in future years (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Learning Partnership, 2008). The need to effectively develop and retain individuals in principal roles due to retirement rates of existing school leaders and the rising number of school aged children in Alberta schools is, I would argue, critical to students' continued academic, social, and emotional success in the province.

Framing the Principalship: The Alberta Leadership Quality Standard

In Alberta, a newly developed Alberta Education *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) came into effect in September, 2019. The legislated implementation of the LQS is a contributing factor related to the development of new principals in Alberta that brings about several challenges for principal preparation programs. This standard articulates the professional expectations of principals in a framework of nine competencies applicable to all principals, and division leaders. Additionally, the LQS serves as the framework for leadership certification programs delivered by provincially approved institutions. Prior to the implementation of the LQS in September of 2019, and the mandatory requirement for principals to be certified in the competencies, there had been no principal certification requirement in the province of Alberta. Individuals wishing to become principals beginning in September 2019 need to be certified by an Alberta Government Ministry approved program (Alberta Education, 2018b).

It is yet to be seen as to whether this new requirement for certification will have an impact on the leadership characteristics or dispositions of individuals who apply for the principalship, if the number of applicants will be impacted based on the perceived level of difficulty of the training, or participant outcomes. Financial costs associated with obtaining certification combined with current economic realities for candidates may also influence the choice of whether to apply for training and, ultimately, who achieves certification and the ability to serve in the role of school principal.

With the increased complexity of the principalship, the increased diversity of the student population, and the recent implementation of the LQS and mandatory principal certification, it is clear that the role of the principal is a challenging one. The growing student population in Alberta and the retirement rate of principals is creating increased demand for new principals as

new schools continue to be built in the province. School divisions need to ensure that strong candidates are being attracted to the role of the principalship and that they are being effectively prepared and supported so that they feel confident in their skills and abilities as they take on this new role (Ryan & Gallo, 2011).

Principal Preparation Programming

With the increased complexity of the principalship, increased demand for new principals, and the recent implementation of the LQS, it is important to ensure that principal preparation programs are designed and offered so that sufficient numbers of aspiring principals become well prepared to take on this challenging role. Much research and effort has gone into trying to determine the best ways to prepare aspiring principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Versland, 2016). In making the case for this particular study it is important to understand that while previous work has been conducted, the context of this study, while sharing similarities with previously investigated jurisdictions, contains situational differences that impact the best practices necessary for principal preparation to be deemed effective within that context. Much can be learned, however, from examining best practices in those other jurisdictions to inform the analysis undertaken in this work.

Principal Preparation Programming Design

A strong design for principal preparation programming should include the skills and knowledge required to meet the demands of the role (Barber et al., 2010; Darling Hammond et al., 2007; Orr, 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) and attention should be given to self-efficacy development (Bandura, 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007; Versland, 2016) and Adult Learning principles (Knowles, 1972; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Orr, 2006; Zepeda, Parylo &

Bengtson, 2014). A 2010 international study looked at leadership capacity development in eight countries across the world in which schools were performing well based on the international PISA tests administered in participating countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Barber et al., 2010). This study included interviews with educational experts including school system leaders, policymakers, and principals; and a survey of 1850 school leaders. Based on the data collected, researchers grouped the identified approaches to school principal preparation into three general models. In the first model, aspiring leaders were largely self-identified and received informal mentoring while taking opportunities to develop skills within their own schools. The second model expanded on the first with the addition of opportunities for aspiring leaders to take courses or become involved in programs that allowed them to build their interest and capacity in leadership. The third and most advanced model included criteria for the identification of promising leaders, provisions to guide and support the growth of aspiring leaders over time, and opportunities to gain increasingly complex leadership experiences through taking on new challenges with support and guidance from within their schools (Barber et al., 2010). This third and most advanced model provides insight into the development of effective principal preparation programs as it aligns with elements recommended by others such as Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), Orr (2006), and Versland (2016) in their studies related to principal preparation programming.

The Stanford leadership study (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007) reviewed eight exemplary principal preparation development programs from across America, and described lessons learned from them and implications for action to improve them. Of the eight programs included in this study, four were university-based programs, and four were programs based in public school divisions. Findings indicate that well-designed programs share common elements that support

the development of leaders who are able to demonstrate effective leadership practices in schools.

These common program elements according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) include:

- alignment with professional standards emphasizing instructional leadership as well as a philosophy that stresses instructional leadership and school improvement;
- integration of theory and job-embedded practice and an emphasis on reflection;
- program leads and instructors who have demonstrated expertise in theory and practice;
- a cohort structure to the program including ongoing coaching and mentoring;
- high quality ongoing internships to allow participants to engage in leadership in a school setting while being supported by an experienced school principal.

Results of the study also indicated the need for more careful screening of leadership candidates in order to identify those with proven records of leadership ability, instructional backgrounds that are strong, and who represent the communities in which they will serve. This, the authors contend, means they show promise to serve as principals. Principal reflections in the Stanford study placed little value on traditional university programs which they described as too removed from the realities of day to day operations of schools, too focused on lecturing, and providing too few opportunities to practically apply learning or solve emergent school challenges.

Other researchers who have studied principal preparation programs (Coffin, 1997; Levine, 2005) have also criticized traditional principal preparation programs which they reported do not meet candidates' needs, do not align with the vision of their division or school, and fail to include job-embedded learning opportunities. Darling Hammond et al. (2007) found that most principal development and licensure programs exist separate from the school setting and the day to day experiences of principals, making it difficult to practice and implement needed skills.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) went on to state that traditional principal development programs

have not kept up with what is required to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students, fail to effectively blend theory with practice, and fail to include enough emphasis on topics such as instructional leadership, effective pedagogy, student learning, and effecting positive change. Effective programs should include a blend of classroom instruction and quality internship opportunities enabling participants to learn from expert practicing school principals. According to Levine (2005) who completed a four-year study of America's Schools of Education, stated that most principal preparation programs fail to include mentorship and job embedded leadership opportunities that are important for the development of leadership skills. Parylo, Zepeda, and Bengston (2012) stressed that mentoring is an important aspect of principal preparation programs and can serve to fill gaps between theory and practice that are difficult to address in traditional post-secondary principal preparation programs.

In Alberta, Canada, a 2018 review by the College of Alberta School Superintendents' (CASS) collected information from 52 school divisions across the province to examine how leadership development programming was being provided. Most school divisions indicated they have developed their own leadership development programs to support the contextual needs of their division, and have mandatory programs for new principals led by senior division leaders, principals, central office staff, retired leaders, and/or external consultants (CASS, 2018). Five divisions in the province have specific principal preparation programs. These programs range in length from a two-day workshop to determine readiness for the principalship, to programs providing the equivalent of one day per month of training for a year. Most programs contain a mentorship or job-shadowing component, and most previously aligned their programs with the provincial Principal Quality Practice Standard (PQPS), which now is replaced with the new provincial Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) in September, 2019.

Importance of self-efficacy development. Principal preparation programs not only need to include the skills and knowledge principals require (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007), they must support the development of principal self-efficacy, or a belief in one's capabilities to be successful in accomplishing the many tasks the role requires (Versland, 2016). Versland and Erickson (2017) described self-efficacy as "a perceived judgment that one has the ability to execute a course of action that brings about a desired result" (p. 1). Being able to effectively organize and carry out the complex responsibilities and duties of the principalship requires such efficacy. Versland's (2016) mixed methods study of principal preparation programs and the development of principal self-efficacy found that greater self-efficacy supports principals in providing leadership that will result in ongoing school improvement. She contends that principal preparation programs can foster the development of self-efficacy by integrating activities that are designed with Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy development in mind: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and psychological arousal (p. 317).

According to Bandura (1997), one must have strong self-efficacy beliefs in order to put skills into practice effectively. Bandura holds that an environment of reciprocal determinism exists whereby a person's behavior both influences and is influenced by personal factors and the social environment. Therefore the context in which principals work and lead become determiners in the level of efficacy the person has for the role.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977), which is the guiding framework for the study, suggests that there are important aspects of designing professional learning activities that will help to build a leader's self-efficacy as they prepare to take on the role of the principalship. A study by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) showed that initial professional learning aimed at preparation for the principalship is crucial to the development of principal self-efficacy.

Activities during principal preparation involving instructional strategies that provide vicarious experiences, mastery experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological arousal as described by Bandura (1997) support the development of self-efficacy and enhance the training of individuals so that they will be better prepared to take on their new role as principal (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007; Versland, 2016). Greater self-efficacy within leaders helps them to work harder and be more persistent, be more flexible, remain calm and confident, and avoid burnout, anxiety, and frustration (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Versland and Erickson (2017) described self-efficacy as “a perceived judgment that one has the ability to execute a course of action that brings about a desired result” (p. 1). Being able to effectively organize and carry out the complex responsibilities and duties of the principalship requires such efficacy.

Bandura (2009) theorized that one’s belief in their own efficacy has a bigger impact on achievement of goals, than do skills and knowledge. As our schools and the role of the principal become more complex, it is increasingly important to ensure that our principal preparation programs are fostering the development of principals who have not only the skills and knowledge for the job, but the belief that they can in fact achieve that which they set out to (Bandura, 2009; Versland, 2016). Principal’s self-efficacy in their role influences their beliefs around school leadership and their expectations of students and staff within the school environment. When principals believe that they have the skills and ability to develop a collaborative culture and implement strategies that will influence school improvement through supporting improvements in teacher practice, their beliefs and actions positively influence both the individual and collective efficacy of teachers. Collective efficacy is defined by Versland and Erikson (2017) as teachers beliefs that their efforts as a whole will have a positive effect on students within the school.

Versland and Erickson (2017) found that strong principal self-efficacy enables principals to more effectively influence instruction and school improvement, which in turn improves collaborative relationships amongst staff, teacher's level of efficacy in the classroom, staff commitment to the school vision, and collective efficacy, which ultimately supports student achievement and growth. Teachers' beliefs in their collective ability to improve results for students support their collective efforts in enacting positive change. With enhanced collective efficacy, academic achievement and positive behavior of students can be realized (Versland & Erikson, 2017).

Additionally, beyond the development of self-efficacy, programs to support the growth and professional learning of aspiring principals should be designed in adherence to the principles of adult learning theory in order to be effective (Parylo et al., 2012). Combining knowledge and skills development with opportunities to build self-efficacy, with attention to adult learning theory, will support principal preparation programming and prepare aspiring principals to effectively take on the role of the principalship.

Importance of Adult Learning Theory principles. Beyond developing skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy, understanding and taking into account the principles of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1972) is important for principals' and aspiring principals' learning, their work with staff, and the design of principal preparation programming (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005; Zepeda et al., 2014). Knowles et al. (2005) developed an andragogical model of adult learning that has evolved over the years and takes into account the needs of adult learners. This model has six assumptions that currently form the foundation of adult learning. Knowles et al. (2005) outlined these six assumptions including: the need for adult learners to know *why* it is important to know something prior to learning it; that there is a deep need for adults to be seen by others as

capable of directing their own learning; the understanding that adults bring their own experiences with them which may be tapped into during the learning process; the importance of presenting learning experiences at the time in which they are required by the learner in order to engage in relevant tasks; having a problem-centered approach to learning as opposed to a subject-oriented approach which is more suitable for children; and the importance of intrinsic motivation such as self-esteem, quality of life, and greater job satisfaction which is more influential for adults than extrinsic motivation such as higher salaries or job promotion. Planning and delivering professional learning in alignment with these six assumptions will address the needs of adult learners and support them in growing as professionals (Gregson & Sturko, 2007). This suggests that principals and those who prepare principals work in an adult learning environment and so attention to adult learning principles is important in this work in order for professional growth to occur.

Challenges of Designing Principal Preparation Programming

Demonstrating the need to prepare aspiring leaders for the position of the principalship and its' challenges is important. Effective principal preparation programming includes opportunities for individuals to build the required knowledge and skills to take on the role of the principal (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). The practices, skills, and knowledge of leaders, that need to be aligned in principal preparation programming, are discussed widely by researchers.

Core leadership practices of successful principals include: instructional leadership and the ability to develop exemplary teachers (Barber et al., 2010; Gurr, 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Karstanje & Webber, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood, Sun, & Pollock, 2017; Robinson et al., 2008); increasing professional capacity by developing people (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008); building a shared vision and purpose (Barber et al.,

2010; Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2008), influencing a positive school culture, leading change, and creating a supportive organization for learning (ATA & CAP, 2014; Deal & Peterson, 2016; Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Karstanje & Webber, 2008; Kruse & Seashore-Louis, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008); and aligning resources strategically with school needs and goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008).

Being trained in these practices is the first step in believing you can lead. In order for principals to effectively implement these practices however, it is important for them to also believe that they are capable of carrying the practices out effectively (Versland, 2016). Careful and early identification of potential school leaders while supporting their leadership development with ongoing programming designed to build self-efficacy may enable divisions to build greater leadership capacity resulting in more candidates who are well prepared to take on the role of the principalship. Attention to adult learning theory may further support the development of individuals who are prepared to assume the role of the principalship. More qualified and well-prepared candidates will help to address anticipated principal shortages allowing vacancies due to retirements and rising student populations to be filled with new principals who are able to positively influence student achievement (Barber et al., 2010).

Given that success in the principalship is in part determined by one's self-efficacy, can preparation programs address it? Recent research by Versland (2016), grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977), concludes that principal preparation programming can contribute to the development of principal self-efficacy by including activities that result in mastery experiences enabling participants to build relationships with others in the program while learning the course content. In order to build self-efficacy, Bandura (2009) suggested that

participation in powerful mastery experiences, in increasingly challenging activities, is the most effective. One such powerful mastery experience is the internship. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007), who studied factors contributing to the development of self-efficacy in principal preparation programs, found that the inclusion of extended internships, allowing participants time to build relationships with colleagues and experience a supportive environment, contributed to their growth in self-efficacy. The authors went on to state that internships should include sufficient rigor for participants to thoroughly develop the skills and knowledge to cope with challenges they will face as principals. Internships as a “mastery” element of principal preparation program design have clearly led to higher self-efficacy among participants in these studies.

This study is guided by the theory of practice that principals who feel competent and self-efficacious, are likely to be more successful in building collective efficacy in their school and those who have interned or mentored in the role feel more competent. Of importance to the profession then, is the ongoing improvement in the design and content of principal preparation programming to include self-efficacy development (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Delivery of that design and content can be further enhanced through the consideration of adult learning theory in principal preparation learning activities. Ensuring that participants know why they need to learn what they are learning, including a problem-centered approach to solving real challenges, providing increased autonomy in learning, and allowing participants to build on previous learning and experiences will all increase the likelihood that learning is successful (Knowles, et al., 2005).

By design, programs whose content emphasizes a strong foundation of the skills and knowledge shown by the research to be associated with best practice, balanced with support in

building skills in cultivating and enhancing interpersonal relationships within one's school context, are able to strongly predict the self-efficacy beliefs of principals (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Analysis of the experiences of aspiring principals who have participated in principal preparation programming may provide insight into the success of the program in supporting the building of the self-efficacy needed for a successful transition into the principalship. Little research related to the development of self-efficacy in aspiring principals through principal preparation programming currently exists (Versland, 2016).

Purpose of the Research

Prior to implementation of the new LQS and provincially mandated leadership training programs in September, 2019, principal preparation in Alberta occurred at the discretion of each school division. In the large urban division that was the focus for this study, a variety of leadership development programs will continue to evolve, and continue to be offered concurrent with the new provincially mandated certification programming aligned to the new standard (Van Kuppeveld, 2019). The target division's *Aspiring Principal Development Program* (APDP) is a specific component of their Leadership Development Framework that has been designed for individuals who have the support of their current principal, that are interested in taking on the role of the principalship, and who are selected by a committee of senior division leaders.

While many divisions in Alberta have undertaken the creation of similar principal preparation programs (CASS, 2018), a paucity of research exists to indicate the impact of these programs on the levels of self-efficacy of the participants for beginning in the principalship. Grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory and Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory, the purpose of this case study was to investigate the impact of a school division's principal preparation programming on the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship in a large urban division.

Research Question

This instrumental case study (Stake, 2006) endeavored to answer the following research question:

How does principal preparation programming impact participants' reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in a large urban school division?

Scope of the Research

This research study on the development of self-efficacy through participation in a preparation program, focused on aspiring principals from schools across a large urban division in central Alberta, Canada. The instrumental case study (Stake, 2006) was bounded by the experiences of four cohorts of 20-25 aspiring principals, each involved in the division's yearlong APDP from 2016 - 2019. The cohorts of participants involved in the APDP in the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years and the curriculum and experience of the participants in the monthly sessions throughout the yearlong program formed the case boundaries. The APDP was designed to build leadership capacity to prepare emerging leaders to manage and lead schools and fill the anticipated demand for new principals that the division will face in the near future. These cohorts of aspiring leaders have completed a division principal preparation series including several elements: (a) a full day of programming each month over the course of a year; (b) monthly sessions, facilitated by two supervisors in the division's leadership development unit whom were previously division principals; (c) included presentations by senior division leaders and experienced principals; (d) dialogue related to research articles and leadership practice, and (e) self-reflection activities. Program content encompassed an overview of division organization and governance, legal matters, operational management, leading a learning community, managing conflict, fostering positive student behavior, change management, fostering

relationships, building school culture, and self-awareness. In addition, participants completed a three-day job shadow in a school with a principal with more than two years in the role. The culminating experience of the program required each participant to complete a practical yearlong project in their school or central department. Program success is measured by the division through monthly written feedback from participants (CASS, 2018).

Data collected throughout this case study includes results from a survey of participants from four cohorts of the APDP in the years between 2016-19, as well as data from focus group interviews with participants from these cohorts. The survey was adapted from Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2004) Principal Self-Efficacy Survey (PSES) by altering the stem for the questions to include aspiring, new, and beginning principals instead of only principals as in the original survey. This change to the stem for the questions was made so that the wording aligned with the needs and participants of this study. The PSES questions were designed by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis to determine the reported self-efficacy of participants. The survey for this study also included short answer questions related to activities included in the APDP, and several demographic questions to gather information about the participants.

Significance

Strong principals are important for student and school success (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Without principals who can fill this role in all schools, it is doubtful that schools will be able to serve all students and that high quality teaching and learning will occur (Salazar, Pazey, & Zembik, 2013). Principal preparation programs such as the Aspiring Principal Development Program which is the focus of this case study, aim to support individuals in gaining the skills and knowledge that will support them as they take on the role of the principalship. The role of the principal is becoming increasingly complex and at the same time, increased demand for

principals in Alberta is confounded by a shortage of applicants. As a result, there is a need to prepare more principals who feel they are more fully prepared to meet the complexities and the demands of the role. Ensuring that principal preparation programming is designed to include content based in best practice and to incorporate principles that support self-efficacy development among participants is important to the development of quality principals and the future of education in Alberta. Arguably, such a study can inform other school jurisdictions world-wide as the need for qualified and confident leaders in schools is, I hold, universal.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Understanding the perceived impact of principal preparation program design on the self-efficacy of participants, in relation to the responsibilities expected of them as they transition to the principalship, is important in improving the design of programming and to better prepare individuals for taking on this complex role. Results of this study on the structure and delivery of a principal preparation program in a large urban division in the province of Alberta, Canada, may inform future iterations of the program and principal preparation programming in other divisions within the province and beyond.

This chapter offers a review of literature related to the historical roles, importance, and complexity of the school principalship, and skills and knowledge required in order to be effective in the role. Also provided is an examination of challenges related to the design of principal preparation programs associated with that complex role including criticisms of traditional classroom based university type programs (Levine, 2005) and recommendations from the literature regarding strong program design. Included in the discussion of program design is a synthesis of literature identifying best practices in adult education as they apply to leadership in schools and to professional development. Research regarding the importance of self-efficacy in leadership and its' intersection with the challenges, practices, and approaches to effective school leadership development will conclude the review. The chapter also offers a brief summary of key ideas gleaned from the literature and a transition to the study undertaken.

Historical Roles of the Principalship

The first school principals began to appear in North American schools in the mid-nineteenth century at the time in which urban schools began to shift from the one room school house to having multiple graded classrooms with teachers who were responsible for the education of students of similar age (Rousmaniere, 2007). At this time, there was little guidance as to the role

of the principal or the qualifications needed for the job, although most duties consisted of managerial and clerical chores such as taking attendance, managing the building, maintaining discipline, and a teaching assignment (Kafka, 2009).

Toward the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the principalship became primarily a managerial position as the teaching portion of the assignment was removed from the role and the emphasis became more on management and administration, while becoming more political. This was also the time that a focus on instructional leadership began to emerge (Rousmaniere, 2007) and that the status, power, and local authority of the school principal became widely recognized (Kafka, 2009). As early as the late 1800s, the principal began to be recognized as the most important factor in the success of the school and was expected to regularly visit classrooms to evaluate teachers and teach them to be better teachers (Pierce, 1935). As time progressed, the desire to have principals function as instructional leaders remained, however a tension between the expectations for instructional leadership and the managerial and clerical tasks, often emphasized by division offices, was prevalent. Rousmaniere (2007) wondered whether principals in this time were expected to be teachers or administrators. This question, arguably, may still exist today among educational stakeholders.

In Canada, in the post-depression years, emphasis was placed on schools to focus on the whole child and on each child's individual development. After the end of World War II, principals' roles in Ontario, Canada, focused primarily on the supervision of teachers and the management of schools (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019). By the 1960s and 1970s, societal pressures facing students became a greater responsibility of schools (Mombourquette, 2013). By the late 1960s and into the early 1980s principals were expected to serve as change agents as they were tasked with implementing various new federal agendas for students requiring specialized

supports and instructional and curricular initiatives beginning with the areas of mathematics and the sciences (Hallinger, 1992). As more researchers investigated what is important to the success of schools and student achievement, instructional leadership was again considered to be of critical importance (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019). With the economic downturn of the 1980s, schools and principals faced increased financial pressures, and increased accountability across Canada. The introduction of provincially mandated examinations in Alberta, Canada (Mombourquette, 2013) and a changing political climate in Ontario, Canada both increased the emphasis on accountability for achievement results and exerted pressure on principals to focus on managerial issues and less on instructional leadership by the early 1990s (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019).

Over the years, the role of the principal has remained similar in certain respects such as having the responsibility of working with teachers to improve instruction and balancing the teaching and administrative aspects of a school. The role is also changing and becoming increasingly complex in various ways. Principals need to provide supports to teachers for educating students with more complex needs in classrooms with greater diversity (ATA & CAP, 2014). Today's principals need to be effective in working with others to create a vision for their school, be able to facilitate change, and oversee teaching and learning. Maintaining a learning environment which is positive, safe, and conducive to the success of all students, developing partnerships with parents and community members, and supporting teachers in improving their practice are all expectations of today's principals (Rintoul & Bishop, 2019).

Importance of the Role of the Principal

Effective principals are important to the success of schools, teachers, and ultimately the success of students. Principal leadership is more indirect than direct in relation to student achievement as principals are able to create environments through which teachers can directly

impact student achievement (Robinson et al., 2008). Hitt and Tucker (2016) synthesized empirical research related to the influence of school leadership on student achievement. They suggest that as schools become more complex, it is increasingly important that principals are able to access ongoing professional learning to support them in their role, and that aspiring principals receive sufficient support and opportunities to develop skills and understanding prior to becoming principals. In order to improve schools and learning, good educational leadership is an important factor; attention must be given to the key leadership skills necessary to move schools and learning forward (Perez-Garcia, Lopez, & Bolivar, 2018).

Principals who are strong instructional leaders have been shown to influence student achievement positively (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010). A study by Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2012) measured principal quality over the first three years working in a school. They found that the top 16% of principals were able to realize annual improvement in school wide student achievement for all students that was 0.05 *SD* or more above average. They also concluded that strong school leadership is especially important in getting failing schools back on track. Although principals have less opportunity to directly work with students than teachers do, there are important indirect actions of principals such as supporting growth of teacher instructional practice and teacher efficacy and positively influencing school culture which ultimately impact student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2017).

A longitudinal research study by Heck and Hallinger (2014) analyzed data from 60 elementary schools in the western United States to determine the impact of school leadership on teaching and learning in math. Results showed that when school leadership focused on instructional improvement, there was a small but statistically significant ($p = 0.08$) indirect impact on student achievement in math due to a positive impact on the school's instructional

environment. Leadership does not directly affect student achievement, but leadership can indirectly influence student achievement through the direct effect on teacher practice (Heck & Hallinger, 2014).

Williams, Kirst, & Haertel, (2005) identified school leadership as critical in relation to leading school improvement and reform, building vision, and in using data to inform instructional improvement and provide assistance to students requiring specialized supports. The National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NCLSCS) (2010) in England provided evidence that school leadership makes a difference. Their research study included collecting and analyzing survey data from a sampling of schools that showed increased student achievement over the past three years while having the same head teacher. The study concluded that principal leadership has an impact on the way teachers work in schools including their dedication, confidence, and the way they plan and carry out their lessons, all of which affect student learning. The data also showed that principals lead school improvement efforts through establishing and maintaining high expectations, identifying priority needs of students, and designing and leading courses of action for improvement while attending to school culture and positive working conditions. This NCLSCS study also concluded that principals provide the overarching leadership in schools and are responsible for managing change and advancing school improvement and student achievement.

Complexity of the Principalship

A national study regarding the changing role of the principalship in Canada (ATA & CAP, 2014) identified factors contributing to an increasing complexity of the principalship. These factors were related to increased student diversity, changing family dynamics, more complex classroom and teaching conditions, increased reliance on technology, economic conditions, and

changing cultural factors. The authors also identified a list of factors that are changing in relation to principals' roles including: workload and job complexity; an increased emphasis on instructional and transformational leadership and a need to develop these new skills; an increasing need to develop relationships with community; levels of stress; and degree of time commitment. Additionally, findings from this study suggests that the challenges of the principalship can become overwhelming, with urgent managerial tasks often overshadowing other leadership roles and inhibiting principals from engaging in other important pursuits such as continual leadership development and community building.

Many of the factors related to increasing workload for principals mentioned in the ATA/CAP study relate to the increased use of technology and a corresponding rise in expectations related to connecting and communicating with others including parents. Principals in this study reported that they felt that they needed to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in order to respond to requests and challenges brought about through social media. The need to develop increased working relationships with community due to increased student and family needs and diversity such as supporting mental health, food and nutrition programs, and other wrap-around services, was also reported to place more demands on principals and schools.

Even though principals in the ATA/CAP study indicated that collaboration is important, many claimed that they carry the workload and responsibility for the majority of leadership tasks themselves. These principals strongly believe that they need increased time for reflection and to collaborate with colleagues. They also claimed to need more opportunities to support their teachers in improving their instructional skills (ATA & CAP, 2014). This study identified two important areas for supporting principals: articulation of competencies essential for school principals, and advocating for increased leadership learning as opposed to allowing managerial

aspects of the job to monopolize the role. Citing Dennis Shirley (2014, p. 7) the authors emphasized that these new challenges and the increased complexity of the role is becoming so overly taxing, that they threaten the educational essence of the work of school leaders, “transforming those leaders into compliance officers of vast information systems that appear to offer few cognitive returns for their investment for schools” (ATA & CAP, 2014).

An international review of successful school leadership (Day & Sammons, 2014) resulted in similar conclusions. This review highlighted that increasing demands due to broader social goals of society, rising academic standards, and heightened pressures of accountability on schools as a result of new national accountability frameworks and expectations aimed at providing public assurance related to education, all put greater expectations on school leaders. The study goes on to say that to cope with these challenges, successful school leaders build leadership capacity in other members of their school community, emphasize ongoing professional learning for staff, and build trusting relationships with staff and community.

More emphasis is being placed by ministries of education on instructional leadership, achievement, and overall school improvement (Ryan and Gallo, 2011). Kruse and Seashore-Louis (2009), described increasingly complex demands of principals including the challenges of balancing leadership and management; achieving accountability targets; coping with increased financial pressures; and an ongoing emphasis on continuous improvement, curriculum, and instructional leadership. The authors suggest these demands require principals to go beyond providing instructional leadership to a model of intensified leadership focusing on influencing the school culture, bringing the sub-cultures of the school together and harnessing the leadership of others to positively impact teaching and learning.

Skills and knowledge needed by principals today. As expectations and demands on principals and the complexity of the role continues to rise, it requires principals to understand their school community and history (Dolph, 2017) and have a strong grasp of important leadership skills and practices essential for success in the role. Research describes a growing number of approaches to school leadership such as transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 1987 & 2007, Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1994, Leithwood & Sun, 2012), instructional leadership (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Glickman, 2002; Hallinger and Murphy 1985; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009), distributed school leadership (Elmore, 2000; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001; Lambert, 2003), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), intensified school leadership (Kruse & Seashore-Louis, 2009), and transformative leadership (Shields, 2011).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership as described by Kouzes and Posner (1987) emphasizes leaders challenging processes to change existing conditions by trying new things, taking risks, learning from what does not work, adjusting their approach, and trying again. Transformational leaders also create a shared vision and in doing so, enlist their community in actively working together toward impelling future possibilities in order to realize the vision. The authors emphasize that transformational leaders create teams characterized by mutual respect, that trust one another, and individuals who feel strong and competent. Transformational leaders have high standards, but provide support and guidance in helping teams achieve them by navigating bureaucracy and setting small goals leading to accomplishment of the overall objectives. Finally, Kouzes and Posner (1987) state that transformational leaders thank and recognize others on their hard work contributing to meeting goals to underscore the importance of valuing the work of others in the change process.

Instructional leadership. Blasé and Blasé (1999) reviewed literature which described the evolution of instructional leadership since the mid-1980s. At that time, they suggest instructional leadership was fairly prescriptive and required principals to focus on providing “direct assistance to teachers, group development, staff development, curriculum development, and action research” (p. 350). More recently, instructional leadership approaches have become more collegial, collaborative, developmental, and transformational with greater emphasis on growth through reflection and consideration of each local context.

A meta-narrative review of instructional leadership published in 2018 by Boyce and Bowers looked at 25 years of studies using the US National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Their findings identified four themes of instructional leadership which had been most researched within the 109 studies reviewed including, “principal leadership and influence, teacher autonomy and influence, adult development, and school climate” (p. 172). They also identified three factors that stood out in relation to the four themes that emerged including teacher satisfaction, commitment, and retention. These combined findings informed the development of one integrated model of instructional leadership which they refer to as “leadership for learning” (p. 161).

Distributed leadership. Distributed leadership emerged with increased demands and external pressures related to school accountability and improvement (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Distributed leadership emphasizes increasing the leadership capacity or responsibility for leadership to many members of the school community. Harris and Spillane (2008) described distributed leadership as the shared involvement of formal and informal leadership in schools in order to influence school improvement and student success. For distributed leadership to work, barriers that often prevent teachers, principals, and other professionals from effectively working

together need to be removed or rearranged (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Lambert (2006) described leadership capacity as “broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership and a way of understanding sustainable school improvement” (p. 231). Principals and others distribute the leadership within the school by sharing decision making, solving problems together, co-designing professional learning, creating a shared vision, and taking collective responsibility for student learning (Lambert, 2006).

Servant leadership. Greenleaf, who coined the notion of servant leadership, described it as leadership in which one serves others and in doing so leads. The servant leader cares greatly for others and works to make sure that their needs are looked after to enable them to grow as human beings (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders put others first and believe that everyone is “in this together” (Anderson, 2008, p. 2).

Intensified leadership. Intensified leadership was described by Kruse and Seashore-Louis (2009) as leadership which involves the creation or shifting of a school culture to one in which all members of the school community come together and take shared accountability for the success and learning of all students. Intensified leadership requires a blend of managerial skills and the ability to enact a vision which supports professional growth so that the lives of students will be changed for the better. The leadership skills of individuals within a school are effectively leveraged into a system that works collaboratively to achieve the vision for the well-being and success of all. Intensified leadership does not discount the importance of instructional leadership and builds on the insights of servant and distributed leadership (Kruse and Seashore-Louis, 2009).

Transformative leadership. Transformative leadership, as described by Shields (2011) is leadership that is concerned with both the public and private good and “emphasizes the need for education to focus both on academic excellence and on social transformation” (p. 2). The foundation of transformative leadership is based on a world view while considering the realities of the context of the members of the school community. Goals include “liberation, deep democracy, equity, and justice” (p. 4) and thus, leaders with moral courage are required in order to stand up for these ideals. Transformative leadership may make use of principles that characterize other leadership models in order to accomplish its’ goals.

Various researchers have argued that whatever the model of leadership, there are common skills and practices that need to be developed in order for leadership to be effective and that different models of leadership try to accomplish similar outcomes in different ways (Gurr, 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Gurr (2017) discussed findings from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) involving researchers from over 20 countries conducting multiple case studies from varying perspectives to look at the practices and characteristics of principals in successful schools based on opinions of students, parents, teachers, and school board trustees. Using a blend of various leadership styles and models to support teachers in making positive changes to their practice was deemed to be more advantageous than subscribing to one specific model. These common skills and practices which are stressed by many researchers include: setting direction and vision (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008); ensuring high quality learning experiences through managing teaching and learning (Barber et al., 2010; Gurr, 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008); increasing professional capacity by developing people (Gurr, 2017;

Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008); redesigning the organization, leading change, and creating a supportive organization for learning (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008); and aligning resources strategically with school needs and goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008).

Setting direction and vision. Principals have a critical role in bringing members of the school community together to create a shared vision and ensure that stakeholders actively work together to realize the vision (Gurr, 2017). People tend to find a vision and goals more compelling when they have helped to create them and when they find them challenging but achievable. They are more motivated to work toward bringing the vision to life (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004). A study by Robinson et al., (2008) that examined the impact of leadership strategies on student learning, found a mean effect size of 0.42 in terms of involving teachers and other community members in creating shared goals, communicating them clearly and monitoring progress along with expectations. Clear communication of shared goals and ongoing dialogue is essential to maintaining direction toward the goals and vision (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Furthermore, principals who model work and behaviours that are aligned with the vision and goals, demonstrate expectations which encourage others to act in an aligned manner. Modelling the vision by the principal is more effective than relying on written and verbal communication (Hitt and Tucker, 2016).

Ensuring high quality learning experiences through managing teaching and learning. An international review of school leadership (Barber et al., 2010) found that a focus on developing teachers and instructional leadership was what best principals devote the most attention to. The principals in this study expressed that they value their role in coaching teachers and helping them improve their practice above all else. Results of Gurr's (2017) research also

showed the importance of having high expectations while supporting everyone in being successful. Robinson et al., (2008) found an effect size of 0.42 in relation to having principals support teaching through coaching, classroom visits, and providing feedback to teachers to help them improve their practice. Several researchers (Gurr, 2017; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006) promote leadership blend of leadership models by supporting growth in teaching practices that have been proven to support student learning at the same time as challenging the status quo, and working to motivate and encourage teachers in their work. Attending to these facets makes it more likely that teaching practices will not only improve, but that students will learn better as a result of teachers providing stronger instruction along with greater encouragement and stimulation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Although instructional leadership has been mentioned in the literature for decades, recent emphasis has been placed on “shared, instructional leadership” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 370) where principals act more as facilitators and in less of a top down or expert manner. In order to achieve a shared approach to instructional leadership, it is important for principals to develop the capacity of the people they work with (Gurr, 2017).

Increasing professional capacity by developing people. Collaboration and dialogue between teachers and principals with an aim to explore new practices, improve instruction, and share decision making is the focus in shared instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003). In a study that examined the impact of leadership strategies on student learning, Robinson et al., (2008) found a mean effect size of 0.84 in terms of leadership that promotes professional learning which is aimed at improving teaching. When principals work side by side with teachers as partners in learning, the impact on student learning is significant. To increase professional capacity in this way, principals must also have a strong understanding of what teaching practices are effective so that they can emphasize these practices while de-emphasizing less effective

strategies (Robinson et al., 2008). Team work and distributed leadership along with building leadership capacity in others is important for school-wide success (Gurr, 2017).

Redesigning the organization, leading change, and creating a supportive organization for learning. Leading change can be a challenging process for principals. Principals need to understand the change process, ensure that there is an understanding of why the change is needed, and provide a pathway for change with pieces that are manageable while celebrating successes along the way (Dolph, 2017). Reeves (2009) suggests that for change to occur, principals must not only know what to do, they must have knowledge and skill to involve others in the implementation of change. First of all, principals should determine what will not change. Next they should model the change themselves while employing a variety of strategies to meet the range of needs of their team. It is also important that principals engage with all individuals in all of the roles within their team. Plans to facilitate change must include provisions for celebrating short term wins, providing specific feedback along the way, having the courage to stand firm or change course depending on what is in students' best interests, and communicating the moral reasons for change clearly so that teachers work to create the best for students rather than feeling the need to comply with authority (Reeves, 2009).

Aligning resources strategically with school needs and goals. Principals need to align instructional goals with high quality resources and recruit teachers with skills and expertise to provide effective high quality instruction. Robinson et al., (2008) found an average effect size of 0.31 based on seven studies which analyzed the impact of strategic resourcing on student achievement. It is not enough for principals to secure funding and resources; they must ensure that the resources are aligned with the pedagogical needs of students. In terms of human resources, Robinson et al., (2008) referred to research by Brewer (1993) that showed that when

principals with academic expectations that are high, are able to select their own staff, student achievement was higher.

The context of school leadership. Beyond the need for principals to be able to create a vision, be strong instructional leaders, increase professional capacity, lead and manage change, and strategically align resources, they must consider their school context and be able to positively influence school culture in order to be effective (Dolph, 2017). Leithwood et al., (2017) also stressed that principals must be in tune with the context of their school and able to adapt core leadership practices in order to meet their school community's specific needs. Personal qualities of successful principals are also important and include things such as: trust, optimism, empathy, openness, humility, courage, honesty, and persistence (Gurr, 2017). In Alberta, Canada, the context of schooling has recently shifted with legislated new standards including the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) which came into effect in September, 2019.

Alberta Leadership Quality Standard. In Alberta, a new *Leadership Quality Standard* (LQS) came into effect in September 2019 (Alberta Education, 2018b). This new standard of professional practice includes nine competencies which principals and school division leaders must demonstrate.

- Fostering Effective Relationships
- Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning
- Embodying Visionary Leadership
- Leading a Learning Community
- Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis and Inuit

- Providing Instructional Leadership
- Developing Leadership Capacity
- Managing School Operations and Resources
- Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

Fostering effective relationships according the Alberta LQS includes creating a welcoming, empathetic, and safe learning environment through establishment of positive and constructive relationships with parents and other community stakeholders to address student needs and create relevant opportunities for dialogue and engagement in school community decision making. Employing a solution focused approach to solving challenges while acting with integrity in the best interest of students is inherent in this competency.

Modeling a commitment to professional learning, according to the LQS includes an imperative for leaders to model ongoing professional learning through seeking, considering, applying and keeping up on educational research trends as well as engaging with others to build expertise and capacity. Seeking feedback and engaging in critical reflection is one possible indicator of meeting this standard.

According to the Alberta LQS, embodying visionary leadership includes working with the school community to identify shared values, create a vision, and set and implement goals in working toward continuous school improvement. Visionary leaders demonstrate a student centered approach and embrace diversity. Visionary leadership takes into consideration, research based and effective approaches to leadership, teaching, and learning, and makes use of data to inform decision making while recognizing and celebrating accomplishments of students and staff members.

Indicators within the LQS delineate that leading a learning community involves fostering a positive, inclusive, and caring school culture that supports teaching and learning that is evidence-informed and incorporates the ethical use of technology. They state that leading a learning community includes an emphasis on ongoing opportunities for collaborative professional learning, high expectations for both students and staff, and a shared responsibility for the success of all. This competency accentuates that parents, guardians, and community service agencies are valued members of learning communities.

The LQS competency related to supporting the application of foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit tasks principals with educating school members in areas of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit culture. These include building understanding and respect for the history, perspectives, culture, and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, and in supporting the process of reconciliation.

Providing instructional leadership, according to the Alberta LQS, involves working to ensure that all students receive high quality teaching and learning opportunities which are aligned with the outcomes of the program of studies. Instructional leadership requires that teachers are supported in developing skills that allow them to confidently provide for a wide range of learner needs and in order to support teachers, leaders need to have strong pedagogical skills and expertise in assessment, evaluation, and the use of technology. Finally, instructional leadership entails the interpretation of data to align pedagogical and professional learning decisions, and facilitate access to resources to support teaching and student learning.

Developing leadership capacity involves principals supporting the building of leadership capacity within the school. Achievement of this competency may be demonstrated by principals engaging in and modelling collaborative decision making by including multiple perspectives and

engaging in open dialogue. Through developing leadership capacity, principals may empower teachers and students to engage in shared leadership activities and promote parental involvement in school life.

Managing school operations and resources indicators require school leaders to align decisions and operations with school values, goals, and areas of need, as well as with division policies and regulations, and provincial legislation. All decisions must be made ethically, and take into consideration principles of child development as well as effective teaching and learning. As connectivity and networks are considered a resource, ensuring access to digital learning and technology is also an indicator of meeting this competency.

The ninth and final competency of the Alberta LQS relates to responding to the greater context of society. Principals demonstrate this standard by understanding and responding appropriately to the social, political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects that impact the school and by demonstrating an understanding of issues and trends in education at the local, provincial, national, and international level. Working to help the community understand important issues and trends impacting and related to education is also an indicator of meeting this competency.

An understanding of all nine LQS competencies helps principals advocate for whatever is needed to support students' academic, social and emotional growth. The competencies laid out in the LQS provide a structure which supports professional growth of Alberta principals and division leaders to enable them to continue to develop the skills and knowledge required in their complex role.

Clearly complex, the role of principal and the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective in that role, create challenges for divisions in Alberta and elsewhere as they look to provide preparation programs for their own school leaders. Not only do principal preparation programs

need to adhere to adult learning principles as they help aspiring principals gain these necessary skills and knowledge, they need to design opportunities that will support the self-efficacy development of the aspiring principals as they learn and begin to put the new skills and knowledge into practice.

Challenges of Principal Preparation Programs (PPP)

According to Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) despite the changing reality of the job of the principal, leadership development and preparation programs do not seem to be keeping up with the increased demands and expectations. Although principals play a very important role in the success of schools, very little is known about the best ways in which to prepare and develop individuals to excel in the role. Aspiring and beginning principals are often not well prepared or supported in meeting the challenges they face in building culture, providing instructional leadership, and facilitating school-wide improvement while attending to the variety of day to day leadership needs and managerial tasks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Slater, Garcia Garduno, and Mentz (2018) described many common challenges faced by novice principals which they recommended be addressed through principal preparation programming. These challenges include new principals having to deal with ineffectual staff, implementing new initiatives, managing school buildings, feelings of loneliness and isolation in the role, managing time, tasks, priorities, and budget. In considering the development of PPP, Slater et al. (2018) also stressed that the context in which new principals will be leading must be taken into account as should attention to self-care and well-being; one way to support self-care is through teaching processes to develop skills in self-reflection. Slater et al. (2018) concluded that novice principals may need to focus on and master the basic logistical and managerial challenges initially, as only then will they be able to take on the challenge of instructional improvement.

Might there be ways to support beginning principals in managing their well-being and the challenges of the new role so that they can also support instructional improvement?

Another factor posing challenges for the development of principal preparation programs is that what works in one context will not necessarily work in another context; a one size fits all approach to programming is bound to be less than successful. Designers and leaders of programs must be aware of the uniqueness of each context in which the work of leadership will occur and new leaders must learn to apply new skills and knowledge appropriate for the context of their specific school community. Most principal preparation programs fail to address the aspect of context and as a result, aspiring principals are ill prepared (Slater et al., 2018).

Criticisms of traditional programs. The most common models of principal preparation programs in the United States are division-created programs or programs offered by universities which both miss the mark in terms of adequately preparing principals to effectively lead learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). These programs often exhibit weaknesses in that they: allow participants to self-select to enroll, use curriculum which is not aligned with the reality of school needs, provide weak opportunities to make connections between theory and practice, and offer limited and poorly designed practical experiences in actual school settings (Levine, 2005).

Levine (2005) stated that most leadership development programs fail to include mentorship and job embedded opportunities which are important for development of leadership skills. In his study which included an analysis of post-secondary leadership development programs from across the United States, he stated that he found no programs that he deemed to be exemplary. He came to his conclusion based on his judgement of what he believed to be outdated curriculum, insufficient time and quality of job embedded learning, insufficient program rigor, and weak faculty and instruction.

In Scott and Scott's (2013) review of findings from the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) they described a range of formal and informal principal preparation programming approaches. Formal programs are usually facilitated by post-secondary institutions and lead to leadership credentialing. Informal programs are usually led by divisions, consultants, consortiums or unions and often consist of short courses or seminars and may include mentoring or on the job learning. Both formal and informal programming approaches have advantages, and both have been criticized for shortcomings (Scott & Scott, 2013).

Formal programs. Formal programs articulate standards and provide assurance that certain knowledge and skills have been gained through successful completion. Some programs however have lowered admission standards, allowing less qualified applicants in, in order to ensure sustained revenue from tuition (Scott & Scott, 2013). Some formal programs may employ facilitators who are not in touch with the realities of the school setting and the needs of practicing school leaders (Levine, 2005).

Informal programs. Informal programming has been criticized for overly focusing on training new leaders to abide by the cultural norms and social processes of the organization (Scott, Webber, Aitkin, & Lupart, 2011). This type of programming is often unprogressive and thus inhibits creative thinking which may be what is actually needed to shift a school or system in a more positive direction. Informal programming often lacks a research base and is often provided by consultants, charging considerable amounts for programs that don't provide the promised results and may in fact be biased depending on the political climate or stance of the organization (Weber et al., 2011). Another criticism of informal programming is that it is often less carefully planned and thought out, resulting in programming being fragmented and not producing results capable of transforming teacher practice (Scott & Scott, 2011). On the other

hand, informal programming can be important as it is more flexible and can be more responsive in providing informal opportunities for aspiring or new principals to gain practical knowledge and skills, allowing them to persevere through the challenges they encounter as they take on the principalship (Scott & Scott, 2011).

Principles of strong design. The high demand for new principals and the increasing complexity of the role calls for principal preparation programming that effectively prepares individuals for the role. Barber, et al.'s (2010) international study of school leadership concluded that leaders are developed through support and experiences, and that intentionally working to build their capacity can increase the system's overall capacity (2010). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) stated that principal preparation is important in building principal self-efficacy, so it is important to closely consider the types of activities and experiences that are included in principal preparation programs. The study by Leithwood et al. (2004) supported the inclusion of three broad areas of school leadership practice into leadership development programs that continually lead to improvement in student learning. First of all, it is important for school leaders to be able to formulate a vision for the shared work of the school and set high expectations while monitoring progress and performance. Secondly, a principal must be able to shift and strengthen school culture to enable the vision to become a reality while ensuring strong teaching and learning. Finally, good principals must be able to effectively develop people by providing modelling, creating stimulating learning opportunities, and ensuring individual support for achieving needed change. These areas, or arguably skills suggested by Leithwood et al. (2004), suggest elements of strong program design.

A report by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) examined how to best prepare principals for the challenging role of transforming schools and suggested elements of effective program design as

well. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) concluded that the most statistically significant preparation of individuals that completed programs occurred when participants were involved in a yearlong internship with a principal as a mentor, and a coach who was a retired principal. Furthermore, they stressed that leadership training should not stop once individuals take on the role of the principal, that intensive mentoring should continue for at least the first year, and professional learning should be an ongoing endeavor. Finally, their report stressed that resources need to be allocated to the development of quality leadership programs and leadership challenges which will allow principals to spend more time focusing on instruction.

Exemplary pre-service programs for aspiring principals and in service programs for principals in their first years of the role were identified by Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007). The key focus points identified from these programs were: instructional leadership, transforming school culture, strong internship opportunities and coaching, and the use of data and evidence to organize change. Graduates of these exemplary programs rated their experiences in a number of areas much higher than did graduates from other programs from across the country. They rated their experiences significantly higher in areas such as cohort experience, reflecting on practice with an aim to improvement, receiving support from practicing school administrators, integration of theory and practice, student centered instruction, problem-based learning and action research or inquiry type projects, and the requirement of creating a portfolio of evidence related to learning and accomplishments. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) also stressed the importance of ongoing support for principals which should include a combination of theory and practice, working with mentors who can scaffold learning experiences as needed, and the promotion of peer networking.

Research conducted in England by Rhodes and Brundrett (2008), identified effective mechanisms of leadership development through a study involving 90 school leaders. Findings of the study indicated that most school leaders identified the development of empowerment, support, and controlled risk-taking as contributing to effective site based leadership development. Work shadowing, learning walks, networking, mentoring and coaching were methods described as helpful by school leaders in that study. Hale and Moorman (2003) in their work on the training and development of school leaders and the influence of state policy on school leadership suggested that developing cohorts of emerging leaders was integral to effectively supporting their development. In support of the principles of best practice noted by Darling Hammond et al. (2004), they noted job embedded leadership development programs involving coaching, mentoring, and visioning were emerging in both the United States and England to support leaders in integrating theory and practice.

Orphanos and Orr (2014) conducted a study which analyzed the impact of innovative leadership preparation programs on principal practice. This study showed a statistically significant impact of these programs on leadership practices of principals and on collaboration and satisfaction by teachers. Based on these findings they suggest policy implications in support of investment in leadership preparation design which will lead to school and system improvement. In another study, Orr (2006) described strategies that should be included in principal preparation programming in order to achieve the desired results. These strategies included an emphasis on adult learning strategies such as problem-based and experiential learning, engaging in reflection and structured dialogue, and active engagement with school communities. Also deemed helpful by Orr, was the inclusion of case based teaching, a cohort structure to programming, and the inclusion of job-embedded experiences and internships.

Principal preparation programming needs to keep up with the changing realities of the role and society. Paying attention to the complexity of needs of school leaders and aspiring leaders by carefully designing programming by taking into account the needs of adult learners and the importance of self-efficacy development will undoubtedly, pay big dividends in student, school, and system success.

Best Practices in Adult Education

Even with the inclusion of skills and knowledge required by principals in principal leadership development programs, delivery of programming should align with the principles of adult learning in order to be effective (Zepeda et al., 2014). Principles of adult learning (Knowles, 1972) may be used to design leadership development training programs to help participants master the intended content while building the self-efficacy to put the skills and knowledge into practice. Adult learners, including teachers and school leaders, learn best when professional learning is designed and implemented taking into consideration the research related to adult learning (Fogarty & Pete, 2010; Gregson & Sturko, 2007; Knowles et al., 2005; Zepeda et al., 2014). Children and adults learn differently (Knowles, 1972).

Knowles (1972) discussed the differences between pedagogy, or learning designed for children, and andragogy, designed for adults, and the implications for program planning and the design of learning experiences. Knowles argued that adults are essentially self-directing learners while children are more dependent upon their teacher for all learning. He went on to describe the differences in assumptions, the role of experience and readiness to learn, and a problem oriented as opposed to a subject-oriented approach to learning. Also included in Knowles' theory are elements of process design which he claimed are important for adult learning and therefore would likely apply to principal preparation programs as well. For adult programming to be

effective, the following elements of adult learning need to be considered and incorporated: creation of a comfortable environment, co-planning, assessment of competencies and current level of participants, negotiation of objectives between students and teacher, a variety of student centered learning processes, and using diagnosis of learning needs as opposed to evaluation.

While adult learning theory as described by Knowles (1972) and Knowles et al. (2005) has focused on learning from the perspective of each individual, other research related to adult learning has also included a focus on learning in context (Gregson & Sturko, 2007; Merriam, 2008; Zepeda et al., 2014) as well as a multidimensional aspect of learning which includes emotional and spiritual aspects along with the cognitive aspects (Merriam, 2008). Merriam (2008) summarized research that explained a shift in the understanding of adult learning from one that focuses on each individual learner's perspective to a perspective in which learning occurs in relation to the learners' physical and sociocultural context. Specific contexts may differ in relation to factors such as group values, norms, rules, physical spaces, and cultural background of the people. Merriam (2008) went on to stress the multidimensional aspects of adult learning including emotional and spiritual components. She stated that the brain is able to make connections that are meaningful and support learning when learning activities are tied to past experiences creating actual physical and emotional responses to sensory information.

Goddu (2012) wrote about the importance of self-directed learning, experiential or situative learning which can be applied to real life situations, and narrative learning, as motivators for adult learning. Self-directed learning shifts control of learning from the instructor to the adult learner who is empowered to make choices and link new learning to personal experiences. According to Goddu, the instructor needs to be a facilitator of learning and a resource that can be tapped, while also learning from their adult learners.

Fogarty and Pete (2010) described seven protocols to support adult learning in order to create change in schools including:

- Professional learning is more effective when sustained over time with participants understanding the big picture and then having choice on content and design of their own learning within the big picture.
- Learning is more effective when it is job embedded with support for implementation on a day to day basis when needed.
- Collegial learning with time scheduled to talk to colleagues about their learning related to student centered challenges is a powerful way to create positive change.
- Interactive professional learning related to real issues is motivating for adult learning which often results in ownership of learning and the ability to transfer learning into action.
- Adults benefit from learning opportunities that are differentiated for them in terms of delivery, that are practical, and that can assist them in doing their job.
- It is important to use data to demonstrate that efforts are in fact, positively influencing student learning.

Attention to these seven protocols may enhance PPP which in turn may enhance the development of self-efficacy in participants.

Adult learning and the context of school leadership. Adult learning theory used in the design of principal preparation will increase effectiveness in meeting the learning needs of adults and ensure that they have the opportunity to master the required knowledge and skills (Zepeda et al., 2014). As a form of adult learning, Zepeda et al. (2014) assert that principal preparation should include the following five features of adult learning: self-directed; motivational; problem-

centered, aligned with goals; and relevant to context. Their cross-case study of professional development programming in Georgia recommended that school systems need to pay better attention to aligning principal professional learning with adult learning approaches in order to be more responsive to the actual needs of the participants. Doing this requires that participants be granted more autonomy in directing their learning and ensuring that principal preparation programming is aligned with the specific needs of the participants involved. The context of the system and each specific school site should also be taken into account. Finally, Zepeda et al. (2014) stressed that adult learning principles should be embedded in the ongoing work of school and division leaders throughout their careers.

In addition to presenting instruction aligned to adult learning principles, preparation programs must empower participants to effectively use their new knowledge and skills in their school context. This calls for activities designed to develop their self-efficacy. Perhaps training and preparation for the principalship can be enhanced through greater attention paid to the tenets of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977), and Knowles Adult Learning Theory (1972).

Self-Efficacy and Leadership

Beliefs related to self-efficacy are a component of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977). Self-efficacy is described as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). One's ability to design and carry out a specific course of action depends more on the individual's self-efficacy, than on their actual ability to perform the actions. Bandura (1986) outlined four sources related to the development of self-efficacy including: mastery experiences or performance accomplishments, social modeling or vicarious experience, social or verbal persuasion, and emotional or physiological arousal.

Mastery experiences or performance accomplishments are the most influential sources of self-efficacy development (Bandura 1986). Repeated successes raise the expectation and belief that one will be able to achieve continued success without being negatively impacted by occasional failures. Vicarious experiences can also raise self-efficacy as one can learn by watching and imitating successful behavior of someone else or adapting or changing one's efforts in response to a model who fails to perform a behavior well. Watching someone else perform a behavior successfully also helps one build efficacy as they come to understand that the behavior is in fact possible. Social or verbal persuasion increases self-efficacy and involves receiving feedback in the form of praise or encouragement related to one's performance of a particular behavior. The feedback can help an individual to improve their ability to perform, especially when the praise and encouragement is combined with corrective feedback. Emotional or physical arousal is the final of Bandura's sources for raising self-efficacy and involves the monitoring of one's emotional state and stress in relation to a behavior and developing coping skills to deal with stressful situations. When one learns to welcome the challenge of a certain behavior, self-efficacy is enhanced (Bandura, 1986). Increased self-efficacy influences one's feelings of optimism, motivation, ability to function well, and ability to persevere in the face of challenge (Bandura, 2012).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), in reference to school leaders, spoke about self-efficacy as "a perceived judgment of one's ability to effect change, which may be viewed as a foundational characteristic of an effective school leader (p. 573)." Their work, as with this study, was grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory, and included the conclusion that principals' self-efficacy beliefs have an influence on their persistence and effort level on a day to day basis and in their resilience when setbacks arise. In addition, they stated that principals' self-

efficacy beliefs play a critical role in their ability to meet the demands of their position. They stressed that self-efficacy development through professional learning for school principals should include an approach featuring activities which provide mastery experiences. These experiences may be developed incrementally first by modelling, followed by guided practice, and then opportunities to transfer the skills back into their school setting.

Goddard, Skrla, and Salloum (2017) showed a link between student achievement and principal self-efficacy. They found that schools with high teacher collective efficacy credited principals with providing opportunities for collaboration leading to instructional improvement. A study of 300 Norwegian principals by Federici and Skaalvik (2011) showed a positive relationship between principal self-efficacy and engagement in their work as defined by vigor, dedication, and absorption. They concluded that building self-efficacy should be an important focus in trying to improve principal effectiveness in schools. Hallinger, Hosseingholizadeh, Hashemi, and Kouhsari, (2018) referred to research which has been completed over the past 10 years which showed a positive relationship between principal self-efficacy and their instructional leadership as well as self-efficacy and their efforts to positively impact behaviors and attitudes of teachers and increase collective teacher efficacy. A meta-analysis of 114 studies by Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) showed that self-efficacy can contribute to as much as a 28% increase in performance which is higher than other factors such as goal setting or receiving feedback interventions, or “actions taken by (an) external agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one's task performance” (Kluger & Denisi 1996, p. 254). To support the enhancement of self-efficacy, Stajkovic and Luthans stressed that it is important for support to be provided at the time in which it is required to complete each given task. When timing is off,

efforts may be deemed ineffective, but in reality, the supports were provided either too early or too late.

Where theory meets practice. The self-efficacy of a principal is complex and is developed through their unique experiences and contexts (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007). Versland (2016) studied the development of self-efficacy as a result of principal preparation programs and showed that self-efficacy could indeed be enhanced through inclusion of specific practices. She made recommendations as to how principal preparation courses could better support the development of self-efficacy by including elements that align with Bandura's (1986) four sources of efficacy beliefs including mastery and vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and the promotion of positive psychological states. Versland (2016) went on to state that activities should be designed with these sources in mind while continuing to focus on relationship building. For example, mastery experiences could involve participants in engaging in authentic activities related to school improvement, requiring them to work with others to solve real problems. Substantial internships should be provided so that aspiring principals have time to put their learning in to practice in a school setting and learn vicariously about what does and does not work by watching others engage in various aspects of leadership work. Long term internships also help participants build relationships and experience support and social persuasion. The rigor of programming should be high in principal preparation programs in order to help participants develop the psychological responses they will need in order to meet the challenges that they will face as principals.

Versland and Erickson (2017) conducted a case study on how principal self-efficacy impacts collective efficacy. They defined collective efficacy as "the teachers' beliefs that their efforts as a whole will have a positive effect on students" (p. 1). Results of the study showed that principal

self-efficacy and its impact on the development of instructional leadership and leadership capacity in teachers influences the collective efficacy of teachers, their willingness to work together, meet challenges they encounter, and achieve shared goals. With collective efficacy, schools develop a more collaborative culture, are able to operationalize their vision and mission more effectively, and ultimately positively affect student achievement (Versland & Erickson, 2017).

Table 1 shows the alignment between the necessary skills and practices of school leadership found in the research, the competencies outlined in the Alberta LQS, the content of the APDP being studied, and the areas of leadership self-efficacy covered in Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey.

Table 1

Alignment between necessary skills and practices of school leadership found in the research, competencies of the LQS, content of the APDP, and sub-scales of the PSES

| Skills and practices stressed by researchers | LQS (Alberta Education, 2018b) | Content of APDP (Van Kuppeveld & Fiorillo, 2019) | PSES (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) |
|--|---|---|--|
| Setting direction and vision (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008); | Embodying Visionary Leadership (LQS Competency 3) Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge - First Nations, Métis and Inuit (LQS Competency 5) | Understanding school culture Visionary leadership presentation | Moral Leadership Instructional leadership |
| Ensuring high quality learning through managing | Leading a Learning Community (LQS | Staff relations processes and employee performance management | Instructional leadership |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| teaching and learning (Barber et al., 2010; Gurr, 2017; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008); | Competency 4) Providing Instructional Leadership (LQS Competency 6) | Using data to identify school needs | |
| Increasing professional capacity by developing people (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008); | Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning (LQS Competency 2) Developing Leadership Capacity (LQS Competency 7) | LQS and Division leadership development framework Job-shadowing experience Sharing of experienced leaders' journeys A day in the life of District Support Services Inclusive Learning Supports Second language programming, curriculum design, Building foundational knowledge of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Career Pathways Reflective Practices LQS self-assessment | |
| Redesigning the organization, leading change, and creating a supportive organization for learning (Gurr, 2017; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood & | Fostering Effective Relationships (LQS Competency 1) Embodying Visionary Leadership (LQS Competency 3) | Planning for change models Everything DISC – understanding work styles to build effective relationships School culture and change | Instructional leadership Moral Leadership |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|-----------------------|
| Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008); | | Restorative practices to enhance student behavior Leading change school-based projects | |
| Aligning resources strategically with school needs and goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008). | Managing School Operations and Resources (LQS Competency 8) Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context (LQS Competency 9) | Finance: Fundraising and Internal Audit Human resources staffing Managing infrastructure Overview of governance, and accountability structures | Managerial Leadership |

As seen in Table 1, there is much alignment between what the literature says is important in terms of skills and practices necessary for effective school leadership, the Alberta LQS, the content of the APDP, and the leadership skills measured in the PSES (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004).

Impact of Principal Preparation Programming

Limited research exists pertaining to the impact of principal preparation programming on student achievement (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Donmoyer, Yennie-Donmoyer, & Galloway, 2012; Fuller, Young, & Baker 2011). Determining the impact of principal preparation is very complex with many factors, and although the research is limited, there is much criticism of how principal preparation programming is designed (Donmoyer, Yennie-Donmoyer, & Galloway, 2012). Research by Orr (2011) highlights the difference in impact of conventional programs versus other programs deemed to be exemplary. Results in this study however, are based on participant self-reporting rather than a measurement of student achievement.

An empirical study by Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) looked at five highly regarded university-based principal preparation programs to examine their effectiveness in preparing participants with the necessary skills to take on the principalship. Although there has been much written in the research regarding the design of effective principal preparation programs, there is limited research related to the actual impact of principals preparation programs on the behavior of principals and their ability to positively influence teaching and learning. Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) found that all five of the programs that they studied used a cohort model and a structure that included a strong partnership between school divisions and the university, which allowed for extended internships in schools. Assignments and projects in these programs were grounded in Adult Learning Theory (Knowles et al., 2005) and included authentic experiential learning opportunities that challenged participants to use their knowledge of research to solve real problems within actual school settings. In each of these five programs, participant success was measured by a variety of performance measures including survey data and a comprehensive portfolio generated by each individual. There is limited outcome based data related to the impact of these programs on student success and school improvement, however the Urban Educational Leadership Program (UELP) at the University of Illinois in Chicago, which was one of the principal preparation programs in Davis and Darling-Hammond's (2012) study, is gathering data to assess the impact of program participation on changes in student achievement and the ability of principals to positively impact change through measures such as student attendance. Graduates from UELP are more than three times more likely to become principals than completers of other programs in the state of Illinois. Schools led by UELP graduates are achieving greater gains in student achievement as well as greater improvements to school culture and climate than are other schools in the Chicago Public Schools System.

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) recommended that to better judge the effectiveness of principal preparation programs, more data be collected in relation to six abilities deemed important for principal leadership effectiveness including:

- Affecting positive change related to teacher motivation, efficacy, and satisfaction;
- Fostering a positive culture that nurtures and is conducive to improvement in teaching and learning;
- Establishing a culture of teacher collaboration;
- Supporting professional development that improves teaching and learning;
- Aligning resources and processes to support, develop, and assess teaching and learning; and
- Engaging parents and community partners in support of the school.

A quantitative study by Fuller, Young, and Baker (2011) sought to determine the impact of principal preparation programs on effective teaching practices and resulting gains in student achievement. They found a positive relationship between improved teaching and learning and principals who have completed preparation programs at institutions with research and doctoral programs. Their study was not however, able to determine which characteristics of program design or content within the programs was causing this association. Fuller, Young, and Baker (2011) stressed the importance of developing stronger indicators to measure principal quality and the quality of preparation programming and the impact on principal behaviors.

Grissom and Harrington (2010) analyzed data from the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) which was a study aimed at gathering descriptive data related to American elementary and secondary schools. The authors investigated how principal professional development influenced principal effectiveness by analyzing teacher survey responses related to school management.

Results of their study showed that principals who engage in university-based leadership development are seen as less effective by their teachers and that their schools' results based on state and division standards are lower. They were not however, able to provide evidence as to why these programs caused principals to perform poorly. Further, this study found that principals that received support from coaches and mentors performed better than those who participated in university-based programs.

Versland's (2016) mixed methods study looked at the impact of principal preparation programs on the development of self-efficacy of participants. She concluded that the program design including the development of relationships along with designing learning experiences based on Bandura's (1986) four sources of efficacy were the most important factors in the development of principal self-efficacy. Very little research can be found which describes how principal leadership development programming impacts the self-efficacy of aspiring principals and no study of this type completed in Alberta or anywhere else in Canada has been located.

Summary

There is much research to support the specific skills and knowledge that individuals need in order to effectively take on the role of the principalship. Emerging research regarding the best ways of working with aspiring principals to build their self-efficacy, enabling them to thrive in the role, is very impelling. To meet the need for more principals to fill vacancies in our schools, the better they can be prepared through effective principal preparation programming, the more likely it will be that we will fill the vacancies with individuals who can provide the type of leadership which will support all students in all schools in achieving their potential. It is hoped that the findings of this research study will provide insight into specific programming elements which are effective in supporting aspiring leaders in their development of self-efficacy, and thus

prepare them well, believing in their ability to successfully take on the challenges which lay ahead.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory and Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory, the purpose of this instrumental case study (Stake, 2006) was to investigate the impact of a school division's principal preparation programming on the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship in a large urban division. This study endeavored to answer the following research question:

How does principal preparation programming impact participants' reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in a large urban school division?

This chapter details how the research was investigated, beginning with a description of the research design and rationale, setting, case studied, participants, role of the researcher, methods of data collection and analysis, and the theoretical framework for the study. Ethical considerations are also discussed.

Rationale for Methodology

Instrumental case study was chosen as the methodology for this study (Stake, 1995). Instrumental case study as defined by Stake (1995) is "research on a case to gain understanding of something else" (Stake, 1995, p. 171). The case, or unit of study, was the Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP) in a large urban division in Alberta, Canada. The case was bounded by time and activity as suggested by Stake. The cohorts of participants involved in the APDP in the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school years, the curriculum of the program, and the experiences of the participants in the monthly sessions throughout the yearlong program formed the case boundaries.

Case studies, according to Bassey (2012) are empirical inquiries that are carried out within a local natural context and consider “*interesting* aspects of an educational activity, programme, institution, system or work of an individual” (p. 156). Case studies are not a methodology, but a “choice of what is to be studied” (Stake, 2008, p. 119). They can be strictly qualitative or can also involve mixed methods and various approaches as this study does (Stake, 2008). Case studies must be conducted with an “ethic of respect for persons” (Bassey, 2012, p. 156). Case studies can inform decisions of practitioners and those responsible for policy decisions. Enough data must be collected in order to:

- explore *significant* features of the case,
- create *plausible* interpretations of what is found,
- test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations,
- construct a *worthwhile* argument or story,
- relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature,
- convey *convincingly* to an audience this argument or story, and
- provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments. (Bassey, 2012, p. 156)

Rationale for choosing instrumental case study as the methodology for this research is connected to the study’s purpose: to investigate the impact of participation in a school division’s Aspiring Principal Development Program on the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship. While the content of the APDP has been closely aligned with the defined principal leadership competencies of the LQS, as well as research in the area of school leadership, without self-efficacy, it seems doubtful that new principals will be able to put into practice that which they learn in the APDP.

The case in this study was the Aspiring Principal Development Program in a large urban division in Alberta, Canada from 2016-19. The research was conducted in order to gain an understanding of self-efficacy development of aspiring principals in relationship to their participation in the year long program. According to Stake (1995), in instrumental case study, the most important factor is the issue being studied rather than the case itself. “Issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts” (Stake, 1995, p. 17) and thus inform the researcher in developing insight into the problems or challenges of the case. This study aimed to develop insight into the development of self-efficacy in aspiring principals so that they are able to put into practice, that which they know and have learned. Further, this study provides formative information which may lend itself to improvement in the design of the APDP and summative analysis that may inform other leadership preparation programs in the province of Alberta and beyond.

Setting

This study was conducted in a large urban school division in the province of Alberta, Canada. The division has approximately 105,000 students, 213 schools, and over 9,000 staff. Substantial growth in the urban area resulted in 21% growth in student population and the addition of 17 new schools from 2011-18. Due to student population growth, the opening of new schools, and the retirement of experienced principals, 69 new principals were appointed to division schools over the past three years. The division operates under a site-based decision-making model. Leadership development has historically been the responsibility of each school division in the province of Alberta and, until September 2019, there had not been provincial level principal certification required by law. The division in which the study was conducted has been conducting its own leadership development programming since the late 1990s. In 2016, division

principal development programming was revised to form the Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP).

Context: The Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP)

In September 2019, a new provincial Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) came into effect in the province of Alberta which outlines nine competencies applicable to all principals and division leaders. Prior to the implementation of the LQS, and the mandatory nature of principals being accredited in all of its dimensions, there was no principal certification requirement in Alberta. The LQS was used as a framework to guide the 2018-2019 Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP), with APDP program elements aligned with the competencies outlined in the standard in order to help prepare participants to meet these expectations.

The APDP has continued to evolve somewhat since its inception in 2016, based on feedback from participants, the evolving context of the division, and mandates from Alberta Education. Two APDP facilitators, with past experience as principals in a variety of school settings and who are now supervisors in the division's Human Resources department, are responsible for facilitating the program. Each year, cohort(s) meet monthly at a central location beginning in August through to May. Most sessions involve presentations from various division leaders along with activities facilitated by the program leaders. In addition to the monthly sessions, participants are expected to complete a school-based leadership project over the course of the year, engage in three days of job shadowing with a principal who acts as a mentor, and maintain a reflective journal of their experiences (see Appendix A for Aspiring Principals Development Program 2018-2019 Overview).

Participants

Participants were contacted to request participation in the survey portion of this study through the division's Research Department Unit, by the leadership staff responsible for the APDP, and finally by the researcher. Eligible participants for this study participated in one of four APDP cohorts of 20-25 aspiring principals each, over the past three school years.

Participants in each APDP cohort expressed interest in taking on the role of the principalship and were selected by a committee of senior division leaders after garnering support from their current principal. Of the 96 participants who took part in the program over the three years, 11 have since left the division and were not able to be contacted or invited to volunteer for this study. Of the remaining 85 participants, 67, or 79% completed a survey which included an adapted version of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2004) Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey (PSES) (Appendix B for the original PSES; Appendix C for the adapted version used in this study) questions as well as short answer and demographic questions. Based on the results of the survey, 12 participants were chosen to take part in one of two focus group interviews.

Of the participants in the study, 92% were assistant principals when they took the APDP. Approximately 40% of these assistant principals were currently working in elementary schools serving students in kindergarten through to grade six. Approximately 60% of these assistant principals were currently working in secondary schools serving students enrolled in grades seven through twelve. In Alberta where this study was conducted, it is usual for new principals to assume their first principalship in an elementary school, even if their background is in secondary education. After several years of experience, those with secondary school teaching experience may be reassigned to a principalship in a secondary school. The duties of an assistant principal in Alberta is largely dependent on the needs of the school and the leadership of the principal. Some

may have roles that focus primarily on student discipline and other managerial tasks while others may, under the mentorship of their principal, assume many of the same roles as the principal with the exception of staff evaluation.

Participants for the study were chosen through “critical case sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 243) which selects a small number of important cases to “yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge” (Patton, 2015, p. 276). Critical case sampling can assist in the decision making process regarding a program’s viability (Suri, 2011). Critical case sampling supports the formation of generalizations that are logical based on the view that “if it happens here, it will happen anywhere” and “if it doesn’t happen here it won’t happen anywhere” (Patton, 2002, p. 236). It was hoped that this study would provide opportunity to make logical generalizations about the aspects of principal development programming which support the development of self-efficacy in participants and that the information gleaned would be robust and inform future decisions regarding program design.

Selection of participants for the focus groups was based on intensity sampling (Patton, 2002, p. 243) and data from the PSES portion of the survey. The first focus group was made up of participants with self-efficacy scores that were higher than the median score with attention given to creating a balance of males and females, principals and assistant principals, and to ensuring a range of years’ experience in education. The second focus group was chosen based on a similar balance of demographic factors, but of participants with overall self-efficacy scores that were lower than the median. Consideration was given to ensuring that each focus group had a distribution that included equal numbers of principals and assistant principals. Focus groups were also designed to have equal numbers of males and females, and a range of years of experience in education even though these factors were shown to have no correlation with self-

efficacy by Dimmock and Hattie's study (1997) or by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' study (2005). As some of the participants with the highest and lowest self-efficacy scores did not volunteer or were unable to participate in the focus group interviews, participants with the next highest or lowest self-efficacy scores were invited to participate.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is in her 35th year as an educator in the division in which this study was conducted. She served as a classroom teacher at the junior high and high school levels for 11 years, as a curriculum coordinator in a high school for four years, an assistant principal in a kindergarten to Grade 12 school for two years, a principal for 16 years in four different schools including a kindergarten to Grade 6 elementary school, a kindergarten to Grade 9 school, a Grade 7 to 9 junior high school, and a Grade 10 to 12 high school. She also worked for two years as a director in central office with responsibility for five different decision units including: Student Assessment, Division Research, International Students, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education, and Career Pathways. She is currently a high school principal.

For much of her career, the researcher has been committed to finding ways to better prepare educators for leadership roles, feeling that there were important aspects of leadership which could not be effectively developed through traditional, centrally directed leadership development programming. She completed a Master's Degree from the University of Portland including a capstone project related to examining targeted training in distributed instructional leadership for emerging leaders. She has designed and led leadership development programming for groups of teacher leaders as well as subject area or grade level department heads, curriculum coordinators, and assistant principals for the last 12 years, with a focus on instructional coaching, managing change, influencing school culture, and navigating challenging conversations. She has mentored

numerous beginning principals. During the 2018-19 school year, she was a member of the division's Leadership Development Principal Committee, which reviewed and made suggestions for improvement to the division's Leadership Development Framework.

In the APDP cohorts from which volunteer participants for this study were drawn, there were three participants who previously had worked directly on a staff team of the researcher and several of the participants had been participants in the researcher's unofficial leadership development groups. Two of these participants were chosen to be a part of the focus group interviews. These two participants were not chosen to be members of the focus groups because they had worked with the researcher in the past; they were chosen based on their reported self-efficacy based on survey results, and the make-up of the focus groups sought by the researcher. Most of the participants are known to the researcher and some have been interviewed in the past for leadership positions in the researcher's schools. The researcher however, was not involved in the APDP program. Because of this, it was assumed that participants would not worry about providing feedback which the researcher would take personally. The positive relationship that the researcher has with many aspiring leaders in the division may have in fact, strengthened the data gathering for this study as participants may have spent more time thinking and being more thoughtful in their responses.

Focus group questions and interview protocols were reviewed with the dissertation committee chair as well as two principals who were not involved in the study in order to check for clarity and minimize any biases of the researcher. The same questions were asked of each focus group and the interviewer adhered to the protocol so as not to lead focus group participants toward any one type of response. Throughout the analysis of data, the researcher engaged in memo writing to capture observations regarding thoughts and feelings in relation to the data.

These processes were undertaken to allow the researcher to surface her own preconceptions, enable her to be transparent in relation to her biases, and “enable deeper engagement with the data (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Design and Procedures

Instrumental case study (Stake, 2006) which was chosen for this research used a mixed-methods approach including a survey with both quantitative and qualitative elements, a review of the Aspiring Principal Development Program Overview, and two focus group interviews to allow the researcher to develop deep understanding and insight into participants’ perception of the impact of strategies and activities included in the APDP on the development of their self-efficacy. The research was conducted according to the following schedule:

Table 2

Research Schedule

| Time | Activity |
|-----------------------------|--|
| September, 2019 | Administration of survey to members of the Aspiring Principal Cohort |
| September, 2019 | Artifact review of Aspiring Principals Development Program Overview |
| First week of October, 2019 | Analysis of quantitative and qualitative survey data |
| October, 2019 | Focus group interviews |
| November, December, 2019 | Transcribing and coding focus group interview data |

Survey. With Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Portland in August, 2019, as well as approval from the division in which the study was conducted, the first data collection method, involving surveying volunteer participants from the APDP from the 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 school year, was conducted between September 10, 2019 and

October 2, 2019. The survey instrument that was used included an adapted version of the Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey (PSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) as well as some short answer and demographic questions (See Appendices C and D for original and adapted surveys).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis created their survey after conducting a study to look for existing surveys to measure self-efficacy that were both valid and reliable. In this study, they analyzed two survey instruments and found them both to be problematic in terms of stability, reliability, and validity. As a result of their analysis of these two survey instruments, they made the decision to develop a new survey based on an existing instrument developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001). This new instrument was developed to gain insight and understanding into the elements that pose challenges for principals in carrying out aspects of their role in the context in which they are working. The 18 survey questions were designed to measure self-efficacy in relation to three domains: management, instructional leadership, and moral leadership. Reliability of the PSES is high with internal consistency demonstrated by a reported Cronbach's alpha of .91 when considering all 18 survey items. Each subscale as reported by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) also showed high reliability: self-efficacy in relation to management is .87; self-efficacy in relation to instructional leadership is .86; and self-efficacy in relation to moral leadership is .83. These three subscales showed a moderate correlation with each other ($r = .48- .58$) (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2005).

Several research studies have shown that race, gender, and years of experience in administration do not show a correlation with principal self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2005). Their results were similar result to findings by Dimmock and Hattie (1996) who found uncorrelated relationships between self-efficacy and years of experience ($r = .07$) and

gender ($r = .03$). Additionally, Dimmock and Hattie did not find any significant correlation between self-efficacy and school context, school grade levels, or socio-economic standing of the student population. As this study dealt specifically with the development of self-efficacy and its impact on aspiring principals, these factors are beyond the scope of this study.

The PSES (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) was adapted slightly to align with the purpose of this study and its use with Aspiring Principals and their beliefs related to self-efficacy as they prepare to take on their first principalship as well as new serving principals with less than three years in the role. The adapted survey that was used for this study consisted of the 18 questions with a nine-point Likert scale included in the original PSES instrument (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) as well as four short answer questions related to activities in the APDP, and seven demographic questions added by the researcher. The PSES question stem was adapted to replace *principal* with *aspiring principal*; *beginning principal*; and *new principal*. Beginning principal was included as some of the aspiring principals may have been appointed to the principalship less than a month prior to completing the survey. New principal was included as some of the individuals from the 2016-17 and 2017-18 APDP cohorts may have been appointed to the principalship since completing the APDP and thus may have one or two years' experience in the role. Sample questions included in the adapted version of Tschannen-Moran and Gareis' (2004), PSES include:

In your current role as an aspiring, beginning, or new principal, to what extent can you...

- Facilitate student learning in your school?
- Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school?
- Handle the time demands of the job?

The survey was administered in September, 2019 and the data was analyzed immediately following collection from all participants. Data from the survey was analyzed to determine the overall level of self-efficacy of each participant as well as the self-efficacy of each participant in relation to managerial, instructional, and moral leadership.

Focus group interviews. The second data collection strategy consisted of focus group interviews with members chosen by “intensity sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 243). Intensity sampling supported the selection of members who completed the PSES who reported varying degrees of self-efficacy beliefs and thus were more likely to “manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely” (Patton, 2002, p. 243), which, in this case is the development of self-efficacy beliefs.

Focus group interviews were used in order to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the APDP on the level of perceived self-efficacy of participants as opposed to self-efficacy developed through other means. Focus groups allow for the social construction of responses to questions as participants are able to build off of comments made by other group members (Merriam, 2009). Although Merriam (2009) recommends that members of a focus group not know one another well, some members of the focus groups in this study were in the same APDP cohort and thus had spent 10 full days working together over the course of the year in which they were involved in the program. Other participants knew one another based on previous working relationships within the division. Creswell (2005) stated that focus groups work well when those being interviewed are similar to one another. Focus groups in this study were similar in that participants in each group had a similar level of self-efficacy scores and all were either principals or assistant principals when the focus group interviews were held. All participants were accepted into the APDP as they were deemed good candidates for the principalship by their principals and

assistant superintendents. No other criteria or qualifications were required for admission. Most participants were serving as assistant principals in division schools in the year in which they participated in the APDP. Another consideration for the use of focus groups over one-to-one interviews was the limitation of time to collect information for this study. A savings in time is a benefit of focus group interviews over one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2005).

Two focus groups were made up of six participants each, consistent with the group size of four to six participants recommended by Creswell (2005). The results of the adapted PSES informed the precise questions to be asked. The intent of the focus group questions was to determine what about the specific activities that were mentioned in the short answer questions, impacted participants' self-efficacy development in relation to Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy development. The elements mentioned by 10% or more of participants in each short answer questions were provided to focus group members and they were asked to contribute more detail about the elements and why they felt that the elements had the effect that they did on self-efficacy development. Focus group questions were the same for each of the focus group interviews. Focus group questions can be found in Appendix D.

Focus group questions were designed in order to determine what elements, practices, and experiences in the APDP contributed to feelings of self-efficacy. The questions were reviewed with the dissertation committee chair and with two division principals who were not participants in this study to assess question design and intent. Feedback received was used to adjust the wording of questions slightly in order to improve clarity. Focus group interviews were scheduled for the end of October at the school where the researcher was principal as this location was centrally located and thus convenient for the majority of participants.

Focus group interviews were recorded with permission of the participants in order to ensure that all of the voices and comments were heard. Recordings were then transcribed through the use of “Rev”, an online transcription service which uses security measures aligned with National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) guidelines and Center for Internet Security Cybersecurity Best Practices. Files were encrypted using TLS 1.2 protocol. Communication between the researcher and Rev (n.d.) servers was encrypted with industry best practices. Transcriptions were completed within two days following the interviews and were then checked for accuracy and edited by the researcher through repeated playback of recordings in order to catch errors and omissions and make necessary corrections.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data. Descriptive statistics including the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range were calculated for overall scores on the PSES portion of the survey as well as for the sub-scores for management self-efficacy, instructional self-efficacy, and moral self-efficacy.

Qualitative survey data. Qualitative survey data included demographic data related to participants, and four short answer questions related to activities included in the APDP

Demographic data. Demographic survey data included data related to participants: current role, years in current role, years of formal school leadership experience, years in education, years in education outside of the division in which the study took place, and gender. Descriptive statistics of the demographic data including the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range were calculated for overall scores on the PSES portion of the survey as well as for the sub-scores for management self-efficacy, instructional self-efficacy, and moral self-efficacy.

Short answer question data. Four short answer questions related to activities included in the APDP were included in the survey to determine which activities participants felt contributed to their self-efficacy development through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social or verbal persuasion, and psychological arousal (Bandura, 1986). A frequency count of reported program elements was carried out to determine the frequency with which participants stated that the various activities contributed to their self-efficacy development. Activities mentioned by participants were compared to a list of activities generated from the Aspiring Principals Development Program 2018-2019 Overview (Appendix A) and activities that emerged from the data which were not identified from the program overview were added. For example, the first short answer survey question asked participants about activities in the APDP that helped them develop persistence. The number of times that various program elements such as cohort structure, school-based leadership project, presentations by experts, were counted and recorded. The information gleaned from this analysis was then used to inform the focus group interview questions so that details about the activities and their importance to self-efficacy development could be explored. Later, this qualitative survey data was coded using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016) in the same manner as the focus group interview data was coded (described below).

Focus group interview data. Transcripts of the focus group interviews were coded using descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016). Descriptive coding involves summarizing the main idea or topic of a section of data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding was completed manually on a hard copy of the transcripts as suggested for first time researchers by Saldaña, (2016). Transcripts were printed with a large margin on the right hand side in order to leave room for writing notes and codes.

Text was divided into short sections with breaks between ideas and responses of different focus group members. Notes and codes were then summarized in the margins.

First cycle coding was initiated through the development of a list of a priori codes based on the literature review, in alignment with Bandura's four sources of self-efficacy development (Bandura, 1986) as well as the six assumptions of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles et al., 2005). The a priori codes were applied deductively while reading through the transcripts. First cycle codes (Saldaña, 2016) were also informed by the, PSES survey results, and the literature reviewed for this work. Throughout the process of reviewing the data, an inductive process was also used so that codes could be revised and new provisional codes that emerged could be added. A one-page list of codes was created and maintained throughout the coding process. Iterative returns through the data enabled further adjustments to be made to the codes. At the conclusion of cycle one coding, 15 a priori codes and 15 emergent codes had been established (Appendix E).

Cycle one coding was first completed independently for the data from each of the two focus groups. Once this coding had been completed however, the codes used for the two focus groups were deemed to be very similar, and thus the data was considered in aggregate from that point forward.

In Vivo coding was undertaken along with descriptive coding to identify the specific language of the participants in attempt to capture what really stood out in the transcripts and to capture the inherent meaning of participants' comments. Saldaña (2016) recommends In Vivo coding as useful for beginning researchers in order to ensure that the voice of participants is honored. In Vivo coding was completed as data was reviewed and key phrases and passages that stood out were highlighted.

Once first cycle descriptive and In Vivo coding was completed, second cycle coding was undertaken through *axial* coding in order to create categories of codes with similar properties (Saldaña, 2016). From the 33 first cycle codes, seven categories were formed (Appendix F). Data was then sorted by category and analyzed within and across the relevant codes to identify related themes. From the seven categories, three overarching themes were identified.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the lens through which the data was analyzed and considered. Decisions related to selection of a priori codes for cycle one coding, focus group protocol development, and data analysis were based on Bandura's (1986) four sources of self-efficacy development and Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory. For this reason, the frameworks are articulated in this chapter rather than other more traditional locations within this work.

Bandura (1986) created a Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model to show the relationships among how learning occurs and influencing factors including behavior, internal personal characteristics, and external environmental and social factors. Personal characteristics include cognitive and metacognitive abilities, one's values and beliefs including self-efficacy, and physical characteristics. Behavioral factors include the choices one makes and carries out verbally and physically as well as established behavioral patterns and social interactions. Environmental factors include family and societal values, the influence of power, external expectations and social interactions. Personal characteristics, behavioral factors, and environmental and social factors all act upon each other and are acted upon in varying degrees depending on the circumstances. Under Bandura's model, self-efficacy would influence the behavioral choices individuals make as well as the environmental and social factors that

surround them. Conversely, self-efficacy would be influenced by environmental and social factors and behavioral factors in context. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how personal characteristics, environmental and social factors, and behavioral factors all interact to influence one another. The intersection of personal characteristics, behavioral factors and environmental factors represents determines how an individual will respond within that context.

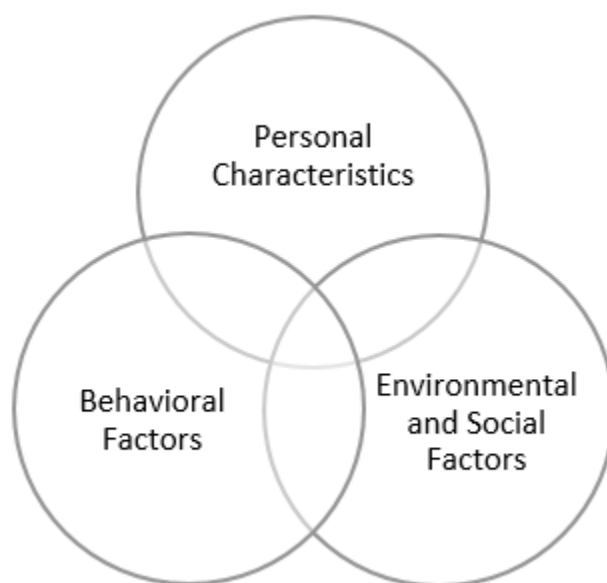


Figure 1. Bandura's (1986) Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model

Principals with high self-efficacy can better develop and carry out a plan of action involving group processes with staff, leading to desired outcomes in their schools (McCormick, 2001). As an element of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997), self-efficacy beliefs are influenced and developed through four sources including: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social or verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Without self-efficacy beliefs, Bandura argues that one cannot behave in the necessary ways to produce the outcomes desired. Self-efficacy beliefs are not consistent from one context to another and depend on the specifics of each task. So for example, in this study, having been a teacher with high self-efficacy would

not necessarily provide a foundation that would result in high self-efficacy should that teacher transition to the role of assistant principal or principal.

Principals judge their self-efficacy beliefs by weighing their abilities, skills, knowledge and personal characteristics against their shortcomings within a given context or setting (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Good leadership requires principals to be able to facilitate change by creating and enhancing an environment or culture conducive to and leading to change and the achievement of goals. There are few studies of principals' sense of self-efficacy, but the few that do exist are very promising (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Principals with higher perceived self-efficacy tend to work harder to achieve goals and are more able to adapt to each specific context while remaining calm, confident, and maintaining a sense of humor even when challenging situations arise (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Versland (2016) concluded that the way in which aspiring principal development programs are designed and carried out, can have an impact on the development of self-efficacy of the participants and that consideration should be given to including activities designed with Bandura's (1986) four efficacy sources in mind.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of this study was established through attention given to the enhancement of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility. Credibility of this study was established through triangulation of data in order to explore the question from different perspectives and to increase understanding and validity of the study. Sources of data included PSES data, qualitative survey data, and data from two focus group interviews.

Confirmability. Throughout the study, confirmability was established through the clearly stated research question and the provision of sufficient detail to allow readers to gauge the study's credibility. Clear explanations of how decisions were made in relation to methodology, theoretical foundation, and choices related to analysis of the data also enhanced confirmability of the study.

Dependability. Dependability of the study has been demonstrated through the clearly articulated research process. Throughout the research process, a reflexive journal was kept which included field notes, decisions made, transcripts, and detailed records of the data collected. Detailed notes, including the recording of observations and reflections by the researcher related to the focus group interviews and other aspects of the research process, were kept in order to highlight experiences, developments, progress, and interactions important in the analysis of the case. The researcher took observational notes throughout the focus group interviews and expanded on these notes immediately after the conclusion of each focus group interview in order to add detail as suggested by Merriam (2009). Field notes also included information about the participants including their current leadership roles, time and location of the focus group interviews, and reflective comments including the researcher's thoughts, feelings, and hypotheses (Merriam, 2009).

Transferability. Transferability of this study has been enhanced through capturing the thick descriptions of the details of the case being studied which allowed for analysis of many variables. The detailed description of the case will allow others to judge the viability of transferring the findings to their own contexts.

Ethical Considerations

Approval for this study was requested and granted from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Portland as well as from the school division in which this study was carried out. The purpose and procedures for the study were clearly outlined and communicated by way of an information sheet provided to each participant. Participation in the study was completely voluntary; participants were given the opportunity to ask clarifying questions of the researcher prior to participating. A letter of consent was provided to and signed by each participant who participated in the focus group interviews. Each survey participant was provided with a letter of consent which was imbedded in the preamble to the survey. Participants were required to indicate their agreement to participate in the survey, prior to being provided with survey access. The consent form clearly outlined that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that their participation in it would not be used in any way that would affect their position or promotion in the division. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any point.

Audio recordings of the focus group interviews were stored in a system protected by password on the researcher's computer to ensure ongoing confidentiality. Written notes taken during the focus group interviews were locked in a cabinet in the researcher's home office; electronic files of notes were kept on the researcher's password protected computer. To further ensure and increase confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in place of participant names during the focus group interviews. Any data that may have revealed the identification of participants was omitted from the reporting of this study.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was devoted to outlining how this research study on the impact of participation in a school division's aspiring principal development program on the reported self-

efficacy of participants was investigated, outlined the case being studied, research methodology and rationale for the study. The methodology included investigation of the case, a Division's Aspiring Principal Development Program, had completers of the program complete a survey, and had selected individuals participate in two focus group interviews. Also included in this chapter was a description of the setting, participants, role of the researcher, and methods of data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations were also discussed.

Chapter Four: Findings

This instrumental case study was designed to investigate how participation in a school division's aspiring principal development program impacts the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship in a large urban school division. Data collected by means of a mixed-methods survey and focus group interviews of selected participants were analyzed to address the following research question:

How does principal preparation programming impact participants' reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in a large urban school division?

This chapter is organized into five parts: demographic information related to all participants who completed the survey; quantitative data from the Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey (PSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004); demographic information related to the participants in the focus groups; qualitative responses to short answer survey questions regarding the principal preparation program; and qualitative data, including overarching themes, emerging from responses to the survey short answer questions and the transcribed focus group interviews. The chapter concludes with a summary and introduction of the main concepts discussed in chapter five.

Survey Results

Survey results include: a description of the demographic characteristics of the participants; descriptive statistics from the PSES portion of the survey; self-efficacy scores for all participants including the groups of assistant principals, principals, and others; and qualitative data reflecting participant experiences of activities included in the APDP.

Participants' demographic characteristics. The survey was distributed electronically to 85 potential participants, all of whom had completed the Aspiring Principal Development Program since its inception in 2016. Of the 85 potential participants, a return rate of 79% provided a final *N* value of 67 participants. Table 3 describes demographic characteristics of the participants including gender, years in current role, and total years in education.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants

| Role | Total <i>N</i> = 67 | Assistant Principal <i>n</i> = 31 | Principal <i>n</i> = 27 | Other <i>n</i> = 9 |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 29 | 13 | 12 | 4 |
| Female | 36 | 17 | 15 | 4 |
| Prefer not to say | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Length of time in current role | | | | |
| < 2 months | 10 | 0 | 8 | 2 |
| 2-12 months | 5 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| > 12-36 months | 18 | 2 | 13 | 3 |
| > 3-5 years | 15 | 13 | 2 | 0 |
| > 5 years | 18 | 16 | 0 | 2 |
| Years in education | | | | |
| < 10 years | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 10-15 years | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| > 15-20 years | 21 | 9 | 7 | 5 |
| > 20-25 years | 21 | 8 | 12 | 1 |
| > 25 years | 18 | 11 | 5 | 2 |

The statistics in Table 3 show that there have been slightly more females in the program than males. Fifty-four percent of participants in the APDP over the three year period were female, and

43% were male, leaving 3% who preferred not to specify a gender. The percentage of APDP participants who are now principals is 40% with 44% of those being male, and 56% being female. Within the group who are currently assistant principals, 42% are male and 55% are female. Ninety percent of APDP participants have more than 15 years of experience in education and 58% have 20 or more years' experience in education. Sixty-three percent of principals and 61% of assistant principals have over 20 years of experience in education.

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics including the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and range were calculated for overall scores on the PSES portion of the survey as well as for the sub-scores for management self-efficacy, instructional self-efficacy, and moral self-efficacy. These statistics are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Overall, Management, Instructional, and Moral Self-Efficacy

| | Mean | Median | Mode | Standard Deviation | Range | Lowest Self-efficacy Score | Highest Self-efficacy Score |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|------|--------------------|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Overall Self-efficacy | 7.47 | 7.44 | 7.44 | .62 | 3.33 | 5.67 | 9.00 |
| Management Self-efficacy | 7.07 | 7.00 | 7.00 | 1.09 | 5.33 | 3.67 | 9.00 |
| Instructional Self-efficacy | 7.59 | 7.67 | 7.67 | .67 | 3.50 | 5.50 | 9.00 |
| Moral Self-efficacy | 7.77 | 7.83 | 8.00 | .75 | 3.83 | 5.17 | 9.00 |

Self-efficacy scores were based on a nine-point Likert scale with a score of one indicating not at all, three indicating very little, five indicating some degree, seven indicating quite a bit, and nine indicating a great deal. The lowest mean self-efficacy scores and greatest range between lowest

and highest self-efficacy scores were found in the area of management self-efficacy ($p = .23$). Two individuals had management self-efficacy scores that were below four. Both of these individuals had high moral self-efficacy scores of eight or higher. Their instructional self-efficacy scores were also higher than their management self-efficacy scores with one scoring 7.83 and the other scoring 6.17. Both individuals had moved from assistant principalships at the high school level into principalships at the elementary level; one was in the first year of the principalship and the other was just beginning their second year as a principal. Despite these two low scores in managerial leadership, these scores did not result in a significantly lower mean for the sub-score for managerial leadership.

Survey participants: self-efficacy scores. Mean self-efficacy scores were calculated for the group of participants as a whole, as well as for the groups of principals, assistant principals, and other participants. ANOVA results indicate that none of the groups differed significantly in terms of overall self-efficacy scores ($p = .75$). ANOVA results also show no significant difference between the instructional self-efficacy of the groups ($p = .32$); the management self-efficacy ($p = .23$); or moral self-efficacy ($p = .70$). Table 5 describes the mean self-efficacy scores for principals, assistant principals, other participants, and all participants for instructional, management, moral, and overall leadership self-efficacy.

Table 5

Instructional, Management, Moral, and Overall Self-Efficacy Mean Scores for all Participants, Assistant Principals, Principals, and Others

| | All Participants <i>N</i> = 67 | Assistant Principals <i>n</i> = 31 | Principals <i>n</i> = 27 | Other <i>n</i> = 9 |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Overall self- efficacy | 7.47 | 7.53 | 7.41 | 7.43 |
| Instructional self-efficacy | 7.59 | 7.68 | 7.58 | 7.30 |
| Management self-efficacy | 7.07 | 7.22 | 6.80 | 7.37 |
| Moral self- efficacy | 7.77 | 7.70 | 7.86 | 7.70 |

While no significant difference was found based on the sample included in this study, it may be possible that the small sample size played a part in these results and that with a larger sample size, significance may appear, especially in the area of management self-efficacy. While no statistical significance was found, it is notable that there was a lower management self-efficacy mean score for principals as compared to other participants.

Focus group survey data. The first of the two focus groups was made up of participants with overall self-efficacy scores that were above the median score considering all participants who completed the PSES portion of the survey. The second focus group was made up of participants with overall self-efficacy scores that were below the median score considering all participants who completed the PSES portion of the survey. In each focus group, three participants were male and three were female; three were principals and three were assistant principals. The first focus group had participants with a range of years of experience in education from 15 years to over 25 years. The second focus group had participants with a range of years of

experience in education from less than 10 years to 25 years. In terms of the overall sample of study participants that completed the survey, 27% had more than 25 years of experience in education, 31% had more than 20 and up to 25 years' experience, 31% had more than 15 and up to 20 years' experience, 9% had between 10 and 15 years' experience, and 1% had less than 10 years' experience in education. Specifics related to the participants' characteristics and PSES scores are provided in Table 6 for the first focus group and in Table 7 for the second focus group. Table 6 describes demographic information related to the participants in the first focus group, their self-efficacy scores from the PSES portion of the survey, and the overall ranking of their self-efficacy considering all participants.

Table 6

Focus Group #1 participants: Higher self-efficacy group

| Overall S-E ranking <i>N</i> = 67 | Role | Years in Ed | School Grade Levels | Gender | IL S-E Score | ManL S-E Score | MorL S-E Score | Overall S-E Score |
|--|------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | AP | 25+ | K-9 | F | 9.00 | 9.00 | 9.00 | 9.00 |
| 10 | AP | 15-20 | K-9 | F | 7.67 | 8.17 | 8.50 | 8.11 |
| 20 | ActP | 25+ | K-6 | M | 7.67 | 8.00 | 7.67 | 7.78 |
| 28 | P | 15-20 | K-6 | M | 8.00 | 6.67 | 8.00 | 7.56 |
| 31 | P | 20-25 | K-6 | M | 7.33 | 6.83 | 8.17 | 7.44 |
| 32 | P | 20-25 | K-6 and 9 | F | 7.83 | 6.67 | 7.83 | 7.44 |

Note. AP = Assistant Principal; ActP = Acting Principal; P = Principal; IL S-E = Instructional Leadership Self-Efficacy; ManL S-E = Managerial Leadership Self-Efficacy; MorL S-E = Moral Leadership Self-Efficacy.

The mean self-efficacy scores considering all members of the first focus group are 7.89: for overall self-efficacy, 8.20 for moral self-efficacy, 7.92 for instructional self-efficacy, and 7.56 for management self-efficacy. Each of the principals in the first focus group rated themselves lowest in terms of management self-efficacy; two of the principals rated themselves equally in terms of instructional self-efficacy and moral self-efficacy while one of the principals rated themselves slightly lower in instructional self-efficacy and higher in moral self-efficacy. The acting principal and assistant principals all rated themselves higher in overall self-efficacy than did the principals in this group. Overall, the acting principal and assistant principals rated their management self-efficacy and moral self-efficacy higher than they did their instructional self-efficacy, with the exception of one participant who rated their self-efficacy as nine across all three sub-categories.

Table 7 describes demographic information related to the participants in the second focus group, their self-efficacy scores from the PSES portion of the survey, and the overall ranking of their self-efficacy considering all survey participants.

Table 7

Focus Group #2 Participants: Lower Self-Efficacy Group

| Overall S-E ranking <i>N</i> = 67 | Role | Years in Ed | School Grade Levels | Gender | IL S-E Score | ManL S-E Score | MorL S-E Score | Overall S-E Score |
|--|------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 44 | P | 15-20 | K-6 | F | 7.83 | 6.67 | 7.33 | 7.28 |
| 49 | AP | 15-20 | 10-12 | M | 7.33 | 5.83 | 8.33 | 7.17 |
| 51 | AP | 20-25 | 7-9 | F | 6.67 | 7.0 | 7.67 | 7.11 |
| 54 | AP | <10 | 7-9 | M | 7.33 | 6.33 | 7.50 | 7.06 |
| 63 | P | 20-25 | K-6 | M | 7.83 | 3.83 | 8.00 | 6.56 |
| 67 | P | 15-20 | K-6 | F | 6.17 | 3.67 | 8.83 | 6.22 |

Note. AP = Assistant Principal; P = Principal; IL S-E = Instructional Leadership Self-Efficacy; ManL S-E = Managerial Leadership Self-Efficacy; MorL S-E = Moral Leadership Self-Efficacy

The mean self-efficacy scores considering all members of the second focus group are: 6.90 for overall self-efficacy, 6.72 for moral self-efficacy, 7.19 for instructional self-efficacy, and 5.56 for management self-efficacy. All but one member of the second focus group ranked themselves highest in terms of moral leadership self-efficacy and lowest in terms of management self-efficacy. Two of the principals in this focus group ranked their management self-efficacy lower than four on the nine-point Likert scale which may indicate that they are experiencing challenges in dealing with the stress and time demands of their new role. Both of these participants had moved from positions as high school assistant principals to elementary school principals within the last year.

In comparing the self-efficacy scores between the two focus groups, the mean self-efficacy scores for management self-efficacy were lowest in both groups. The highest mean sub-score in

the first focus group was for moral self-efficacy; the highest sub-score in the second focus group was for instructional self-efficacy.

Qualitative survey data. Beyond the PSES questions, survey participants also completed four short answer questions related to activities in the APDP. Data from these four questions was reviewed to identify the activities that participants mentioned most often in relation to the topic identified in each question. No prompts or choices were provided for respondents to respond to; all responses were self-generated by APDP participants who completed the survey. Given the self-identified nature of survey responses related to the prompts for these four questions, activities named by 10% or more of the respondents were deemed by the researcher to be of interest in this work and thus were reported in the tables that follow.

The first short answer question asked participants what activities, if any, in the APDP helped them to develop persistence leading to mastery of leadership skills in their work setting. The most common responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

APDP Activities Reported to Support Participants in Developing Persistence

| APDP Activity | # of responses <i>N = 67</i> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cohort structure of APDP | 18 |
| School-based leadership project | 17 |
| Presentations by experts | 16 |
| Ongoing dialogue | 14 |
| Job-shadowing experience | 14 |
| Networking | 8 |

Opportunities for participants to interact with one another as well as to apply their learning through their school based leadership projects were described as supporting participants in developing persistence leading to mastery of leadership skills and the development of self-efficacy. In Table 8, all six activities listed as contributing to persistence in the program meet the researcher's threshold for consideration and discussion later in chapter five.

The second short answer question asked participants what activities, if any, in the APDP helped them by providing them with opportunities to observe others and learn from their success or failures. Once again, no prompts were provided for participants to respond to. The most common responses to this question are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

APDP Activities Reported to Support Participants Through Opportunities to Observe Others

| APDP Activity | # of responses <i>N = 67</i> |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Job-shadowing experience | 39 |
| Ongoing dialogue | 26 |
| School-based project | 11 |
| Self-reflection | 9 |

Four activities met the 10% threshold for consideration for this prompt and warrant some discussion in chapter five. Three of these activities reported as providing opportunities to observe others and learn from their success or failure were also identified as helping participants develop persistence and were listed in Table 8.

The next short answer question asked participants what activities if any, in the APDP, helped participants by providing them with praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback

related to their leadership skills. The self-generated responses that were mentioned by more than 10% of participants to this question are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

APDP Activities Reported to Support Participants Through Providing Praise, Encouragement, and Corrective Feedback

| APDP Activity | # of responses <i>N = 67</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Self-reflection | 17 |
| Ongoing dialogue | 17 |
| School-based project | 14 |

In Table 10, the three activities listed as contributing to persistence in the program meet the threshold for consideration. Each of the activities reported in Table 10 were also reported in relation to the first two short answer questions and listed in Table 8 and/or Table 9.

The final short answer question asked participants what activities, if any, in the APDP helped them to welcome and take on challenges. Once again, no choices were provided for survey respondents to respond to. Responses to this question, which were mentioned by a minimum of 10% of respondents, are shown in Table 11.

Table 11

APDP Activities Reported to Support Participants in Welcoming and Taking on Challenges

| APDP Activity | # of responses <i>N</i> = 67 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| School-based project | 15 |
| Cohort structure | 9 |
| Presentations by experts | 7 |

Activities reported to support participants in welcoming and taking on challenges, which were mentioned seven or more times, were included in this table.

Most APDP activities reported as supporting participants in developing self-efficacy, as indicated by their responses to the short answer questions summarized in the previous four tables, were reported to support self-efficacy development in more than one way. Survey participants reported that the school-based leadership project supported them in developing persistence, learning from observing others and hearing the stories of others, providing praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback, and welcoming challenges. Ongoing dialogue was reported to support participants in welcoming challenges. Ongoing dialogue also was reported to support participants by hearing the stories of others, and by providing praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback. The cohort structure and presentations by experts were both reported to support learning and self-efficacy development through helping participants develop persistence and welcome challenges. The job-shadowing experience was reported to support participants in developing persistence and through observing others and hearing the stories of others. Opportunities for self-reflection were said to support participants by providing opportunities to learn as a result of observing and hearing the stories of others, as well as by providing

participants with encouragement, praise, and corrective feedback. Finally, networking was reported to have supported participants in learning to persevere in order to overcome challenges.

Qualitative data from the short answer survey questions were later coded using the same a priori codes and emergent codes used in analysis of the focus group interview data so all data could be considered together in arriving at the themes explored in detail during chapter five.

Focus Group Interview Data

Focus group interviews were conducted to gain insight into the experiences of participants in the APDP, which they perceived to have led to development of their overall self-efficacy for school leadership. In analyzing the data from the focus group interviews, three overarching themes emerged. To get to three themes, first cycle analysis using descriptive and In Vivo codes confirmed 15 a priori codes drawn from the literature. Fifteen emergent codes were also revealed at the completion of iterative returns through the data (Appendix E).

In second cycle analysis, through axial coding, a priori and emergent codes from first cycle were distilled into seven descriptive categories based upon similarities of responses (Appendix F). Finally, given further analysis in relation to the research question, the categories were deemed to fit within three overarching themes.

Considering Themes

Iterative returns through, and on-going analysis of data from the focus group interviews as well as the data from the four short answer survey questions resulted in the emergence of three themes: (1) leadership identity, (2) process and content: critical components, and (3) context. These themes and the categories that were combined to create them are outlined in Table 12.

Table 12

Themes Based on Established Categories

| Themes | Categories |
|--|--|
| Leadership Identity | Social Emotional Conditions Learner Identity Leadership Capacity |
| Process and Content: Critical Components | Process of Programming Content Professional Identity |
| Context | Time Context |

Leadership identity. According to responses from the four qualitative survey questions and data that emerged from the focus group interviews, leadership identity and the evolution of a sense of who participants are as leaders was developed through a combination of supportive social emotional conditions, their development of their identity as learners, and through the development of leadership capacity. Participants spoke about the benefits of learning about leadership through observations of others and hearing about the stories of others. Participants also spoke about being able to develop clarity regarding *why* they needed to learn about particular areas related to school leadership and how the increased clarity supported their development of intrinsic motivation for taking on leadership tasks.

Social emotional conditions. Feelings of emotional safety and of not being judged were identified as contributing to participants' learning and self-efficacy. Comments related to these feelings were made 20 times by focus group members and 20 times by survey respondents. Survey respondents and focus group members described how, through professional conversations and developing relationships with a variety of leaders who shared their expertise with the cohort, they began to feel safer and more confident in asking questions and sharing

ideas. These leaders reassured participants that none of them were alone and that they were available to help when needed. As a result, participants said that they got to know a variety of people who could support them in their leadership journey, and they became more confident that they would not be judged for asking questions. As participant P3 in the second focus group put it:

Even though, when they present[ed], I still felt a little anxious because it's like, "Oh! Wow! That's a lot that we've got to do." I was reassured because they say, "you're not alone, you can call us, pick up the phone".

A member of the first focus group, P4 made a similar comment, "Not only is it [the answer] just a phone call away, they're not judging you."

Also contributing to feelings of emotional safety and the development of self-efficacy, according to participants, was the cohort structure of the program. Members of the second focus group discussed their feelings related to the cohort being a safe place to ask questions of one another as well as of the experts and leaders who made presentations to the class, and where they received encouragement and support. They reflected that they valued the sense of community that was developed, and the environment of trust that was generated, all of which supported the sharing of thoughts leading to the development of leadership skills and identity. Focus group member P6 from the second focus group commented that, "We band together and just that collaboration, just that support was so crucial to allowing you to be vulnerable and allowing others to be vulnerable and create that safe environment just to take those risks." Comments such as, "We supported and encouraged each other every time we met, and continue today" from a survey respondent (P18), were similar to sentiments shared by the focus groups. Participants from the second focus group as well as several survey respondents also shared that they valued

the encouragement they received from mentors and from the facilitators of the APDP, in particular in relation to the projects that participants led in their own schools.

Learner identity. The development of individual learner identity and its contribution to self-efficacy development was a perceived outcome of APDP participation. Comments related to the development of learner identity were made 14 times by members of the first focus group, 11 times by members of the second focus group, and 68 times by survey respondents. Participants described a variety of ways in which they were able to learn through observations of others and through listening to others' stories; they stressed that they found these experiences to be very valuable. Several members of both focus groups also described how learning the *why* behind various leadership tasks and processes was important in building their intrinsic motivation for action.

The opportunity to shadow a principal for three days in a school that was not their own was described by 14 survey respondents as well as all but one of the focus group members, as an invaluable experience. The only downfall of this experience that was reported by a member of the first focus group (P6) as well as a survey respondent (P26), was that it was not long enough, and they wished that they had had opportunities to shadow several principals instead of just one. Participants appreciated learning by being in a setting that was different from their own. As participant P49 noted in the short answer section of the survey:

The opportunity to job shadow a principal at another school was an invaluable experience, which allowed me to see a school much different than my own and converse with the Principal on many leadership topics. I took away a number of ideas and things to try at my own school and learned about things that didn't work, that my job shadow principal shared.

Five members of the second focus group and three from the first focus group made similar comments related to how the job-shadowing experience provided them with the opportunity to learn in a setting that was different from their own. The following comment from P6 from the first focus group was typical of comments made by the other focus group members, “I found the job shadow helped me to get a different perspective from the context of the building I was in and seeing how the principal was handling situations.”

Survey respondents and focus group members also described how their practice was transformed through their job-shadowing experiences. Survey respondent P6’s comment was typical of many others:

The opportunity to shadow a principal changed my practice. The opportunity fit with many scenario-based discussions [from our classes]. I saw new ways of doing things and was able to have conversations that allowed me to implement new practices immediately.

Similarly, learning from the stories of others was described through 17 comments made in the focus group interviews and 28 comments made on the short answer portion of the survey, as a fundamental aspect of the APDP that supported participants’ development of self-efficacy. Participants described how hearing the stories of their colleagues in the program, of the presenters including a variety of principals and senior division leaders, and of the principals that they job shadowed, all helped them understand the broader picture of the division and of the work of leadership. These stories also helped them learn how to approach a variety of challenges, and learn from others’ successes and failures. Participants described how hearing these stories sparked ongoing dialogue with other leaders both in their cohort and with their principals back in their own schools. Participant P3 in the first focus group described the value gained from hearing the stories of others in this way:

I really did enjoy the presentations. I really thought everyone that came was either a central or school leader, but they all talked about their times in the schools and gave me those little hints and tips and tricks to weave your way through your project, through your leadership journey. And having that practical toolkit, I thought was very beneficial.

In addition, survey participant P18 added, "...hearing about the failures that other people had, allowed you to kind of map out a route to avoid those yourself. But someone had to originally make the mistake, out of failure; otherwise there's no learning involved." When principals described challenges that they were facing or had faced in their schools, participants reported they realized that they do not have to have all of the answers, and that engaging in dialogue with other leaders can help in identifying solutions. Hearing these types of stories also helped participants in giving themselves permission to be vulnerable themselves.

Also contributing to participants' identity as learners were the components of the APDP, which helped them to understand the importance of, or the why behind, what they were learning. Two participants (P1 & P6) from the first focus group and two from the second focus group (P2 & P3), as well as two survey respondents (P12 & P13) mentioned gaining a greater understanding of the importance of the LQS along with the division's mission, vision, and priorities. These participants explained how understanding these pieces more thoroughly helped them to better understand how decisions are made in schools and in the division and how the smaller pieces are important to the big picture. As survey respondent P13 wrote:

The ongoing understanding of the LQS, which was communicated throughout the program, also enabled me to persevere through more challenging situations. The deepened understanding of my local school, the division and the larger context also assisted me when needing to master skills.

The supportive social emotional conditions described by APDP participants and the growth that they reported in relation to their identity as learners were both components of the program that were deemed by participants as important in contributing to the development of their leadership identity and self-efficacy. Participants also felt that development of their leadership capacity throughout the program further contributed to their leadership identity.

Leadership capacity. The most commonly mentioned activities within the APDP which survey respondents stated supported their development of leadership capacity and mastery of leadership skills leading to increased self-efficacy included: the cohort structure of the program, the school-based leadership project, presentations by experts, ongoing dialogue, and job-shadowing experiences. Participants felt that these activities supported them in learning to persevere, to welcome and take on challenges, take ownership of their leadership actions, build intrinsic motivation, and apply their knowledge and learning through the day to day work in their schools.

In terms of perseverance, 17 survey respondents reported that the school-based project that they were tasked with completing helped them to focus their leadership efforts on important and achievable goals, which they were able to see through to completion, resulting in positive change within their schools. Three members of each focus group also made comments related to their development of persistence. Focus group member P3, from the second focus group described how the school-based project helped them learn to persevere:

So I think the leading change project forced me continually to try and implement the changes that I saw as a vision earlier on. I think, had I not had that project (as a part of the APDP) I may have abandoned it or had high, lofty goals in November that would have fizzled come June.

A member of the first focus group (P5) also valued the school based project in terms of learning to persevere, “The project... you're starting something in your school and you're going to be held accountable for it, you're not going to let it drop... really forces you to be persistent with it.”

Participants shared that the notion of leading something that was needed in their school, that they felt accountable for, and that involved working with other people on their staff, challenged them to create a plan, break it into doable chunks, check in with others who were involved, and try different approaches when pieces of the project did not work, in order to see the project through to its completion.

Linked to the concept of perseverance is the notion of ownership which one participant from the first focus group and two participants from the second focus group described as helping them build their leadership capacity. During the second focus group interview, participant P6 summed up how their feelings of ownership of the project helped them to learn to lead change in this way:

This [project] was my baby, for lack of words. And it just put me in the driver's seat in a different sense than when I'm working side by side with my principal. It's [usually] their vision, it's their drive, it's what they're looking at, and how they feel the community, the school, whatever is going to be enhanced. But this was mine.... My principal provides me many opportunities... But there's always that guidance and this was me, on my own... I think that was what really helped me to master that ability to lead change and that ability to pull a team together around an end goal....

The school-based project was the most commonly referenced activity by survey respondents related to the question regarding APDP activities that supported participants in learning to welcome and take on challenges. Three participants of the first focus group and a survey respondent talked about getting to a point where they were welcoming challenges and said that

the school-based project was an activity that they felt allowed them to achieve this. As survey respondent P16 stated, “the opportunity to provide leadership in the school on a project helped me to be more open to taking on challenges and working with them”. Focus group participants described feeling challenged when the bar was raised such as when they were tasked with presenting their school-based projects to the assistant superintendents. As this participant (P5) of the first focus group commented, “So now, when I have challenges that come along my way, or my own projects, I want to try.” Another member of the first focus group (P2) spoke about the importance of preparing ahead in order to make the most of opportunities such as the job shadow. By getting to know a bit about the school, and creating a list of questions ahead of time, this participant felt able to get the most out of the experience.

Choice of activity for participants’ school-based project within the APDP was another aspect that five members of the first focus group and four members of the second focus group said they valued in terms of allowing them to pursue what they felt was important in their learning and would make a positive difference in their school. One participant from the first focus group (P2) expressed appreciation for their principal who, “tasked me with the freedom to identify a need in the school and create the direction and develop the path and everything. So I do appreciate that.” A participant in the second focus group (P6) expressed how great it was to choose a project in alignment with what they felt was needed in their school at the time:

When we were asked to choose a project you really look at what your school needs and what's already happening and what could we do that might be better? Or what is the end goal? Why did we choose this project? So my project was around indigenous education and I wanted to focus on that.

Choice of some APDP program elements was reported as being beneficial to participants' capacity building. Participants from both focus groups however, also felt that more choice would have prevented duplication with modules that many participants had taken prior to their participation in the APDP. Although members of the focus groups felt more choice of topic throughout the sessions would be beneficial, they had differing opinions as to how more choice might be able to be implemented. From the first focus group, P2 stated:

I did find there were repetitive presentations [lack of choice]. I had taken so much stuff prior to that; personally, it was a lot of repetitive pieces, but again, you still get more out of that. And I don't know how one would make it, how one would design a program to fit the varying needs of all the members in that group anyways.

A participant in the second focus (P4) group felt that getting initial feedback prior to the start of the APDP from applicants selected for the program would be helpful in tailoring the program to the group's needs.

Because I mean, if there's 20 people in the cohort and 19 of them are very special needs focused and they have a ton of background on special needs, maybe inclusive learning isn't something that's going to be in need in that cohort. So maybe we're jumping off on something else. So I think maybe getting feedback at the start.

Learning how to cope with challenges was the one area that differed in the discussions between the two focus groups as it was discussed in depth through 11 comments made by members of the first focus group, but was not mentioned at all by members of the second focus group. Participants in the first focus group believed that APDP participation helped them learn to cope with challenges and in doing so, helped them to build their leadership capacity and self-efficacy. All of the participants in the first focus group spoke about being able to call on other

division leaders who they had come to know through the APDP in order to ask questions and move forward. As P1 from the first focus group stated, “it’s so important to believe that yes you can do it and if you can’t you can pick up the phone and call somebody.” Some also spoke of learning to cope by learning more about themselves as leaders through activities such as the job-shadow which helped one member of the first focus group (P1) discover, “OK, this is the type of leader I am.” Two survey respondents (P31 & P44) commented about completing activities such as the DISC survey and as a result, becoming more proficient in relating to others. Several focus group participants such as P1 from focus group one spoke about learning to “check their ego at the door and have room for growth”, being vulnerable, learning from mistakes, and growing in their leadership journey.

The final aspect of the APDP, which participants felt supported their development of leadership capacity and self-efficacy, was related to opportunities to apply their knowledge and learning by actually leading in their schools. Seventeen survey respondents stated that their school-based project was the most powerful to this end. Five members of each focus group also stressed the importance of their school-based project in building their leadership capacity and self-efficacy. Comments such as this one from P3 from the first focus group highlight these thoughts and speak to the development of leadership capacity and self-efficacy as a result of the school-based projects:

The leading change project gives us that practical side. We actually need to go out, try it, make some mistakes, reflect, try it again, which is the basis of learning... it was a good thing that the project was part of the course because it gave a small piece of what it’s like to be a principal....

Another participant in the first focus group (P2) described how the project allowed them to build a variety of leadership skills, “it involved visionary, instructional leadership, change management for the whole school, and embedding the work in the classrooms as well as with parents and community”. Comments were similar from the second focus group such as this comment shared by P5 who felt that successful completion of the project would allow them to take on bigger challenges in the future:

...the leading change project, you had a goal, and you knew that that's something you had to get to... if I can lead this small change whatever it is within the present school... You get more confidence... self-efficacy, about feeling like you can do it in a larger scale.

Eight members across both focus groups and five of the survey respondents made comments which spoke to the benefits of receiving encouragement and feedback from other cohort members and the facilitators of the APDP throughout the course of their school-based project, which supported their development of self-efficacy, leadership skills and decision making, and ultimately ensured their project’s success. As one participant from the first focus group (P2) stated:

The school-based action research project and feedback about my project was very helpful.

Throughout my project, I had to observe staff and make adjustments to my research based on their success and failures aligning to the project criteria.

Although not attributed to participation in the APDP, when asked to reflect individually about experiences and learning participants engaged in outside of the APDP that they felt were critical to their leadership and self-efficacy development and that prepared them for their first principalship, participants provided examples of a variety of ways in which they were provided with opportunities to apply their learning within their schools and catchments. These experiences

included mentoring others such as new teachers or in one case, a principal who was new to their school; opportunities to act for their principal in their absence or for a principal at another school; taking the lead for decision making related to staffing a position; and taking on a variety of other leadership roles within the school and catchment.

Process and content: Critical components. Critical components related to programming processes that were integrated into the delivery of the APDP as well as the content included in the APDP, were described by focus group members and survey respondents as being critical to their development of self-efficacy. Processes included in the design of the APDP deemed worthy of note by participants are: professional dialogue with both experts and cohort members, the process of reflection, collaboration, coaching, the size of the group, and presentation style. Content of the APDP mentioned by participants as being critical included learning new information, solving practical challenges, and receiving critical feedback. Participants also deemed processes and content of the program as critical to the development of their professional identity. These program elements include the development of professional networks, accountability measures, support provided by mentors, and processes and an environment which made it more comfortable to take risks.

Process. Professional dialogue within the cohort was mentioned repeatedly: nine times by the first cohort, 10 times by the second cohort, and 47 times by survey respondents, as being a critical component of the APDP. Several survey participants stressed how the facilitators of the APDP were very intentional and effective in working to create a supportive and collegial environment within the cohort so that authentic dialogue could occur. As one survey respondent (P3) commented, the facilitators were “positive, honest, and created an environment where open communication and sharing of ideas and fears was possible”. A second survey participant (P11)

echoed this comment, “the sharing of successes or failures... was directly dependent on how the facilitators created trust, vulnerability, and openness”. Yet another survey participant (P24) said “they [the presenters] were very deliberate about making sure we interacted with all members of the cohort. I didn’t leave the program feeling like I missed the opportunity to really get to know each person in my group”. Although focus group members shared that they valued the ongoing professional dialogue within the cohort, they did not expressly attribute it to the program facilitators.

Numerous survey respondents as well as members of both focus groups lauded the benefits of the cohort structure and engaging in ongoing dialogue about the work they do in schools and discussing various scenarios and how different challenges could be approached. They appreciated that they could bring their own challenges to the cohort and get feedback or “talk it out” to learn and find solutions. As a first focus group member (P1) put it, “if you have questions and you need support, then those are the people you ask questions to”. Further, survey respondent P2 added:

Being in a common cohort group, one could discuss experiences and issues with members that might have similar experiences. This allowed for supportive dialogue, the sharing of opinions and feedback which could be more meaningful by essence of being in such a cohort group.

Survey respondent P28 also appreciated this risk-free environment commenting:

The Aspiring Principal group was extremely supportive and a safe environment. I recall the sharing circle allowed for topics to be brought from the group. Small group activities also provided an opportunity to share and elicit feedback from the group members.

Focus group participant P2 also expressed that they valued being able to take risks and stated, “Having the cohort group was really helpful for that [talking through challenges].” Each of these comments illustrates the value that participants placed on the cohort structure of the APDP.

Two members of the first focus group (P1 & P6) admitted that it was not easy at first to let go of their egos and show their vulnerability, but that over the course of the program it got easier and it created positive shifts in them as leaders. The ongoing dialogue within the cohort was also, as one survey respondent (P56) stated, “important to creating a confidence and awareness of the skills needed for the role [of principal]”. Another survey respondent (P45) commented that the cohort structure and dialogue “helped to positively push me – while others took risks or shared their challenges, it created an environment to invite challenges myself”. The open and honest sharing created an environment that allowed for vulnerability which an additional survey respondent (P54) mentioned they “found to be extremely rewarding and led me to wanting to take on challenges, knowing that I wasn’t alone in many of the issues I might have been having. We are all in it together.”

APDP cohort members also deemed professional dialogue with experts to be very beneficial as described by six comments made by first focus group participants, 12 comments made by second focus group participants, and 28 comments made by survey respondents. Experts who participated in program sessions ranged from seasoned school principals, to a range of senior leaders from the division office such as assistant superintendents, the director of finance, consultants, and the board lawyer. According to participants in the program, opportunities were created for cohort members to ask questions of, and engage in dialogue with the guest speakers who made presentations to the group. One survey respondent (P13) commented that “each session, including those led by leaders from outside the program but with expertise to share like

the CFO from Financial, were delivered in a way to allow any questions and to openly share”.

Participant P2 from the first focus group made a similar comment, “you can talk about that example that you’re experiencing with the guests that came in... that whole piece was really beneficial.”

Beyond the presentations in the monthly sessions, participants expressed their appreciation for the dialogue with the principals they were paired up with for their job shadow experiences as well as their own principals back in their own schools. As a participant in the first focus group (P1) said of their job shadow, “... having that dialogue (during the job shadow)... with that principal, with those assistant principals, and just understanding how things work in other places was eye-opening”. A participant in the second focus group (P3) talked about their job-shadowing experience and shared their appreciation for the dialogue with the principal they were paired with:

My principal was... We closed the door and I had the day for three solid days, as much time as I wanted. I know that came at a cost because it's not like the phone wasn't ringing and there weren't issues at the school, but they were put on hold for me to ask my very naive questions.

Participants also appreciated opportunities to engage in dialogue and discuss challenges of their school-based projects with their own principals as evidenced by comments from one participant (P6) in the first focus group:

My principal helped me to keep my project in perspective. So kind of bigger picture, not just about my own tunnel vision of what I needed to do for this, but bigger. [My principal asked] the bigger questions about division, the LQS, and all those pieces that I needed to understand. Because I would've just kept it here versus big picture. So the having the support

of the principal that kind of had that vision on the outlier and just kind of checking in with me and talking about where that was headed, I felt was important.

Participants also reported being able to have deeper dialogue with their principals after experiencing various components of the APDP. After the job shadow, one participant from the second focus group (P4) stated that they felt that they had come away with new perspectives which they were able to talk about with their principal:

But after sitting around talking [with my job shadow principal], it was a really powerful thing that I came away with and was able to talk to my principal about too - and a have more intentional conversations that sparked from that [job shadow].

Finally, a number of participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss their school-based projects and engage in dialogue with assistant superintendents who came to listen to their presentations about their experiences. As one individual who completed the survey (P67) noted, “Opportunities to present our projects to Assistant Superintendents was beneficial... presented an opportunity to engage in conversations with them about the project and to hear their perspectives on one's work.”

The reflective processes that were embedded throughout the APDP including monthly reflective journaling assignments and ongoing reflective opportunities in class, were expressed in 10 comments made by members of the first focus group, five comments made by members of the second focus group, and 19 comments by survey participants, to have supported them in internalizing their learning and learning from challenges and failures. As one first focus group participant (P1) put it, “You can go through stuff, but if you don't think about it and reflect on it, then really what are you getting out of it? Just practice”. A member of the second focus group (P1) made a similar comment:

Reflective activities, I rated them quite high. Yeah. Because I again found it... Having a presentation or a day of different activities put together was all great but reflective activities spurred the next level, which was your critical response to it if you will.

Another member of the second focus group (P6) also expressed how the reflective assignments helped to build leadership identity:

You don't have time to reflect often... having to do the assignments, then having a chance to reflect on what has happened, what you're doing or what you want to be as a leader, who you want to be as a leader. That was really incredible, I think for my learning and allowed me just to step back and take a breath and go: okay, you saw this, you learned this, you've heard this, this person shared this, okay, now what for myself as I develop?

Being intentional about the reflective process was also described by a second focus group participant (P5), as an important process included in the APDP design. "It's being very intentional of how you're reflecting and then growing from that," that participants described as supporting their learning. A participant in the first focus group (P1) put it this way:

I think as, as professionals, we reflect all the time, maybe in our heads or maybe out loud with a colleague, but to actually sit and go through that process... and, building all of that in together I think was the most important part of the entire program.

The first focus group engaged in a dialogue related to the value of reflection and their disappointment of not having time for reflection built into some of the sessions. As P3 stated:

They had great information to tell us, but without those breaks to talk and reflect, you quickly lost focus and everything just squashed over you. It was gone. Other than that, I think they worked really hard to make sure we did have this reflection time.

And from another member of this focus group (P6) stated that:

Some of the times that you didn't have an opportunity to reflect after, it just seemed like a long day. And so you just kind of went away going, "okay, that was a long day" and not really thought about what was being said or being able to digest it or to understand it from your own context.

Several survey respondents and a member of the first focus group (P6) also described coaching and collaborative opportunities as important contributors to their learning. Although not a formal part of the APDP, participants who did have an opportunity to work with an effective coach found it to be valuable, especially when it came to the development of one's vision for leadership. As P6 in the first focus group described, in relation to developing their visionary leadership:

How do we find that within ourselves? And I know that comes through the coaching, which is appreciated, but I don't think a lot, maybe a lot of people had that opportunity to have a coach throughout their leadership practice. Even still, I think that when we have that coaching model, when that is in place, when you have an effective coach that can get you to a place of where you want to be and to keep that momentum going.

This participant went on to agree with other focus group members who expressed that the development of visionary leadership was something that was lacking in the APDP. One survey respondent (P47) who had taken training in coaching outside of the APDP had this to say about the value they found in coaching:

I participated in executive coaching and this was so valuable to keeping me on track and affirming the abilities I have as a leader to lead a staff toward a common vision. As I still am growing as a leader, mistakes are part of the learning process. The coaching kept me on the path toward my goal instead of getting side tracked by the minutia.

Several participants including two from each focus group and four survey respondents talked about collaborative work within the cohort being important to their growth as this survey respondent (P54) said, “the ability to collaborate with peers in similar situations to share ideas and skills about how to handle certain situations was valuable”. Others, such as this member of the first focus group (P3) spoke about how their project necessitated them learning how to collaborate more effectively with a team and not just try to do everything themselves:

My interpretation of my project was I have always been very much, “here, let me do that for you. Let me get in the middle of everything” kind of leader. And when it came to the project, we got to do our first meeting, here's what we're going to do. And then next meeting I'm sick, or my child is sick, and everything just fell apart. I was never there. And I remember when it's time to start doing the write-up and I'm feeling so bad because nothing's been done. And I sat down on Friday with my group and said, "It's okay, sorry, I let you guys down." And they had everything done. And for me it gave me that reminder - I'm not alone as a leader, as you give to other people, the challenge is to let them lead, let them do their bit. And that's how the team works. And yes, I've been told that for multiple years, but this was just that kick in the head I needed to remind me of that. So again, when I go into challenges now I take that lesson with me.

There were differing opinions regarding the format of presentations and the resulting impact on participant learning. For the most part, participants stated that they really appreciated the cohort format of the APDP as well as the built in opportunities for reflection. They also valued the job-shadowing opportunities, the school-based project, and the opportunities to meet and talk with other division leaders with expertise in various areas. Three comments from focus group members however spoke to presentation type sessions of less value to them due to a lack of

opportunity to be actively engaged when a straight lecture format was used. A comment by a member of the first focus group (P3) that spoke to this included, “anytime there wasn't a chance for conversation - there were a few lectures that would go on and on and on and on”. Participants deemed these sessions to be ineffective. A second focus group participant (P2) commented, “because if something wasn't modeling instructional leadership, then I felt like it had less value”.

The size of the cohort and working groups within the cohort was an aspect of the APDP mentioned by one member of the first focus group (P6). Although most participants expressed that the cohort structure was supportive to them and that they did get to know the other members of the group well, this focus group member stated:

I found the cohort to be quite large. And to be honest with you, I didn't really get to know probably half of the people as much. I know it comes onto yourself too, and I'm a very social person, but I think I didn't get to know a lot of people in my group. Because I found you kind of went in, you got the guest speakers, and you did some of those things.

Other APDP participants who completed the survey or participated in the focus groups did not reiterate this comment. Beyond the processes involved in the design of the APDP, the content was also discussed as a critical component of the program.

Content. APDP content including the actual information that was covered, opportunities to solve real problems, and the process of receiving critical feedback were all important components of the APDP according to participants. Focus group participants claimed to have developed a greater understanding of practical information, operational items, and division processes and policies that supported their development of self-efficacy, although one member of the first focus group and four members of the second focus group said that they found that some

information that was shared was repetitive with other leadership modules they had taken. As a member of the first focus group (P1) expressed:

I think for me the information presentations were information, which is essential to know. I mean, you have to have the information to move on and make change in anything. But some of that I had taken before as part of the different modules.

Even though some information was said to be repetitive, a member of the second focus group (P6) found validation in knowing that they already knew the information being shared, “I do remember too - sitting there in some of those presentations going, I know that. Yes. Right? And there was that validation that you are doing the right thing”. Some specific topics, especially those related to available division supports, were described as being most valuable by a second member of this focus group (P1):

The ILS [Inclusive Learning Services] people came in, which was great. The more I wish I would have known, right? They could have done some more, right? And they could have presented situations where things had gone bad, I think.

Another comment from survey respondent P47 referred to appreciating presentations from people who shared who to call in times of need, “Presentations from supports in the division like our board lawyer, and DSS [Division Support Services] communicating who to call if the wheels fell off!”

Seven focus group members and survey respondents reflected on the benefits of the ongoing focus and reference to the LQS throughout the APDP. One survey respondent (P12) stated that, “The regular references to the LQS and activities revolving around the cohort becoming familiar with the aspects of the LQS was beneficial” while another (P13) recounted that, “The ongoing understanding of the LQS Standards, which was communicated throughout the program enabled

me to persevere through more challenging situations”. Participant P1 from the first focus group made a similar comment in relation to the benefit they found in continually being reminded to view their leadership work through the bigger picture and the lens of the LQS, “...that [the LQS] helped me to keep my project in perspective. ...not just about my own tunnel vision... asking the bigger questions about district, the LQS, and all those pieces that I needed to understand”.

Learning to create a school vision and understanding how to go about implementing it was a competency that members of the first focus group discussed and felt was missing from the APDP. They agreed they would have benefited from if it had been included in the program or included in a different way. As one member of this focus group (P5) explained:

... this idea of visionary leadership and having to implement your own vision remains, a source of insecurity for me... it's always somebody else's vision... my principal's... in an acting-for role, it's always someone else's vision... which honestly sometimes feels like a little bit of a relief to me because I don't have to spend a lot of time thinking about what my vision might actually... And so when I think about getting my own school... I'm still a little insecure about it. How do I decide what the vision for this place should be? What's my vision?

Participant P4 in the first focus group described how they felt that they did not learn how to, or have the support to, develop their visionary leadership:

What I really felt I lacked... I didn't have visionary leadership... had dreams of [for the program]... I'm going to be exposed to these visionary leaders... that will fire my call for change... build something big and beautiful. But really what I got was a lot of ways to not get stuck in the doo doo as I do my job.

When asked about experiences outside of the APDP that helped participants in developing their leadership and self-efficacy development and their preparation for their first principalship several focus group members shared that a variety of leadership modules such as “Fierce Conversations” and “Executive Coaching” had been very helpful to them. Several focus group members also mentioned that leadership development groups that they belonged to in their catchments supported their learning especially through opportunities to learn about and practice instructional coaching.

Focus group members and survey respondents described being able to engage with and solve real problems through the school-based project, which helped to increase their self-efficacy. Discussions related to school-based scenarios were also described by six survey respondents as having helped them gain new perspectives and build their capacity in terms of responding to challenges. The value of engaging in scenario based discussions was highlighted by these comments written by survey respondents such as P6, “Opportunities for scenario based discussions showed me new ways of doing things and I was able to have conversations that allowed me to implement new practices immediately”, and from P15, “scenario based learning and discussion all helped to build confidence which in turn builds persistence and determination”, and from P36:

When responses were different than my own and the reasoning for the response was explained I realized on several occasions that I need to think things through more carefully and I could of handled similar situations differently with better outcomes.

Participants also valued the school-based leading change project, which allowed them to engage in the process of leading in a meaningful way. As a member of the first group (P3) expressed, “[the project] gives us that practical side. We actually need to go out, try it, make

some mistakes, reflect, try it again, which is the basis of learning”. Another member of this group (P2) added that:

It was a good thing that I think that project was part of the course because it just gave a small, I think, little piece of what it's like to be a principal because unless you get moved into an acting or a principal role one doesn't know (what it's really like) until you're living in that world... And so I think that project is important because it just helps give that piece of experience.

Critical feedback throughout the APDP was provided in a number of ways. The process of reflective journaling and receiving feedback from cohort members and facilitators during the monthly sessions was discussed by each focus group and was mentioned seventeen times by survey respondents. Lesser mentioned ways of receiving feedback were through conversations with assistant superintendents which was mentioned six times, and from participants' own principals which was mentioned four times. Focus group members such as P4 in the second focus group shared that facilitators provided “timely and targeted” written feedback through thought provoking questions in response to participants' journaling exercises which helped them to think more deeply about topics. Additionally, as a member of the second focus group (P4) stated:

I really appreciated the facilitators; their feedback wasn't just fluff. ... it was very intentional, very targeted. I was able to have conversations even outside of the journaling assignments with one of facilitators and it was a really open and honest dialogue. And I appreciated the feedback.

This second focus group participant (P4) went on to add that the facilitators helped them by providing comments related to their reflective journaling such as:

"Oh, think a little bit more about this or dig a little bit deeper in this idea." And you're really forced to look more inward because they don't want just surface answers... But then when they send those questions back, "Oh, tell me a little bit more about this..." It really made me stop and think, which is a pretty powerful thing and really helped me build that efficacy. So I appreciated that.

And sometimes, the feedback related to the reflective journaling was reported to have helped to validate the thinking of participants, "...journaling allowed me to identify important learning events, and feedback received from our program supervisors would push my thinking, encourage me to make connections, or confirm for me my thoughts, observations and reflections".

Members of both focus groups made a total of 17 comments about the benefits of receiving corrective feedback throughout the APDP, especially in relation to the school-based projects, to the development of their self-efficacy. Fourteen survey respondents made similar comments. One member of the first focus group (P2) shared their appreciation for the critical feedback provided by the cohort this way:

I could share the work that I was doing and get some feedback on that as I continued to embed that project in the school community. And so I found that was really helpful having a cohort group where you could share and get feedback on, on the process and how things were going.

Another member of this focus group (P3) added comments related to the importance they attributed to feedback that was provided by not only the cohort, but also from their principal and from individuals within their school whom they were leading:

The cohort structure gave you that feedback loop that you do have that open conversation with and get feedback, reflect on things. Do it again, push your learning forward, get your

mastery of leadership skills. Without people there to give you some type of feedback, whether it's constructive feedback or suggestions of, "Hey, have you tried this?" I don't think the project would have been as effective when you don't have that constant assistance from other people. And much comes from our principal... But it also comes from me taking that project into the school and constantly asking for feedback from staff, ones that were involved in the project.

A second focus group member (P5) added this comment with regard to feedback received by APDP facilitators, "I appreciate the kind of probing questions... did cause me to think a little bit deeper... I did appreciate that feedback." Survey respondents also appreciated the feedback that the program facilitators provided as noted by P4 "The leaders of the sessions were amazingly positive, always open to giving positive and critical feedback in a respectful and helpful manner."

Professional identity. Participants in the APDP reported building their self-efficacy and professional identity through networking, working with mentors, taking more risks, and being held accountable for following through with completing activities and developing a sense of responsibility to their cohort. Comments related to networking were made 15 times by focus group members and 20 times by survey respondents. Comments related to mentoring were made twice by focus group members and seven times by survey respondents. Taking more risks was mentioned five times by focus group members and comments related to increased accountability were made four times by focus group members, and five times by survey respondents.

Building professional relationships with cohort members as well as other leaders in the division was described by participants as helping them to become more persistent in taking on challenges. Focus group members and survey respondents talked about the comfort they felt in

knowing who to call for help and advice when challenges arise, and in how accountability measures of the APDP and cohort ensured that they persevered and followed through, even when challenges arose and when moving forward meant that they needed to take risks in relation to their leadership development. One survey respondent (P20) wrote about how the connections that they made throughout the APDP have stayed with them and that they are able to remain persistent because of the support of their professional colleagues:

I honestly think for me it was the opportunity to make connections with other people in our division during the entire program. I feel like I left Aspiring with so many colleagues in my back pocket. I was in the first group of APs to complete the program and still regularly keep in touch with some of the people from my cohort. If I'm ever feeling stumped by a problem, I reach out to them or other leaders in the division that I have developed a relationship with. I strongly believe that if you surround yourself with people that are all looking to improve themselves and their schools, you will rarely lack persistence because we all lift each other up and make our division stronger.

Networks. The development of professional networks, as an important part of self-efficacy development, was mentioned eight times by members of the first focus group, seven times by second focus group members and 20 times by survey respondents. As a member of the second focus group (P2) said:

the presentations let you know that there was someone to call, or... if you're working in that specific area, that they had more information... you get a face to the name, and it makes it easier to make that connection.

A member of the first focus group (P6) made similar comments in relation to knowing who to call for help, and in feeling confident in reaching out to them:

...to me was helpful in building relationships. And knowing that I'm not alone and I can call those people... And then I called her, and we got through it... just little things, but big things, I would never, ever have known who to call or where to go. But now I have them at my fingertips, and I know all those people.

A survey respondent (P33) also indicated how important they felt it was to develop a network of supports:

Having an opportunity to have people who work in different levels of the division explain their roles and what they can do to support me was HUGE!!! During my first week it was what saved me, I knew I was not alone and I could call any number of people. When I did they were so kind and helpful.

The opportunity to develop a strong professional network is something that several members of both focus groups agreed, continued to support them in their leadership journey for years after completing the APDP. As this member of the second focus group (P6) stated:

The cohort structure has continued on through my first-year principalship, my second-year principalship and those are people that I am in ongoing communication with and we just built relationships that I would have never had if I wouldn't have had that cohort and those other people to bounce ideas off... so huge in our division and in this learning.

Accountability measures. The focus group interviews included discussions of the importance of the projects and activities included in the APDP, as well as the cohort structure of the program, in developing their personal accountability and thus persistence and willingness to take on challenges and see them through. A member of the second focus group (P4) talked about the accountability they felt, to complete their project and to not let their cohort colleagues down:

It was a bigger challenge for me. So definitely, held me accountable, like number three had said and following through with that, because sometimes you get bogged down and you might let it slide but it definitely held me accountable. And the accountability piece with the cohort too, we had there's some people who would take away our commit to try for the next week, a lot of times it was staffing issues, or you'd say, "I'm not sure." And we would give strategies and ideas and we would do each other, "Okay, next time we meet, I'm going to ask you how it went and ask you what this thing that we talked about. And I want you to say how it went."

And from a member of the first focus group (P4):

We definitely started to feel accountable to each other. And so my attaining of this skill and as I work on trying to master those skills comes about as I don't want to let the cohort down and I want to provide good advice, good support, good thorough, well thought out, intentional words to people that come to me now that are still part of that cohort. And so that raises the bar for me.

Mentors. The nine study participants who spoke about mentors did so in a positive manner. While some equated mentor with the principal they were paired with in their job shadow or the facilitators of the APDP, others spoke about the benefits of having their own principal serve as a mentor for them as this survey respondent (P33) did:

Not so much in the program did I receive this but I did from my principal. She was an amazing mentor and I felt very lucky to have someone giving me feedback and supporting me in journey. She used the coach approach and offered weekly opportunities to do this. I also know that I had the mindset that I wanted feedback and to grow and I was open to the opportunity. I know this may be difficult for some people but it gave me the gift to reflect,

learn and grow. Without it the decisions I making in my building today as a principal would be very difficult.

Another survey respondent (P55) spoke of how they appreciated their job shadow principal as a mentor and how their perspective showed them a different lens through which to approach challenges, “The three-day mentor experience was great. I was able to make it my own, ask questions that were pressing to me, and receive answers that were through different lenses”.

Risk taking. The support of the cohort along with being put into situations that required risk taking as a leader helped participants to develop their professional identity and self-efficacy as leaders. A member of the second focus group (P6) talked about feeling supported in taking risks professionally and then being able to model risk taking for others:

... both the leading change project and the cohort helped me welcome and take on challenges because both allowed me to reflect... get feedback from everyone. My cohort held me up when I was flat, and they applauded me and were my biggest cheerleaders when I was successful... knowing that I had that support allowed me to take risks and to take on those challenges and welcome whatever was thrown my way as a learner. It also placed me with the staff and students. I'm learning right beside you, I'm asking you to take all these challenges on and try new things and “Hey look at me. I'm doing the exact same thing because we're all lifelong learners.” Right?

This comment illustrates how strongly participants viewed the importance of having the support of colleagues from their cohort when taking on new challenges requiring a certain amount of risk taking on their part.

Context. The context of the settings in which school leadership occurs and the variety of leadership styles that participants were exposed to were identified by focus group members and

survey respondents as elements that supported their growth as leaders and enhanced their self-efficacy. Numerous participants including two survey respondents, four members of the first focus group and one from the second focus group talked about gaining a greater perspective of school leadership through their job-shadowing experiences. They described learning that not every school was the same as theirs, and that different schools require that different tasks be attended to by their school leaders. An awareness of the varied contexts of the different schools helped participants to think more deeply about what needs to be done in a school to meet the needs of specific staff and students, and to think about how different challenges might best be met. As a member of the first focus group (P5) described:

The thing I really appreciated was how different the context was from anything I had experienced in my career. Never having worked in an elementary school, being deliberately paired with an elementary school principal in a complex school ...you realize what you don't know.... I remember my first thoughts were: Wow, there's a lot of buses! Who organizes the supervision schedule? How do we do that? There's a lot of EA's in a building like this - who timetables EAs? And so from feeling pretty confident...to, Oh my goodness, this is a very different thing. There's some things I don't know here.

Other participants, who completed job shadowing in schools with settings that were different than their own schools, were able to draw similarities between the seemingly different contexts. Members of the second focus group discussed how their ability to discover these similarities helped them to feel more confident and efficacious about the possibility of taking on a principalship in a school that may be different from what they have known. As this second focus group member (P3) recounted:

I was placed in a school two levels below ...in primary as opposed to high school. It was a very different setting than what I'm accustomed to seeing in the day to day, and I could see just how transferable things are. Kids are kids, and that was a beautiful thing to see.

Another member of this focus group (P2) had a similar experience:

The job shadow... it was really huge because we know that we're not going to end up in a similar school and we know that kids are the same. They're just bigger kids or they're just younger kids, and lots of those conversations are still the same about how we work with them. But it really affirms that for us.

Some APDP participants referred to their observations of different leadership styles in relation to the context of their job-shadowing experience. A member of the first focus group (P1) related that the job shadow allowed them to, "...see different leadership styles in a different school context". One member of the second focus group (P6) described the job shadowing to be their strongest experience, "as it provided just that different lens, in a different building, a different leadership [style], a different staff, a different way of doing everything".

Participants in the second focus group described how they continually took what they learned throughout the APDP and thought about how they could apply their new learning to their own school and leadership context. In regard to sharing successes with other cohort members, one group member (P2) commented that they often thought, "Okay, maybe I could try that. Or how would that success look in my school or in my context?"

Seeing and learning how various leadership competencies fit, in alignment with the LQS, was another area of learning that supported their self-efficacy development, which was mentioned by several focus group members. One participant in the second focus group (P2) explained how they used to see the LQS as several unrelated areas:

Before the aspiring leaders, [I saw] the LQS as these individual pillars. And so working with a program like aspiring leaders, you start to see where they really do dovetail into each other and they're often related and they're not just these individual pillars or silos of leadership.

Another participant in this group related that prior to taking the APDP, they saw the LQS as: somewhat of an artificial document, something that was created and that would address certain facets of the profession but nothing with fluidity, or something that was dynamic and that could be morphed into various situations.

With an increased understanding of the LQS, this individual claimed to have built a stronger understanding of the greater context of school leadership while increasing their self-efficacy.

Finally, time was mentioned over and over again by survey respondents and focus group members: 20 times on the survey, 17 times from the first focus group, and 21 times in the second focus group, in terms of the importance of creating time for what is important as a leader, the timeliness of learning in relation to what is needed when, and as a desire for more time for job shadowing. Several participants expressed that they appreciated various aspects of the APDP that helped them to make time for important leadership work rather than getting stuck in the minutia of the day to day. As one of the members of the second focus group (P4) said in regard to their school-based project, "as an AP you get so bogged down with the day to day behavior, phone calls, and other little things that add up during the day, and you never really get a chance to take something on like that". This participant went on to speak about the value of the time provided to engage in dialogue during each session:

It's huge to just be able to have some dedicated time to sit with colleagues from different schools or catchments and across all four divisions to just chat about emerging issues or staff

problems we are having. You might want to bounce some ideas off of everyone, because you don't get that chance very often.

A survey respondent (P11) also expressed how they valued the time to come together as a group in developing their self-efficacy, “The time away from specific environments and being able to come to a group of fellow colleagues supported the opportunity to see myself as a leader.”

The ongoing dialogue that occurred in the monthly sessions was mentioned as something that allowed participants to ask questions in a timely manner. As a member of the second focus group (P5) stated, “It was nice to be able to talk to people at that time and just be reassured that, Yes, I'm thinking in the right direction”. Time to reflect was also discussed by the second focus group, and when this time was not provided, these focus group members shared that it left them feeling frustrated. Several participants also shared frustrations with regard to being presented with really detailed information at a time when they felt it wasn't relevant to them as described by this member of the second focus group (P3):

I can't say that I remembered a lot of the details because, for me, I need to be in it to learn.

So I learned more in my first-year principalship. They had similar presenters come in... but now I had some really relevant questions to ask them because I was living it at the time, whereas you're not when you're going through the aspiring principal program.

This participant's views were similar to those of another member of this focus group (P5) who reflected on a session focusing on school councils which was overwhelming due to the amount of information that they felt they did not need at the time. This comment also speaks to the importance of presenting information at a time when the information is needed by participants if it is to be of benefit to them:

It's a lot of information and it's not really things that you're going to deal with until you're in the principalship. So, yes, we need to be aware of it, yes, we need to know there's a different organization if they're fundraising and just those general ideas to make sure that we're aware of it when we do get into that role, but to give us all that information at that time, sometimes seemed a little too overwhelming and not very useful. But when I heard it the next time when I actually had my school council... I knew how they were set up, and what things I needed to change because it wasn't according to regulation, then that was more valuable to me.

Time spent participating in the job shadow was also described as being highly valued as evidenced by this comment made by a member of the first focus group (P6):

(job shadow) I almost wish that I had more than just the three days, because I found it to be that valuable. And in the course of the time frame that we were in, I found it to be rushed, but really important to my learning.

Summary

This chapter has presented both quantitative and qualitative data from the survey as well as data that emerged from analysis of the focus group interview transcripts. Qualitative data for both the survey and the focus groups was represented through discussion of three themes including the development of leadership identity, process and content: critical components, and context of leadership development programming. Chapter five explores findings derived from analysis of this data and reflection on the literature that has informed this study. Chapter five also provides recommendations for the enhancement of principal preparation programming to support the development of self-efficacy in participants based upon the findings of this study.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to investigate the impact of a school division's principal preparation programming on the reported self-efficacy of participants preparing for their first principalship in a large urban division. The study was grounded in Bandura's (1977) Social Cognitive Theory and Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory. The case in this study was the Aspiring Principal Development Program (APDP) in a large urban division in Alberta, Canada from 2016-19. Instrumental case study was chosen as the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of self-efficacy development of aspiring principals in relationship to their participation in the yearlong program. As Stake (1995) defined instrumental case study: it is "research on a case to gain understanding of something else" (Stake, 1995, p. 171).

This chapter includes a brief summary of the study and will address findings related to program design and self-efficacy development as well as adult learning principles; implications and recommendations for aspiring principal development programming; limitations of the study; suggestions for further research; and conclusions related to the study.

The research question for this study was:

How does principal preparation programming impact participants' reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in a large urban school division?

Data was collected in part, through administration of a survey to determine the perceived self-efficacy of participants, as well as to gather qualitative data related to activities within the APDP that participants believed contributed to their development of self-efficacy. Two focus group interviews following the survey, allowed for more detailed exploration of participants'

survey responses and topics related to the literature as well as collection of qualitative data related to participants' thoughts regarding their self-efficacy development as a result of activities included in the APDP. Focus group participants were chosen based on their level of perceived self-efficacy, as indicated by their survey responses, with one group being comprised of individuals with self-efficacy scores above the median, and the other group with scores below the median. Focus groups were selected in this manner as it had originally been thought that different feedback may be generated, based on the level of reported self-efficacy of participants. Analysis of the data however, showed that responses were similar from both groups.

As detailed in chapter two, it is evident from the literature that principal self-efficacy effects student achievement (Goddard, Skrla, & Salloum, 2017; Versland, 2016; Versland & Erikson, 2017), that the role of the principalship has become more complex (ATA & CAP, 2014; Day & Sammons, 2014; Kruse and Seashore-Louis, 2009; Levine, 2005; Rintoul & Bishop, 2019), and that there is a need for effective preparation for new principals to ensure that they are well equipped to take on this important, increasingly complex role (Barber et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr, 2006; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007; Versland, 2016). Effective principal preparation includes building the necessary knowledge and skills as well as the development of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2007; Versland, 2016).

Discussion

This study shows that participation in a principal preparation program impacts participants reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in a large urban school division in a number of ways. The reported impact on self-efficacy development includes activities and program structures that incorporate the four sources of Bandura's (1986)

self-efficacy development as well as the tenets of Knowles' (1972) Adult Learning Theory. Findings are also aligned with other research in these areas such as research related to perceived self-efficacy development in principal preparation programming by Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) and Versland (2016); and research related to the importance of incorporating adult learning principles into principal preparation programming by Parylo et al., (2012) and Zepeda et al. (2014).

Findings related to self-efficacy. The theory of practice that guided this study was that principals who feel competent and self-efficacious, are likely to be more successful in building collective efficacy in their school and those who have participated in strong principal preparation programming are likely to have strong self-efficacy. Results of this study did not show any significant differences between the perceived self-efficacy of APDP participants who are now principals and those who are not; or between instructional self-efficacy, management self-efficacy, and moral self-efficacy. There were however, a couple of things that surprised me in relation to this data. At first I was surprised to see that principals had a slightly lower overall perceived self-efficacy score than assistant principals. I was also surprised that management self-efficacy came out as the lowest of the three sub groups, and that it was also the lowest for the group of principals. I had anticipated that instructional self-efficacy would be the lowest of the sub-scores overall as I felt that it takes a longer period of time to develop instructional leadership skills. These observations made me wonder if, when individuals become principals, they begin to feel increased responsibility which contributes to less self-assurance and self-efficacy especially in the area of management self-efficacy. Principals may have a lower sense of perceived self-efficacy in this area as they may feel more responsibility for elements such as shaping operational policy and procedures related to school management. Management self-efficacy also

includes elements such as handling time demands, completing paperwork, prioritizing, and coping with stress. If beginning principals are feeling pressure to do many things well in their new role, they might not be coping as well as they would like and their self-efficacy related to these things may be impacted.

These results may be explained in terms of Bandura's (1986) Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model. As environmental and social factors shift when one transitions to being a principal, behavioral and personal factors including self-efficacy beliefs will also shift. Self-efficacy beliefs are not consistent from one context to another and as a result, one would expect that as an individual moves into the role of the principalship, self-efficacy would be impacted. In terms of management self-efficacy, perhaps beginning principals feel increased pressure to meet deadlines and do everything that is expected of them in their new context and thus go through a period in which stress associated with their new role and increased pressure that they place on themselves to look competent, may result in lower self-efficacy scores in this area.

Themes related to self-efficacy. Results of this study identified various ways in which participants in an APDP believe that the activities included in the program impacted their self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in their large urban school division. Analysis of the data from this study resulted in the emergence of three themes related to participants' experiences in the program. The three themes related to the development of self-efficacy by aspiring principals who participated in the APDP include:

- Development of leadership identity; developed by way of social emotional conditions, the development of learner identity, and building of leadership capacity;

- Process and content: critical components; critical components of processes and content deemed impactful to programming; and
- Context; understanding the context of school leadership including the element of time.

Included in these three themes are elements that Bandura (1986) described as sources contributing to self-efficacy development: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social or verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Participants in the APDP identified program activities and design elements that provided experiences that helped to develop their self-efficacy through Bandura's four sources. In looking at the responses to the four survey questions which were designed to gather examples of factors that contributed to self-efficacy development through each of the four sources of Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy development, seven elements stood out as having the greatest impact on the perceived self-efficacy of the participants. These seven elements include:

- Completion of the school-based leadership project;
- Ongoing dialogue;
- Job shadowing;
- The cohort structure of the program;
- Regular opportunities for reflection and receiving feedback on reflections;
- Presentations by experts; and
- Opportunities for networking.

Mastery Experiences. According to Bandura (1997), mastery experiences are the strongest of the four sources of self-efficacy development. When individuals experience success in increasingly challenging situations as school leaders, they become more confident in their ability

to act in ways in which they will attain their desired results. They are more likely to persevere to overcome challenges and stay positive while working to achieve their goals. In this study, participants identified the cohort structure of the APDP, the school-based leadership project, presentations by experts, ongoing dialogue, their job-shadowing experiences, and networking as helping them to develop persistence leading to mastery of leadership skills. When asked what about these activities and elements of the program supported them in attaining and mastering these skills, opportunities to apply their learning and thus build leadership capacity was identified as critical to participants. As a member of the second focus group (P2) explained with regard to applying their learning through completion of their school-based project:

So when you're doing that project and it doesn't go well then it forces you to go back and try again. And so you are you accessing resources through the division, through your current principal, through the cohort. So that getting ideas and, "Okay, well I've got to go back and try this angle a little differently here, I'm going to go try to move this a little bit farther forward." Or whatever that is. So that causes you to persist and try to move towards mastery.

As Versland (2016) stated, principal preparation programs can contribute to the development of principal self-efficacy by including activities that result in mastery experiences enabling participants to build relationships with others in the program while learning the course content. Versland found that including a project-based learning approach and case studies served as mastery learning which contributed to self-efficacy development of program participants. Similar to Versland's (2016) findings, the cohort model of the APDP was described as a critical component of the of the program's design which allowed participants to engage in mastery experiences while building relationships throughout the yearlong program. Participants described their perceived value of the cohort model and the ongoing dialogue within it as critical to their

learning and development of self-efficacy. Two survey respondents expressed their appreciation for the cohort model in building their self-efficacy in their comments. Participant P19 stated that:

...the best part of APDP to help with persistence was the collegial atmosphere developed within the program. Having opportunities to connect with other leaders regularly and discuss challenges, share stories and suggestions, and know that you were part of a cohort that was experiencing similar frustrations was a huge support. Being able to reach out to colleagues to get help, advice or resources was huge.

P27 also appreciated the safe space created by the cohort in which they could learn from one another:

Our debriefs of activities and the safe space given to share our struggles in our schools allowed me to see that others were having some of the same issues I was as a leader.

Discussing how each handled the opportunities given them showed that there was a variety of answers based on context and personality.

The structure of the APDP allowed participants to create networks of support that continue to help them persevere with challenges in their roles as leaders, beyond completion of the program. Survey respondent P13 stated how they appreciated the opportunity to build a network of contacts throughout the APDP, "The group dynamic of the aspiring group allowed me to build a network of contacts which enables me to find assistance with any arising situations."

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) described internships as powerful mastery experiences. Although the APDP did not include an extended internship as recommended by Orr (2006), and Tschannen-Moran, and Gareis (2007), the school-based projects and job-shadowing opportunities appear to have provided some of the elements one may experience in an extended internship and thus they provided valuable mastery experiences for participants. One survey

respondent (P43) explained how engaging in their project included elements that may be present in an extended internship:

The yearlong "Providing Instructional Leadership Project" required us to design, develop and implement an initiative that demonstrates leadership and results in a positive impact on teaching and learning. In order to approach this project with success, analysis, vision, clarity and persistence were all required.

Perhaps extending the length of time in which participants are able to job shadow another principal, or having participants take on an active leadership role in a school that is not their own, in a supportive environment, would enhance these mastery experiences and thus provide additional opportunities for further growth in self-efficacy.

Vicarious Experiences. Also included as one of Badura's (1986) sources of self-efficacy development are vicarious experiences that include learning and developing self-efficacy through modeling or observing others, as well as through hearing the stories of others, both of which support the development of leadership identity. Versland (2016) stated that including opportunities for aspiring principals to observe "an accomplished instructional leader" (p. 302) as a part of their preparation program may support the development of self-efficacy of the participants. Her study went on to find that vicarious learning opportunities such as engaging in dialogue with other cohort members to learn from their stories, experiences, and ideas, supported self-efficacy development. This study produced some similar findings to Versland's study. Participants identified their job-shadowing experiences, ongoing dialogue, the school-based projects, and self-reflection, as supporting their self-efficacy development through vicarious learning opportunities.

Participants identified the job-shadowing experience most often, with 39 (59%) survey respondents identifying job shadowing as a valuable activity in terms of learning from the successes and failures of others through hearing stories and making observations during their three days of job shadowing an experienced principal. This response rate was based on participants being asked to self-identify program activities without any prompting. One member of the first focus group (P5) described how they learned from job shadowing a principal who was new to her school:

The principal I got was new to her school, which I actually thought was pretty fortunate because she was thinking in the way of an experienced principal, but figuring her way through a new building.... There were some things that needed to be improved... she was pretty open and honest with her thought process with me in terms of “here’s some things I’m struggling with...”

Another survey respondent (P13) described how they learned by observing their job-shadow principal in a new context:

The principal shadow program was very helpful in being able to observe an active principal in a setting different from my own contacts. I was able to ask questions, directly observe the work and to debrief after a day, which allowed me to deepen my learning.

These types of experiences help participants to develop self-efficacy by first observing and then reflecting on their observations and stories of others, later allowing them to apply the lessons learned in their own contexts. A member of the second focus group (P4) also described the powerful learning derived from conversations during their job shadow:

It's pretty rare that as an AP you get a chance to sit down with another principal from another school. Just being able to pick their brain, sit in meetings with parents and say afterward, "why did you address that in that way?" or "Why did you come to that decision?"

Another member of the first focus group (P5) spoke about the safe environment that they felt during her job-shadowing experience and how the conversations that they had and the stories that were shared with them, helped them to feel that it was all right to not know everything:

The biggest thing was creating that safe environment so the job shadowing, I mean, I was paired up with a seasoned principal and for it to have those conversations of things that challenged her and how she got through it and just providing that space for me to say, "Okay. It's okay that I don't know everything." ...that's one of the things in our profession, whether you're a teacher, a principal, AP, whatever - you never get there. There's always work to be done right? So to be okay with that and to know that if you try something it doesn't work, try again.

The feeling of being in a safe learning environment was one of the ways that participants felt they were able to build their leadership identity through these types of experiences that arose throughout the APDP.

Ongoing dialogue within the cohort was another way in which participants claimed to have learned from the successes and failures of others, and thus develop their leadership identity.

... the successes that were shared in that [ongoing] dialogue had such a profound impact on me because I didn't even know there were issues where people were sharing successes. I thought, "Wow, that's a thing." And in my own little myopic world, because I am an AP in a high school where I think the jobs are very specific and finite.... And then you have colleagues who have such a diverse portfolio.

The ongoing dialogue in the cohort helped participants to learn from the varied experiences of the group and from challenges that others faced as summarized by survey respondent P47:

Conversation time with colleagues who were all going through the same things at the same time, talking about solutions they have considered [was valuable]. As a high school experienced person who was placed at an elementary, the experience of my colleagues and their suggestions from div. 1/2 was invaluable...

Presentations of school-based projects also helped participants learn vicariously from the success and failure of others, "...the opportunity to present our project to a small table group (with) an Assistant Superintendent provided an opportunity to learn from others in a formalized environment..." As survey respondent (P20) also noted:

...our projects, and the way we presented them in a group with the Assistant Superintendents, really helped with successes and failures. The conversation and questions generated there were very non-evaluative and thought provoking... Our successes and failures made us all stronger.

The encouragement and feedback described here supports the development of both leadership capacity and leadership identity through vicarious learning and also through social persuasion.

Participants in the APDP additionally identified self-reflection as a way in which they enhanced their learning by reflecting upon their observations of others including their successes and failures. When they heard the stories of others or observed others, and reflected upon these experiences, it helped some participants to learn and develop their leadership identity and enhance their self-efficacy. After reflecting on their job-shadowing experience, one member of the first focus group (P1) noted that they came to know who they wanted to be as a leader, "Oh, I think I understand who I am and maybe I want to be as a leader".

Social or Verbal Persuasion. Bandura's (1986) third source of self-efficacy development is social or verbal persuasion and includes receiving feedback including encouragement and corrective feedback related to a particular skill or capability. Receiving corrective feedback supports the development of leadership capacity, and the encouragement helps participants develop their leadership identity. When feedback is positive, it enhances performance and identity as people see themselves as being more capable. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found that exemplary leadership development programming includes support through formal mentoring and a cohort program design.

In this study, participants identified self-reflection and the feedback they received from APDP facilitators in their reflective journals, ongoing dialogue, and their school-based projects, as critical components of the APDP that provided them with encouragement and feedback contributing to their self-efficacy development. Program participants appreciated the opportunity to receive feedback from program facilitators on their monthly reflections, as several survey respondents such as P54 explained, "...Having the chance to receive feedback on our monthly reflections really challenged my thinking and forced me to become much more introspective in my day to day work." P12 made a similar comment "...the feedback received on our monthly written reflections... they provided constructive feedback through questioning that encouraged me to think deeper." P11 also agreed that feedback was helpful as stated in this comment, "...We were given feedback, both positive and corrective, which allowed us to grow even more and move our work forward in the right direction." Even when feedback was not received on written reflections, one participant in the first focus group (P3) stressed that the process of writing helped him to figure out a way forward in taking on challenges:

The moment you put something into words, it becomes real only to you, but that's still very real. I'm trying to find a more eloquent way of saying that, but so the act of doing the reflection forced you to come face to face with things that you've done, making it that much more real and making it so that it was something you felt like you could actually face and overcome... There was a problem today, what am I going to do? Now I can see that problem right in front of me. I can think it through and then with the added encouragement, know you can do it and if you're on the right track kind of thing. All right, I'm now prepared. Got my sword and shield. Let's go slay this dragon.

This participant was also building self-efficacy through psychological arousal, as they discovered how to use reflection as a way to plan for taking on challenges.

The ongoing dialogue throughout the program also provided support leading to self-efficacy development through social and verbal persuasion as cohort members encouraged and supported one another and worked to figure out challenges together as well as celebrating successes together. Two survey respondents summed up the benefits of the cohort. P20 made this reflection:

I left every session having shared good things I've done and taken away great ideas from other people. I can't emphasize enough that the activities we did just generated great opportunities to talk to one another. There was a lot of "brain power" in that room and the program really allowed us to tap into that positive energy. People were excited to be there and learn, and the enthusiasm led to a positive encouraging environment. I never left feeling inadequate, incompetent, or feeling hopeless. The praise and encouragement came from (the facilitators) for sure, but it was equally echoed by the other APs and guest speakers we had.

Survey respondent P11 had this to say regarding their feelings of being supported throughout their project:

Regular check-ins from both the leaders and our colleagues regarding our ongoing project was also a huge help. We were given feedback, both positive and corrective, which allowed us to grow even more and move our work forward in the right direction.

The comments by these two participants, once again speak to how the APDP was able to support the development of leadership capacity and identity of participants.

Participants also benefited from feedback and encouragement from those they were leading throughout the implementation of their school-based projects. One participant in the second focus group (P4) spoke about choosing a project in an area that they felt they really needed to learn more about, but in which there were others in their school with expertise:

It was really important, I think, that I chose something that I had a lot of work to do on and relying on those staff and like I said, being vulnerable... It was a nice back and forth open dialogue between me and the staff too and they gave me pointers. “And so this presentation wasn't the best. Maybe work on this.” ...at first it was hard for me, it's never easy thing but I really appreciated it at the end when I reflected back on it.

By soliciting the feedback from those they were leading, this participant was building self-efficacy through learning how to welcome challenges while developing their capacity as a leader.

Psychological Arousal. Bandura's (1986) fourth and final source of self-efficacy development is that of psychological arousal and the development of helpful responses to challenges and stressful situations. Versland (2016) stated that effective principal preparation programs can support the building of self-efficacy by providing opportunities for participants to “practice skills that help them manage rigorous expectations and execute strategies for

succeeding in arduous courses” (p. 302). In this study, participants identified primarily the school-based project, but also the cohort structure, and presentations by experts, as critical components of the program which helped them to welcome and take on challenges, and thus build their self-efficacy. One member of the first focus group (P1) developed their leadership identity as evidenced by how they described having to meet the challenges of completing their project:

But the project forced me to go from beginning to end... being in a bigger school, sometimes you need other people to do those things for you, and I don't mean in terms of delegate, but you have people who are in charge of specific areas because you can't do it all... I had to make sure that I followed it from beginning to end... it was challenging to ensure that I made sure I had every box checked off. It's pretty easy for us to say, “Oh, you should've done that too.” I've got to remind them to do that. I've got to remember to do that... this is important, as part of my challenge, to make sure that (my project) is on the right path.

Survey respondent P12 also described how the project provided psychological arousal as it helped them to learn to manage rigorous expectations and overcome challenges:

The project was also, because of some pitfalls, an excellent experience where I had to problem solve along the way to ensure I completed the project. The program offered many opportunities to push me out of my comfort zone and embrace the chance to take on challenges.

A member of the second focus group (P4) also described the school-based project as a critical component of the APDP that really pushed them to take risks and make themselves vulnerable in

order to develop their self-efficacy and leadership identity and provide the necessary leadership in their school:

I really had to put myself out there and be vulnerable to say like, “I don’t know nearly as much as I should” ...if I’m going to lead this project, I needed to lean on other people, on staff, and on the division to help me build those skills. ... it held me accountable to make sure that I was continuing to be a learner in this topic and again, putting myself out there saying, "I don't know much on this topic."

Another member of the second focus group (P2) also described how their project pushed them to do more and continue the work beyond completion of the program, “it just encourages you to do more; you want to do more because you've started it, you've laid the groundwork for this and so I'm going to keep going... The seed was planted with that project.”

The cohort structure contributed to the development of leadership identity and was a critical design component of the APDP. Participants described the cohort structure as powerful in terms of learning to respond effectively to challenges and stressful situations. A member of the second focus group (P4) described how the cohort structure helped them to persevere, follow through and be accountable:

...the accountability piece with the cohort too, we had some people who would take away our “commit to try” for the next week... (We’d talk about a challenge)...you'd say, "I'm not sure." ...and we would give strategies and ideas and we would say to each other, "Okay, next time we meet, I'm going to ask you how it went and ask you about this thing that we talked about. And I want you to say how it went."

A member of the first focus group (P4) added this comment related to the accountability they felt to the cohort, “We definitely started to feel accountable to each other. And so my attaining of

this skill and as I work on trying to master those skills comes about as I don't want to let the cohort down.”

Importance of Adult Learning Principles

Attention to the tenets of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1972) which take into account the needs of adult learners are also important for principal preparation programming to be effective. The six assumptions of Adult Learning Theory (Knowles et al., 2005) include: knowing *why* it is important to know something prior to learning it; adults being seen as capable of directing their own learning; opportunities to bring their own experiences to the learning process; the timeliness of the learning activity; a problem-centered approach to learning; and understanding of the importance of intrinsic motivation. Considering these factors will support adult learners in growing as professionals (Gregson & Sturko, 2007).

Findings related to adult learning principles. Participants in this study also highlighted aspects related to Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1972) when describing the processes they felt were critical in the APDP which helped them to build self-efficacy. Timeliness of the learning, choice of activity and ability to direct their own learning, and knowing why something was being learned or how it fit into the big picture were all viewed as important factors related to program design. Several focus group members, such as P5 from the second focus group, described timeliness of learning:

Some of the information...things that you're not going to deal with until you're in the principalship. So yes, we need to be aware... but to give us all that information at that time, sometimes seemed a little too overwhelming and not very useful.

Another member of the second focus group (P6) felt similarly:

...there are some pieces that probably, didn't need to go as deep because you don't need it until you get into the fire. And then you're in the fire in your first year, in your second year and you're like, "Okay, well, I wish I would have remembered what they said about that one."

Choice of activity and the ability to direct their own learning was another aspect related to adult learning principles that focus group members such as P6 from the second focus group, viewed as important and helped to develop their leadership identity. Choice in the school-based project that each participant made enabled them to take on challenges that they felt were important to their school community as expressed this way by P2 of the first focus group, "I'm so appreciative... tasked me with the freedom to identify a need in the school and create the direction and develop the path and everything..."

Several focus group members discussed that the APDP needed to align session topics more closely with the needs of the specific group. Participants commented that the APDP contained material that was sometimes repetitive with leadership modules they had taken in the past, but that sometimes that was not a bad thing, as they took different pieces away when they heard the information a second time. As P1 from the first focus group commented, "...some of it was repetitive to the leadership modules that were offered and I took years prior, not that it's not good to hear that information ...and not that I didn't get anything out of it..."

Participants such as P1 from the first focus group also stressed how it was important to become more aware of why they were doing things and how they connected new learning to the larger picture of education in the division and in the province.

...it's that extra reminder always about what's the purpose? Does it fit with your school vision and mission? Does it fit with the division? How does it fit with... the LQS down the

road? ...sometimes we forget to remind our staff as well... why are you doing this? What's the purpose in terms of curriculum, in terms of, TQS; but as leaders, it's (important)... the project reminded us to focus on the different layers and not just right in your school at the moment.

Implications for Principal Preparation Programming

In this study, various program elements were identified as contributing to the self-efficacy development of APDP participants and are thus considered as important elements for inclusion in principal preparation programs. Completion of school-based leadership projects and ongoing dialogue throughout the APDP received the most mentions by participants. School-based projects provide opportunities for all four sources of self-efficacy development, and ongoing dialogue provides opportunities for self-efficacy development through mastery experiences, vicarious learning, and social and verbal persuasion. The next mentioned APDP element that participants deemed important to their self-efficacy development was the opportunity to engage in job shadowing of experienced principals. Job shadowing is deemed valuable through the opportunities that are provided to learn vicariously through observing others and by hearing others' stories. Job shadowing also provides mastery experiences, by supporting participants in applying and practicing skills and approaches that they observe or hear about while on their job shadow.

Together, a cohort structure of programming and opportunities for ongoing reflection provide opportunities for the development of self-efficacy through each of Bandura's (1986) four sources. A cohort design helps participants develop persistence through mastery experiences and supports them in welcoming and taking on new challenges through psychological arousal as participants become committed to supporting other members of the group. Opportunities for

ongoing reflection provide vicarious learning opportunities as participants reflect on their observations and stories that are shared. Feedback received from program facilitators related to monthly reflections provides participants with praise, encouragement and feedback that further support self-efficacy development.

Presentations by experts and opportunities to network provide support for participants to take risks in practicing and applying new skills. Presentations by experts such as senior division leaders and experienced principals, also help participants to welcome and take on challenges as build their background knowledge related to a variety of leadership roles. Participants also benefit from opportunities to develop relationships with experts as well as cohort colleagues who they then become more comfortable calling for help when challenges arise.

Participants in the APDP valued aspects of program design, aligned with the tenets of adult learning, which they deemed effective in contributing to their learning and self-efficacy. Important is the timing of learning and in aligning learning with the need for information in relation to the school year. Choice of activity is also important to participants: some activities in the APDP were seen to be repetitive, and others were deemed to provide too much information which was not required at the time. Opportunities for participants to direct their own learning through a choice in school-based project, is also important to participants. Finally, knowing the *why* behind what they are learning, and how different topics and aspects of leadership fit into their own school contexts and that of the division is additionally viewed as important.

Recommendations for Aspiring Principal Development Programming

Program elements that I believe should continue to be incorporated into APDP design due to their alignment with the research and the perceived value by participants in supporting their self-efficacy development include: the school-based leadership projects, ongoing dialogue, cohort

structure of the program, job shadowing, opportunities for ongoing reflection and receiving feedback on reflections, presentations by experts, and linking of content to the greater context of the division and LQS. I have also identified some areas which may be worthy of consideration for the future.

Because management self-efficacy was perceived as being the lowest area of self-efficacy, especially by the principals in the group, although not statistically significant, it may be advantageous to explore this area in more depth. Because the survey questions (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004) pertaining to management self-efficacy refer to handling the time demands of the job, maintaining control of one's schedule, prioritizing demands of the job, coping with the stress of the job, and handling the paperwork of the job, as well as shaping operational pieces of the job necessary for managing the school, perhaps activities could be added to the APDP which would support new principals in coping with these demands. Perhaps working to align program elements with the timing of the division calendar and deadlines for school leaders to complete school-based tasks would help and be appreciated by participants such as P6 from the first focus group who had this to say in relation to a session they were in when a deadline was looming:

... we're talking about something else, and I'm sitting there going, "Oh my gosh, can you not talk about this right now because I really want to know about something." You know what I mean? I think we have to look at the year and where everyone's at and then kind of have those guest speakers in alignment...

Extended internships were identified in the research, as providing powerful mastery experiences within principal preparation programming (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Orr, 2006; Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2007). Although experiences of job shadowing and school-

based projects which are included in the APDP may be similar to an extended internship, perhaps an extended opportunity to experience leadership in another school may provide additional opportunity for participants to engage in mastery experiences, learn from the stories and modeling of others, and receive feedback and encouragement while challenging their assumptions and beliefs. I realize that logistically and financially this may present challenges for the division, but perhaps, providing opportunity structure in which APDP participants are able to exchange positions with another participant from a different school, for an extended time frame may provide such an opportunity.

Incorporating case based scenarios along with inquiry based or problem-based learning opportunities with presentations by experts as suggested by the tenets of adult learning (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 2005; Orphanos and Orr, 2013; Orr, 2006) may support participants by offering “situated learning and the means to try out multiple perspectives” (Orr, 2006, p. 495). Using a problem-centered approach to learning is deemed to be more effective for adults than a subject-oriented approach which is more suitable for children as it helps them to better understand how their learning may be applied (Knowles et al., 2005). Rather than having experts come in and present information directly to the group, presenting cases or problems to solve and using the experts as resources in the room, may help participants think more deeply and identify ways of applying their learning in their own contexts.

Although the APDP does not have a structured coaching or mentoring structure as recommended by Darling-Hammond, et al. (2007), Hale and Moorman (2003), and Rhodes and Brundrett (2008), the facilitators do provide these types of supports to participants and cohort members also provide ongoing support to one another. I was surprised however, that coaching and mentoring by the principals of the APDP participants were not mentioned more often by

focus group members and survey respondents. I would think that the principals of participants would be in a strong position to offer encouragement and corrective feedback to participants, especially in relation to their school-based projects. As Hale and Moorman (2003) noted, job embedded leadership development opportunities which include coaching and mentoring components support leaders in the integration of theory and practice. Perhaps including structured expectations for having APDP participants share their progress related to their school-based projects at specific times throughout the year, along with an expectation for principals to provide feedback to participants would be helpful. Participants may then reflect on these conversations and share their reflections with program facilitators or other cohort members.

Additionally, surveying and gathering information on the backgrounds of participants as suggested by Knowles et al., (2005) as well as participants in the second focus group in this study, to enable greater alignment of aspects of programming with the needs of the group may prove beneficial. Determining the needs of the cohort early on, may allow facilitators to structure program activities and processes aligned with their greatest needs (p. 304).

Finally, I believe based on discussion by members of the second focus group that it may be helpful to review the way in which the topic of visionary leadership development is approached within the APDP. Without a foundational understanding of how to involve the school community in creating a shared vision for the success and well-being of students and how to effectively implement change, it is doubtful that new principals will possess the self-efficacy required to undertake this important work.

Limitations

Limitations are factors related to a study which create possible weaknesses (Pajares, 2007). Although this case study does contain factors than some researchers may see as limitations

regarding its generalizability, this case involving a highly contextualized study informing a local issue, may provide transferability which is enhanced by capturing the details of the specific case, thus allowing for the analysis of many variables. As Stake (2005) stated, case studies are not necessarily conducted in order to be able to generalize to a variety of circumstances, they do often provide opportunities to develop insight into related settings or situations. Thus, it is hoped that this case study provides information that will afford insight and direction into other principal development programs outside of the division in which it was conducted.

The limitation of time was a factor which limited the scope of the study to one school division. The study was retrospective in nature in order to gather data from four cohorts who completed the APDP over a three year period. This allowed for a larger group of completers of the program to be included in the study within the time frame of this doctoral program. There was however, insufficient time to allow for observation of program sessions throughout the years. Data was gathered after completion of the program through the use of a survey including quantitative questions as well as open ended qualitative questions, focus group interviews, and analysis of artifacts.

Another limitation of this study was that the members of the four cohorts of participants in the APDP involved in this study may have had slightly different experiences due to cohort make up, continuing evolution of the program, and a change in facilitators in 2018 – 2019. In the first two years, the program was aligned with the Alberta Principal Quality Practice Standards (PQPS) which although very similar to the LQS, does have some differences. Activities aligned with program goals also evolved over the three years. For example, in the first year, participants were not asked to engage in reflective journaling as they were in the second and third year of the program. In addition, the ability of the participants to remember the experiences of the yearlong

program especially those who participated in the program in the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years may have added to the limitations of the study. Perhaps including a list of APDP activities in the survey as opposed to leaving respondents to recollect the activities and their experiences may have garnered additional rich data.

The findings of the study were limited by the experiences of the participants of the four Aspiring Principal Development Program cohorts from one large urban division in Alberta and therefore may not be representative of similar programs in other divisions. Although this certainly may be viewed as a limitation, the detailed insight gleaned into this specific case may provide lessons that will positively inform similar programs in Alberta and elsewhere.

Possibilities for Future Research

Completion of this instrumental case study raised additional questions for me which may be worthy of future research. As this study showed little connection between leadership development programming and participants' current principals, it may be important to conduct research related to how principals are best able to support their aspiring principals' leadership development and growth throughout a program such as the APDP, including the actions of principals which may be most critical and supportive in preparing aspiring principals to take on the role of the principalship.

Another area for possible future research lies with the recent adoption of the Alberta Leadership Quality Standard (LQS), and the mandated requirement for leadership certification in the province. Several post-secondary institutions are now in the process of developing Alberta Government Ministry approved programs. I believe that it will be important to document the development of these new programs and to investigate how the post-secondary programs can complement and support or even merge with existing programs at the division level. As studies

in the United States have shown (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012), the programs deemed most successful at preparing future school leaders include relationships between post-secondary institutions and school divisions in order to ensure integration of theory and practice through strong job-embedded learning opportunities such as extended internships while also receiving support from practicing school administrators.

Conclusions

The education of students, so that they are able to develop the skills, knowledge and competencies to succeed in our rapidly changing world, is of utmost importance in today's society. In order that all of our young people are prepared for their next steps in their life journeys, whether that be the world of work, post-secondary education, community living, or other creative endeavor, our schools must be able to meet increasing challenges and support a wide variety of needs through exceptional teaching and school leadership. Except for quality teaching and curriculum, school leadership has been shown to be the most important factor contributing to student success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As the primary school leaders, principals are in a position to positively impact and influence our future generations.

As a school principal for almost two decades, I have experienced the increasing complexity of our society and of our schools, which has resulted in an increased complexity of the role of the principalship. Not only do principals have to have the skills and knowledge required to meet the myriad of challenges that arise, they must possess the self-efficacy to meet the challenges and do what they need to do as school leaders. I have long believed that the preparation of individuals to take on the challenging role of the principalship is critical to the future of our schools, our society and of our students.

Self-efficacy as defined by Bandura (1997) is "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p.

391). Bandura theorized that one's belief in their own efficacy has a bigger impact on achievement of goals, than does their skills and knowledge. As Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2007) discussed, greater self-efficacy within leaders helps them to work harder and be more persistent, be more flexible, remain calm and confident, and avoid burnout, anxiety, and frustration. So how can we support aspiring leaders in developing their self-efficacy?

When I began this doctoral program I knew little of the theories that this study has been grounded in. I did believe however, that it was important to provide opportunities for aspiring principals to learn through participating in the act of leadership and by taking on increasingly challenging roles related to the needs within their school contexts. I believed that it was important to learn from the wisdom of others and to solicit feedback related to one's efforts. I knew that good leadership required persistence and determination to tackle important challenges and to find solutions that would serve both students and teachers. This study shows that by integrating processes and content that align with Bandura's (1986) sources of self-efficacy, and Knowles' (1972) tenets of adult learning, principal preparation programming can have a perceived impact on the self-efficacy of participants.

In my instrumental case study, I explored how participation in a principal preparation program impacts participants' reported self-efficacy for transitioning to the responsibilities expected of a principal in my large urban school division in Alberta, Canada. Results of my study align with my beliefs going into this program and, as I learned, with elements of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977) related to self-efficacy, and to Knowles (1972) tenets of adult learning. My study showed that there are activities within the division's Aspiring Principal Development Program, which was the focus of this study, that do support the self-efficacy

development of participants. In order to continue to enhance principal preparation programming and in this case, the division's APDP programming should continue to:

- Build on activities designed to provide mastery experiences by providing opportunities for practicing critical skills and competencies in progressively complex situations allowing participants to achieve increasing levels of success;
- Enhance or provide more vicarious experiences that allow participants to observe others, especially others that participants deem have a similar competence to themselves. Participants can then try to imitate what they have observed, build on the successes, or work to eliminate things that did not work;
- Extend further opportunities for participants to receive corrective feedback and encouragement from others who the participants see as being very competent in the area being developed;
- Continue to provide a safe environment in which participants are encouraged to develop positive psychological responses which will help them to welcome challenges and persevere when challenges arise;
- Adapt programming for each cohort with the specific needs of the group and based on ongoing feedback from the group.

Ultimately, my research study speaks to the need for carefully designed principal preparation programming, to ensure that our schools have the leaders that are needed for the future. The success of our schools demands well prepared school leaders who are able to meet the challenges that will undoubtedly arise in our schools in our increasingly complex society. To support the development of leaders who can meet these demands, we need principal preparation programs that are designed based on adult learning principles, that include the necessary skills

and knowledge, but perhaps most importantly, help to build self-efficacious leaders who will embrace the challenges facing our schools, knowing that they are capable of accomplishing what is needed to make a difference.

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Appendix A

Aspiring Principals Development Program 2018-2019 Overview (Van Kuppeveld & Fiorillo, 2019)

Program Purpose: to help prepare District leaders for the principalship, to provide a District perspective and understanding, to deepen knowledge and skills required to lead and manage a school, to develop a community of colleagues.

| Month | Topics/Activities | LQS link |
|---------------------|---|-----------------|
| August 24 | Program introduction, norm setting process, host leadership and components of the program (Providing Instructional Leadership Project, Job Shadowing Experience and Reflective Journal) | 1 |
| | LQS self-assessment completed and areas of strength and areas for growth identified and explored. | 1 |
| | Leadership Development Framework– Overview of the four quadrants and the relationship to the Aspiring Principals Development Program and the development of leadership competencies | 9 |
| | Reflective Practice | 2 |
| | School Culture Presentation – Tools and processes to better understand your school culture; leveraging school culture in change processes | 1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9 |
| September 18 | AM Leading Change – focus on the moral imperative and the reasons that most change initiatives fail. Kotter’s Eight Steps of Change model is shared and explained (9;15-noon) | 1 2 3 6 9 |
| | 1-2:30 pm Strategic District Support: an overview of accountability and fence posts that guide our work: School Act, regulations, legislation. How the Board of Trustees set high level, strategic direction and are accountable to Alberta Education. The Authority Matrix was shared. Governance, what it is and how it works related to board policies and administrative regulations was explained. | 1 8 9 |
| October 16 | Assessment: Using Data to identify needs in your school (10:30-12:00) | 1 2 3 6 |
| | Planning for Change - models | 2 3 4 6 8 |
| | Everything DiSC Workplace-discover DiSC work styles, understand other styles, develop action plans to build more effective relationships (| 1 2 4 6 8 |
| November 20 | Leading Change project proposals 9:15-10:15) | 1 3 4 5 6 |
| | Finance - Fundraising scenario and Internal Audit | |
| | Assistant Superintendents – sharing of personal leadership journey and explanation of Expression of Interest in the Principalship, Principal Readiness Assessment, and principal selection process (12:45-1:45) | |
| December 18 | District Support Services – A Day in the Life of DSS (9:00-10:30) | 1 3 4 6 8 9 |
| | Inclusive Learning Services: preparing for effective multi-disciplinary team meeting to maximize team time and expertise; and how to problem solve and be solution focused <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to dissect the information in a specialized assessment report or student record: What is it telling you, what is the rationale behind the recommendations, how to support teachers in implementing strategies? | 1 4 8 9 |

| Month | Topics/Activities | LQS link |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does inclusiveness mean? How to set the tone in the school? • IPPs • Scenarios (1:45-3:15 pm) | |
| January 22 @Woodcroft | Presentation – Second Languages and tour of ISLE – (30 min) | 1 3 4 6 8 9 |
| | Curriculum and Resource Support Presentation – preparing for curriculum redesign, resources, strategies for supporting staff (90 minutes) | |
| | Expression of Interest in Principalship and Readiness Assessment Process– (12:45-1:00 pm.) | |
| | Staff Relations - an overview of the role of Staff relations in all areas relative to employee performance management (competence and conduct) including scenarios (1:00-2:30 pm) | 1 3 4 6 8 |
| February 19 | Project Updates (9:15-9:45) | |
| | Building Foundational Knowledge of First Nations, Metis and Inuit. Conversations to expand knowledge and understanding on treaties and residential schools. 9:45-12:00 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 |
| | Restorative Practices 12:45-2:15 pm. | 1 2 3 4 6 7 9 |
| | Interview Activity (2:30-3:15) | |
| March 19 | DiSC Workplace, Part 2, AM | |
| | Career Pathways 12:45-2:15 PM | 1 2 4 6 8 |
| | Career Pathways – Principal Sharing 2:30-3:15 pm. | 1 3 4 6 8 9 |
| | Lessons Learned about the Principalship – 9:15-10:15 am. | 1 3 4 6 8 9 |
| April 16 @CFE | Human Resources 101 (10:30-Noon) | |
| | Leading Change Project presentations to Assistant Sups | 1 8 9 |
| | Infrastructure (8:45-10:15 am.) | |
| May 14 | Visionary Leadership – Connecting the Dots (10:30-12:00 pm.) (confirmed Feb. 26) | 1 3 4 8 9 |
| | Job Shadow wrap up and Reflections | |
| | Program evaluation | |

Note: District Vision, Mission, Priorities and Cornerstone Values are further developed and reinforced through activities and on-going processes, such as: Leader to Leader, Circle Check

in/Check out, exit slips. Processes are designed to support aspiring leaders in reflecting upon and developing their leadership philosophy and values and support alignment with the District.

Leadership Quality Standard

1. Leadership Competency – Fostering Effective Relationships
2. Leadership Competency – Modelling Commitment to Professional Learning
3. Leadership Competency – Embodying Visionary Leadership
4. Leadership Competency - Leading a Learning Community
5. Leadership Competency – Supporting the Application of Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Metis and Inuit
6. Leadership Competency – Providing Instructional Leadership
7. Leadership Competency – Developing Leadership Capacity
8. Leadership Competency - Managing School Operations and Resources
9. Leadership Competency - Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context

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Appendix B

Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey (PSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004)

Principal Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for principals in their school activities.

Directions: Please indicate our opinion about each of the questions below by marking one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side. The scale of responses ranges from “None at all” (1) to “A Great Deal” (9) with “Some Degree” (5) representing the mid-point between these low and high extremes. You may choose any of the nine possible responses, since each represents a degree on the continuum. Your answers are confidential.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

In your current role as principal, to what extent can you....?”

| | | Not at all | | Very little | | Some degree | | Quite a bit | | A great deal |
|----|---|---------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | Facilitate student learning in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 2. | Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 3. | Handle the time demands of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 4. | Manage change in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 5. | Promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 6. | Create a positive learning environment in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 7. | Raise student achievement on standardized tests? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 8. | Promote a positive image of your school with the media? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 9. | Motivate teachers? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. | Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 11. | Maintain control of your own daily schedule? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 12. | Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 13. | Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 14. | Promote acceptable behavior among students? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 15. | Handle the paperwork required of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 16. | Promote ethical behavior among school personnel? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 17. | Cope with the stress of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 18. | Prioritize among competing demands of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

Appendix C

Aspiring Principal / Principal Sense of Efficacy Survey (AP/PSES)

(Adapted version - Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004)

Aspiring / Beginning / New Principal Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for aspiring and beginning principals in their school activities.

Directions: Please indicate our opinion about each of the questions below by marking one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side. The scale of responses ranges from “None at all” (1) to “A Great Deal” (9) with “Some Degree” (5) representing the mid-point between these low and high extremes. You may choose any of the nine possible responses, since each represents a degree on the continuum. Your answers are confidential.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

In your current role as an aspiring, beginning, or new principal, to what extent can you....”

| | | Not at all | | Very little | | Some degree | | Quite a bit | | A great deal |
|-----|---|------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | Facilitate student learning in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 2. | Generate enthusiasm for a shared vision for the school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 3. | Handle the time demands of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 4. | Manage change in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 5. | Promote school spirit among a large majority of the student population? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 6. | Create a positive learning environment in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 7. | Raise student achievement on standardized tests? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 8. | Promote a positive image of your school with the media? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 9. | Motivate teachers? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10. | Promote the prevailing values of the community in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 11. | Maintain control of your own daily schedule? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 12. | Shape the operational policies and procedures that are necessary to manage your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 13. | Handle effectively the discipline of students in your school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. | Promote acceptable behavior among students? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 15. | Handle the paperwork required of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 16. | Promote ethical behavior among school personnel? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 17. | Cope with the stress of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 18. | Prioritize among competing demands of the job? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |

19. What activities, if any, in the Aspiring Principal Development Program helped you to develop persistence leading to mastery of leadership skills in your work setting?

20. What activities, if any, in the Aspiring Principal Development Program provided you with opportunities to observe others and learn from their success or failures?

21. What activities, if any, in the Aspiring Principal Development Program provided you with praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback related to your leadership skills?

22. What activities, if any, in the Aspiring Principal Development Program helped you to welcome and take on challenges?

23. What is your current role: Teacher; Consultant; Curriculum Coordinator; Assistant Principal; Acting for Principal; Principal; Other _____

24. How long have you been in your current role: Less than two months; 3 months to one year; more than one year to 3 years; more than 3 years to 5 years; more than 5 years

25. How many years of formal leadership experience do you have (assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, department head, consultant, acting for principal)? One year or less; more than one year to three years; more than 3 years to 5 years; more than 5 years to 10 years; more than 10 years.

26. How long have you been working as a teacher or educational leader? Less than 10 years; 10 – 15 years; more than 15 years to 20 years; more than 20 to 25 years; over 25 years.

27. Have you spent your entire career in this district? Yes No

28. Have you spent time working in another district? If yes, how long? One year or less; one year to five years; more than 5 years to 10 years; more than 10 years

29. Do you identify as: Male; Female; Prefer not to say.

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. On the survey that you all completed, you were asked to reflect on activities from the Aspiring Principal Development Program that you believed supported your development of self-efficacy.

The top five responses were:

- job shadowing,
- leading change project (school-based project),
- ongoing dialogue,
- cohort structure of the program, and
- reflective activities and assignments.

What about these program elements/activities supported your efficacy development?

2. Specific to your attainment of leadership skills, you identified that the:

- leading change project (school-based project),
- the cohort structure of the program, and
- the presentations throughout the program

were critical to your persistence in working toward mastery of leadership skills. What specific characteristics or elements of these program activities/elements supported your attainment and mastery of these skills?

3. Specific to your development as a leader, the:

- job-shadowing experience, and
- the ongoing dialogue with others,

were indicated on the survey as helping you learn from the successes and failures of others. Why do you feel these program elements had that effect?

4. Survey responses indicated that the:

- reflective journaling assignments, and
- the ongoing dialogue with others,

provided you with praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback related to your leadership skills. How did the praise, encouragement, and corrective feedback that you received through journaling and dialogue contribute to your self-efficacy?

5. Survey responses indicated that the:

- leading change project, and
- the cohort structure of the program,

helped you to welcome and take on challenges. What about these activities supported you in welcoming and taking on challenges?

6. All of the activities in the Aspiring Principal Development Program were designed to develop your skills as a leader and your confidence in leadership roles. Can you describe any activities where the approach wasn't effective in increasing skill or efficacy?

7. This is an individual reflective journaling question.

During the year that you were involved in the aspiring principal development program, what experiences and learning did you engage in (specific to the LQS) outside of the aspiring principal program which you believe we're critical to your leadership and self-

efficacy development and your preparation for your first principalship? What was it about these experiences that improved your leadership and self-efficacy?

Appendix E

Cycle One a Priori and Emergent Codes

a priori codes based on literature related to self-efficacy development and Adult Learning Theory

| Description of code | Code abbreviation |
|---|-------------------|
| Application of knowledge requiring participation | AOL |
| Solve real problems | SOLV |
| Learning together through professional dialogue with experts | PFDGEX |
| Learning together through professional dialogue with cohort | PFDGC |
| Learning through observations | LTObs |
| Learning from others' stories | LOstor |
| Corrective feedback | CFB |
| Encouragement | ENC |
| Developing coping skills | COPE |
| Welcoming challenges | WCHAL |
| Knowing <i>why</i> it is important to learn | WHY |
| Seen as capable of directing one's learning | CHOICE |
| Timeliness of learning – learning when information or skills are needed | TIME |
| Problem-centered approach | PRBCA |
| Intrinsic motivation | INMOT |

Emergent codes resulting from iterative returns through the data

| Description of code | Code abbreviation |
|--|-------------------|
| Feeling of safety | SAFE |
| Creates accountability | ACCOUNT |
| Understanding of context | CONTEXT |
| Lecture style presentation with little interaction | SIT and GET |
| Ownership of the work | OWN |
| Developing a network | NETWORK |
| Mentoring opportunities | MENTOR |
| Learning new information | INFO |
| Learning through reflection | REFLECT |
| Being OK to take risks | RISK |
| Learning through being coached | COACH |
| Learning to persevere | PERSEVERE |
| Learning through collaborative activities | COLLAB |
| Attending lectures | LECTURE |
| Group size | SIZE |

Appendix F

Cycle Two Categories

Categories based on established codes

| Category | Codes |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Social Emotional Conditions | SAFE ENC |
| Leadership Capacity | PERSEVERE OWN AOL COPE WCHAL CHOICE |
| Process of Programming | LECTURE SIT and GET SIZE REFLECT PFDGEX PFDGC COLLAB COACH |
| Content | CFB SOLVE INFO |
| Professional Identity | MENTOR NETWORK RISK ACCOUNT |
| Learner Identity | LTobs LOstor WHY INMOT |
| Context | CONTEXT TIME |

