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

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

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

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

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

Focusing on Leadership Preparation

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

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

The Role of Adjunct Faculty

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

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

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

Communities of Practice

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

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

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

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

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

Methods

Program Description and Participant Selection

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

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

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

Data Collection and Analysis

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

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

Findings

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

Cultivating Connections: Precursors to CoP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Establishing Professional Community

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adjunct Faculty Learning and Networking through Program Involvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Discussion and Implications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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