

THE IMPACT OF A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN ON FUTURE LEADERSHIP
PREPAREDNESS: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE *LEAD TEACHERS*
PROGRAM AT OWL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

Matthew C. Jobe

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. The departure of experienced employees potentially impacts an organization negatively and impedes the fulfillment of the leadership positions. A leadership development plan will be generally defined for this study as a systematic and continuous effort to support institutional stability by identifying and developing the appropriate employees to fill the key positions at the suitable time. The transformational leadership theory by Kouzes and Posner framed this case study because it was based on the relationships between the leader and followers with a focus on inspiring, enabling, modeling, challenging, and encouraging. This study followed Creswell's linear data analysis model to utilize ten individual interviews, observations, and historical document analysis to describe the impact on leadership preparedness. Three themes emerged from the analysis: participation is voluntary, leadership development is valued, and leadership opportunities are important. Findings indicated that having *Lead Teachers* did not create a formalized leadership development plan that ensured current educators are prepared to lead.

Keywords: descriptive case study design, leadership development, leadership preparedness, qualitative case study

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Dedication

I dedicate this to Sara, my rock, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of this dissertation. Additionally, the unwavering love and support of Melanna and Lynlee were paramount to this achievement. I also dedicate this to my parents, Rob and Terry, who always urged me to follow-through ... no matter what.

Additionally, I dedicate this to my friends and colleagues who always knew I could accomplish this ... even when I was unsure.

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List of Abbreviations

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This qualitative case study described the utilization of a leadership development plan to increase leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary School. Leadership development programs are effective in assisting organizations and institutions in meeting the needs of the workforce. Employees enable organizations to provide programs and services to meet the mission, and without employees, the organizations would cease to exist. The departure of experienced employees has the potential to impact an organization negatively. Furthermore, the departure of skilled employees could impede the effort to fill leadership positions with internal employees. Education and training organizations should be alarmed with projections indicating that experienced leaders will depart, primarily through retirement, on an increasing basis within the coming years. Consequently, similar to the business realm, scholars note it is time for those in the education and training industry to implement a leadership development planning process that considers the individual and the organization (Calareso, 2013).

Despite the recognized effectiveness of leadership development plans, studies suggest there are gaps within the education and training industry (Washington, 2016). Within this industry, the use of leadership development plans among the workforce is inconsistent at best, and the lack of a deliberate strategy enables that perception to continue. Without a codified plan, identifying employees who desire mentoring or coaching can directly impact an organization. Additionally, succession planning deficiencies highlight that organizations are, in part, not prepared for the negative impacts of employee departures (Jackson, 2017). Therefore, education and training leaders are ideal for identifying the lack of leadership development planning and determining the attributes of a process that prepares employees for leadership positions. This

chapter examined the background of leadership development planning through historical, social, and theoretical lenses. Next, the study's significance was addressed, the problem and purpose statements were identified, and the research questions were introduced. Finally, descriptions of keywords used throughout the study were defined, followed by a summary of the chapter.

Background

Leadership development planning within organizations faces a perennial and imminent crisis (Jackson, 2017; Washington, 2016). Widespread departures of experienced employees through attrition and retirement are expected in the coming years. It is incumbent on educational leaders to prepare the workforce to step up and carry the torch (Mallard et al., 2015). Additionally, knowledge gaps hinder operations if an organization has neither prepared employees nor planned to hire outside the organization (Mallard et al., 2015; Washington, 2016). The preferred hiring method for many organizations is to hire from within; however, the lack of a leadership development plan could mean the internal applicant pool may be limited or nonexistent (Horner & Jordan, 2020; Jackson, 2017; Washington, 2016).

Owl Elementary school has recognized the lack of prepared leaders and acted by forming an internal group called *Lead Teachers*. This group is open to any Kindergarten through fifth grade teacher with an interest in leadership development. It is a voluntary group consisting of current school leadership, grade-specific leaders, and interested teachers. The goal of *Lead Teachers* is to prepare current Owl Elementary School teachers for future leadership positions, both inside and outside the school. Owl Elementary School is making leadership development a priority, but that is not the case for all schools. Thus, educational leaders must choose to make leadership development planning a priority if sustained excellence from within is the preferred hiring method. "The key is that the process of leadership formation is not random and

serendipitous, but rather intentional and well planned” (Calareso, 2013, p. 27). This key is best defined by the history that established how to develop future leaders for the never-ending challenges of leadership.

Historical Context

Educational leadership has changed over the last century, and landmark reports, such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), have contributed to that evolution. The changes in educational leadership require an understanding to provide a historical context of the current leadership challenges. The previously mentioned report was historically significant because it informed the public about the multitude of failing schools and urged school reform across U. S. public school systems. Consequently, the 1980s began the educational accountability era with value-added performance evaluations for educators and administrators (Tucker et al., 2012).

Educational leaders had new, unexpected student achievement accountability expectations added to the overarching tasks of disciplinarians and managers beginning in the 1980s (Tucker et al., 2012). The new expectations led to creating a group of individuals who did not work inside the classroom (Waters & Marzano, 2006). This new group, referred to as *the blob* by U. S. Secretary of Education William Bennet in 1987, wasted resources, resisted educational reform, hindered student achievement efforts, and led to questionable school leadership (Waters & Marzano, 2006). The National Commission for Excellence in Education (1983) called for the closure of approximately half of America’s leadership programs based on poor education and training quality. Ultimately, the school leadership inadequacies led to an investigation of educational leadership preparation programs.

Regardless of the recognized efficiency and effectiveness of leadership development planning, previous research suggested continued deficiencies exist within the educational and training arena (Cieminski, 2018; Washington, 2016). Organizational success, health, sustainability, and the academic impact can be enhanced through succession planning; yet some organizations do not have a fully developed and effective leadership development plan (Bozer et al., 2015; Easter & Brooks, 2017; Lochmiller & Mancinelli, 2019; Mallard et al., 2015). According to the National Association of College and University Business Officers, only 14% of higher education chief business officers reported the presence of a formalized plan (Jackson, 2017). Therefore, if organizations are ill-prepared for leadership development planning, then the urgency to implement a formalized plan is paramount and could build a leadership pipeline.

A pool of eligible leaders is formed when an organization creates a deliberate development plan. While position vacancies and employee departures are inevitable, when there is no leadership pipeline, reactive personnel actions take precedence over proactive actions (Mallard et al., 2015; Washington, 2016). Finding the appropriate person at the right time in the suitable job is the goal of a hiring action. This hiring task is paramount to building a team of leaders that creates a leadership development plan and allows current educational leaders to utilize a succession plan to continue organizational excellence. Hiring is not a simple task, but with the assistance of a deliberate leadership development plan, the long-term effects of ineffective hiring could be minimized (Jackson, 2017; Mallard et al., 2015; Washington, 2016).

Social Context

The requirement and demand for educational leaders that act deliberately to build future leaders exists now (Horner & Jordan, 2020). In organizations, vacancies can hinder stability and strategic priorities, which turns an organization upside down (Berns & Klarner, 2017; Horner &

Jordan, 2020). Vacancies require replacements that can come from internal employees or external applicants, and that social impact on an organization is significant. Thus, while vacancies are not uncommon, they are often filled in different ways, which sends a mixed message to current staff looking to promote and continue the institution's success (Darvish & Temelie, 2014; Holland, 2012; Horner & Jordan, 2020). Moreover, if poor leadership development planning exists, social crises expose deficiencies and make the potential for experienced employees less likely to want the leadership positions needed in a stable organization (Bennett, 2015; Holland, 2012). The required actions of a leadership development planning process are arduous, yet rewarding, for each person and organization. Simply stated, the primary drivers of leadership development planning are found in the administration and leaders that must take the time to identify and develop future leaders personally, professionally, and socially (Ghamrawi, 2013).

The value of leadership development planning to identify future leaders cannot be overstated and must be ensured in all schools to affect society positively. An organization's leadership development plan can be labor-intensive, but it makes an organization stronger (Ghamrawi, 2013; Holland, 2012). Mike Krzyzewski (2000), Duke University men's basketball coach, reiterated the heart's value when forming a team in his book, *Leading with the Heart*. Finding the best player to complete a sports team takes time and effort, but that effort can lead to an NCAA national championship. Similarly, in the education and training career field, finding the appropriate leader can be the difference between sustained organizational and community excellence, or organizational demise, both of which have noticeable societal impacts (Easter & Brooks, 2017). An organization's sustainability can be related to leadership consistency, and a leadership development plan deep-rooted in sound theory can assist in this endeavor.

Theoretical Context

The transformational leadership theory by Kouzes and Posner (2012) guided this study. Leadership development deficiencies weaken organizational effectiveness due to instability, knowledge gaps, and vacancies (Scott & Sanders-McBryde, 2012). Leadership development plans help leaders manage the inevitable vacancies and provide stability (Geroy et al., 2005; Shapiro et al., 2016). The lack of leadership-ready employees creates an internal knowledge and talent management gap that could be managed by implementing a leadership development plan. Additionally, the lack of a strategic plan contributes to a weak organizational structure addressed through conscious, transformational leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Consequently, implementing a transformational leadership plan can help restructure an organization that needs to fill leadership gaps and vacancies (Kleinsorge, 2010; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Transformational leaders and organizations need to look at leadership development planning and design a program that makes deliberate changes to ensure future leaders are available (Strom et al., 2011). The Kouzes and Posner (2012) model is based on the relationships between the leader and followers, focusing on inspiring, enabling, modeling, challenging, and encouraging. Accordingly, the inclusion of a leadership development plan may increase leader preparedness, but current leaders must make a dedicated effort.

Situation to Self

My motivation for completing this study came from the first-hand experience as a substitute in multiple school districts, an education and training leader for the federal government, and a participant in succession planning in the business world. Regardless of the school district, there were factions of educators that could be put into different categories for leadership tracks, and there were many variations. Based on this experience, I utilized an

ontological philosophical perspective in this study to recognize multiple realities based on the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). Accordingly, each educator's view was unique, but not necessarily shared by other educators' experiences. An ontological perspective was also appropriate for the proposed study because it aligned with my previous discussions with full-time educators during my substitute teacher jobs. Interestingly, regardless of the school grade level, the perceptions were unique to each educator and could be described through a personal worldview and individualized theories. Therefore, the need for a descriptive case study of a currently implemented leadership development plan is appropriate.

The worldview and theory that helped shape this study are a combination of biblical, postpositivism, and postmodern perspectives. The biblical worldview was focused on training others on the way they should grow (*New King James Version*, 1982/2002, Prov. 22:6), the postpositivist framework was focused on discovering attributable relationships with repeated tendencies (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the postmodern perspective framework was utilized to understand the conditions of the world today and to recognize individual perspectives. In each worldview and theory, I found direct connections to the educators and the topic of leadership development planning. Interestingly, since I began my career in the business world and had personal experience in both business and education, I noticed a lack of consistent leadership development planning and a better understanding of individual perspectives.

In the business world, it is common for supervisors and managers to ask employees if they are interested in becoming part of the C-Suite (chief executive officer, chief operations officer, chief financial officer), but that was not something shared by educators in the school districts where I worked. When I asked educators if they desired or asked if they want to become future educational leaders, they were curious to know if this was normal. As the opportunities

arose for me to ask more educators the same question and because I had begun working on an educational specialist degree, I chose to further research the topic of leadership development planning in academia. In the literature review process, I found a continuing discrepancy between business and education concerning leadership development planning, leading to establishing the problem statement.

Problem Statement

This problem examined in the proposed study was the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness for the teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. While regularly practiced in the business industry, leadership development planning is not shared and widespread in education and training (Calareso, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2020). Leadership development planning identifies future leaders in an organization and develops them for future leadership roles (Calareso, 2013; Ghamrawi, 2013). Retirements and resignations require organizations to focus on utilizing a leadership development plan within the organization.

Organizations self-hamper the continuity of strategic priorities by not implementing leadership development planning (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Fletcher et al., 2010; Hawthorne, 2011; Ishak & Kamil, 2016). Literature indicates underperformance, instability, and uncertainty for organizations where leadership development planning does not exist (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Morris & Laipple, 2015). As a result, leadership development planning provides school districts stability, whether the vacancy is sudden or planned (Santora et al., 2015). Consequently, organizations must choose to bring into leadership roles those employees who may have little to no experience or identify potential leaders and provide adequate leadership development training to prepare them for senior administrative roles.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. At this stage of the research, a leadership development plan is defined as a codified effort to identify and develop employees to fill leadership vacancies as they occur (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Fletcher et al., 2010; Hawthorne, 2011; Ishak & Kamil, 2016). The theory guiding this study was Kouzes and Posner's (2012) transformational learning theory, which is based on the relationships between the leader and followers, focusing on inspiring, enabling, modeling, challenging, and encouraging each other. The proposed study utilized participant individual interviews, group observations, and historical document analysis to collect empirical data from educators with everyday shared experiences related to leadership development, or lack thereof, within the researched organization (Yin, 2015).

Significance of the Study

This study was vital to the educators at Owl Elementary due to the increasing number of leaders leaving or retiring, which widens the knowledge leadership gap and deepens the need to develop future leaders. Sheridan et al. (2015) based their research on identifying, assessing, and acquiring resources to create and sustain a mentorship culture. The significance of leadership development planning in the education and training career field is vital at all levels because energy must be focused on the future growth and sustainability of an organization (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Cieminski, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2010; Ishak & Kamil, 2016). Consequently, creating a leadership development culture within an organization could be the foundation of a sustainable leadership development program.

This study is beneficial to individuals and the organization because both were committed to creating a leadership development plan that ensures a sustainable applicant pool (Basham & Mathur, 2010; Cieminski, 2018). While there have been studies focused on community colleges and churches, neither focused on the impact of identifying and fostering leadership development at the elementary school level. Both studies suggested further action based on unique circumstances and opportunities, and this study aims to accomplish that for Owl Elementary. Consequently, the study narrows the gap in strategically mapping out individual professional goals for leadership opportunities at Owl Elementary. In turn, this will help the organizational leaders plan for future vacancies, knowing there will be a sufficient depth of in-house talent. The loyalty shown by an organization to the employees is engrained through leadership development planning as the process defines a path for professional growth through development and associated organizational benefits (Calareso, 2013). Therefore, scholars note it is time to make leadership development planning the new norm in the education career field to prepare current education and training educators for future leadership positions (Ghamrawi, 2013).

Research Questions

Leadership development planning is philosophically and socially significant. Moreover, educational organizations' fundamental role in developing future workforce leaders and representing the local community is vital. Qualitative research questions should be grounded in reviewed literature and be relevant, while also allowing flexibility based on data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Taylor et al., 2015). The central question aimed to describe the current utilization of a leadership development plan at Owl Elementary School with the goal of not losing the impact at the lowest level: the educator (Horner & Jordan, 2020). The central research question was the basis of the framework, and the research sub-questions served to further

investigate staff perceptions on leadership development planning, building the next generation of leaders, and identifying factors that facilitate and inhibit the implementation strategy for leadership development.

Central Research Question

How is a leadership development plan utilized at Owl Elementary School to impact leadership preparedness?

Leadership development planning plays an essential role in developing, retaining, and supplying leaders (Ghamrawi, 2013; Horner & Jordan, 2020). It is indisputable that all leadership roles will become vacant. Hence, future leaders' preparedness should be a priority for current administrations and can be accomplished by implementing a leadership development plan (Raza & Sikandar, 2018).

Research Sub-Questions

Sub-Question 1

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary?

Identifying and developing candidates from within the organization is often referred to as sustainable leadership, and it provides a means of maintaining programs and initiatives within an organization (Horner & Jordan, 2020; Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Sub-Question 2

What are the *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions of how Owl Elementary builds capacity in future educational leaders?

Leadership development is handled with far less focus and specificity, which typically results in crisis management when no crisis is necessary, or in the confusion of leadership when

clarity is easily obtained (Basham & Mathur, 2010; Calareso, 2013; Cieminski, 2018; Raza & Sikandar, 2018).

Sub-Question 3

What are the *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies designed to build leadership capabilities?

Many organizations face the daunting task of preparing employees to be tomorrow's leaders while searching for a new leader of their own. Consequently, if current leadership does not train existing employees, either by personal choice or premeditated selection for future leadership roles, the organization could remain status quo (Basham & Mathur, 2010; Cieminski, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Definitions

1. *Career field* – An occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training, followed as one's lifework (Kwan, 2009).
2. *Key positions* – Positions with a high degree of influence over an organization's success, ability to achieve goals; and programs, services, and ability to operate sustainably (Madichie & Nyakang'o, 2016; Stewart, 2016).
3. *Leadership development plan* – A systematic and continuous effort to support institutional stability through the identification and development of the appropriate employees to fill the key positions at the suitable time (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Fletcher et al., 2010; Hawthorne, 2011; Ishak & Kamil, 2016; Stewart, 2016).
4. *Leadership preparedness* – The extent to which a person is perceived to be prepared to lead at the time they assumed their first leadership position.

Summary

The problem examined in the proposed study was the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness for the teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. The purpose of this case study was to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. This chapter provided the background of leadership development planning through historical, social, and theoretical viewpoints, related the study to the researcher, introduced the problem and purpose statements, personalized the study's significance, and provided the research questions and definitions guiding the study. The next chapter is a review of the literature focused on leadership development planning.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Stakeholders within the education and training arena expect school leaders to fulfill roles and responsibilities equal to those required of business leaders (Onorato, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2012; Zimmerman et al., 2020). The significance of leadership in educational organizations has increased with growing expectations of school reform efforts that mandate improved teaching (Tucker et al., 2012). In an annual report, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2002) concluded that within the last decade, excellent schools cannot exist without exceptional leaders. Moreover, a growing amount of literature suggests effective school leadership as the second most influential factor of student achievement, with classroom instruction as the most significant factor (Kearney, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Tucker et al., 2012; Waters et al., 2003). Consequently, having a strong school leadership team is critical for school efforts in improving student achievement and requires a system for building the leadership capabilities for future leaders.

This chapter includes a review of the theoretical framework that guided this study and the current literature on building leadership capabilities in school districts. The literature was examined with a focus on the role of leadership development found in schools today. Next, there is an exploration of literature on the principal shortage and a decline in school leadership effectiveness related to student achievement. Additionally, the chapter examines leadership development approaches in the literature using current leadership programs, mentoring, and internships. Furthermore, the literature review includes research on positive and negative aspects of leadership training programs and provides evidence on how incorporating professional standards, professional development, mentoring, peer reviews, and internships leads to an

improved, comprehensive leadership development program. The chapter also includes a review of current literature on developing a leadership development plan that includes a succession plan. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the main points of the literature review and provides context and connection with the study.

Theoretical Framework

The professional and academic literature is abundant on leadership development plans that represent various theories, models, viewpoints, and attitudes (Charbonneau & Freeman, 2016; Fletcher et al., 2010; Hawthorne, 2011; Ishak & Kamil, 2016). Transformational leadership theory provided the theoretical framework for this study and is based on the model developed by Kouzes and Posner (2012). The most significant impact on student achievement can be attributed to transformational leadership, and it requires the use of other educators' expertise and knowledge by the principal to solve problems collaboratively (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Consequently, the groundwork of transformational leadership is investing and developing leadership capacity throughout the organization and establishes effective leadership pipelines for the organization (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (1978) was the first to define the concept *transformational leader*. He examined leader and follower relationships and found that transformational leaders use their followers' needs to achieve the organization's goal (Northouse, 2012). Additionally, Slater (2008) said the success of a leader is not about the number led but about the number inspired to lead. Raising others' self-awareness and morality enables transformational leaders to change and transform organizations. Consequently, leadership is nothing more than a relationship between leaders and those who choose to follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Kouzes and Posner (2012) built five practices of exemplary leadership in the transformational leadership model, including (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. They used three of the five practices as a theoretical framework due to their linkage to transformational leadership: model the way, inspire a vision, and enable others to act. The emotional impact of transformational leadership on an organization has been measured through empirical evidence, but the mechanisms behind the relationships has not been measured (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). The relationship between transformational leadership and an organization's commitment to impacting change could further advance leadership preparedness.

Bass (1985) advanced on Burns' theory by introducing a mechanism to measure follower motivation and performance. Transformational leadership relies on the leader's personality, traits, and ability to make a change through real world examples, articulation of an inspired vision, and challenging goals to advance the organization. Transformational leaders need to know their values and philosophy to be an example for their team. Leaders need to inspire a shared vision and enable others to act through building trust, relationships, and collaboration because the job of school leadership is too big for one person to accomplish on their own.

Transformational leaders should solicit contributions from others in the organization, which is why they are successful (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Principals rely on teacher leaders, and superintendents rely on central-office personnel and board members (Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, school leaders must build leadership capacity to promote student learning and teacher growth; both of which are critical to transformational leadership (Slater, 2008). In their transformational leadership model, Kouzes and Posner outlined how an effective leader enables others to focus on the vision and inspires others to model a

transformational leader's actions, which equals organizational success. The transformational leadership theory provides a theoretical framework to systems and programs that build the leaders' capacity. Kouzes and Posner's model is based on the relationships between the leader and followers, focusing on inspiring, enabling, modeling, challenging, and encouraging each other. These transformational leadership components were examined in the study of an elementary school with implemented leadership development practices.

Related Literature

Since the inclusion of educational policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002) signed by President George W. Bush and the Race to the Top initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2009) by the Obama Administration, there has been dramatic educational accountability reform. These policies began the era of accountability testing. NCLB (2002) required all states to conduct annual statewide assessments that identified, according to the evaluations, school that failed to make annual yearly progress (AYP). The goal was proficiency in reading and math by the year 2013–2014 for all students; based on the school's performance, there would be sanctions or rewards based on AYP status (Dee & Jacob, 2011; McGuinn, 2011). Therefore, states developed accountability systems by using state standardized assessments to monitor student growth models and educator evaluations to assess the instructional effectiveness and school leadership annually (Horner & Jordan, 2020; Tucker et al., 2012).

The accountability systems transitioned the focus from principals as leaders to principals as assessment coordinators. When a school's success is measured on aggregate scores versus the improved score delta, a school leader's hands are tied. Horner and Jordan (2020) noted that policymakers, researchers, and educators also identify the importance of high-quality principals for effective schools and student achievement. However, the focus on achievement has removed

the focus on the socialization of future leader development. If the school leader's role is relegated to meeting test score requirements, a school leader's position goal could be minimized. Not to reduce the value of testing, but when the school leader's role is focused on classroom teaching and testing outcomes, there is little time left for leadership development that encompasses total school operations, which equates to fewer educators' leadership opportunities. Most academic institutions have limited leadership development training and succession planning systems to prepare current staff (Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Leaders are grown through past experiences and impressions relayed by examples (Edge et al., 2016; Service et al., 2016). The role of a school leader should not be focused on test scores. Instead, it should be focused on inspiring future leaders through mentoring and coaching early in their careers. The dedication to preparing current educators for future leadership opportunities may yield results that far exceed test scores; it could cause leader and student development that improves performance.

Educational Leadership Impact on Student Growth and Performance

Educational leaders can have a positive impact on student growth and performance that is undeniable for school districts. School leaders can substantially contribute to student achievement (Kearney, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Raza & Sikandar, 2018; Tucker et al., 2012; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Through deliberate decision-making efforts that support teaching and learning, setting expectations, developing teacher growth, and leveraging resources to support student achievement within the school, school leaders indirectly influence student growth and performance (Louis et al., 2010; Tucker et al., 2012; Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Educational leaders facilitate school improvement and increase student growth and performance through deliberate leadership efforts. Teacher leader models are a way educational

leaders can utilize transformational leadership techniques to improve student and teacher performance (Cosenza, 2015). Teacher leader positions require teachers to be included in decisions that affect students, which adds a component of inclusion and succession management that ripples through the staff. This informal leadership technique can help current educational leaders prepare future leaders to understand organizational learning techniques (Louis & Murphy, 2017). The teacher leader model can be implemented in a specific school or building, and there are additional levels of involvement educational leaders can use to improve performance.

Waters and Marzano (2006) identified a significant relationship between district-level leadership and student performance achievement through the implementation of five factors: (a) collaborating with all stakeholders in the development of organizational goals, (b) aligning district goals to ensure board support, (c) setting non-negotiable expectations for classroom instruction and student achievement, (d) monitoring instruction and student achievement goals, and (e) leveraging resources to support instructional purposes. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond and Orphanos (2007) found that when principals led school improvement efforts, aligned school vision and goals to instructional practices, and provided additional support for students' achievement scores were higher. Additionally, dedicated leadership training shifts the educator's mindset to the educational leader (Cieminski, 2018; Zimmerman et al., 2020). Consequently, principal leadership has a significant role in student growth and performance but is not required directly to classroom teaching to increase test scores.

Instructional leadership increases teachers' and students' performance, enhancing a school's academic environment (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). There is evidentiary worth of a leader to the climate and culture of an institution when the attainment of quality academic standards is

enforced (Karadağ et al., 2015; MacNeil et al., 2009). Teachers perform multiple roles and duties in a school, and those duties contribute toward school and student improvement (Raza & Sikandar, 2018). The principal cannot lead alone, as leadership is a collective effort (Alam & Ahmed, 2017). School leaders are change managers and require teacher leaders to be the ignition switches of positive school change. However, the teachers need other teachers to help them lead the classroom and principals to lead from the front office.

Principal leadership has been identified as the second most significant influence on student achievement with classroom teacher instruction as the first (Louis & Murphy, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004). A New Leaders for New Schools (2009) study quantified that 25% of student achievement is based on the principal's impact and leadership. Moreover, Marzano et al. (2005) determined that 60% of student achievement is contributed to educational leaders' effectiveness. Moreover, the importance of principal leadership on school performance is to establish a clear direction and vision for the school, address student and faculty needs, and develop teachers that effectively improve student learning (Louis & Murphy, 2017; Orr, 2010). This business-like, administrative approach to student growth and achievement is essential, but other skills are needed to become an effective school principal. While principals are instrumental to successful improvement in a school, it begins with positive efforts by staff and students (Cierninski, 2018). Succession planning, therefore, can help with preparing future leaders with the tools to lead.

Even though leadership development plans are underutilized in educational settings, it is a significant avenue to help school districts be successful (Cierninski, 2018; Horner & Jordan, 2020; Zimmerman et al., 2020). Those with strong leadership skills have the most significant impact on student growth and performance, but they are hard to find (Bryant et al., 2017).

However, effective principals surround themselves with other effective principals who motivate and grow others and do not avoid addressing the difficult conversations and situations with underperforming teachers and staff (Cieminski, 2018). In turn, this creates future educational leaders capable and ready to lead when given the opportunity.

History of Principalship Role

The standardization and evolution of the principal role have transformed into what it is today due to the increased scrutiny on educational accountability and assessment scoring. Principals were once viewed as administrative managers that focused on school operations' tasks and functions from the 1920s through the 1970s (Valentine & Prater, 2011). In 1977, however, the role changed when the U.S. Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity (1970) identified school principals' position as the most influential and vital role in a school. After that, principals were identified as the key figure to improve school performance and promote teaching and learning for students and staff (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007).

The era of educational accountability before the 1980s transferred the weight of the educator's influence on student growth and performance from the classroom to the principalship. In the 1980s, principals became instructional leaders responsible for setting clear goals, motivating teachers toward improved instruction, and supporting teachers instead of telling them what to do (Valentine & Prater, 2011). A starting point for creating learner-centered schools is the inclusion of instructional leadership guides implemented by educational leadership and management (Hallinger, 2010). Instructional leadership is not only about day-to-day teaching in a classroom; it also requires leaders to focus on hiring efforts to find effective teachers that will lead to improved instruction and then continue professional development (Cieminski, 2018; Horng & Loeb, 2010).

The evolution of principalship began as an administrative manager, transitioned to an instructional leader, and then moved to a transformational leader. Today, principals take on multiple roles: visionary, change agent, curriculum and instruction expert, facility and personnel manager, and community linker (Cieminski, 2018; Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Raza & Sikandar, 2018). Utilizing teachers' expertise and leadership, transformational leaders build a collaborative culture to solve complex school issues (Raza & Sikandar, 2018; Valentine & Prater, 2011). A transformational principal's role is to move from being the sole expert and decision-maker to investing in others' leadership-building capacity.

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals and motivates others to accomplish more than what is expected within an organization (Northouse, 2012; O'Donovan, 2015). Distributive leadership techniques are found in successful transformational leaders and are a concept that should be included in leadership development plans (O'Donovan, 2015). The principal must work collaboratively with all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, civic leaders) to solve complex problems is paramount to success and the glue that keeps sustained excellence (Cieminski, 2018; Slater, 2008). Transformational principals play an essential role in growing and developing leaders, which is why this trait has been added to the formal part of a principal's professional responsibility (Turnbell et al., 2013). Additionally, this transformational preparation can help address the challenges needed to become, and remain, a successful principal (Cieminski, 2018).

Principal Shortage

Willing and influential leaders that desire to take on the principalship have become a highly sought commodity (Bryant et al., 2017; Kwan, 2009; Myung et al., 2011). The current principal shortage has demographic issues that include the imminent retirement of baby-boomer

generation principals and increased student enrollment in varying regions across the United States (Bryant et al., 2017; White et al., 2010). School districts are challenged to find willing and capable principals to meet the growing demands. In a 2010 study, 67% of principals in the United States had intended to leave the principalship before reaching the eligible retirement age (Kearney, 2010). The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) anticipated an 8% student enrollment growth nationwide from 2006–2016, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.) predicted an increase of school administrator positions by 8%. These statistics highlight the importance of hiring influential leaders ready to address principalship shortages, regardless of the school's previous successes.

There is a need for highly effective principals for high and low-performing schools (Morgan, 2018). The challenge for schools is to find high-quality leadership to face low socio-economic minority families who do not speak English as their primary language (Myung et al., 2011). As Kearney (2010) noted from the NCLB (2002), the need for high-quality leadership was the most significant predictor of schools meeting AYP. Interestingly, the pool of individuals licensed as school administrators is not small, yet many of those with the credentials choose to remain in teaching or other non-administrative positions (Papa & Baxter, 2005). Requirements for qualified candidates to take on the principal's role will increase with anticipated retirements and growing student populations. Myung et al. noted that school districts would continue to be challenged to fill vacancies based on a decline of interest in pursuing leadership positions.

Lowered Interest in the Principalship

The lack of top job applicants has been a growing concern for school districts (Kearney, 2010; Morgan, 2018; Myung et al., 2011). The attractiveness of principalship is not the same for all certified applicants. The decline of interest can be attributed to factors such as increased

work-related stress, more public scrutiny and accountability, longer work hours, growing legal mandates, insufficient support from districts, removal of principal tenure structures, and a narrowing salary gap between teachers and school administrators (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Myung et al., 2011). Many teachers, of whom almost 50% have master's degrees, prefer to remain in the classroom with the protection of tenure and the possibility of earning comparable salaries to school administrators (Mullen & Cairns, 2001).

An educator's perception of the principalship affects their viewpoint. Whether it be money, prestige, or success, each individual has a perception (Morgan, 2018). Many future principals find their perception while sitting as an assistant principal because of the proximity to the position, required duties and tasks, and leadership training. However, the amount of time devoted to developing the skills to be an effective principal varies based on the current principal's duties (Mertz, 2006; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the assistant principal role is vital to the success of both students and schools and helps each educator find their principalship perception irrespective of compensation (Morgan, 2018).

According to Papa and Baxter (2005), top salaries do not necessarily fully compensate for principalship demands regardless of the school community's challenges. The inadequate incentive structure for principalship is not viewed favorably by potential applicants; hence, more attractive options that do not require the demands of a principal are favored (Ghamrawi, 2013; Kwan, 2009). Moreover, when comparing the pay differential between teacher and principal, an average salary for a principal with 6–10 years of experience is less than the salary of a 20-year veteran classroom teacher, even when accounting for summer pay for principals (Kwan, 2009; Papa & Baxter, 2005). Accordingly, for many who are administrator-certified, the money and increased work-life balance for educators outweigh the title of principal.

Principalship comes with tenuous job satisfaction, making it challenging to attract candidates to apply for these jobs (Kwan, 2009; Morgan, 2018). Hewitt et al. (2011) examined 391 teachers from 139 different school districts who possessed successful principal leadership skills, but openly stated they did not want to become principals for various reasons. In the study, Hewitt et al. found that the most significant pressures that kept teachers from desiring to be a principal were testing and accountability, followed by the stress associated with the position. The increased student achievement requirements meant working an average of 60–80 hours per week, and that meant evening events and dealing with change management issues of veteran teachers resistant to change (Hewitt et al., 2011; Kwan, 2009; Morgan, 2018; Papa & Baxter, 2005). Consequently, much of the principal's time is spent on tasks that are least satisfying to current teachers, including increased stress, time commitment, and accountability pressures stemming from standardized testing (Hewitt et al., 2011; Kwan, 2009).

Tasks previously addressed also highlight the potential lack of job security, which reduces the interest in the principalship. School districts have moved to a more stringent accountability system that could increase principal dismissals, making many jobs unattractive to potential applicants (Turnbell et al., 2013). For many teachers, the thought of job security in the classroom far outweighs a principal position that does not necessarily come with a tenure safety net (Richardson et al., 2016). Therefore, school districts must be open and honest with the accountability target expectations. New hires must be able to negotiate the timeline attached to the targets to establish a successful tenure that satisfies both the person and the school.

The principal shortage could be correlated with decreasing tenure due to increased leadership demands (Richardson et al., 2016). This shortage could be due, in part, to school districts looking for *game-changing* principals with extensive experience instead of up-coming,

inexperienced applicants (Morgan, 2018; Richardson et al., 2016). Principal shortages are also reported due to unsatisfying job tasks, stress, and low pay (Gajda & Militello, 2008). Performing these unpopular tasks is required to be a principal; however, more transparency from the school district in advertising and hiring for the position could provide future applicants with the knowledge and understanding required for principal roles.

School District Roles

School district roles have dramatically changed at the same time as the role of the principalship. School districts' increased role in teaching, learning, and supporting instructional leadership is much different from when school districts were initially established to regulate necessary business and operations (Honig, 2012). According to Bottoms and Schmidt-Davis (2010), the district office has several responsibilities to support schools and principals:

1. School districts set a vision for schools through a comprehensive strategic plan that supports principals to implement improvement plans related to academic, social, and emotional needs of students.
2. School districts establish conditions that allow schools to align resources and policies, create a collaborative relationship among the schools, communicate the vision and strategic plans to the community, and support the principal as the instructional leader.
3. School districts need to invest in learning at all school levels, including teachers, principals, staff, and board members to be an effective school district; emphasizing the importance of professional development as a strategy ensures significant principal development (Richardson et al., 2016).

School districts should also identify potential leadership candidates early and develop them through professional development, which leads to a succession plan. Identifying candidates

requires school leaders to sift through the talented teacher pool and find those who desire and drive to be effective principals (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). These future leaders will ideally understand and master the intricacies of administration and management of finances, transportation, student testing, facilities management, data, accountability, and personnel (Richardson et al., 2016). Attaining these masteries is difficult and requires school districts to invest in deliberate professional development for all teachers, especially future leaders, partner with higher education organizations to provide learning opportunities, and create internships within the district to open the teachers' aperture.

High-quality leadership is essential to the school district and student success. School districts continually face new challenges, and the evolution of all stakeholders has increased expectations (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Calareso, 2013; Kwan, 2009; Richardson et al., 2016). Therefore, researchers and practitioners must anticipate the needs of tomorrow's schools. The next generation of school leaders must be adequately developed if students are to graduate with the knowledge needed to succeed. Additionally, if school districts want to stop the principal carousel, a development plan must be instituted (Calareso, 2013; Kwan, 2009). As the principalship becomes more difficult, there must be a way for school districts to facilitate leadership development while also making school leadership positions more attractive to teachers to move beyond the classroom.

Leadership Development Approaches

Scholars and practitioners consider leadership as one of the most complex phenomena related to human nature (Gibbs et al., 2020). Leadership is the bridge of multiple disciplines yet blurs the lines that separate different thought schools. Educational leadership can be seen as daunting and a seemingly impossible job. Still, school districts are nonetheless tasked to fill the

vacancies with individuals, some of whom are not fully prepared (Bryant et al., 2017). There are current gaps within principal training that are critical to top leadership development that include shaping an academic vision, creating a hospitable climate for learning, improving classroom instruction, managing people and systems, and cultivating leadership across the staff (Turnbell et al., 2013). Whereas many educational administrators have taught in the classroom, not all have. With the stress placed on instructional leadership, having a strong foundation in providing instruction assists in better relating to, and leading, the teachers (Hitt et al., 2012). Merely tapping into classroom teachers for principal positions does not mean they are ready to be school leaders. Instead, deliberate leadership training plans and programs must be examined, introduced, and utilized.

Leadership Training Programs

Historically, educational leadership training programs have been criticized for not preparing future administrators for leadership roles (Kearney, 2010; Orr, 2010). The National Commission for Excellence (1983) in Educational Administration pushed to close almost 50% of leadership training and preparation programs due to low quality in 1987. Moreover, in a four-year study, Levine (2005) examined 1,206 leadership preparation programs in the United States and found outdated curricula, weak training faculty, inadequate instruction, and poor student recruitment and retention. When correlated with the survey responses from the study's principal and superintendent, these findings indicated the insufficiently prepared principal as proof that leadership training programs lack rigor (Gregorutti et al., 2017; Levine, 2005). The criticisms of leadership training programs have led to redesigning and restructuring the curriculum to help more individuals be prepared for educational leadership opportunities.

Criticisms

The criticisms of university-based leadership programs include coursework that is too theoretical and not applicable to school leaders' current situations and challenges. The leadership programs include basic management, school law, and procedures without emphasizing effective instruction, professional development, curriculum development, and assessment (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Gregorutti et al., 2017). A national survey conducted by Public Agenda suggested that 80% of superintendents and 69% of principals felt that the university-based leadership programs did not prepare candidates for today's school system realities (Kearney, 2010). Partial blame can be placed on *fast-track* degree programs that help fill leadership vacancies with credentialed individuals, but they offer minimal course credit requirements and do not fully prepare individuals (Gregorutti et al., 2017). Another area of the blame can go to school districts with reduced educational leadership licensure requirements to increase the appeal for more applicants into leadership programs. The fast-track degrees and reduction of conditions for administrator licensure have provided more applicants but have also ill-prepared these applicants to fill the increasingly demanding vacancies for school administration positions.

Leadership Program Redesign

University-based leadership programs have provided most of the training for school leadership positions. Orr (2010) noted the objectives of leadership programs are to develop capacity and skills for individuals and develop aspirations to pursue educational leadership opportunities. To meet the objectives mentioned above, leadership programs have been redesigned to prepare future leaders better using updated professional standards, cohort learning structure, professional development, mentoring, and internships.

Additionally, recognizing the importance of a whole-being perspective related to leadership development is paramount to leadership success (Gregorutti et al., 2017). The redesign of undergraduate leadership programs includes focusing on the individual (physically, mentally, and spiritually) and balances theory with practical skill development (Schank, 2011). While this model may be newer to education academics, it is typical in business-related programs, highlighting the discrepancy between the two occupational categories.

Professional Standards

Effective leadership programs focus on pedagogy, curriculum, and professional standards (Gregorutti et al., 2017; Kearney, 2010). Additionally, to focus on stewardship of an organization's vision, effective classroom instruction, teacher growth and learning, resource management, professional ethics, and community engagement, many leadership programs have aligned with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (Tucker et al., 2012). These standards allow leadership development plans to individualize learning for each person while maintaining structure (Gregorutti et al., 2017). Additionally, having a framework for development helps the student find and harness their power of influence to improve leadership development. Accordingly, the leadership programs' learning outcomes are developed around ISLLC standards and allow programs to provide more standardized, yet personalized, learning experiences for future school leaders.

Cohort Structure

A strong support network supports effective leadership programs, provides continuous feedback and assessment, and requires field-based experiences through an internship (Hitt et al., 2012; Turnbell et al., 2013). Moreover, reflective practice, coaching, mentoring, and real-world problems should be included in the leadership program and (Gregorutti et al., 2017; Leithwood et

al., 2004). The use of a cohort structure provides a peer-to-peer opportunity to discuss and solve problems together. Darling-Hammond and Orphanos (2007) also supported the inclusion of problem-based learning. Research shows that higher cognitive approaches combined with internships directly correlate with the principal's ability to apply what is learned. Additionally, Kolb's (2014) learning cycle indicates that learning potentially suffers without exploration, discovery, application, and personal reflection. Consequently, the inclusion of cohort learning individualizes the learning experience required to prepare future leaders.

Professional Development in the District

There must be continuous and deliberate professional development. The goal of professional development should be to focus on improving teaching and learning with opportunities grounded in standards-based and research-based learning (Kearney, 2010; Martin et al., 2019; Waters & Marzano, 2006). District-level professional development is a critical strategy for school improvement and provides clear expectations and constant support for principals to improve their teaching and learning abilities (Kearney, 2010; Martin et al., 2019). Funding for professional development is needed for districts (Martin et al., 2019). According to Waters and Marzano, aligning professional development to district and school goals is key to teacher and principal professional development that supports the school's vision.

Additionally, allowing personalized professional development that includes personal reflection helps the educator apply the lessons learned to an emerging requirement (Martin et al., 2019). Educators are more apt to examine new methods known, implement immediately, and reflect on personal proficiency and student mastery (Desimone & Stuckey, 2014). Accordingly, to recruit and retain highly skilled principals, there must be an emphasis and dedication placed on professional development and training to ensure best management practices within the school

(Snell & Furtick, 2013; Gregorutti et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2019).

Coaching and Mentoring

Despite the positive influences on future educational leaders, leadership training programs do not incorporate a formal coaching and mentoring component as do business programs (Le Comte & McClelland, 2017). Gibbs et al., (2020) posited that mentoring provides training support through questioning, reflection, guidance, and listening and is crucial to leadership development concerning technical knowledge, dispositions, values, and behaviors. Furthermore, improving practice without a quality coaching feedback loop is fundamentally impossible, and many future educational leaders need job mentoring (Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016; Mullen & Cairns, 2001). Coaches and mentors exist and could help teach principalship intricacies, but few leadership programs incorporate either in the curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007). The individual growth that comes from mentoring is critical for both the mentor and the mentee.

Mentoring requires direct inquiry and reflection that requires trust that ensures the development of current and future educational leaders (Hitt et al., 2012; Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016). While effective mentoring could be identified differently based on the participants' personal views, the practice of mentoring and coaching best encapsulates the individualized attention needed for personal growth (Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016). Additionally, there have been concerted efforts to include coaching and mentoring in the workplace. Still, a dedicated effort is not as widespread in the leadership development programs found during undergraduate and graduate training (Sciarappa & Mason, 2014). Consequently, as long as coaching and mentoring are not included in academic studies, internships can introduce these effective training techniques.

Internships

Through internships, building leadership capacity is a promising practice that enables job-embedded clinical experience with veteran school leader supervision. The ability to interact with veteran principals on real instructional, academic, and managerial challenges tackled for school improvement is what aspiring leaders need and get to experience through internships (Geer, 2020; Johnston et al., 2010). Interestingly, while many other professions use an apprenticeship or training with professional development during the novice years of a career, educational leaders have lacked this opportunity. The diverse demands placed on principals require the flexibility that can be learned through internships first and then later applied by future leaders as they deal with the various situations (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Geer, 2020). According to Johnston et al. and Mullen and Cairns (2001), internships for aspiring school leaders are highly beneficial and essential to leadership development.

The school leaders' role is crucial, and those who aspire to the position need proper leadership training and development. While an education background and classroom teaching experience provide context to the expectations and challenges of principalship, nothing fully prepares an individual to be a school leader. As many leadership training programs are criticized for under preparation, research has provided promising actions that could assist in building the leadership capacity needed to become a school leader (Baker et al., 2019; Geer, 2020; Gregorutti et al., 2017; Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016; Martin et al., 2019). The inclusion by leadership programs of professional standards, ongoing professional development, peer support systems, mentoring and coaching, and internships is pivotal to prepare the next generation of educational leaders and ultimately strengthen the leadership pipeline.

Leadership Development Succession

A strong leadership succession allows school systems to have trained and prepared individuals ready to fill leadership positions to carry out their vision when vacancies occur. Hitt et al. (2012) defined a leadership pipeline as a “developmental perspective for fostering leadership capacity in schools and districts, from the identification of potential talent during the recruitment phase to ensuring career-long learning through professional development” (p. 1). There is a need for gifted leaders prepared for social, political, and cultural pressures (Baker et al., 2019). The expansion of a strong applicant pool is developing a leadership succession for organizations (Turkson, 2020; Turnbell et al., 2013).

A strong applicant base is needed to face the positional and structural challenges that contribute to the obstacles faced by future leaders. Leadership development requires mentoring, shared learning experiences, and an organization’s dedication to continued professional growth (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). A leadership development succession plan is the responsibility of a combination of entities and organizations (Baker et al., 2019). In most organizations, the human resource sections oversee formal leadership development, but informal leadership development is managed by the school principal, teacher leaders, and peers. These traditional and casual infrastructures add layers of complexity to creating, deploying, and sustaining leadership development support (Turkson, 2020). Consequently, leadership development is an ongoing process, not a single event.

A leadership succession plan recruits aspiring leaders, promotes continuous development in novice and veteran education leaders, and allows organizations to establish a succession management plan. However, few institutions develop, deliver, and assess the developmental rigor needed to support an educational leader’s success (Baker et al., 2019; Turkson, 2020;

Zimmerman et al., 2020). It could be stated that educational leadership appears to be among the least studied and most misunderstood management positions (Zimmerman et al., 2020). One of the many essential components in a leadership succession is identifying and recruiting those individuals with the desired talent.

Talent Identification

Identifying and recruiting candidates with promising potential is the first step to building a leadership succession for principalship (Kearney, 2010; McDermott & Marshall, 2016). There are various criteria for the process, and districts and states have requirements, certifications, and leadership training programs that help aspiring educational leaders direct their efforts. Future potential is challenging to judge; however, accessing the extent of each individual's measurable and objective metrics is crucial to an organization's future success (McDermott & Marshall, 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2020). When identifying talent, there are multiple approaches to determining skills in an organization. McDermott and Marshall suggested up to nine categories in a talent grid as well as how to develop and retain the members within each.

The first category is high performance and high potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals should be considered for accelerated leadership development opportunities to prepare them for future roles with more responsibility. In education, these are the future educational leaders needed to face future challenges. The critical step for these stars is to ensure they know they are a valued member, are included in strategic planning initiatives or task forces, and can lead a highly visible team in the district. These efforts will help keep high performance and high potential leaders from leaving the organization.

The second category is high performance and medium potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals should be provided with opportunities to test and enhance their

capabilities to demonstrate leadership potential. In education, these are future leaders who need help in seeing their potential and may need to spend more time as an assistant principal to understand their leadership potential. This top talent may leave an organization if they are not given a chance to lead an important team with some visibility. So, these high-performing members with potential always deliver projects on-time and could benefit from managing more extensive projects. The organization does not want to lose this top talent and must lay out a training succession to enhance their skills.

The third category is high performance and low potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals are highly capable and proficient in their technical role but lack the desire to promote. In education, these are the teachers that choose to stay in the classroom. These masters are the best at their craft and should be pushed to maintain or enhance their specialized skills but not pushed toward leadership positions. While they may not be future educational leaders, they could be amazing mentors to colleagues.

The fourth category is medium performance and high potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals need to be pushed with challenging tasks to increase their performance. Someone with this type of home-grown talent needs opportunities to lead small groups to learn how leadership works. In education, these are the teachers who might lead a department of fellow teachers. While they have the potential to be excellent leaders, their performance needs improvement and can be best accomplished through new and increasingly complex job assignments.

The fifth category is medium performance and medium potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals need to continue improving their performance and building future capabilities. In education, this category could make up the most considerable portion of

the workforce. Expanding their opportunities on new assignments and teams might improve their performance and see future potential. Overall, this is a solid citizen who can be counted on to do their job every day with little to no oversight, which is not what is desired in an educational leader.

The sixth category is medium performance and low potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These contributors are specialists in their role but have no desire to take on new challenges or learn new skills. In education, contributors can be found in every department and are focused on improving their functional specialty, sometimes at a colleague's expense. If educational leadership potential is the focus of the training succession, this could be the category that gets overlooked.

The seventh category is low performance and high potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals might be in the wrong job or department and need to be revectorred. They might be a diamond in the rough with the potential to lead in an area they know well instead of flounder as a team member. This individual might be the teacher that shows brilliance in particular working groups or meetings but has low marks on performance reviews. As an educational leader looking for leadership training, this might be the category with the most considerable growth potential.

The eighth category is low performance and medium potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These individuals have ongoing low-performance issues and might have potential. However, a leader should be careful in assigning new tasks without genuinely knowing the individual's abilities. These questionable members are found in most organizations and schools and often go unnoticed due to the organization's need to fill a requirement. From the leadership training succession perspective, this category should be overlooked.

The ninth and final category is low performance and low potential (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). These low performers need constant evaluation and monitoring and are not future leadership material. Often, these individuals are moved to try and find their niche without success. Every organization maintains these members on their staff but wish they did not. Consequently, if low performers are in an organization, the current leadership could be to blame.

Johnston et al. (2010) found that many schools select individuals within the above categories who possess specific core competencies over those with the traditional hiring criteria, such as the level of education or years of teaching experience. According to Johnston et al., the two most pivotal competencies are an individual's belief that every child can be successful and the ability to make that a reality. Consequently, schools should select aspiring leaders who believe that every child can learn and take the student outcomes as a personal responsibility to the student, the school, and themselves (Douglass, 2018; McDermott & Marshall, 2016). When those aspiring leaders are found, continuous recruitment should be accomplished by the administrators and fellow teachers and staff (Johnston et al., 2010; Kearney, 2010; McDermott & Marshall, 2016).

The selection and recruitment of potential leaders should be shared among all school districts (Zimmerman et al., 2020). However, the principal plays a considerable role in establishing leadership succession (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). It is typical for school districts to rely on principals to identify and build leadership capacity in potential and aspiring leaders (Ghamrawi, 2013; Kwan, 2009; Zimmerman et al., 2020). However, some researchers suggest that leaders need formal training in this area, specifically identifying, recruiting, and developing leaders, and even suggest that these roles be formally included in the principal's job duty (McDermott & Marshall, 2016; Turnbull et al., 2013). The importance of principals in

identifying leadership strengths in new and established teachers starts the first time they meet and never stops (Johnston et al., 2010).

Building a leadership succession requires principals to provide teachers with leadership opportunities to develop the skills necessary for principalship if they decide to pursue that option and join the list of quality candidates (Kearney, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2020). However, in contrast, Hewitt et al. (2011) suggested it is the district superintendent's role to take the lead on recruiting future principals by developing and implementing leadership training systems for potential school leaders.

The district superintendent plays an essential role in identifying and recruiting potential school leaders since they decide on a hiring action. Superintendents who have a better understanding of the applicant dynamics are likely to be better positioned to make both successful and more informed hiring decisions (Pijanowski et al., 2009). According to Pijanowski et al., the three top strategies required by superintendents to recruit prospective individuals were to increase compensation, improve leadership training strategies through university-based leadership preparation involvement, and redefine the role of the principal in the school district.

Successful Leadership Components

A leadership development plan that is strong and established includes a picture of what successful leadership is. Effective educational leadership has several facets and responsibilities that include creating an environment and culture conducive to learning within their staff and students (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). Many principals face a challenge directly related to building a culture that supports distributive leadership and teacher motivation to go above and beyond (Baker et al., 2019; Slater, 2008).

The leadership development culture desired in education can be found in the business world; however, not all the attributes are positive, and educators must be prepared (Baker et al., 2019). This preparation comes through critical positions in an organization such as teacher leader, department chair, and assistant principal and should be viewed as prime leadership development opportunities. Successful leadership components require combined succession planning and leadership development across an organization to get the appropriate skills in the accurate place at the suitable time (McDermott & Marshall, 2016). This integrated leadership development should be the cornerstone of an organization and directly affect an organization's performance.

This integrated development can be useful at all levels of an organization. Still, with the focus of leadership development, the integration should be focused on those individuals in an organization that desire to become education leaders. Critical to the process of leadership development is the passion and interests of the individuals engaged in the process (Baker et al., 2019). The individual's passion and interest are significant components of successful leadership development. The previously mentioned categories suggested by McDermott and Marshall (2016) help to identify characteristics of suitable individuals with appropriate training and skills development with potential but does not address the passion for serving as an education leader. When a holistic lens is applied to leadership development, successful leadership components are better identified and allow for career transitions through succession planning (Baker et al., 2019).

There is a need for deliberate and thoughtful leadership development in succession management. The intentional act of helping individuals identify and prepare for leadership positions they desire is key to organizational success (Zimmerman et al., 2020). The goal of succession management and leadership development should be to provide leadership applicants

ready to face today's challenges and tomorrow (Baker et al., 2019). This type of leadership development planning in education should be systematic and visible to identify candidates and provide processes and programming (Zenger, 2013).

Literature has provided successful educational leadership criteria with three critical components: leading a school toward a vision, developing and growing professionals, and managing organizational systems (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Turnbell et al., 2013). The tumultuous environment, increased time demands, additional stressors, and personal feeling of being ill-prepared for leadership positions are just a few of the barriers to entry for future leaders (Zimmerman et al., 2020). While each researcher and organization have a unique vision for what a successful leader looks like, the collective components provide schools with the structure needed to build a leadership pipeline, but there are succession challenges and barriers.

Succession Challenges

A school system that uses a leadership pipeline has a way to identify and promote educators through a deliberate succession plan. Many schools face succession challenges finding the appropriate person for the correct position (Fink, 2011). There are substantial challenges in a succession plan that include changing demographics, lack of leadership job attractiveness, and conflicting goals of each generation (Fink, 2011; Myung et al., 2011). School leaders and districts are further challenged to define and align educational goals with the succession plan (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016). A succession challenge might not exist if short-term targets are the goal for educational leaders. However, suppose long-term success is the goal, there is a succession challenge in recruiting and developing leaders who want to contribute to student knowledge attainment, peer-to-peer mentoring, and community involvement (Fink, 2011).

A succession management plan includes a deliberately developed leadership training

plan. Few districts, however, have formal systems in place to ensure proper identification and development occurs in the teachers (Myung et al., 2011). Nonetheless, informal mechanisms a school district uses to identify and attract future leaders through self-selection and tapping (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2020). Often, candidates self-select themselves based on personal motivation and desire, while others are identified by peers or principals to consider school administration jobs. Myung et al. surveyed 15,480 teachers, 583 assistant principals, and 312 principals and found that most aspiring school leaders were encouraged by their peers instead of the school's administration.

School districts must take succession challenges seriously and utilize a leadership training plan to identify and tap into leadership potential individuals. Despite the leadership vacancies anticipated, the next generation does not see school leadership as attractive, and a lack of a succession plan threatens sustainable leadership. Conversely, organizations that have a flourishing school leadership team possess character traits that will set up the organization to be successful in the future through an established leadership development plan and pipeline.

Summary

Influential leaders willing to fill educational leadership positions have become a rare breed, but that has not changed the requirement to have quality leadership in schools (Bryant et al., 2017). The principal's role has evolved dramatically throughout the last 70 years, from administrative manager to instructional leader to transformational leader. While the roles have transformed, the direct link to student outcomes has not changed. Principals exercise decision-making that enables teaching and learning, sets expectations and vision, develops teacher growth, and leverages resources to support student achievement (Cieminski, 2018; Hitt et al., 2012; Louis et al., 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2020). The requirement for current educational

leaders to prepare future leaders is no longer an option for an organization; it is a mandate and call to action.

School districts must facilitate leadership development to support the difficult job of the principal. The job's difficulty is making it paramount for schools to make leadership jobs more attractive for potential and aspiring leaders who want to pursue a career in administration while also recognizing the need for internal leadership development planning. Educational leaders, both aspiring and seasoned, need proper leadership training and development to ensure success from start to finish. While formal leadership development programs are criticized for inadequate training of future school leaders, research has provided practices that promise to assist in building leadership capacity and a leadership pipeline. Still, it is up to the school districts and organizations to implement.

School systems face a potential leadership shortage, and that includes a readiness dilemma. Furthermore, there is a succession challenge to ensure the next generation of school leaders are prepared without a leadership pipeline. Nonetheless, some districts have begun to address the inadequacies through informal selection, but that is not the long-term solution. Hence, there is a need to examine promising development practices further to build leadership capacity and ensure future leaders are ready. A thorough analysis of available literature identified that many school systems do not have a leadership pipeline in place. However, there is a dire need to find capable, ready applicants for leadership positions. This study will serve as an attempt to fill gaps in building leadership capacity through leadership development plans for the next generation. Chapter Three will address research methods utilized to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. There is limited research on leadership development practices that produce promising outcomes within school districts; therefore, this study addressed one way to deliberately develop the next generation of leaders through promising practices and examining current practices by schools. This study included descriptions of Owl Elementary School's strategies utilized to create a leadership development system that fills anticipated leadership vacancies. This study also addressed stakeholder perceptions regarding the process and other factors that help or hinder the implementation of leadership development plans.

This study included description of promising leadership development practices but is not implying other school districts must be limited to only those practices. By identifying and understanding effective and deliberate strategies implemented to create a sustainable leadership pipeline, schools might utilize some, or all, of the practices to ensure a strong pool of talented candidates who can take on the leadership challenges of schools today. Therefore, this chapter begins with a description of the research design and restatement of the research questions for this study. Next, a detailed description of the study's sampling and the population is provided and is followed by organization and theoretical framework overviews. The data collection process is then reviewed, and an overview of study participants, instrumentation, and data analysis is provided. Finally, ethical considerations for this study are presented before a summary.

Design

A research design should be chosen that best answers the research questions. While there are multiple designs that could be applied to this research topic, the descriptive qualitative case study design was chosen based on my personal experience as well as the literature review and research questions related to Owl Elementary School. A qualitative methodology was the most appropriate approach for this study to gain insight into leadership development promising practices from the field (Yin, 2015). Qualitative research is designed to explore and understand how individuals interpret and make meaning of personal experiences (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015). A quantitative research design is not focused on an understanding of the participants. Furthermore, a quantitative design is not ideal because the phenomena of a leadership development plan at the elementary school cannot be operationalized with a reliable and valid statistical measure (Yin, 2015). Therefore, to make meaning of how the Owl Elementary members view leadership development, a qualitative research approach was appropriate to develop a deep understanding of how individuals and the organization address the problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015).

A qualitative case study approach was utilized to collect in-depth and rich data (Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2015). Using a descriptive case study approach allowed me to gather data on Owl Elementary that already includes leadership development plans, policies, and processes (Yin, 2015). Case studies utilize real-life situations and provide a holistic account of a bounded system phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015). This examination encompassed only one elementary school with a dedicated leadership development plan, so it was appropriate to use a case study approach to investigate the research questions within the research plan boundaries.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How is a leadership development plan utilized at Owl Elementary School to impact leadership preparedness?

Research Sub-Questions

Sub-Question 1

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary?

Sub-Question 2

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions of how Owl Elementary builds capacity in future educational leaders?

Sub-Question 3

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies designed to build leadership capabilities?

Setting

Owl Elementary School is a single site location in Northern Virginia with a dedicated effort to promote leadership development among educators. Additionally, Owl Elementary is part of a larger school district consisting of five elementary schools. Owl Elementary was selected as the setting using a purposeful, convenience sampling (Yin, 2015) based on its active effort on leadership development using working groups and individual development plans. The school principal, also known as the champion, identified the participants that will provide the best data to answer the research questions.

Owl Elementary is a high-achieving K–5 public elementary school in Northern Virginia and serves approximately 800 students. The elementary students vary from low to medium-to-high income families, includes high transiency military families, and English-language learners. The organization setup is that of a typical elementary school within a school district where the principal serves as the elementary school leader with an assistant principal, and each department has a lead educator in charge of the curriculum. To better understand how leadership development is deliberate at Owl Elementary School, the *Lead Teachers* participants were asked questions that focused on the school’s approach to leadership development using *how* and *why* questions (Yin, 2015).

Participants

To research and collect the most meaningful data, qualitative research participants must be selected strategically (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sargeant, 2012; Yin, 2015). Target research populations are the totality of individuals who share a predetermined common characteristic relevant to the study (Sargeant, 2012; Yin, 2015) and participated in the *Teachers Lead* program at Owl Elementary. The sample pool of the teachers was between 10 and 15, with the proposed sample size of 10. Sampling is the process of selecting a representative component of a defined population (Orcher, 2014; Yin, 2015). The sample size of teachers and administrators consisted of men and women between the ages of 25 and 65 from diverse personal backgrounds who participate in the leadership development program. The participants’ strategic selection helped in understanding the leadership development plan due, in part, to the direct or indirect experience of each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sargeant, 2012; Yin, 2015).

Participant qualifications were established with support from the leadership development group participants in *Lead Teachers* and the literature. Leland et al. (2012) suggested that

succession planning is best understood through the perspectives of employees that have experienced leadership development planning at some level (Yin, 2015). If the participant had not experienced deliberate leadership development at any level, their perspectives of the impact, or lack thereof, is beneficial to the study (Leland et al., 2012). Thus, the study participant qualifications had at least 1 year of service as an Owl Elementary employee, experience with leadership development planning, and expertise within any school where a key position was vacant. The literature review helped ground the established requirements (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Delery & Roumpi, 2017; Jiang et al., 2017; Yin, 2015) used to verify that the participants possess the perceptions or perspectives required to appropriately answer the research questions and identify with the purpose of the study.

Table 1 displays the demographics of the study participants with pseudonyms which were used to protect their identify.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Race	Job Title	Lead Teachers Involvement
Debbie Gray	45	Female	White	Classroom Teacher	7 years
Tom Green	39	Male	White	Classroom Teacher	14 years
Molly Pink	36	Female	White	Classroom Teacher	9 years
Lilly Hazel	38	Female	White	Classroom Teacher	9 years
Julie Pearl	35	Female	White	Program Coordinator	3 years
Daphne Orange	33	Female	White	Program Coordinator	4 years
Ron Silver	36	Male	Mixed	Program Coordinator	5 years
Mike Shell	47	Male	African American	Program Coordinator	5 years
Charlie Emerald	43	Male	White	Program Coordinator	18 years
Amanda Ruby	31	Female	White	Counselor	2 years

Due to the participants' commonality and the direct impact the study might have on their professional career, I utilized purposeful, nonprobability sampling (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Yin, 2015). The principal provided the information to gain access to the research population members through a detailed contact list. Employee names, positions, and email addresses were included on the list provided by the principal and provided the access needed to establish relationships and rapport. Gatekeepers can help researchers gain access to appropriate members of the researched population (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2015). Accordingly, the principal served as a gatekeeper, or champion, for gaining access to the qualified community (Yin, 2015). In this scholarly leadership development study, the use of a gatekeeper to access population members and identify eligible research participants was consistent with the qualitative approach (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2015).

Procedures

Upon gaining approval for the research proposal, I completed the application and gained Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to begin the data collection (see Appendix A). Prior to beginning the formal data collection, I requested a review of the interview questions from a professor. In addition, a test run of the interview questions was completed by participants that are like the eligible participant pool. A review and test run of the interview questions contributed to greater awareness for me in this case study (Williams-McBean, 2019). As a novice researcher, assistance by academic professionals better informed and prepared me to face challenges that arose in the study and provided more confidence in the data collection instruments. Accordingly, a well-organized review and test run increased the quality of the research and informed other areas of the research study.

After IRB approval, I contacted the principal and requested permission from Owl Elementary School to complete data collection at the school site (see Appendix B). Once the school approved, the solicitation of participants began with a purposeful sampling approach; specifically, a criterion-based technique since participants were required to be in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The data collection included contact information for *Lead Teachers* participants to schedule individual interviews, working group observations, and document review. After permission from the participants was obtained, the scheduling and coordinating began. When scheduling the individual interviews, I arranged to send a copy of the informed consent agreement, including a brief introduction of the study to each participant. Additionally, a copy of the questions to be used during the interview was provided along with all prescribed forms (see Appendix C).

Similarly, for working group observations, *Lead Teachers* participants were provided the informed consent agreement and a brief introduction of the study. While there were no prescribed interview questions during the working group observation, it was important for the participants to feel at ease during observation which came from interview interactions. The working group observation was important to collecting further data to answer the research questions. In addition, past meeting minutes were analyzed to provide context and content to the research study. Ultimately, the data collection process yielded the context and answers needed to answer the research questions.

Once data collection and analysis were completed, a peer review was utilized to ensure credibility in the study. A peer review offered the researcher an honest appraisal of the study's ability to answer the research questions (Herber et al., 2020). Ultimately, the peer review process drove up the quality of the research study to allow for maximum impact to the

researched community. The completion of the peer review initiated the final edits to the manuscript. The final manuscript was approved by the dissertation chair and committee member before being submitted to the Liberty University School of Education for dissertation defense.

The Researcher's Role

Qualitative research requires a dedication to the researcher's case study methods and designs (Yin, 2015). In this study, I desired to understand the reality of leadership development planning at Owl Elementary School. It is a local school with an available leadership development plan that might show educators' successful utilization and application of deliberate strategies. I have worked in various educational organizations in elementary, secondary, and higher education as well as in private and public business operations which allowed for a unique perspective. A common theme existed in each educational setting, where there was no clear leadership development path for educators to become educational leaders. The frequency and consistency between organizations' employees heightened my interest in the topic. As the researcher, I was responsible for the topic selection, study development, and presentation of research outcomes as it fits the qualitative case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2015). The corollary relationship to the research questions and the participants was found in the shared community site, common career field, and the common goal of leadership positions, to include breadth and depth of educational leadership between the participants and myself. Thus, the established professional relationship helped develop rapport and added as a benefit when researching leadership development planning (Yin, 2015).

The potential for bias existed since the topic is both personal and professional (Yin, 2015). However, I did not have any authority over the participants, so the qualitative case study approach minimized bias as it required an extensive literature review, interviews, observations,

and artifact analysis, which brought unique perspectives by the research participants and removed researcher bias (Calareso, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The bounding, or bracketing, approach to this study removed research bias challenges (Tufford & Newman, 2012; Yin, 2015). While I was the principal interviewer, observer, and document analyst, dedication to the process was paramount to ensure bias did not creep into the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). Also, by utilizing the school principal to ensure the appropriate participants were selected, direct application to the research questions existed, which aided in limiting bias and adding efficiency to the data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tufford & Newman, 2012; Yin, 2015).

Data Collection

Data collection and organization are vital to the success of a research study and should be considered before collecting the data (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). Interview documentation data was analyzed through developed organizational processes before the interviews (Yin, 2015) using the NVivo computer program. In addition to the interview documentation sheet, a data inventory spreadsheet was maintained in NVivo as an efficient reference to locate data and understand data collected from other interviews (Bickman & Rog, 2009; Yin, 2015). Before conducting interviews, the spreadsheet and file folders were developed within NVivo on a secure, personal computer. The file folders were organized by interview, and each folder contained subfolders organized by the data source. The personal computer is password-protected, and a second password was established and required to gain access to the folders containing the study data. Only I have access to the secured file folders, and upon request, access could be granted to the program director and members of the doctoral committee.

Individual Interviews

The first type of data collection in this case study design was an individual, semi structured interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The primary objective of an individual interview, especially a semi structured interview, is for the researcher to listen and discover what someone else thinks about the studied phenomenon when it cannot be directly observed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015). The individual interviews in this study allowed me to seek specific information on the participants' perspectives and experiences regarding leadership development plans. The individual interview process enabled the participants to discuss the interview questions with me in detailed dialogue. An individual interview required the researcher to be a good listener, stay adaptive, have a firm grasp of the studied issues, and conduct ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015).

Each individual interview session was scheduled in advance with the research participant. While the interview was being planned, the participant was asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix C). As the sole interviewer, I also prepared an individual interview documentation sheet before the interview (see Appendix D). The interview sheet was utilized to document the context and circumstances associated with the data collection (Flick, 2014). The documentation sheet contained biographical information and related information to include the setting, date, and time (see Appendix D). Each individual interview was completed using a video application such as Microsoft TEAMS due to the geographic separation and time difference. The date of the individual interviews was dependent on participant availability and minimized personal and professional time intrusion. Accordingly, each individual interview lasted at least 30, but not more than 60 minutes. Upon receipt of the signed informed consent form,

participants were informed of the official start of the interview, reminded of the recording device, and informed of the interview rules (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015).

The individual interviews were conducted in a private area located via video, and began with a consistent set of questions on the interview documentation sheet (see Appendix D). I asked any follow-up questions and included them on the documentation sheet and in the transcript. Moreover, the transcripts were securely held by me after the members have checked them for accuracy (Yin, 2015). I asked open-ended questions designed to prompt the participant to share in-depth information about the researched phenomenon. This technique is generally acceptable in scholarly interviews (Chan et al., 2013; Yin, 2018). Finally, digital recordings from each individual interview were transcribed verbatim using NVivo software and provided to participants for member checking to ensure accuracy and to provide clarifying remarks, if required. Following are the standardized open-ended interview questions with the central research question (CQ) and/or the sub questions (SQ) noted in parentheses for each.

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another, and describe your involvement with *Lead Teachers*.
2. Where can educators learn how to be involved with the leadership development program?
(CQ)
3. How would you describe what the school does to provide leadership development for teachers? (CQ)
4. How would you describe what steps are being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles? (SQ1)
5. How is the leadership development plan helping you prepare for future leadership opportunities? (SQ2)

6. What aspects of the leadership development plan need to be revised to address your leadership development needs better? (SQ3)
7. What does Owl Elementary School do to retain future leaders? (SQ2)
8. How can you be assured that Owl Elementary School leadership has established a leadership development plan necessary to create a pipeline of future leaders? (SQ3)
9. How did you get involved with the leadership development plan? (SQ1)
10. If you are not aware of the leadership development plan, how would you get involved? (SQ1)
11. What other questions do you have regarding the study that might not have been covered during this interview? (SQ3)

Question 1 was designed to determine if the participant is aware there is a leadership development plan at Owl Elementary and, if they are aware, do they know where to find the plan. This is a general knowledge question that forms a commonality between participants (Yin, 2015). The second and third questions were asked to determine if the participant feels confident that Owl Elementary School develops teachers for leadership positions and what steps are taken outside of having a leadership development plan. The fourth and fifth questions required vulnerability, which is why they are not asked earlier. The questions necessitated that the participant and I have good rapport ensuring honest details emerge and adding to bracketing for data analysis (Yin, 2015). The sixth and seventh questions were asked to take the focus away from the current timeframe and focus on the future, which is the value in a leadership development plan that leads to a leadership pipeline (Calareso, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2010; Kwan, 2009; Spanneut et al., 2012).

Questions 8 through 10 began to focus on the participant's perception of leadership development. Each participant's observations and opinions were imperative to the level of confidence determined in the study. Additionally, these questions were used to reveal trends in participant attitudes and explored a possible deeper problem related to leadership development (Yin, 2015). The primary intent of qualitative research is to understand participant logic, attitudes, and motivation of participants (Bryman, 2012).

I aligned the interview questions with the research questions to support the overall research plan (Yin, 2015). The central research question was asked to determine how a leadership development plan is utilized at Owl Elementary School. The alignment was achieved by developing interview questions that provide the responses or data needed to answer the research question in support of recommended research protocols (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Seidman, 2015; Yin, 2015). I used the data collection protocols during the interview established by Creswell (2014) and included the collection of identifying data, background information, and the utilization of selected open-ended questions to begin a constructive dialogue (Yin, 2015). I refrained from interrupting research participants, provided a private interview location, clearly transitioned between questions, asked clarifying questions as needed, provided clarifying responses when requested, and expressed verbal gratitude to the participants (Creswell, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2015).

Individual interviews were recorded digitally and transferred to the appropriate participant file folder, along with the additional notes taken during the interviews. The recording device was secured and accessible only by me, and upon request, the program director and members of the doctoral committee. Upon completion of the interview, I scanned the handwritten notes, if applicable, into the appropriate subfolder. Additionally, I used the

handwritten notes to create a typed narrative designed to augment the initial notes (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The notebook was secured in a lockable drawer with the recording device, and the typed narrative was placed within the subfolder. In summation, the primary data organization technique utilized within this study was use of the password-protected file folders and subfolders located on a password-protected personal computer.

Observation

Direct observation techniques are foundational to qualitative research designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2016; Yin, 2015). For this study, I was a nonparticipant observer in the leadership development working group to pay attention to the context and content of the discussion. The leadership development working groups were observed during planned meetings virtually using the web-based platform Microsoft Teams, to add context and answer the research questions (Yin, 2015). To get the best data, there were both descriptive and reflective field notes (see Appendix E) from every observation (Silverman, 2016; Yin, 2015). These working group observations were documented with the exact date and time stamps, which provided a frame of reference for the research.

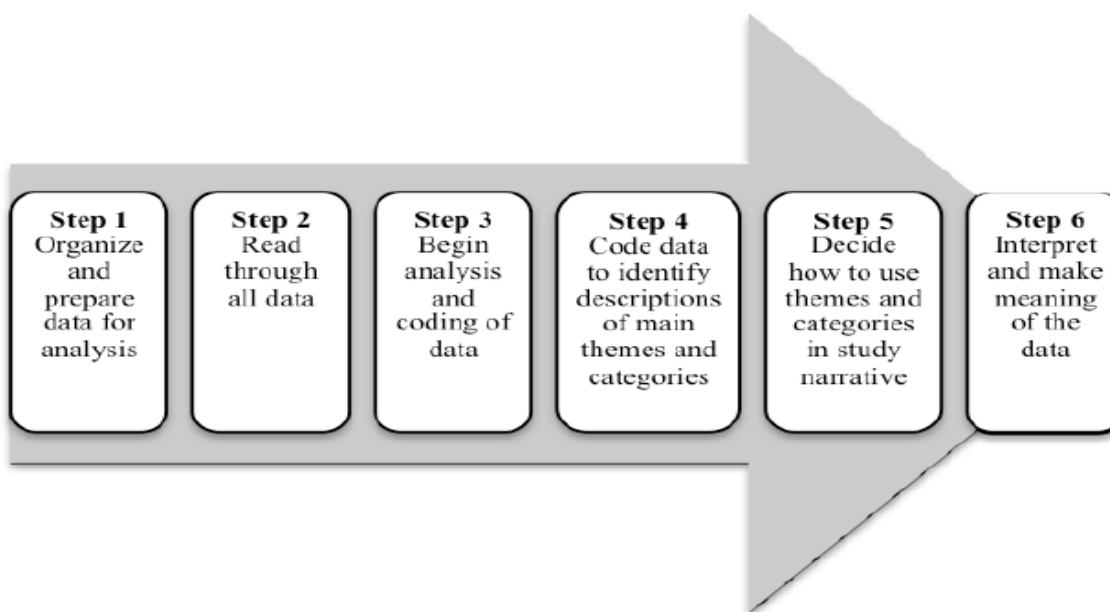
Working group observations were used in gathering data for this study as it allowed observation of the phenomenon in its natural setting (Yin, 2015). Collecting the data through direct observations provided additional information to encounter firsthand, rather than counting on a clean relay of information through more individual interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015). In this study, I used multiple settings for the observation, but observed primarily leadership development working groups at Owl Elementary School. Gathering data through working group observations provided further data to triangulate the study findings to the individual interviews and document analysis (Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2015).

Document Analysis

Document analysis of artifacts was the final method of collecting data in this study, which provided the last data source for triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The collection of artifacts provides supplemental data to triangulate results for the study questions. All historical documents were essential to the case study analysis because they provided a historical context for when Owl Elementary began its leadership development plan and how far the school has come in preparing future leaders (Calareso, 2013; Fletcher et al., 2010; Kwan, 2009; Spanneut et al., 2012). Individual interviews, working group observations, and *Lead Teachers* meeting notes allowed me to triangulate findings and strengthen internal validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is part of the research design and requires planning to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). For the proposed study at Owl Elementary School, I completed individual interviews, observed working groups, and analyzed past *Lead Teachers* meeting notes to answer the research questions. Data analysis is an ongoing process aimed to make sense of data at a deeper level (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, NVivo will be utilized to codify the information from each data collection method and analyzed according to each research question. In case study research, the goal was to expand and generalize theories, not extrapolate probabilities (Yin, 2015). The data analysis approach for this study followed Creswell's (2014) six steps for data analysis presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1*Creswell's Data Analysis Model*

Note. From *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed., p. 76), by J. W. Creswell. Copyright 2014 by Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell's (2014) clear and linear model provides a clean approach to data analysis. This process began by organizing the collected data from the interviews, observations, and historical documents. The first step in preparing the data for analysis was to transcribe the individual interviews, type the field notes, arrange interview notes, and scan artifacts into NVivo. For this study, I utilized the NVivo transcription service to convert all audio interviews into documents. I used NVivo to read all the data for first impressions and comprehension. Then, I made notes in the margins of any concerns or discrepancies noticed in the data collection method, follow-up questions remaining, or initial themes. Next, I chunked the data into sections according to the natural topics identified within NVivo. Additionally, within the software, I used the pre-code technique of highlighting any valuable quotes or interesting passages (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Saldaña, 2013). In combination with Creswell's model, Maxwell (2013) asserted that the initial steps in qualitative data analysis are to read all the data thoroughly and then begin to code the text appropriately. In this light, the data analysis continued.

I used coding to analyze data from interviews, observations, and artifacts (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2015). The initial coding process included analyzing each document within NVivo, one at a time for meaning, and noting my thoughts about the text and its content on the margin's chunked data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007; Yin, 2015). I then identified common themes and organized the data into categories to structure the descriptive narrative. Once the initial organization was completed, I coded the topics to consolidate similar data using abbreviated descriptive words within NVivo. This coding led to additional sub-categorization or refining of the coding. Once completed, I interpreted the data and made meaning of the common themes that emerged from the data analysis within the software (Yin, 2015).

Analytical tools are essential to completing a thorough qualitative study, but not without challenge (Yin, 2015). Case study designs have the least-developed evidence analysis aspects because there are few fixed formulas or recipes as guides, even with the use of NVivo. This analysis was carried out as a simultaneous, continuous process throughout the collection of data. I read the field notes, analyzed interview transcript notes, and reviewed artifacts throughout the data collection process using the above steps to code my data within NVivo. Once completed, I analyzed all the data using the following three-step method.

First, I sorted through the coded data and identified relationships that emerged from the data. The relationship identification was completed by playing with the data to develop an analysis using arrays with themes and subthemes (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Second, by using an analysis of the theoretical basis of the data using the transformational leadership model

(Kouzes & Posner, 2012), I found commonality among the coded items and theoretical orientation. This process identified commonalities and differences in word choices and identified conceptual themes. The third and final step as to triangulate, or cross code, relationships between the items (Yin, 2015).

Once all the data was coded into NVivo, participant data was analyzed to identify common themes. This component created a foundation for potential later analysis through the combination of the data as a direct reflection of the propositions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). Further, this component was grounded in the idea that too much or too little data collection inhibits the researcher's proper analytic technique (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Yin, 2015). Therefore, having rival explanations during the data collection ensured a more robust case study that supported the foundational groundwork accomplished through the research. The next section will discuss trustworthiness and its importance to this case study.

Trustworthiness

The rigor of this study was verified through the data interpretation and methods and determined trustworthiness. Trustworthiness serves to support the argument that the study findings are significant and worth noting and included member checking. Triangulation encompasses multiple data collection methods to check the data against one another to determine where a single conclusion can be supported through data analysis (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2015). In this study, the analysis came to a single conclusion. The credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Credibility

Credibility is imperative to the qualitative research case study design. Credibility involves reviewing and member checking to ensure confidence in the truth of the research

findings (Yin, 2015). The richness of the data collected during the individual interviews, working group observations, and historical document review helped my analytical abilities to find truth in the research. Since the semi structured interviews yielded new themes after the bounding of themes, credibility was attained. The interview questions were reviewed by academic professors to ensure the answers received provided value to the study. Additionally, member checking was used to ensure the data are credible. Member checking is the act of participants reviewing their transcript responses to ensure accurate representation from the individual interviews and working group observations. Therefore, it was paramount for me to follow research protocols to ensure efficiency in the study and provide dependability and confirmability for repeatable research.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability are best identified through the rich detail garnered during data collection in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings as well as the degree to which the research procedures are documented. Dependability was ensured in this research by following research procedures in accordance with research protocols (Yin, 2015). Confirmability encompasses the well-documented research procedures that allow others outside the research to follow, audit, and critique the process. In this study, confirmability was addressed through peer reviewing and member checking. The setting—Owl Elementary School—was integral to the study because the administration and educators were willing and excited to support the research through personal lenses. I ensured the dependability and confirmability remained throughout the study by utilizing the IRB checklist (see Appendix A) and adhering to all ethical considerations for ease of transferability (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability was considered in this study because qualitative research studies use a representative sample of the largest population, as opposed to generalizability in quantitative research. In qualitative research, transferability is the degree to which the study's findings could be applicable to other situations, contexts, times, or populations (Yin, 2015). Owl Elementary School is a single site with unique participants, but the overall study could be transferred to different participants in different settings. This study provided detailed descriptions to allow readers to decide which processes of one study can be applied to another (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The use of concise information observed from the setting and participants' mannerisms ensured transferability could be considered in the review of a leadership development plan's impact on leadership preparedness.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical and were carefully monitored for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). All participants were provided a participant consent form (see Appendix C) to sign, and the importance was communicated to them so they could choose to withdraw at any time. Data were accessed and stored digitally on a password-protected personal computer, with each unique data source having a password-protected file folder with appropriate subfolders. Upon request, the data location is accessible only by the researcher, the program director, and the doctoral committee members. As one of the first steps of the dissertation process, IRB approval was sought and gained, ensuring ethical consideration of data collection. This approval provided the authority and credibility needed to ensure all human ethical concerns are addressed. This consideration was accomplished by maintaining an ethical issues checklist, in accordance with IRB approval, which assisted in maintaining the purpose of the study, making available any consent forms, and ensuring all participation is on a volunteer basis.

All participant data and information collected was kept completely confidential, including the matching pseudonyms (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2015). The master list that matches the pseudonyms to their participant names was stored in a separate folder on a secured personal computer. This security and confidentiality ensured that all participant information remains protected, and each participant is given the freedom to share data concerning the lived experiences of the studied phenomenon. Due to the personal nature of the participants' answers regarding the possible lack of leadership development planning, there was not an unusual level of stress or discomfort in the process for the participants. Accordingly, to maintain the high ethical standards throughout the study, each participant was provided a consent form that presented why this study is important and provided the researcher's contact information to address any participant questions (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form and, by signing their name, gave their consent to participate in the study (Yin, 2015). Finally, due to the study's voluntary nature, participants were able to withdraw at any time, which provided the ethical consideration required by the IRB while also ensuring a repeatable study.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the research project and a discussion on the project's methods and procedures. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the leadership development plan at Owl Elementary School. The researcher's role, research participants, research design, research population, and sampling strategy were addressed to describe the research project. Moreover, this chapter included discussion of the data collection methods and data analysis techniques as well as plans for triangulating the collected data. The study design, elements, techniques, and strategies were consistent with scholarly and

professional literature examples and will be utilized to fulfill the study's purpose and answer the research questions. Finally, trustworthiness and ethical considerations were examined to ensure dependability, confirmability, and transferability for a repeatable study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the study. This study examined the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness for the teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. While leadership preparedness is regularly practiced in the business industry, it is not shared nor as widespread in education and training (Calareso, 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2020). The problem appears to be more critical in education where leadership development planning does not identify future leaders in an organization nor develops them for future leadership roles (Calareso, 2013; Ghamrawi, 2013). Furthermore, retirements and resignations require organizations to focus on utilizing a leadership development plan within the organization which was the purpose of this study.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. Using individual interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study explored the perceptions of *Lead Teachers* participants as related to leadership preparedness. The researcher also examined the criteria for preparing future leaders through leadership development plans used to prepare future leaders. Additionally, document reviews were completed to examine if leadership preparedness was integrated in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School.

Central Research Question

How is a leadership development plan utilized at Owl Elementary School to impact leadership preparedness?

Research Sub-Questions

Sub-Question 1

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary?

Sub-Question 2

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions of how Owl Elementary builds capacity in future educational leaders?

Sub-Question 3

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies designed to build leadership capabilities?

The design of the study utilized a descriptive qualitative case study based on my personal experience as well as the literature review and research questions related to Owl Elementary School. Individual interviews and observations were used as data collection methods, as well as document analysis of the *Lead Teachers* program. The data were analyzed utilizing Creswell's (2014) six steps for data analysis. This method of analysis highlights an iterative approach; thus, the transcribed data was reviewed frequently, then coded and recoded using open coding from NVivo. Through NVivo, emerging themes were identified and then separated into major categories. A word or idea was considered a theme if it was mentioned over one percent of the time by participants.

This chapter will present an overview and describe the individual interview participants. Next, the superordinate themes that emerged from the data are presented through tables along with direct quotes from the participants. Additionally, each research question will be addressed

compared to the data collection. Finally, the findings are presented based on each research question and the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Participants

Invitations to participate in the study were sent via email based on the champion's identification of eighteen individuals who were identified as members of the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. The email solicitation included an overview of the research study to provide insight into the case study and problem statement. There were ten responses and all ten agreed to participate in the study. Four of the participants were classroom teachers, five were program coordinators, and one was a counselor. An informed consent form and the interview protocol were sent to each participant prior to the individual interviews. The interviews were scheduled for a place and time convenient to the participants, and the signed consent forms were emailed to the researcher prior to the individual interviews.

Ten individual interviews were conducted along with two observations with *Lead Teachers* participants. The same questions were asked of each interview participant in the same sequence and clarifying or probing questions were asked if a response did not fully address the original question. The individual interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher with each transcript sent to the respective participant via email to be reviewed for accuracy. The transcripts were uploaded into NVivo and analyzed using open coding to identify themes. The themes were then organized into broader categories called superordinate themes, which were created by combining similar themes. During the theme exploration, the researcher kept track of ideas through reflective and coding memos. The ten individual participants will be described next.

Debbie

Debbie Gray is a 45-year-old White classroom teacher who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for seven years. She learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through word of mouth and described Owl Elementary School leadership development as “very little.” Debbie did not feel there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles but believes the leadership development plan is helping her prepare for future leadership opportunities by becoming more comfortable with having uncomfortable conversations.

Tom

Tom Green is a 39-year-old White classroom teacher who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for fourteen years. He learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through word of mouth, administration, county resources, and a professional development website. Tom described Owl Elementary School leadership development as fluid and available. He does feel there are steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through shared responsibilities, experiences, and county involvement and believes the leadership development plan is helping him prepare for future leadership opportunities by not limiting his potential and fostering self-discovery.

Molly

Molly Pink is a 36-year-old White classroom teacher who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for nine years. She learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through the *Lead Teacher* program coordinator and described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as topically focused. Molly does not feel there are formalized steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles but believes *Lead Teachers* is helping

her prepare for future leadership opportunities by allowing her to lead small groups and to lead her colleagues.

Lilly

Lilly Hazel is a 38-year-old White classroom teacher who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for nine years. She got involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through word of mouth and described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as a mentor program focused on new teachers. Lilly feels there are steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through classroom management techniques and believes the leadership development plan is helping her prepare for future leadership opportunities by assisting her to become a better teacher and by learning from others.

Julie

Julie Pearl is a 35-year-old White program coordinator who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for three years. She learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through the district website, word of mouth, and volunteering for opportunities, and described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as grade-level focused through content leads. Julie feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through teacher-mentor programs and administration assignments. She believes the leadership development plan is helping her prepare for future leadership opportunities by participation in *Lead Teachers* and other groups throughout Owl Elementary School.

Daphne

Daphne Orange is a 33-year-old White program coordinator who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for four years. She learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through word of mouth, administrative suggestions, and as part of the job requirements. She

described that Owl Elementary School provides leadership development to anyone interested. Daphne feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through a culture of responsibility and by allowing everyone to be a leader. Additionally, she believes the leadership development plan is helping her prepare for future leadership opportunities by providing support from administration and opportunities through the district professional development program.

Ron

Ron Silver is a 36-year-old mixed-race program coordinator who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for five years. He learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through self-nomination and an open invite. He described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as readily available to anyone and through leadership empowerment. Ron feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through educators being given leadership opportunities. He believes the leadership development plan is helping him prepare for future leadership opportunities by providing a “peek behind the curtain” on school leadership roles and responsibilities.

Mike

Mike Shell is a 47-year-old African American program coordinator who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for five years. He learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through an email from administration and described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as community learning team focused and through administration setting the example. Mike feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through hands-on involvement, program ownership, job shadowing, and leadership

modeling. He also believes the leadership development plan is helping him prepare for future leadership opportunities by providing realistic expectations and administrative perspectives.

Charlie

Charlie Emerald is a 43-year-old White program coordinator who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for eighteen years. He learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program from school administration and the school district. Charlie described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development through school-based professional development from administration and district-level development through specific professional development days. Charlie feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through district initiatives to seek out and grow leader candidates and through leadership opportunities within the school. He believes the leadership development plan is helping him prepare for future leadership opportunities by allowing cohesive leadership teams to design professional development specific to their curriculum-specific areas.

Amanda

Amanda Ruby is a 31-year-old White counselor who has participated in *Lead Teachers* for two years. She learned how to be involved with the *Lead Teachers* program through administration and the school district and described how Owl Elementary School provides leadership development as bi-monthly and on demand. Amanda feels there are proactive steps being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles through planned professional development, administrative involvement, and dedicated staff meetings. Additionally, she believes the leadership development plan is helping her prepare for future leadership opportunities by providing interactions with other leaders in the school.

Results

Data collection protocols (Creswell & Poth, 2018) indicate the researcher should use questions that encourage the participants to open up and share freely, particularly during individual interviews. Accordingly, the protocol for this study consisted of open-ended questions that asked the participants to talk about their background which divulged demographic information that were not readily apparent. Moreover, the questions asked *Lead Teachers* participants to inform the researcher how educators could learn to be involved with the leadership development program.

Some participants described the *Lead Teachers* program in terms of methods of participation in a leadership development program. Debbie Gray, a classroom teacher, described participation as based on position or determined by if you are “in with the in crowd.” Molly Pink, another classroom teacher, explained that the leadership development program coordinator “attends districtwide meetings” and “can let us know” how to participate. Julie Pearl, a program coordinator, added there is a “process for applying” which anyone can access to be included in the *Lead Teachers* program.

Additional participants described the leadership development program as open to anyone and inclusive of new ideas. Ron Silver, a program coordinator, stated educators are “always invited to join the *Lead Teachers* meetings.” He added further, “a lot of people kind of self-started and then some people are just identified.” Lilly Hazel, a classroom teacher, described “my colleagues are always my greatest resource” when searching for opportunities and that the educators “learn from each other.” The inclusive learning environment ensures new ideas are welcomed and allowed to mature. A classroom teacher, Tom Green, articulated:

I would say educators would ask one another if they were interested in opportunities. I think we learn a lot from each other. I think our administrators ... are willing to provide opportunities.

Similarly, Daphne Orange, a program coordinator, pointed out, “in my instance, I just kind of got involved.” Another participant, Charlie Emerald, a program coordinator, added that administration ensures “teachers at a school level receive information about those opportunities of professional development.” Amanda Ruby and Mike Shell, both program coordinators, concurred with the others that the *Lead Teacher* program is open to anyone and fosters new ideas to improve Owl Elementary School.

The remaining interview questions focused on aspects of leadership development program training, building leadership capacity, and understanding leadership preparedness. The responses from the individual interview participants were coded to identify themes which were then recoded and organized into broad categories. These categories, or superordinate themes, are discussed in the following section.

Theme Development

There were three overarching themes that resulted from the data analysis. The data was collected through individual interviews, observations, and document analysis. The identified themes were: participation is voluntary; leadership development is valued; and leadership opportunities are important. Each theme will be discussed with details from the data collected.

Participation is Voluntary

The *Lead Teachers* program is perceived by the individual interviewees and working group participants as voluntary as illustrated in Table 2. The historical meeting minutes also highlighted the voluntary participation nature in the opening comments by various members.

While there is not a formal process by which participants are nominated or assigned to the program, 80% of participants commented that they voluntarily participate based on position or desire.

Table 2

Superordinate Theme: Participation is Voluntary

Theme	Sample Direct Quotes
Participation is Voluntary	<p>Charlie: “My first leadership role ... was as the math lead teacher.”</p> <p>Molly: “I was the new lead teacher of the team.”</p> <p>Mike: “I felt comfortable enough to always just speak.”</p> <p>Julie: “When I first came to Owl, I came from another school and I had served as a lead teacher ... and the principal asked if I was interested in continuing as a lead teacher.”</p>

Program Coordinator, Daphne Orange, explained that while voluntary, she became involved after the school administration suggested participation. She stated: “I was asked to represent my grade level ... since then, I’ve served as a *Lead Teacher* in a few different grade levels.” The school administration request to participate was echoed by Lilly Hazel, “I was approached but I was asked politely and nicely if I’d be interested.”

It was evident during the conversations that the educators who chose to be involved with *Lead Teachers* had a passion for their jobs but also for helping their colleagues. This was also evident in the observations as 50% of the participants eagerly supported that statement. Additionally, Amanda’s passion and desire to help also came with the job:

It kind of came with the territory. I didn't necessarily put it out there that I wanted to do that. I assumed that would happen and then it kind of just all fell into place ... and it was a quick conversation with administration.

Leadership Development is Valued

In his description of leadership development within Owl Elementary, Mike explained that the administration wanted him to “do something more to develop” and he “became involved in the process of planning” for *Lead Teachers*. Seven of 10 participants in the *Lead Teachers* program feel leadership development is valued as shown in Table 3. There are various methods and modalities to attain leadership development and each participant has their preferred means. The working group participants mentioned the value in leadership development and appreciated that the one-size-fits-all approach was not a mandate at Owl Elementary. The importance of leadership development is clearly conveyed to the educators in the school and is evident in the data.

Table 3

Superordinate Theme: Leadership Development is Valued

Theme	Direct Quotes
Leadership Development is Valued	<p>Charlie: “for the past ten years, there’s been an initiative at our district to try to get teachers ... who were interested ... to become administrators in the future.”</p> <p>Daphne: “that culture of everyone has a voice, everyone is working together.”</p>

Ron: “having that trust and opportunity to try new things. All of these kind of breed leaders and then also the available leadership opportunities to take on different roles ... to make us a better school.”

Amanda: “We are constantly having professional development ... or leadership development in general.”

Working Group Participant: “I appreciate that I have a voice in deciding how I get development. Leadership supports all learning modalities which makes me want to participate.”

Leadership development is not a single instance at Owl Elementary. The development was seen in historical documents and heard in the working groups that leadership development opportunities for educators existed through small group workshops, leading a professional development event at a staff meeting, or by organizing a school-wide project. Additionally, the working group observations were focused on leadership development by allowing small group leadership experiential opportunities or by leading a professional development where peers and administration participated and provided feedback. These continued opportunities for development were further explained by Tom in the interview and echoed in the working group:

I feel like the responsibilities are often shared, so I think that prepares teachers quite a bit ... like faculty meetings for example, are not always just driven by the administrator. I know many times I’ve been asked to help with curriculum writing or textbook adoption processes and in those opportunities, I felt like that was helping me too.

Leadership Opportunities are Important

There were two interview questions that fed into this theme. Participants were asked to describe what steps were being taken to prepare educators for leadership roles and what experiences were offered to retain future leaders. Additionally, working group observations highlighted how leadership opportunities are important and allow for practice in real time for future leaders. Participants' responses are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Superordinate Theme: Leadership Opportunities are Important

Theme	Direct Quotes
Leadership Opportunities are Important	<p>Tom: "Many times, teachers are the ones leading discussion and activities, not necessarily people that are officially lead teachers but, that's a leadership role that any teacher could be involved in."</p> <p>Debbie: "We're leading small group conversations, and this is the first year that we've done this and I have found that to be very helpful in terms of creating relationships with other people on the staff that I wouldn't normally get to interact with."</p> <p>Ron: "I can specifically speak to this school where people are given a lot of leadership opportunities, they can choose what they want to do."</p> <p>Lilly: "Just managing class, managing a classroom, and managing all of the students in your class is great preparation for any leadership role."</p>

At least seven interview participants commented positively about the school providing leadership opportunities for educators. Julie Pearl stated: "The role of the mentor, I think, really

helps individual teachers develop themselves as a leader, supporting someone who is a colleague, but also taking on that leadership role to guide and support and teach in that way.”

Molly Pink also shared how involvement with colleagues allowed leadership growth. She stated: “we formed these cohorts, so it’s putting me in a position to take charge and lead with my peers.”

Participants spoke openly about the subordinate themes to include knowing some degree of familiarity with strategies associated with leadership development, but some were more familiar than others. It was evident in the interviews and from working group participants that the longer an educator had been at Owl Elementary School and involved in *Lead Teachers*, the more familiar they were with the concept of leadership development. In the following section, a deeper understanding of participants’ views of leadership development planning for leadership preparedness will be revealed as the findings are presented in relation to each research question.

Research Question Responses

In this section, the research question and responses are addressed. The responses come directly from the data collection techniques. As seen in chapter three, each research question had at least two questions to receive thorough responses to address the study’s purpose.

Central Research Question

How is a leadership development plan utilized at Owl Elementary School to impact leadership preparedness?

While a formalized leadership development plan is not being utilized at Owl Elementary School, it does not mean leaders are not being prepared for future opportunities. The *Lead Teachers* program is built on preparing educators for leadership opportunities. In fact, the program is focused on providing hands-on experiences for educators through meetings, small group interactions, and colleague connections. As Ron Silver highlighted:

At this school you feel like the principal, assistant principal ... they trust you as an expert in the field. And having that trust give you the opportunity to try new things in meetings which lets us learn from each other.

While there is no formalized plan that educators can find, print, and follow to prepare for leadership positions, the *Lead Teachers* program does prepare educators by providing monthly meetings.

The *Lead Teachers* monthly meetings are primarily held for *Lead Teachers* participants, but any staff member can join. The monthly meetings have a dual purpose (a) to inform educators on the school-wide important efforts, and (b) to have educator-led discussions focused on inclusivity. The meetings, while not part of a formalized leadership development plan, do help educators in leadership preparedness. Daphne Orange articulates that “we’re holding each other accountable, whether you are an administrator, an assistant, a teacher ... everyone is on the same playing field.” This is evident in the individual interviews as 100% of the participants highlighted the meetings and small group interactions as valuable to leadership preparedness. As Julie Pearl stated:

I’ve communicated with colleagues about different opportunities, where it’s just a onetime thing where you participate in a panel discussion or some sort of a focus group ... if you’re interested in specific topics to try to improve within the school district, you can volunteer for leadership opportunities.

The *Lead Teachers* participants engage in small group interactions which occur twice a month or can be called at any time. These small group interactions allowed for observation of participants in their natural setting. My firsthand experience of the small group interactions provided context to the *Lead Teachers* program and participants to understand how leadership

preparedness was impacted during the interactions. Additionally, the observations provided a clearer understanding of the intent of the *Lead Teachers* program which helps develop transformational leadership traits (e.g., model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart in participants (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). While leadership traits do not directly correlate to leadership preparedness, the observations allowed for data analysis from another source prior to triangulation.

The *Lead Teachers* participants utilize colleague connections to enhance leadership skills beyond formalized meetings. These connections were mentioned by 50% of the interviewees. From the interviews, participants value the peer-to-peer interactions for discovery learning, personal growth, and professional development and the working group participants echoed throughout the observations. While these connections are not formalized, they are imperative to leadership preparedness as they form interpersonal relationships and communication skills which should be part of leadership development plans.

Research Sub-Question 1

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions regarding the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary?

The *Lead Teachers* participants describes the impact of the leadership development plan on leadership preparedness as minimal. They acknowledged that the school provides ample opportunity for educators to get involved and hone leadership skills, but the lack of a formalized leadership development plan was evident. As Debbie Gray mentioned, "I wouldn't call it leadership development, but we're doing things that I think are more beneficial for our staff." In fact, 70% of individual interview participants could not identify a leadership development plan and did not identify *Lead Teachers* as a leadership development program.

The definition of leadership development plan was provided and discussed to participants when requested. When the definition was discussed with the 70% of the individual interview participants, there was still a disconnect between the purpose of the *Lead Teachers* program and leadership preparedness. In fact, I was surprised to learn that educators did not believe they were part of *Lead Teachers* program to prepare for future leadership opportunities. Instead, most participants thought it was a program to enhance internal dialogue to address topics of interest to the school. The working group observations highlighted members were curious to have discussions with peers but did not see the *Lead Teachers* program as leadership development. This further highlighted how participants, while being indirectly developed for leadership, were never provided a formalized leadership development plan to better understand why *Lead Teachers* existed and what it could do for each participant.

Research Sub-Question 2

What are *Lead Teachers* participants' descriptions of how Owl Elementary builds capacity in future educational leaders?

Interestingly, the participants described *Lead Teachers* as a program that developed each to better themselves both personally and professionally. Daphne Orange said, "I feel like there's constant opportunities to be part of committees ... it's just an open, open culture where everyone gets a chance to shine in whatever way they want." In fact, the observations provided evidence that future leaders were being developed through *Lead Teachers* participation. Mike Shell added, "Now, do I want to become a principal? No, but I know that I'm learning things that will help me in some other things that I want to do." Overwhelmingly, the program empowered participants to take pride and ownership in enabling colleagues to discuss important topics openly which furthered leadership development and preparedness.

Lead Teachers builds capacity in future leaders by providing them experience outside the classroom to lead peers. Tom Green states, “I think we learn a lot from each other ... from administrators and your building principals and assistant principal ... they are willing to provide opportunities.” This skill takes time and dedication to build and participation in this program ensures development beyond books. Participants highlighted how the administration empowers and engages with educators to take ownership in not only *Lead Teachers*, but also in any activity that improves the school and its students. Ron Silver found self-development opportunities through the district website. The ability for participants to improve their leadership capacity is clearly enhanced through *Lead Teachers*, but it is not evident that this is an outcome from program participation since there is not a formalized leadership development plan.

Research Sub-Question 3

What are *Lead Teachers* participants’ descriptions regarding the factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies designed to build leadership capabilities?

Lead Teachers participants did not highlight factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies to build leadership capabilities. There were discussions in the observations which could be seen as strategies to build leadership, but the individual interviews did not identify overwhelming evidence to provide factors to build capabilities. Lilly Hazel explained that there are no strategies other than “managing students in class” and continued “I imagine that some sort of leadership qualities transfer well into working with adults too.” The lack of a formalized leadership development plan may have hindered the participants’ ability to comprehend if, and how, strategies were designed to build leadership capabilities.

Of all the research questions, this one was the only one that did not identify themes that supported the *Lead Teachers* program as leadership development. In each data collection area,

there were signs of factors and strategies that could build leadership capabilities, but each participant had a unique view on how *Lead Teachers* involvement-built leadership capabilities. Furthermore, the individual interviews provided ten unique perspectives which could be highlighted as an area for future research.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the research study. The chapter commenced with a restatement of the problem statement and purpose of the study as well as the research questions that guided the process. The participants of the study were described in detail to gain a full understanding of *Lead Teachers* perspectives. Additionally, the data collection results were provided as were the identified themes: participation is voluntary, leadership development is valued, and leadership opportunities are important. The identified themes of participation is voluntary, leadership development is valued, and leadership opportunities are important were supported with data collection quotes, perspectives, and researcher findings. Finally, the research questions were examined using the data to better explain the findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This study described the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. The research was conducted in a single site location in Northern Virginia and the researcher utilized individual interviews, observations, and document analysis to collect data. The data were then analyzed following the steps outlined by Creswell's (2014) six steps for data analysis. This chapter will present a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings and the implications in light of the relevant literature and theory, an implications section, an outline of the study delimitation and limitations, and recommends for future research.

Summary of Findings

In this section, the findings will be summarized to as related to the identified themes: participation is voluntary, leadership development is valued, and leadership opportunities are important. Each theme will be provided an overview with accompanying themes entwined. This brief review of findings provides context for the study's implications.

A formalized leadership development plan is not utilized at Owl Elementary School. Nonetheless, participants are being prepared for future opportunities because the *Lead Teachers* program is built on preparing educators for leadership opportunities through hands-on experiences for educators through meetings, small group interactions, and colleague connections. This leads to the theme of leadership development is important and the voluntary nature of the *Lead Teachers* program. The lack of a formalized plan that educators can find, print, and follow to prepare for leadership positions does not hinder the *Lead Teachers* program from preparing educators.

The *Lead Teachers* participants described the impact on leadership preparedness through the lens of the leadership development plan. Participants cited minimal impact even though they acknowledged that the school provides ample opportunity for educators to get involved and hone leadership skills. This involvement is due, in part, to the theme of participation is voluntary. The inclusion of diverse opportunities ensured a shared understanding that leadership development is valued and is important. However, the lack of a formalized leadership development plan was evident when it came to describing impact on leadership preparedness. In fact, almost three-quarters of individual interview participants could not identify a leadership development plan and, furthermore, did not identify *Lead Teachers* as a leadership development program.

The participants described *Lead Teachers* as a program that developed each educator to better themselves both personally and professionally and described clearly how to build capacity. This dedication to leadership development ensured the engrained value is acknowledged by all participants. In fact, the observations provided evidence that future leaders were being developed through *Lead Teachers* participation. Overwhelmingly, the program empowered participants to take pride and ownership in enabling colleagues to discuss important topics openly which furthered leadership development and preparedness. It cannot be overstated that the leadership development is valued theme is cited among the members. Finally, participants highlighted how the administration empowers and engages educators to take ownership in not only *Lead Teachers*, but also in any activity that improves the school and its students.

While the previous research questions had a positive correlation, *Lead Teachers* participants did not highlight factors that impact the development and implementation of strategies to build leadership capabilities. There were discussions in the observations which could be seen as strategies to build leadership capabilities, but the individual interviews did not

identify overwhelming evidence to provide factors. However, even though there were gaps in implementation of strategies to build leadership capabilities, the three themes were woven in the data. It is evident that the lack of a formalized leadership development plan may have hindered the participants' ability to comprehend if, and how, strategies were designed to build leadership capabilities. But there is no doubt that the participants sense the three themes quite clearly: participation is voluntary, leadership development is valued, and leadership opportunities are important.

Discussion

This section will discuss the study findings in relationship to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed. Furthermore, this section will confirm or corroborate previous research and discuss how the study may have diverged from or extended previous research. Additionally, any novel contribution from this study will be discussed before finally identifying how the study extends or sheds new light on any theory informing the topic.

Empirical Discussion

The emotional impact of transformational leadership on an organization has been measured through empirical evidence, but the mechanisms behind the relationships has not been measured (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017). The relationship between transformational leadership and an organization's commitment to impacting change could further advance leadership preparedness, but Owl Elementary and *Lead Teachers* have not identified that evidence. Transformational leaders can and should solicit contributions from others in the organization to be successful (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Principals rely on teacher leaders, and superintendents rely on central office personnel and board members to provide that

evidence (Leithwood et al., 2004), but the current construct is not built to provide that evidence to Owl Elementary School.

Educational Leadership Impact on Student Growth and Performance

Educational leadership can have a positive impact on student growth and performance. Participation in *Lead Teachers* is one way leadership can impact student growth and performance (Kearney, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010; Raza & Sikandar, 2018; Tucker et al., 2012; Valentine & Prater, 2011). School leaders can indirectly influence student growth and performance through deliberate decision-making, setting expectations, developing teacher growth, and leveraging resources (Louis et al., 2010; Tucker et al., 2012; Zimmerman et al., 2020). While student impact was not discussed during the individual interviews, the working group observations recognized the deliberateness educators use to impact student growth and performance.

History of Principalship Role

Transformational leadership techniques are found in successful educational leaders and are a concept that should be included in leadership development plans (O'Donovan, 2015). The study revealed transformational leadership through administration, but not in a formalized leadership development plan. Transformational principals play an essential role in growing and developing leaders, which is why this trait has been added to the formal part of a principal's professional responsibility (Turnbell et al., 2013). As such, transformational leadership should be added to a newly created formalized leadership development plan and implemented in the *Lead Teachers* program. Transformational preparation can help address the challenges needed to prepare future leaders (Cieminski, 2018).

Principal Shortage

The current principal shortage has demographic issues that include the imminent retirement of baby boomer generation principals and increased student enrollment in school districts across the United States (Bryant et al., 2017; White et al., 2010). While Owl Elementary School is not experiencing, nor has experienced, a shortage, research suggests they are the minority (Myung et al., 2011). The challenge for schools is to find high quality leadership and *Lead Teachers* can provide that pool of eligible leaders. While the pool of individuals licensed as school administrators is not small, many of those with the credentials choose to remain in teaching or other non-administrative positions (Papa & Baxter, 2005). As such, it is imperative that Owl Elementary create a formalized leadership development plan to ensure current educators are prepared to lead.

Lowered Interest in the Principalship

The decline of interest in the principalship can be attributed to increased work-related stress, more public scrutiny and accountability, longer work hours, growing legal mandates, insufficient support from districts, removal of principal tenure structures, and a narrowing salary gap between teachers and school administrators (Darling-Hammond & Orphanos, 2007; Myung et al., 2011). Many teachers prefer to remain in the classroom with the protection of tenure and the possibility of earning comparable salaries to school administrators (Mullen & Cairns, 2001). While pay was not discussed in this study, it was mentioned by nearly 25% of participants which could highlight a future research opportunity.

School District Roles

School districts continually face new challenges, and the evolution of all stakeholders has increased expectations (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Calareso, 2013; Kwan, 2009;

Richardson et al., 2016). The next generation of school leaders must be adequately developed with capabilities and capacity if students are to graduate with the knowledge needed to succeed. Additionally, if school districts want to stop the principal carousel, a development plan must be instituted (Calareso, 2013; Kwan, 2009). There must be a way for school districts to facilitate formalized leadership development while also making school leadership positions more attractive to teachers to move beyond the classroom. *Lead Teachers* has created a group to address the issue, but Owl Elementary must create a formalized leadership development plan if it wants to be prepared.

Leadership Development Approaches

Scholars and practitioners consider leadership one of the most complex phenomena related to human nature (Gibbs et al., 2020). Educational leadership can be seen as daunting and a seemingly impossible job. Still, school districts are nonetheless tasked to fill the vacancies with individuals, some of whom are not fully prepared (Bryant et al., 2017). There are current gaps within principal training that are critical to top leadership development, and Owl Elementary has created *Lead Teachers* to address these skill gaps. Tapping into classroom teachers for future leaders does not mean they are ready to be leaders. Instead, deliberate leadership training plans and formalized programs must be introduced and implemented.

Leadership Training Programs

Historically, educational leadership training programs have been criticized for not preparing future administrators for leadership roles (Kearney, 2010; Orr, 2010). In this light, *Lead Teachers* could be considered a training program that is producing similar outcomes. As such, a formalized leadership development plan in conjunction with *Lead Teachers* could be the ideal leadership training program for Owl Elementary. Based on the data from this study, there is

a mixed desire for a formalized leadership development training program at the school.

Theoretical Discussion

The relationship between transformational leadership and an organization's commitment to impacting change could further advance leadership preparedness. Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggested there are five ways to enable transformational leadership. This study focused on three of the five areas: model the way, inspire a vision, and enable others to act. Of those three areas, the *Lead Teachers* program emphasizes all areas and that is due, in part, to the administration. Therefore, this study corroborated transformational leadership theory among *Lead Teachers* in Owl Elementary School. While the research tangentially focused on the three areas of transformational leadership, the interviews and observations were able to compare the data to the research.

Novel Contributions

This study did not highlight novel contributions to the theory or research. However, it did highlight a need for Owl Elementary School to create and implement a deliberate learning development plan to complement *Lead Teachers*. Furthermore, this study highlighted how the ongoing research of leadership training programs and succession challenges pose growing threats to school success. If a formalized body of education either at the federal, state, or local level could standardize a learning development plan that includes a hands-on, experiential model like *Lead Teachers*, the shortage found today might not be a future issue.

Implications

Many schools face challenges in finding future leaders within their organization. While Owl Elementary is not looking for an administrator, the planning should begin now. *Lead Teachers* is a program that focuses on the long-term success of its participants and the school. If

a formalized leadership development plan is not instituted, there could be implications.

Theoretical

There is a human element that is involved in leadership development that cannot be discounted. The use of a transformational leadership model (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) can have continued success and it requires the use of educators' expertise and knowledge to solve problems collaboratively. Consequently, the groundwork of transformational leadership is investing and developing leadership capacity throughout the organization and establishes effective leadership pipelines for the organization (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017; Valentine & Prater, 2011). Owl Elementary has a transformational leader principal and that has major implications for *Lead Teachers* participants. However, as the program is currently constructed without a formalized leadership development plan, the entire weight of effort is on the principal to impact each educator and that is near impossible. Furthermore, transformational leaders cannot expect future leaders to just appear based on proximity to the leader. Instead, a formalized framework will ensure the theory is passed from leader to educator to leader.

Empirical

This study amplified and highlighted the current research. There is a disconnect between what the business and educational arenas due when it comes to leadership development. It appears that if a formalized leadership development plan were to be created, the larger educational population would benefit. This benefit can come when transformational leaders, such as those found at Owl Elementary, engage with their educators to prepare them for future leadership opportunities. While *Lead Teachers* is not the formalized program that focuses on creating transformational leaders, it has the foundation to impact the school district and the students. Furthermore, the role of the principal is complex and requires leadership traits learned

through academic and experiential learning. This learning can originate in internal leadership development programs, but it can be enhanced when external relationships are encouraged such as professional learning communities and academic leadership development programs. Through these opportunities, future leaders are prepared to model the way, inspire a vision, and enable others to act.

Practical

Leadership is nothing more than a relationship between leaders and those who choose to follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Transformational leadership relies on the leader's personality, traits, and ability to make a change through real world examples, articulation of an inspired vision, and challenging goals to advance the organization. Transformational leaders need to know their values and philosophy to be an example for their team. At Owl Elementary School, the principal has instituted shared values and philosophies to enhance student engagement and learning but has not harnessed the same power with *Lead Teachers* participants. Even though leaders need to inspire a shared vision and enable others to act through building trust, relationships, and collaboration because the job of school leadership is too big for one person to accomplish on their own, it is difficult without a formalized leadership development plan. In their transformational leadership model, Kouzes and Posner outlined how an effective leader enables others to focus on the vision and inspires others to model a transformational leader's actions, which equals organizational success and should be implemented at Owl Elementary School.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study has a delimitation of lacking a formalized plan. The delimitation would be removed if the study was focused to participants of a particular leadership development program

that is easily accessible by anyone interested. This was determined after research participants continuously highlighted the delimitation of a formal leadership development program even though there was a *Lead Teachers* program. The participant qualifications required at least one year of service as an Owl Elementary employee, experience with a leadership development plan, and expertise within any school where a key position was vacant. These requirements are adequate for a similar study and should be utilized in future leadership development program research studies.

The study had limitation of not knowing that a formalized leadership development plan did not exist. This limitation led to some research questions receiving less than adequate answers to fully explore how *Lead Teachers* impacts leadership preparedness at Owl Elementary School . Additionally, learning that the district which Owl Elementary is a part of has an informal leadership development training plan could have opened the opportunity to include district participants. These 10 individual interview participants and working group members may have highlighted a formalized learning development plan that could have been applied at Owl Elementary. Had I known there was a district informal leadership development training plan, an additional research question could have been asked to discern the utility and practicality of that plan against the *Lead Teachers* program.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research should be considered: inclusion of a multi-site study, inclusion of a non-participant group, and inclusion of a questionnaire that asked a larger group if they believed a leadership development plan was formalized, if the leadership development plan was utilized, and if the leadership development plan prepared them for leadership opportunities. These recommendations may have provided a greater contrast between

sites within a school district, a greater understanding of the impact of a leadership development plan and provided a quantitative tool to assess perceived success before and after the research was completed.

The topic of the use of a leadership development plan's impact on leadership preparedness should still be considered as should the ages of the participants. It would be beneficial to ensure a diverse group were researched to not miss an opportunity to understand impact on diverse cultures, but it is not required. If the recommendations are implemented, the case study design should still be used. However, if the quantitative questionnaire is utilized, I would suggest a mixed-method research study to fully understand the impact of the pre and post questionnaire outcomes on leadership preparedness. Additionally, a grounded theory study that aims to create a model for a formal leadership development framework could be utilized to assess leadership preparedness.

Summary

This study sought to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. Based on the research, there is an apparent positive correlation between involvement in *Lead Teachers* and leadership preparedness according to the data. However, the inclusion of a transformational leadership model with a formalized leadership development plan could yield exponential results among the participants. Furthermore, these suggestions complemented with the inclusion of a control group, wider participation among a district, and a pre and post questionnaire would result in a more thorough and applicable research study.

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Appendix A
IRB application

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 12, 2021

Matthew Jobe
Kristy Motte

Re: IRB Conditional Approval - IRB-FY20-21-902 THE IMPACT OF A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN ON FUTURE LEADERSHIP PREPAREDNESS: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE LEAD TEACHERS PROGRAM AT OWL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dear Matthew Jobe, Kristy Motte:

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been **conditionally** approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Conditional approval means that your complete approval is pending our receipt of certain items, which are listed below:

Documented approval from each research site you are enrolling in your study. Acceptable forms of documentation include a letter on official letterhead or a time-and-date stamped email from a person with the authority to grant permission.

Please keep in mind that you are not permitted to begin recruiting participants or collecting data until you have submitted the above item(s) and have been granted

complete approval by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well as you continue working toward complete approval.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

School District Application for Approval of Research Project



Planning & Evaluation 2110 Washington Blvd • Arlington, Virginia 22204

September 24, 2021

[Redacted]

Dear Mr. Jobe:

Our research committee has completed its review of your application to conduct the research study entitled *"The impact of a leadership development plan on future leadership preparedness: A descriptive case study of the Lead Teachers program at [Redacted] in Arlington Public Schools (APS).*

The committee has approved your research contingent on the following requirements:

1. The participation of any APS staff member, student, or family who might be involved is completely voluntary at all times. Each participant (or parent of participating students) must be informed in writing of the scope and potential impact of their participation. You should be prepared to provide proof of their informed consent, if requested.
2. You must maintain the total anonymity of all students, staff, and schools associated with APS in any discussions or reports. Any disclosure that may reveal the participation of an APS student, staff member, school, or the school system must be approved in advance by the APS Department of Planning and Evaluation.
3. Any change to the proposed research must be submitted to and approved by the APS Department of Planning and Evaluation in advance of implementation.
4. You must forward documentation of final Liberty University IRB approval to [Redacted] prior to conducting any research.
5. Logistics must be coordinated with and approved by [Redacted].

We wish you success as you carry out this study.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Michael J. Frickel
Assistant Director for Evaluation

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Project: The Impact of a Leadership Development Plan on Future Leadership Preparedness: A Descriptive Case Study of the Lead Teachers Program at Owl Elementary School

Principal Investigator: Matthew Jobe, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must have at least 1 year of service as an Oakridge Elementary employee, experience with leadership development planning, and expertise within any school where a key position was vacant.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of this case study is to describe the ways the development leadership plan impacts leadership preparedness for teachers in the *Lead Teachers* program at Owl Elementary School. The proposed study will utilize participant interviews, group observations, and historical document analysis to collect empirical data from educators with everyday shared experiences related to leadership development, or lack thereof, within the researched organization.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour and 35 minutes and will be recorded.
2. Allow me to observe you during a Lead Teachers working group. Each observation will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and be recorded.
3. Grant permission for me to view your past Lead Teachers meeting minutes and provide the meeting minutes for my review (2 hours).

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased public knowledge on this topic with improved learning outcomes for the participants.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Liberty University IRB-
FY20-21-902
Approved on 9-29-2021

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and working groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from working group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Working group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the working group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Matthew Jobe. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at _____ You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Randy Tierce, at _____

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at _____

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

Liberty University IRB-FY20-21-902
Approved on 9-29-2021

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received _____

answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Liberty University IRB-FY20-21-902
Approved on 9-29

Appendix D

Interview Documentation Sheet

General Information Questions			
Date	Month:	Day:	Year:
Time	Start time:	End time:	
Location	(If face-to-face; leave blank if via videoconferencing)		
Method	(E.g., face-to-face or through Skype videoconferencing)		
Your Name			
Your Email			
Participant Demographics			
Name			
Phone Number			
Current Age			
Gender			
Race/Ethnicity			
Job Title			
Email			
Interview Questions			
<p>Below each question, transcribe the participant responses verbatim. If needed, ask clarifying or probing questions to elicit more depth or understanding of the issue (e.g., “Can you provide an example?” Or, “Can you tell me a little more about that experience?”).</p>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another, and describe your involvement with <i>Lead Teachers</i>. 2. Where can educators learn how to be involved with the leadership development program? (CQ) 3. How would you describe what the school does to provide leadership development for teachers? (CQ) 4. How would you describe what steps are being taken to prepare teachers for leadership roles? (SQ1) 			

5. How is the leadership development plan helping you prepare for future leadership opportunities? (SQ2)
6. What aspects of the leadership development plan need to be revised to address your leadership development needs better? (SQ3)
7. What does Oakridge Elementary School do to retain future leaders? (SQ2)
8. How can you be assured that Oakridge Elementary School leadership has established a leadership development plan necessary to create a pipeline of future leaders? (SQ3)
9. How did you get involved with the leadership development plan? (SQ1)
10. If you are not aware of the leadership development plan, how would you get involved? (SQ1)
11. What other questions do you have regarding the study that might not have been covered during this interview? (SQ3)

Reflective Notes

Please write out your thoughts and observations while conducting this interview. What surprised you? What responses could you personally identify with? Track your running thoughts and observations by typing them in the box below.

Appendix E:
Observation Protocol

Observation Protocol

Organization Name _____

Type of Observation _____

Location _____

Participants _____

Time Start _____ End _____ Total _____

1. What are you looking for?

- What does the environment look like?
- Physical set up?
- How are the people grouped?
- Who is leading?
- What is the agenda?
- Time intervals on each topic?
- Diversity/gender/age/ethnicities
- Attire of participants?

2. Focus on the interaction between the leader and others. Write a narrative of the observed interactions/behaviors and record verbatim of the conversations. Be sure to time stamp all events, approximately every 10 minutes. What are you looking for?

- Context of interaction? (Hallway conversation, informal/formal, etc.)
- Noteworthy interactions
- Engagement of Participants- How actually engaged are participants?

