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Tonya Holcomb Wallace

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Examining the Relationship Between Beliefs and Perceived
Experiences During Assistant Principal Preparation for
the Role of Principal

by Tonya Holcomb Wallace

This dissertation has been read and approved as fulfilling the partial requirement for the
Degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Leadership.

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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BELIEFS AND PERCEIVED
EXPERIENCES DURING ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PREPARATION
FOR THE ROLE OF PRINCIPAL

By
Tonya Holcomb Wallace

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education
in Curriculum and Leadership
(EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP)

Columbus State University
Columbus, GA

December 2019

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing family: Brett Wallace, my husband, and our four children, Maggie, Daniel, Reed, and Shelby. I love you all to the moon and back.

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My sincere and deepest appreciation goes to everyone who encouraged and supported me through this journey. I thank God for giving me the will and tenacity to complete this goal. I want to thank every individual who helped pave my way during my educational career that has led me to this place.

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My husband, Brett Wallace, has been my rock! While it has been challenging for us both to go through this enormous process at the same time, it has been such a comfort to know that I have someone who truly knows the challenges and frustrations that come with writing a dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

Principals have been expected to serve as managers and leaders of curriculum and instruction while facing intense accountability and had to be good communicators capable of building relationships within their school and with community stakeholders. School complexity increased challenges leaders faced, so educational leaders utilized research-based strategies to develop professional resilience and grow in the face of adversity. In preparation for school principalship, assistant principals needed to move beyond school operation and management roles to become a viable candidate for career advancement. Limited research exists describing the preparation of assistant principals for advancement. The purpose of this convergent mixed methods research study was to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. The 33 participants in this study were public school principals currently employed in a school district in Middle Georgia. The three data sources in this study included a Demographic Survey, Principal Readiness Inventory, and Qualitative Questionnaire, which were combined into one online measure for data collection purposes. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted using the quantitative data, and a thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data by principal readiness group. According to the data collected, participants reported higher levels of mentoring prior to the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of mentoring after the initial educational leadership certification. This information could be useful in developing effective leadership development programs that would help assistant principals make a transition into the principalship role.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The role of school principal has been evolving since the 1800s, adapting to dynamic social and political forces (Kafka, 2009). Historically, schools grew in complexity, constantly changing in response to fluctuating priorities (Morrison, 2008). Responsibilities of 21st century principals increased significantly, as public education became increasingly impacted by policy mandates and accountability demands. The skills and qualifications of contemporary principals has differed drastically from principals of the past (Kafka, 2009). According to Kafka (2009), researchers contrasted responsibilities of past principals to 21st century principals , which has emphasized the vast scope of the position.

As schools grew in popularity in the early 1800s, the need for an individual to serve as principal expanded. The principal was usually a male teacher responsible for instructional and administrative duties while maintaining order within the school. Eventually, the principal's administrative role became the primary responsibility, wherein principals focused on managerial or supervisory duties while serving as instructional leader (Kafka, 2009). This individual provided support to teachers while ensuring the school ran properly. Principals were granted a certain level of autonomy and independence in their schools. As enrollment increased in schools, the role of principals formalized as the position of school principal in the 1920s (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

Madden (2008) described the role of principal as extremely difficult yet vital to school success. Principals are required to be competent in various skills to be considered an effective leader. Financial operations, school building maintenance, class scheduling, public relations, school policies, and discipline fell under the role of principal (Madden, 2008). According to Blasé (1987), effective principals were found to be principals who determined the school mission, communicated the mission to stakeholders, monitored the curriculum, offered support and direction to teachers, assessed student progress, and created a positive school climate. The principal was said to be expected to serve as a professor of education, a supervisor of teachers, financial manager, counselor, politician, social worker, disciplinarian, visionary, assistant custodian, and bureaucrat (Bloom, 1999). Blaydes (2004) reported that successful 21st century principals had to have a strong foundation of relevant knowledge regarding learning theories, child development, and current research of educational issues. Principals were said to be expected to possess many technical skills; however, principals who lacked interpersonal skills, such as social perceptivity, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution skills (Lightfoot, 2014), were found to be less likely to lead a school successfully (Northouse, 2009). Successful administrators demonstrated high expectations for teaching by leading the school's instructional focus and fostering a learner-centered school culture (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). Effective principals balanced these roles ensuring that needs of constituents were in clear focus (Meador, 2013).

Newly appointed principals experience a mix of emotions in the beginning of their first year. While excited to begin the new school year, many principals feel unprepared to lead. Most school administrators began their leadership role as assistant

principals whose purpose was to support school administration and become a means to provide training opportunities for future school principals (Goodson, 2000). According to Schmidt-Davis, Bottoms, and the Southern Regional Education Board (2011), the primary steppingstone to the principalship was reported to be the assistant principalship. The duties and responsibilities of assistant principals were notably different from duties and responsibilities of principals; therefore, many assistant principals reported feelings of inadequate preparation to serve as principal. Once appointed principal, school administrators were tasked with leading a school into excellence without much guidance (Bodger, 2011). According to Bennis (1999), a common leadership myth was that *leaders were born*, but reality was that *leaders were made*. According to Bodger (2011), new principals were expected to be successful leaders requiring minimal support. Most administrators took leadership courses in preparation for the role of principal. However, these courses did not fully prepare new principals for daily demands of the job, and principals were expected to lead successfully upon school assignment (Bodger, 2011). Novice principals were expected to manage daily school operations, serve as instructional leader, oversee school finances, provide meaningful professional learning for teachers, and motivate school staff (Bodger, 2011). Retaining effective principals was a problem for districts across the nation (Culbertson, 2017). According to Culbertson (2017), there was found to be a shortage of qualified candidates seeking an administrative position, and 50% of principals quit within their first three years on the job.

Due to the importance of the principal's role as instructional leader, the selection process and training of school principals were found to be common topics in educational research (Karakose, Yirci, & Kocabas, 2014). According to Enomoto (2012), research on

preparation programs for the role of principal was more readily available than research on development of assistant principals even though the majority educational leaders began their administrative careers as assistant principals. The assistant principal's leadership role, although vital to school success, was under-researched (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012). In recent years, defining the assistant principal role was found to be difficult because the position lacked an accurate job description yet encompassed a vast quantity of essential tasks for school success (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Effective assistant principals were required to multi-task and prioritize job functions (Lightfoot, 2014). Assistant principals spent their time administering school discipline, supervising lunch, meeting with parents, maintaining a safe school climate, observing teachers, and evaluating staff (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Assistant principals were also expected to serve as instructional leaders who consistently maintained visibility, solved problems, promoted community awareness, supported staff, communicated school vision, planned teacher in-service opportunities, developed the master schedule, and promoted a positive school climate (Madden, 2008). Assistant principals did not feel prepared to lead because they did not get enough experience with the instructional aspects of their job (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Exposure to a wide variety of experiences and situations was reported to be ideal preparation for the school leadership role. Assistant principals tended to lack instructional leadership training and opportunities to perform many responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009).

By the end of the 1990s, school administrators were said to have encountered complex challenges revealing the need for support and guidance to develop resiliency

(Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Practical readiness was developed through coaching, mentoring, residencies, and internships and served as an integral part of successful school leadership preparation programs (Zubrzycki, 2013). Mentoring models for new principals were developed in the early 1990s. These models were designed to stimulate reflective practices, provide technical expertise, and aid in the socialization of new principals (Daresh, 2004). Assistant principals needed professional development opportunities to obtain content knowledge and skills necessary to lead a school. Assistant principals would have benefited from opportunities to experience various aspects of school principalship as preparation for the role (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Many assistant principals did not engage in such context-specific learning experiences in preparation to serve in the capacity of resilient principals (Zubrzycki, 2013). Researchers suggested that an ideal preparation program equipped assistant principals with knowledge and skills necessary to oversee the education of students in their school (Kearney & Valadez, 2015). Leadership students who participated in insufficient leadership preparation programs experienced self-doubt regarding competency in the role of a principal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). The lack of adequate training caused novice principals to feel overwhelmed while serving the first year in this role (Bodger, 2011). As a prerequisite for a principalship, some states required assistant principals to earn principal certifications (Weller & Weller, 2002). Previously, Georgia required one educational leadership certification for all levels. In 2016, Georgia adopted a two-tiered educational leadership certificate. The purpose of this Georgia Professional Standards Committee (GaPSC) rule was to improve the quality of leadership preparation programs. Teachers who want to transition into school-level leadership, such as assistant principal, will be required

complete a Tier I certification program. To earn Tier II certification, current assistant principals will be provided with job-embedded learning and assessment to prepare for the role of principal (GaPSC, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Understanding how to best prepare assistant principals for their role as a principal is an important component for leadership educators. A leadership model for assistant principals was needed, so the concept of assistant principal could fit the changing role of leadership. Educational leaders needed to define the role of assistant principal clearly to best utilize this leadership asset in the face of an ever-changing educational landscape (Stecher & Kirby, 2004). As vital members of the school leadership team, assistant principals needed to have opportunities to perform responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). Student discipline experience and routine managerial tasks did not prepare assistant principals to face the broad challenges of the principalship (Umphrey, 2007). Before moving into the role of principal, assistant principals needed intentional mentoring, access to strong support systems, and specialized training to become effective principals (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). High-stakes accountability, data-based decision making, balancing daily challenges, and creating a strong team of educators were important topics for professional development. According to Rowland (2008), effective leadership programs were long termed and job-embedded.

There is a challenge in public education to examine and perhaps develop how assistant principals are trained for the principalship. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 250,000 public school administrators were employed in the United States with

over 9,000 in the state of Georgia (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The problem, specifically, pertained to how assistant principals were trained or prepared for the principalship. The universal training ground for developing strong school leadership began with the assistant principalship (Lightfoot, 2014). Currently, assistant principals are only able to develop on-the-job skills related to the duties assigned by the principal. Large public schools with several assistant principals often assigned each assistant principal specific areas to manage within the school. For example, one assistant principal was in charge of lockers, textbooks, and organization of school events. Another assistant principal served as game manager, custodian supervisor, and maintenance coordinator. Usually, one assistant principal served in an instructional capacity and coordinated testing administration. Assistant principals only gained on-the-job experience in the areas they are assigned to manage (Madden, 2008). However, assistant principals need the opportunity to experience the totality of the principalship to be prepared to lead a school (Madden, 2008). Understanding the attitudes and beliefs of principals regarding their personal experience as assistant principals is a critical component in learning how to meet the needs of aspiring principals to help make the transition to the principalship easier (Lightfoot, 2014).

According to Madden (2008), assistant principals stated a need for additional training in human resources and instructional leadership prior to the principalship. Umphrey (2007) found that experience with student discipline and managerial tasks did not prepare assistant principals to serve as principal. Assistant principals seeking to become a principal were impacted by the lack of training in human resources and instructional leadership. Training in instructional leadership enabled assistant principals

to impact instructional practices. Successful instructional practices had a positive effect on student achievement, which contributed the school's overall success (Hutton, 2014). Focusing on instruction and creating a learner-centered school culture impacted student achievement (Wood et al., 2013). Teachers had the most in-school impact on student achievement with principals second (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Instructional leaders who involved stakeholders in developing a shared vision for learning created positive relationships with the community (Tirozzi, 2001).

Unfortunately, research on how to prepare assistant principals to lead a school was limited (Lightfoot, 2014). The need for this type of research study was evident in the lack of research addressing the attitudes and beliefs of principals' experiences while serving as an assistant principal. This study contributed to the body of knowledge by determining if there was a relationship between administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual skills developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness. This study also determined if there was a relationship between professional experience and principal readiness. To fill the growing need for qualified candidates to serve as principal, universal leadership preparation standards were needed to prepare assistant principals for the principalship. The required two-tiered educational leadership certificate for Georgia posed a challenge for districts and university preparation programs to meet the professional development needs of assistant principals. The new requirement emphasizes the need for professional development before assuming the role of principal (GaPSC, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

This convergent mixed methods research study examined the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. A quantitative correlational research design was used to examine relationships between predicting and outcome variables. In this study, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine the relationship between principals' attitudes and beliefs about administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences gained in the role of assistant principal and principal readiness using public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district. The qualitative descriptive case study research design explored perceptions of professional development experiences that would be most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to become principals for public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to combine the strengths of both research methods to investigate the stated problem of assistant principal preparation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions will guide this convergent mixed methods research study to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal.

RQ1 (Quantitative): What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness?

H1_O: There will not be a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness.

H1_A: There is a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness

RQ2 (Qualitative): What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness?

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks are models of concepts drawn from various sources (Imenda, 2014). This conceptual framework was developed by combining a number of related topics to explain a research problem (Imenda, 2014). The conceptual framework of this study was based on the goal of understanding the challenges and experiences principals face upon first beginning the principalship by evaluating leadership attitudes and belief regarding their experiences as an assistant principal (see Figure 1).

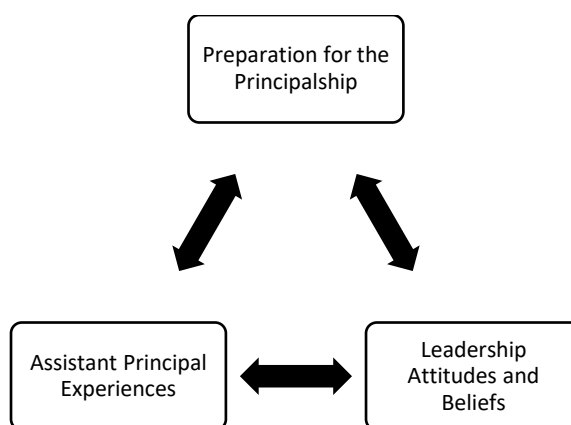


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study of preparing assistant principals to serve as resilient school principals.

The framework above provided graphical representation of the direction of this study. The framework represented the theory that specific skill sets and knowledge help prepare assistant principals to lead schools. Ideal preparation for the principalship should include exposure to a wide variety of experiences and situations (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). The experiences gained through the assistant principalship impacted principals' attitudes and beliefs regarding how prepared the assistant principal was to take on the principalship (May, 2016).

According to Grodzki (2011), districts benefitted from understanding the attitudes and beliefs of new principals as they entered into administrative roles. Preparation for the principalship was established by leadership attitudes, beliefs, and assistant principal experiences. Even though leadership preparation programs existed at university and district levels, understanding the attitudes and beliefs of principals in terms of preparedness for the role of principal impacted how curriculum was tailored to meet the needs of assistant principals. Understanding the attitudes and beliefs of assistant principals helped determine the additional skill sets needed to be prepared for the principalship.

Methodology Overview

A mixed methods convergent research design was used to collect quantitative data through the 13-item Demographics Survey, the 19-item Principal Readiness Inventory, and the Qualitative Questionnaire, which contained three unstructured open-response items. The same convenient sample of public school principals currently employed in a school district in Middle Georgia was used to collect data concurrently from a combined online measure using Survey Monkey[®]. For the quantitative data, a correlational research

design allowed the researcher to determine if a relationship existed between principal beliefs and experiences as an assistant principal and principal readiness (Ellis & Levy, 2009). Descriptive statistics were utilized for summarizing the data (i.e., predicting variables and outcome variable) and describing the participants. A stepwise multiple regression model was conducted. For the qualitative data, a descriptive case study research design allowed the researcher to determine the perceptions of principals regarding assistant principal preparation for the role of principal and address impactful professional development they experienced as assistant principals to prepare them for this role (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Data from the qualitative questionnaire was collected using coding and category construction. The researcher demonstrated the connection between categories and codes and the connection between subthemes and themes in order to determine whether the themes emerged from the data or the themes were imposed on the data.

Delimitations

The study participants served as current principals. These principals understood the demands of the principalship and could offer insight on the skills needed to be ready for the job. Non-traditional schools were not included in this study. These schools were structured differently than traditional schools and were not mandated to follow Elementary Secondary Education Act guidelines, which affect the administrative roles and responsibilities.

Limitations

This study examined the beliefs of school principals regarding the school leader role and discussed impactful professional development experienced as assistant principals

in preparation for this role. Principal participants may have been hesitant about sharing challenges when answering the survey items. Participants were not asked to provide any identity information to maintain anonymity of participants. Time may have been another limitation. Principals who were willing to participate may have encountered time restraints that hindered their ability to participate in this study. Participants in this study resided in a single urban school district in Central Georgia. Generalizing findings to other districts with different demographics and socioeconomic statuses may be difficult due to the study's limited number of participants within the same school district. The outcome variable was measured by one survey item and served as another limitation.

Definition of Terms

Administrative Skills, the technical competencies of the job of principal as well as skills involved in the management of people and resources (Lightfoot, 2014).

Assistant Principal, inaugural administrative position that can serve as a stepping stone for the principalship (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Best Practices, the success of a practice used to foster improvements in student achievement (Arendale, 2018).

Collaboration, professional learning community members working together to increase student achievement (Friend & Cook, 1992).

Conceptual Skills, problem-solving skills as well as the ability to plan strategically for the long-range success of the school (Lightfoot, 2014).

Interpersonal Skills, skills involving social perception, emotional intelligence, and conflict management (Lightfoot, 2014).

Leadership, ability to guide teachers, students, and parents towards common goals and increase student achievement (Clawson, 2009).

Mission, used to guide actions within organizations as to distinguish one organization from another (Drucker, 1974).

Principal, highest-ranking administrative position in which he/she supervises and is responsible for the daily operations of the school (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

Principal Readiness Inventory, data collection tool for the study that consists of a series of questions delivered in the form of an anonymous online survey (Lightfoot, 2014).

Principalship, the post of principal (Burks, 2014).

Professional Development, strategies for increasing capabilities of educators by providing training opportunities in the workplace (Hickman, 2017).

Resilience, a personal quality that predisposes individuals to thrive in the face of loss (Allison, 2011).

Vision, a shared agreement among stakeholders involving the general values, beliefs, or goals used to achieve the organization's mission (Conley & Goldman, 1994).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to examine the role of assistant principal and pathway to school leadership with expectations of improving leadership preparation. Assistant principals needed training to allow them to develop skills necessary to meet leadership challenges posed by public schools (Soehner & Ryan, 2011). There was little research focused on the transition between roles and responsibilities of assistant principal to principal (Lightfoot, 2014). To develop principals who were moving in a sustained

direction, universities and districts benefitted by providing meaningful opportunities for professional growth and development (Fullan, 2002). The results of this study may benefit universities and districts seeking to improve the quality of leadership preparation programs offered as well as benefit assistant principals seeking to become principals.

By improving the leadership preparation process and understanding the skill sets needed to serve as a resilient principal, districts experienced increased principal sustainability and retention. According to Miller (2013), principal turnover rates hovered around 20% from 2008 to 2013. This study's findings may benefit assistant principals in preparation of principalship leadership challenges as well as principals who mentor and supervise assistant principals. According to Parylo and Zepeda (2015), professional learning and principal succession could not be separated. Professional development increased the applicant pool and principal retention, and it was a major component of principal succession planning (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015). Professional development beliefs, the principal's role, and challenges facing current principals contributed to development of context-specific learning experiences for assistant principals.

Summary

Principals were expected to serve as managers and leaders of curriculum and instruction while facing intense accountability and had to be effective communicators capable of building relationships within their school and with community stakeholders. School complexity increased challenges principals encountered; therefore, educational leaders utilized research-based strategies to develop professional resilience and grow in the face of adversity. In preparation for school principalship, assistant principals are required to move beyond school operation and management roles to be a viable candidate

for career advancement. The purpose of this convergent mixed methods study was to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. This information could be useful in creating effective leadership development programs that would facilitate the position transition from assistant principal to the principalship. Meaningful professional development, understanding the role of the principal, and recognizing the challenges that come with the job would give assistant principals context-specific learning experiences needed to serve as resilient principals.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review was to examine challenges facing 21st century principals in support of the development of assistant principals' leadership capacity to become resilient principals. The researcher will address the role of assistant principal, the need for administrators to serve as resilient principals while facing adversities, and preparation programs available to help build leadership skills needed for the principalship. As school leadership, principals and assistant principals must adapt to and thrive in complex environments. In turn, school leadership must instill this adaptive and survivalist capacity in teacher leaders and other stakeholders (Radford, 2006).

Schools are complex organizations, constantly changing (Morrison, 2008) wherein principals faced adversity in the form of budget cuts, reductions in force, school closures, and intense accountability brought about by school reform initiatives (Allison, 2011). Successful adaptations enabled complex systems to thrive in ever-changing environments (Radford, 2006). Resilient principals built pliable organizations that managed sustainable change and grew stronger in the face of adversity. With proper coaching, administrators grew in their ability to face challenges with resilience (Allison, 2011). Assistant principals required training to develop necessary skills to meet leadership challenges posed by public schools (Soehner & Ryan, 2011). Building leadership capacity impacted instructional practices and had a positive effect on student achievement thus, improving the school's overall success (Hutton, 2014).

As school environments grew in complexity, the demands of the principalship became almost impossible to meet (Danielson, 2007). Principalship demands increased while principal turnover rates hovered around 20% from 2008 to 2013 (Miller, 2013). Finding qualified replacements to fill principal vacancies posed an additional challenge to school systems. With anticipated increases in retiring principals, qualified replacements capable of positively impacting a school's success were needed, and assistant principals could serve as a recruitment pool (Oleszewski et al., 2012). By examining current trends in leadership succession, Peters (2011) concluded that there was a nationwide decline in the number of applicants qualified to serve as the school principal. Assistant principals needed to gain significant experience in all aspects of the principal's role to be prepared to lead a school (Peters, 2011). Understanding how assistant principals' work experience contributed to a successful principalship was important for preparing assistant principals to serve as resilient principals (Farmer, 2010).

To investigate the assistant principal's fit as potential school principal, a historical review of the principal and assistant principal positions was conducted. Relevant research regarding resiliencies and interpersonal skills needed for school leadership of complex organizations followed. A review of the research on school leadership succession plans followed by a summary of studies reporting assistant principal preparedness actions were conducted. This literature review served to situate the preparedness of assistant principals for principalship positions within the current research.

Resilience in Leadership

Over the decades of the development of the principal and assistant principal positions, school leaders operated under increasingly complex conditions at rapid pace of

heightened accountability. Resilience helps principals learn how to face adversity and grow stronger in the process (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Principals face adversity in the form of budget cuts, reductions in force, school closures, and intense accountability brought about by school reform initiatives (Allison, 2011). High poverty, high student mobility, and low community support has been reported to add to the level of adversity principals face daily (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Society places high demands on principals by holding them accountable for implementing reforms successfully while, meeting the needs of a diverse population of students (Murphy, 1998). According to Tirozzi (2001), 21st century principals educate an increasingly diverse student population, manage issues that stem from home or the community, and risk losing their job if their schools did not meet accountability requirements. Principals in the United States work in organizational settings that mandate community support, cultural sensitivity, continuous professional development, instructional monitoring, and demand a commitment to ensuring students achieve academic success (Crow, 2006).

Adaptability becomes a critical aspect of an organization in unpredictable environments of complex systems that are impacted by interconnecting variables. Resilient principals develop resilient organizations that can withstand complex issues encountered, and then grow through facing such adversity. Without effective strategies to build resilience, principals could not impact the resilience of an organization (Allison, 2011). Schools are educational systems that contain multiple variables connected in a non-linear manner (Radford, 2006); therefore, schools operate in complex environments. According to Morrison (2008), all complex systems need to learn, adapt, and change. Knowing what to do, when to do it, how to do it, and why it needs to be done is important

for principals (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Successful schools are able to develop the capacity to self-organize, increasing adaptability as needs arise. The ever-changing educational environment in which schools operate, require successful adaptation (Radford, 2006). Resilience is a quality that allows an individual to face challenges of adversity and grow from it. Resilient principals are able to manage sustainable change in the face of adversity (Allison, 2011). Transformational school leaders maintain momentum amidst constant change by ensuring the culture of the school adapts and changes. Resiliency is evident when the faculty and staff remain focused on the school's mission and buy-in to the transformation process completely (Guarasci & Lieberman, 2009). Resilient principals implement effective, research-based strategies when confronted with adversity. They understand that change is inevitable and are able to see opportunity in the face of adversity (Farmer, 2010). Resilient principals pay close attention to critical indicators regarding school progress towards goals to reveal weaknesses and predict future issues (Allison, 2011). Resilient principals understand the importance of building bridges between diverse views when facing adversity (Farmer, 2010). Resilient principals know the value of life-long learning to meet the challenges of change (Allison, 2011) and nurture this value amongst stakeholders. Strong leadership fosters strong stakeholders and building trust between principals and stakeholders adds resiliency to organizations (Guarasci & Lieberman, 2009). Because teachers are on the front line of the transformation process and either facilitate or obstruct school improvement efforts, resilient principals select new initiatives wisely, so teachers are not overloaded (Allison, 2011; Guarasci & Lieberman, 2009).

Educational landscapes are changing constantly to meet the needs of society, which increases the complexity of the principalship. The complexity of educational leadership not only impacts administrators in the United States but globally as well (Cheung & Walker, 2006). According to Cheung and Walker (2006), school administrators in Hong Kong face constant reforms, socio-cultural shifts, and inconsistent political agendas. Administrators in Australia found difficulty in managing the implementation of government initiatives and experienced professional isolation (Quong, 2006). Shoho and Barnett (2010) conducted an empirical qualitative study of 62 new elementary and secondary Texas principals. Thirty-six of the new principals were at the elementary level, 15 were at the middle school level, and 11 were at the high school level. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the personal and professional challenges new principals faced. The data collection included semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Data analysis revealed principals who first served as an assistant principal felt prepared to deal with issues that centered around school culture, personnel issues, supervising curriculum, and operational matters. According to Shoho and Barnett (2010), these administrators did not feel prepared for issues involving budget, special education, or the enormity of job. Principals who spent considerable time working as assistant principals indicated that they were surprised by the number of duties and tasks assistant principals were required to perform. A limitation of this study was that it only included principals from South Central Texas. An additional research suggestion was to replicate the study to include principals from different regions (Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

Principals who believe in their ability to accomplish challenging goals have a strong sense of efficacy (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). According to Patterson and Kelleher (2005), a principal's sense of efficacy strengthens with every successful encounter facing adversity. Principals who have a strong sense of efficacy tend to be motivated to set goals, allot energy to complete their goals, and persevere when facing obstacles (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Resilient organizations understand the reality that external forces could limit ideal aspirations (Patterson, Goens, & Reed, 2009). Resilient organizations search for the positive by viewing adversity as a learning experience rather than a problem (Patterson et al., 2009).

Administrators under constant stress turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms if they do not have strong personal efficacy, which is correlated with happiness and good health. Finding positive coping mechanisms to manage stress is a critical factor to preventing burnout (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). A proper diet and exercise program work together to reduce stress, increase health, and build self-esteem. According to Whipple, Kinney, and Kattenbraker (2008), a relationship exists between individuals who maintain healthy levels of exercise and higher levels of self-efficacy. Having a positive mental outlook is beneficial when working under stressful conditions and is a powerful coping mechanism during periods of adversity. Principals who possess the ability to self-correct during times of difficulty have a greater likelihood to overcome obstacles (McMahon, 2006). Having a positive mental outlook helps principals when they face adversity.

Relationships are important when dealing with stress, and creating positive relationships helps reduce stress. The foundation of a good relationship begins with trust, a critical component in bridging opposing positions between principals and stakeholders

(Noonan, Walker, & Kutsyuruba, 2008). Effective communication enables principals to establish trust among their stakeholders. Bolman and Deal (2010) stated that maintaining open communication regarding differing opinions during problem solving increased the likelihood of finding a resolution. Once trust and open communication are established, principals have the full support of stakeholders and are able to achieve their goals more efficiently.

Positive thoughts lead to purposeful actions (Johnson, 2007). A positive mindset enables principals to thrive during challenging times. Maintaining an optimistic outlook increases a principal's ability to overcome adversity by linking positive outlook to purposeful action (Farmer, 2010). Focusing on what is important to the mission, helps reduce distractions when encountering obstacles (Rozycki, 2004). Principals are able to gain perspective by seeking help from others who are able to offer a different assessment of the challenges faced. Maintaining supportive social networks with family, friends, and colleagues increases a principal's resilience (Mullen, 2009). When principals model resilience, the observers are able to learn how to be resilient based on the principal's actions, and modeling helps establish norms for expected behaviors (Warner & Esposito, 2009).

Confidence and competence are complementary attributes for principals to possess. Principals who are confident in their ability to face challenges are more likely to undertake challenges. Successful principals understand the importance of strengthening their confidence and competence levels by setting obtainable goals and overcoming setbacks quickly (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). People who recover quickly from setbacks tend to have a task-oriented coping style, believe that they are in control of their

lives, and rely on relationships built with others to help them cope when faced with adversity (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

Resilient principals utilize healthy coping strategies to meet the challenges faced. Resilient principals frequently engage in personal renewal because they understand the importance of taking care of themselves (Allison, 2011). Spiritual renewal allows resilient principals to reconnect with their own core values. Taking time to interact with nature helps reduce stress levels, and produces healthy benefits (Allison, 2011). Taking the time to participate in enjoyable activities helps to reduce stress and anxiety and allows principals to face challenges with resilience.

Mental models affect thought processes, guide perceptions, and direct behaviors, and these models are formed by a person's experiences, observations, and knowledge (Kellar & Slayton, 2016). Resilient principals realize that understanding mental models of their school enables them to understand why the school functions the way it does. A principal's self-efficacy is based on the confidence, knowledge, and skills a principal possesses to lead successfully (Kellar & Slayton, 2016). Immunity to change is the underlying barrier that impedes an individual's ability to move in the direction of a goal. Principals have to recognize their own immunity to change as well as their staff's immunity to change to impact school improvement. By understanding immunity to change, principals discern both supporting factors and preventative factors influencing improvement efforts, and they are able to implement strategies to overcome barriers (Kellar & Slayton, 2016).

After interviewing 25 principals, Patterson and Kelleher (2005) identified six strengths of resilient principals. The first strength is the ability to assess past and current

reality. Disruptions are going to occur, so principals have to build their tolerance for complexity. Resilient principals know that change is inevitable and demonstrate adaptability when adversity occurs (Patterson et al., 2009). Principals are able to determine causes of adverse situations and assess the risks presented. Realistic optimists are able to accurately assess the adverse situation they face to make informed decisions regarding necessary actions, without dismissing the level of the threat (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Resilient principals alter their course of action by adapting to changing circumstances (Patterson et al., 2009).

The second strength resilient principals possess is the ability to see opportunities presented by the obstacle faced. A positive outlook regarding change contributes to improved resiliency. Realistic optimists assess the reality of a situation and believe a positive impact could be made even when facing adversity. Realistic optimists are keenly aware of barriers posed by organizational reality and find solutions that remove barriers (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

The third strength is ability to remain firm on values. Core values are the individual values a person possesses, which defines their character. Core values represent an overall belief about what is important in life, while educational values represent an overall belief about what matters most in the work environment (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Program values drive actions of resilient organizations by giving meaning and direction to specific initiatives (Patterson et al., 2009). According to Patterson and Kelleher (2005), core values come before professional values when faced with a situation that creates competing values.

The fourth strength of resilient principals is the ability to maintain strong personal efficacy. Personal efficacy is an individual's conviction in successful accomplishment or significant impact of challenging goals (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Efficacy beliefs provide motivation needed to set a challenging goal, plan of action for meeting the goal, and persevere when facing adversity. Having a strong personal efficacy enables a principal to impact the complex environment of a school when facing challenges that seem out of reach. Successful principals understand the importance of setting attainable goals as a strategy to increase their personal efficacy. Resilient principals celebrate small victories and overcome setbacks quickly. Principals have a complex job and understand that mistakes and oversights are inevitable (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

The fifth strength is the ability to use their personal energy wisely. Energy enables principals to stay energized and in turn energize others (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Principals are expected to manage their own focus and attitude towards creating positive energy in order to inspire others. Principals model how to transform negative emotional responses into positive emotional responses (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Resilient principals are able to maintain a clear mental focus during periods of adversity. Resilient principals know how to discontinue an unsuccessful strategy that was draining their energy without giving up on their goal and work to develop a new strategy (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

The sixth and final strength of resilient principals is the courage to act on their convictions and maintain courage even when the risks are high or when facing adversity. Principals expose themselves to public criticism and must be able to stand firm on their

convictions. Principals build integrity and authenticity when they are consistent with what they value most (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

Complex systems require successful adaptations to thrive in an ever-changing environment (Radford, 2006). The capacity of leadership is highly dependent on quality leadership preparation experiences (Guerra, Zamora, Hernandez, & Menchaca, 2017). Resilient principals manage sustainable change in the face of adversity and build resilient organizations, which grow stronger despite challenges faced (Allison, 2011). According to Smith (2011), first-hand experience strengthens leadership resiliency and helps develop leadership capacity of potential principals. With proper preparation, administrators grow in their ability to face challenges with resilience (LeMieux, 2000). Assistant principals need substantial training to develop skills necessary to meet leadership challenges posed by public schools (Soehner & Ryan, 2011). Building leadership capacity impacts instructional practices with positive effects on student achievement and improves the school's overall success (Hutton, 2014). By preparing assistant principals to be resilient leaders, school districts are able to develop principals who understand the district's primary beliefs (Burdette & Schertzer, 2005). According to Enomoto (2012), research on preparation programs involving the principalship is abundant; however, research on development of assistant principals is limited, even though the majority of educational leaders begin their administrative careers as assistant principals. Assistant principals benefit from the opportunity to see all aspects of school leadership when preparing for the principalship (Johnson-Taylor & Martin, 2007). Some districts have procedures in place to support administrators through leadership academies,

mentoring, coaching, targeted in-service, and career development opportunities (Conley & Cooper, 2011).

History of the Principalship

While no exact date could be established for the beginning of the principalship, evidence of centralized duties and responsibilities emerged around the 1800s (Spain, Drummond, & Goodlad, 1956). The word *principal* was derived from prince and referred to first in rank, importance, and authority. The position of school principal was primarily a development of the 20th century in response to increased student enrollment in schools (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). The term principal transformed from an adjective to a noun in response to the rapid growth of cities and the population of school-aged children (Hart & Bredeson, 1996).

The need for grade-level classes became evident when schools grew larger in early 1800s (Kafka, 2009), which led to the establishment of the principal-teacher position. Initially, schools began as one-room classrooms where the principal-teacher was tasked with teaching students and managing daily schoolhouse operations. The principal-teacher was a teacher who was responsible for assigning classes, handling discipline, building maintenance, monitoring attendance, and making sure school started and stopped on time (Kafka, 2009). By the early 20th century, one-room classrooms expanded to multiple classrooms divided by grade levels (Madden, 2008). As schools expanded, the need for someone to manage daily schoolhouse operations grew. Eventually, the principal-teacher stopped teaching and took on the role of principal. The principal served as a manager who was responsible for overseeing financial operations,

maintaining the school building, scheduling students for classes, managing public relations, upholding school policies, and administering discipline (Madden, 2008).

The status of principals grew with formalization of the principal position. Between the 1890s and the end of World War I, compulsory education laws were common (Reich, 1968). First, superintendents granted principals autonomy to lead their schools (Kafka, 2009). Then, with development of professional associations, such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and National Education Association, principals gained local authority and prestige in their communities (Kafka, 2009). According to Kafka (2009), principals served as local leaders by organizing social functions, such as open house, and becoming involved in local civic activities. Between 1900 and 1950, principals were expected to be involved with more than the managerial and authoritarian principles within the school (Monahan & Hengst, 1982). Principals served as supervisors of teachers and were expected to visit classrooms providing advice on how to improve instruction (Kafka, 2009). By the 1920s, principals' duties reached beyond school stakeholder groups. The internal responsibilities of leading teachers and monitoring students were enhanced by the external responsibilities of communicating with district leaders and working with parents and community members. Uniting these stakeholder groups, principals became critical components of school reform efforts (Kafka, 2009). Most parents made the choice to send their children to school. School enrollment grew from 7 million to 15 million between 1870 and 1898 as schools began to replace the church as society's central hub of socialization (Kafka, 2009).

Beck and Murphy (1993) studied the principal's changing role from the 1920s through the late 1990s. Each decade brought about a transformation, which continued to build upon the previous roles. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), principals were viewed as spiritual and scientific leaders due to the role church and science played in American politics. The role of the principal centered around 1920s values, which were promoted in schools. In the 1930s, this value-based role shifted to a scientific manager position. Serving as the scientific manager, the principal was expected to be a financial expert, lead curriculum and instruction, and understand business management of a school (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Democratic leadership came about in the 1940s as World War II and fears of communism prompted the movement for faculty and students to have a voice in decision-making processes (Kafka, 2009). This decade was defined by an emphasis on democratic concepts, equality, and patriotism, with the principal serving as a democratic leader (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Postwar decades led to the return of principal as an administrator (Kafka, 2009). In the 1950s, principals were expected to serve as the authoritarian and manage hierarchical structures in their school (Beck & Murphy, 1993). The ability to command respect and take decisive action became the expectation of principals in the 1960s. During the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, the principal's position was that of a school manager and not an instructional leader (Sergiovanni, 2001). The 1970s concentrated on the importance of social connections while maintaining the school. Principals were viewed as change-agents, and they were expected to manage federal entitlement programs and curricular initiatives (Kafka, 2009). Student achievement became the focus of school principals in the 1980s. Strong administrative leadership was thought to play an important role in the success of schools

(Kafka, 2009). This era brought about the need for the principal to serve as the instructional leader in the school. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), the principal served as a community leader in the 1970s. The importance of involving families and community members in schools was a focal point for principals during the 1990s.

Accountability moved to the forefront of education in the 21st century. At this time, principals not only had to manage the school, but they were also tasked with leading school reform within the school building (Madden, 2008). Principals served as the instructional leader to ensure increased student achievement (Jenlink, 2000). As instructional leader, the principal served as the leader of leaders and needed to develop instructional leadership qualities in assistant principals and teachers (Tirozzi, 2001). Principals are expected to serve as instructional leaders who democratically involved stakeholders in developing a shared vision for learning and ensured accountability for standardized testing. Principals were expected to recognize good pedagogy in classrooms and demonstrate good andragogy when working with their faculty and staff (Lashway, 2003). According to Kafka (2009), principals were expected to correct society's social and educational inequities.

According to Blasé (1987), effective principals needed to determine the mission of the school, communicate the mission to stakeholders, monitor the curriculum, offer support and direction to teachers, assess student progress, and create a positive school climate. Madden (2008) described the role of the principal as one that was extremely difficult, yet vital to the success of a school. According to Bloom (1999), the principal needed to serve as a professor of education, a supervisor of teachers, financial manager, counselor, politician, social worker, disciplinarian, visionary, assistant custodian, and

bureaucrat. Thompson (2001) viewed principals as problem solvers who were effective communicators. Principals had to consider all stakeholders and serve as supportive leaders. Blasé and Blasé (1999) conducted one of the first studies that included principal visibility during classroom walkthroughs as a role of the principal. Principals needed to show more support to their teachers by being more engaged in daily activities within the classroom.

Tirozzi (2001) stated that principals must lead curriculum development and be involved in instructional delivery and assessment strategies directly. Principals needed to serve as leaders and managers in schools. Successful leaders needed to be skilled problem solvers, support all stakeholders, and be able to communicate effectively (Tirozzi, 2001). Successful principals gave helpful feedback to teachers to help them grow professionally (Blaydes, 2004). DuFour (2002) stated that as an instructional leader, principals are required to implement learning communities in their building to improve the skills and knowledge of their teachers, and impact student achievement.

Alvy and Robbins (2004) described three stages of professional development of new principals. During the first stage, the anticipatory stage, new principals began to understand the expectations of their role in the school. The second stage was the encounter stage. This stage measured the level of success a new principal experienced based on reactions to the new position. The third stage was the insider stage, which measured how well the new principal responded to the challenges presented in this role.

Blaydes (2004) believed that 21st century principals must have a foundation of knowledge regarding learning theories, child development, and current research.

According to Blaydes (2004), principals who served with passion and possessed a strong

work ethic were well suited to be successful 21st century leaders. These principals needed to be life-long learners who studied current research and successfully used interpersonal skills while working with others and valued the importance of classroom visibility for monitoring instruction. Principals were required to be extremely knowledgeable of school law in relation to professional responsibilities (Madden, 2008). School safety was prioritized as principals ensured well-maintained equipment and facilities, constantly supervised students, and provided swift attention to school discipline issues (Tirozzi, 2001). Principals were responsible for influencing, guiding, and initiating action in their schools (Tirozzi, 2001).

Role of the Principal

Historically, principals were considered school-building managers. Principals were responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the school. Managing self, organization, finances, facilities, and faculty were the duties of the principal (Green, 2012). Initially, leadership preparation programs focused more on developing managerial skills than developing instructional leadership skills that impact change (Mazzeo, 2003). However, the role of the principal changed as the educational landscape transformed. The principal role transformed into a model wherein the principal served as an instructional leader, a team builder, a coach, and an agent of change.

Accountability demands pushed student achievement to the forefront; therefore, principals were required to serve as instructional leaders. The role of principal shifted from being managerial and administratively centered to instructional leadership oriented to facilitated teaching and learning (Tirozzi, 2001). According to Hallinger (2003), the principal was responsible for improving instruction, which made instructional leadership

a top-down approach. To impact student achievement, principals collaborated with others to increase the internal functions of schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). As the instructional leader of the school, the primary duties of the principal expanded more deeply into the teacher realm. Principals identified which instructional practices had the greatest positive impact on student achievement (Waters et al., 2003). Principals developed learning communities in schools to enhance the skills of the teachers and improve student achievement. Instructional leadership provided by the principal influenced teaching strategies and professional development opportunities (DuFour, 2002). Principals became more involved as resource-providers and instructional communicators, increasing visibility within the school (Whitaker, 1997). In response to increasing accountability pressures, principals had to become results oriented and committed to a strategic focus. Common assessments, end of course exams, and increased stakes for student performance held teachers accountable for student growth and achievement. Principals were required to lead collective efforts ensuring high expectations for student achievement, alignment of standards to curriculum, instructional rigor, and a unified commitment that all students would learn and exhibit growth.

Principals not only serve as managers and instructional leaders; they are also tasked with transforming the learning culture within the school. Effective school improvement required positive school culture (Barth, 2002). Principals had to become conceptual thinkers in order to transform the organizational culture of schools (Fullan, 2002). School culture impacted every aspect of the school community and played a lead role in the ability of schools to educate students (Stolp & Smith, 1995). According to Bolman and Deal (2003), schools were able to create and sustain their culture through

rituals, policies, and symbols. Principals determined if the school culture needed to be transformed to support and facilitate change (Lencioni, 2002). Principals were expected to function in a continually changing environment while serving students with increasingly diverse needs (King, 2002). As change agents, principals oversaw the change process and understood that institutional change occurs on a learning continuum (Fullan & Miles, 1992).

Superintendents, school boards, faculty and staff, parents, the media, and community members held principals accountable for school improvement. Principals were expected to involve community stakeholders in developing the vision of the school while ensuring all students learn. Implementing new technologies in the classrooms and providing professional growth for all faculty were additional expectations of principals. Principals were tasked with ensuring school improvement with inadequate available resources. Both external and internal stakeholders increased the pressure on principals to lead school improvement initiatives while simultaneously requiring that principals maintain safety, improve pedagogy, manage schools, create positive school cultures and promote professional development (King, 2002).

Role of the Assistant Principal

Over the decades as schools grew, the scope of the principal's role expanded facilitating the need for assistants. The initial purpose of the assistant principal position was to help relieve some of the burden on the principal if the enrollment of the school was high enough to justify the position. Creating a standard list of the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals was difficult because the role was different from school to school (Celikten, 2001). Because the principal was responsible for determining

the duties of the assistant principal, assistant principals tended to carry out duties the principal was not interested in doing, which were primarily operational in nature. Beginning in the 1920s, the duties of the assistant principal included performing clerical tasks, overseeing extracurricular activities, and managing students (Glantz, 1994). In 1923, the NAESP conducted the first nationwide study surveying 1,270 assistant principals on their role (Glantz, 1994). Data were collected regarding experiences, training, working conditions, responsibilities, and financial status. The purpose of the study was to provide a descriptive overview of the assistant principal position. According to the survey data, most participants regarded discipline and attendance as their primary duties. The study presented a comprehensive overview of the importance of the assistant principalship (Glantz, 1994).

Austin and Brown (1970) conducted a study of secondary assistant principals 50 years later. The problem this study addressed was the lack of significance given to the role of the assistant principal. The purpose was to delineate the nature, function, and relative status of the assistant principal position. Data were collected from 1,127 assistant principals and 1,207 principals from 50 U.S. States. The research design involved a normative study and utilized a 59-item survey that addressed school management, staff personnel, community relations, student activities, curriculum/instruction, and pupil personnel items. Assistant principals and their supervising principal were asked to complete the survey. Data were analyzed by calculating the percentage distribution. The data collected revealed that assistant principals were assigned duties in each of the basic categories used for grouping administrative task. The viewpoints of the assistant principals and principals were similar regarding the importance of the duties they

performed. However, there was a great deal of variability from school to school regarding the assigning of duties. Assistant principals were limited on being tasked with duties, which allowed for discretionary decision-making, and they were given a large variety of duties that require a level of expertise but were not adequately trained. The data collected indicated that assistant principals valued more experience in staff selection, recruitment, orientation and evaluation. An additional finding was that study participants viewed instructional leadership as another area of importance in which they typically did not receive enough training. A limitation of the study was the researchers lacked the research capabilities of universities and regional laboratories. Austin and Brown (1970) suggested a collaborative effort was needed to get a broad depiction of the role of the assistant principal. An implication of the study was a better understanding of the role of the assistant principal. Additional research was needed to reexamine the process of administrative selection and career progression.

In 1992, Glantz conducted a survey of 164 New York City assistant principals to determine their expected duties (Glantz, 1994). Eighty-five elementary school assistant principals and 79 middle school assistant principals participated. Of the participants, 92 were male, 72 were female, and 55% of the participants had five or less years of experience serving as an assistant principal. The study used a survey composed of 13 open-ended questions. The questions addressed the assistant principals' current responsibilities compared to the duties the participants believed they should be performing. Semantic differential scales were used to measure the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals. Over 90% of the participants stated that their main duties included student discipline, parental complaints, lunch supervision, substitutes, and

administrative paperwork (Glantz, 1994). A minimal number of participants reported involvement in staff development, training teachers in professional learning sessions, or developing curriculum. One assistant principal responded to the survey by stating, “I went to graduate school to complete a certification by focusing on theories and research about instructional supervision, yet most, if not all, of my time is spent on mundane and mindless administrative routines, like lunch duty,” (Glantz, 1994, p. 285). Dealing with discipline issues that disrupt the educational environment in a school is time consuming. The expectation was for assistant principals to be visible and ready to respond if any unanticipated events occurred. Monitoring students left less time for assistant principals to focus on implementing curriculum, observing teachers, and creating proactive behavior solutions (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The duties assigned to assistant principals did not provide adequate training for the principalship (Glantz, 1994). Staff development, teacher training, and curriculum writing were noted as areas where assistant principals had little to no involvement (Glantz, 1994). Glantz (1994) did not expect the findings to be helpful for the leaders who were currently serving as assistant principals, which was a limitation of the study. According to Glantz (1994), the findings of this study warranted additional research, publicity, and discussion.

The role of assistant principals remained the same through the early 1990s. Eventually, educational reforms began to shift the focus to improving instruction. Expectations of the principal began to change over time, as did the role of the assistant principal. At this point, job responsibilities of assistant principals shifted from being primarily focused on operational duties to more instructional leadership responsibilities (Pounder, 2011). Until this shift, principals were solely in charge of managing

instruction. To fulfill this role, assistant principals needed more time devoted to instructional leadership duties. Assistant principals needed to be visible, serve as problem solvers, promote community awareness, support staff, communicate vision, plan teacher in-service opportunities, develop the master schedule, and promote a positive school climate (Madden, 2008). Assistant principals were valuable assets to principals as instructional leaders if given the time and opportunity. More than ever before, assistant principals were required to meet expectations tied to academic success of students (Aldridge, 2003). Assistant principals require exposure to a wide range of situations to develop experiences in preparation for the principalship. Assistant principals had a role in teacher evaluations, curriculum development, and instructional leadership (Stecher & Kirby, 2004). Assistant principals supported professional development efforts, improved teaching strategies, and served as an instructional resource for teachers (DuFour, 2002). However, assistant principals often did not feel prepared for the principalship. Even though there was a shift in the role of assistant principal, many aspiring principals still experienced a misalignment between operational and instructional aspects of their job (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Assistant principals were unable to gain experience in curriculum and instructional leadership and were not given the opportunity to perform many of the responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). In order to prepare future principals for the principalship, school districts needed to offer ongoing professional development opportunities. Professional development began as an avenue to increase student achievement, largely focused on preparing principals and teachers for this job. However, accountability fell on the shoulders of teachers, principals,

and assistant principals. The push for accountability made it necessary to include assistant principals in all facets of professional development.

Chen, Webb, and Bowen (2003) conducted a quantitative study of 130 randomly selected elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals. The problem addressed in this study was the issue of principal shortage. The study found that most assistant principals began their leadership role with a principal who served as a mentor. The study's purpose was to investigate the beliefs of assistant principals regarding their preparation to serve as principal. A survey instrument was developed to determine the assistant principals' perceptions of their preparation to become a principal (Chen, Webb, & Bowen, 2003). Assistant principals were tasked with ranking the five most important responsibilities of school principals. The study found that instructional support was ranked the highest followed by curriculum development, providing a safe climate, teacher observation/evaluation, and parent conferences. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze the data. An analysis of variance was used to ensure the demographics of the assistant principals were contributing factors in the difference in the perceptions of the assistant principals. The assistant principals identified supervision of athletic and extracurricular activities, transportation, cafeteria supervision, and purchase orders as the least important responsibilities of principals (Chen et al., 2003). The participants ranked lack of experience as the main reason they did not feel prepared for the principalship. The results of this study indicated that assistant principals lacked sufficient on-the-job training to prepare them to lead a school (Chen et al., 2003). The use of a single survey instrument limited the generalizability of the findings. An implication of this study was to guide

principals on how to plan professional experiences for their assistant principals that would prepare them to lead a school. Additional research was needed to determine how to best prepare assistant principals for the principalship using improved mentoring programs.

In 2008, Madden conducted a descriptive study of 108 Georgia public secondary school principals with one to three years of experience. The problem that this study addressed was the shortage of assistant principals prepared to assume the role of principal. The purpose of the study was to determine if the role of the assistant principal in Georgia public secondary schools prepared one to serve as principal. In Madden's (2008) study, 68 of the participants were male, and 40 participants were female. The study used a survey composed of 59 closed-ended questions. School management, leadership in staff personnel, community relations, instructional leadership, student activities, and pupil personnel were the six categories of duties assigned to assistant principals. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the data collected in the study. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and cross tabulations were used to describe the demographics and responses to ideal and actual tasks of the assistant principal. According to the survey results, assistant principals needed experience with human resources, such as hiring, recruitment, orientation and evaluation, conflict management, and decision-making. The participants ranked instructional leadership as the second highest category on the survey. Duties, such as improving instruction, using new technology, setting goals, preparing the master schedule, and facilitating staff involvement in new programs, were among the items identified in the study. A limitation of this study is that volunteer population findings may not be generalizable to non-

volunteer individuals. The generalizability of the findings was limited by the use of a single survey instrument. An implication of this study was to guide principals on how to prepare their assistant principals for the principalship. Madden (2008) recommended the study be replicated using a larger sample who were randomly selected from various geographic locations.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) conducted a survey of 80 principals who mentored aspiring principals from university-based principal preparation programs in a 16-state SREB region. The survey collected information regarding the quality of the internships and the performance of the interns. The survey also focused on the opportunities that the mentors provided interns to gain practice in competencies for school improvement and increased student achievement. According to the SREB report developed by Schmidt-Davis (2011), assistant principalship was the primary stepping-stone to becoming a principal. The SREB report stated that successful principals served as outstanding mentors for assistant principals aspiring to lead a school. According to the SREB report, university and school districts did not provide mentoring experiences that prepared aspiring principals for the challenges of the principalship. Offering aspiring principals and principal mentors meaningful professional development would impact school improvement efforts and leadership succession (Schmidt-Davis et al., 2011).

In another study of assistant principals, Sun (2012) conducted a survey of 133 high school principals in New York. The problem was the role of the assistant principal had been impacted by accountability-driven educational reforms. The purpose of the study was to investigate the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals in an intense accountability-oriented climate. The study included a survey designed to gather data

regarding assistant principals' perceptions of daily roles and responsibilities. Of 133 participants in the study, 39% had 3 years or less of experience as an assistant principal, 46% had 4 to 9 years of experience, and 17% had over 10 years of experience. The survey consisted of two identical lists of 25 duties assistant principals might perform. The participants were asked to use one list to rank actual daily duties and a second list to rank what they thought assistant principals needed to spend their time doing. To determine whether there was a relationship between the duties assistant principals thought they should perform and what they spent their time doing, Sun (2012) utilized the Spearman Rank Order Correlation for 25 duties listed on the survey. Based on the findings, assistant principals needed to spend most of their time on instructional leadership, evaluation of teachers, student discipline, administrative duties, and goal formulation. The results indicated that assistant principals actually spent most of their time dealing with administering discipline, completing administrative duties, counseling students, evaluating teachers, and conducting parent conferences (Sun, 2012). Sun (2012) also conducted one-on-one interviews with participants and found that assistant principals still spent most of their time on the top five duties ranked in the survey conducted by Glantz (1994). The assistant principals stated in their interviews that they performed more duties than were listed on the survey. The assistant principal participants agreed that they spent more time evaluating teachers, observing classrooms, attending grade-level meetings, collecting data, and analyzing results. They stated that being more involved in these duties helped provide teacher support to improve instruction. Sun's (2012) study confirmed that traditional duties of the assistant principals' role had not changed drastically. The study provided mixed methods data indicating that there had been an

increase in instruction-related tasks performed by assistant principals. Gathering data from studies allowed researchers to determine how the role of the assistant principal supported the principalship. A limitation of the study is that convenience sampling may threaten internal validity. Internal validity may have impacted the participants' view of the study and how the study related to their job. An implication of this study is to understand the daily tasks assistant principals perform and to evaluate how the role and responsibilities may have changed over time. There was no empirical evidence in this study regarding whether or not assistant principals' changing roles improved student achievement. Sun (2012) recommended future research focused on examining the jobs of assistant principals at the elementary, middle, and high school level to see if there were different trends and perceptions among assistant principals in different school levels.

Lightfoot conducted a study in 2014 to determine if the assistant principalship was adequate in its present scope and depth to prepare an assistant principal to assume the principalship. The problem that this study addressed was the roles assistant principals assume may not be sufficient in depth and breadth to prepare them to become effective principals. The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not the assistant principalship was adequate in its present scope and depth to prepare an assistant principal to assume the principalship. The study was designed to identify the administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual skills necessary for the principalship that were adequately or inadequately developed through experience as an assistant principal. Administrative skills included the technical competencies involved in the principal position, such as the skills needed in the management of people and resources. Interpersonal skills included maintaining confidentiality, understanding social relationships, and managing conflict.

Conceptual skills included problem-solving skills as well as the ability to plan strategically for the long-range success of the school. Participants included 30 principals working in public schools in the region of East Texas served by the Region 7 Education Service Center. Of the participants, 37% were elementary principals, 60% were secondary principals, and 3% were principals on campuses with both elementary and secondary grades. Data were collected using an online version of the Principal Readiness Inventory. The opening section of the Principal Readiness Inventory provided demographic data followed by data relative to current principals' level of involvement in tasks lying within the three skill categories of administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills. The last question on the survey provided a measure of how well their experiences in all skill categories combined prepared them to become effective principals. Lightfoot (2014) concluded that assistant principals who were involved in duties requiring administrative skills felt more prepared to become effective principals. Experience with interpersonal competencies gave them the most confidence in their ability to lead. The data indicated no significant relationship between the level of involvement in conceptual skills and perceived principal readiness. A limitation of the study was that the researcher could not control the level of honesty the participants used to answer the survey questions. An implication of the study was to close the gap in research pertaining to assistant principals. Another implication of the study is to inform districts and universities on how to improve their preparation programs and to instruct principals on how to help their assistant principals develop professionally.

Table 1 includes studies that were significant in understanding the role of the assistant principal and how to best prepare them to lead a school. The studies addressed

the various tasks assistant principals were assigned during the assistant principalship. Each study revealed specific areas assistant principals felt as though they were not trained adequately to serve as the principal of a school, but future research would add to the limited research available on development of assistant principals and could provide information on how to improve the quality of leadership preparation programs. Specific data regarding significant studies on the assistant principalship are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Significant Studies on the Assistant Principalship

Study	Design	Participants	Data Source	Data Analysis	Results
Austin & Brown (1970)	Normative study – stratified random sample	1,207 principals and 1,127 assistant principals in over 1200 public junior and senior high schools	Survey – 59 items that addressed school management , staff personnel, community relations, student activities, curriculum/i nstruction, and pupil personnel items	Percentage distribution was calculated, and data expressed in tables.	Assistant principals were not being tasked with duties allowing for discretionary decision-making. Assistant principals were given a large variety of duties that required a level of expertise but were not adequately trained.
Chen et al. (2003)	Quantitative study-random sample	130 elementary, middle, and high school assistant principals.	Survey with closed-ended questions	Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance	Most assistant principals lacked sufficient training.
Madden (2008)	Correlational study	108 Georgia public secondary school principals with 1 to 3	Survey with closed-ended questions	Data were entered into the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics	Assistant principals needed additional training in the area of human resources and

Study	Design	Participants	Data Source	Data Analysis	Results
		years of experience		used. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were conducted.	instructional leadership prior to the principalship.
Sun (2012)	Mixed Methods Study - Survey and one-on-one interviews	133 High school assistant principals in New York City Quantitative- 70 were male, and 63 were female. Qualitative – seven males and three females.	Ranking survey and semi-structured interview	A Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used for data analysis along with the Seidman's guide for qualitative research.	Assistant principals were getting more experience in the area of instructional leadership, but the degree to which they received this experience was largely dependent on the principal.
Lightfoot (2014)	Correlational research	Current principals working in public schools in the region of East Texas served by the Region 7 Education Service Center	Principal Readiness Inventory – anonymous online survey	Data were entered into the SPSS software, and a discriminant function analysis was conducted.	Assistant principals who were involved in duties requiring administrative skills felt more prepared to become effective principals. Experience with technical competencies gave them the most confidence in their ability to lead. The data indicated no significant relationship between the level of involvement in conceptual skills and perceived principal readiness.

Succession in Leadership

According to Hargreaves (2005), a change in leadership was one of the most significant events that transpired in a school. Higher teacher turnover rates and decreased student achievement have been associated with the departure of a principal (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011). The negative effects of principal turnover on student achievement was greater at schools performing poorly on state mandated tests and had a large population of students from low income families (Beteille et al., 2011). A change in leadership can undermine reform efforts, negatively impact teacher buy-in, create unclear goals and expectations, and fracture professional learning communities (Beteille et al., 2011). Effective succession planning ensures that leadership positions are not left vacant and are filled in a timely and efficient manner (Grodzki, 2011).

A principal's effectiveness in creating sustained change was determined by the principal who replaced the retiring principal (Fullan, 2002). Schools need many leaders at many levels to maintain succession in leadership. Learning in context helped produce principals who are ready for challenges of the principalship (Fullan, 2002). Years of experience and professional development on the job enabled principals to handle complexity of the principalship. Effective succession of leadership allows for sustained school improvement (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). To develop principals who were moving in a sustained direction, schools and districts provided opportunities for professional growth and development (Fullan, 2002).

In pursuit of academic excellence, best practices must be employed in school leadership succession to maintain school improvement momentum. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) stated that all stakeholders must be committed to the process of growth to

maintain sustainable improvement. According to Fink and Brayman (2006), planned leadership succession supported greater commitment and communication among staff, which ultimately led to sustained school improvement. Planning for leadership succession involved knowing where the organization should have been and having a plan to get there (Peters, 2011). Having a plan in place for leadership succession added to stability of organizations. According to Peters (2011), principals need to consider what the assistant principal's intentions, values, motives, expertise, needs, and capabilities are when assigning responsibilities and duties.

Fink and Brayman (2006) conducted a study to explore school change as it related to leadership succession, a process for identifying and developing new principals. They interviewed teachers and principals, and data revealed several factors that led to issues in principal succession. One problem was principal turnover rate, which averaged about 22% in 2008 (Miller, 2009) and about 20% in 2013 (Miller, 2013). Changing leadership too soon limits the ability of the principal to follow through on changes being implemented, which left the new principal to manage unfinished reforms or create a new direction for the school. Changing leadership caused issues with the amount of time necessary for stakeholders to develop a shared understanding and commitment to the vision of the new principal. Succession plans for school leadership require schools to have many leaders at many levels (Fullan, 2002). According to Grodzki (2011), effective succession planning had to include a socialization process that facilitated and supported the placement of a new administrator into the school. Myung, Loeb, and Horng (2011) reported that some teachers were recruited for leadership roles because they possess administrative abilities. Sponsored mobility occurred when current leadership encouraged

specific teachers to pursue a degree in school administration. Some districts used sponsored mobility as an avenue to “grow their own leaders” (Myung et al., 2011, p. 699). Effective socialization included structured learning opportunities and accommodations for informal learning opportunities (Grodzki, 2011).

Principal Preparation

Increased attention to principal effectiveness led to the evaluation of principal preparation programs. Schools need administrators who were trained to lead to maintain continuous improvement. According to Hess and Kelly (2005), traditional principal preparation programs did not adequately prepare assistant principals for the principalship. University-based principal preparation programs are responsible for preparing principals to lead. However, 88% of principal preparation programs were not current in their practices, and 89% of participants claimed that they were not prepared for the rigors of the position (Levine, 2005).

Cheney and Davis (2011) conducted a study of 66 assistant principals in the northern Kentucky region. The purpose of the quantitative study was to investigate the professional development needs of assistant principals in the northern Kentucky region. A five-point Likert-scale survey was created utilizing the 31 functions from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The participants were asked to rate the importance and level of proficiency for each of the 31 functions. Professional development needs were determined by the gap between importance and proficiency. Data were analyzed using a Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test. The results revealed that most assistant principals had little to no experience with school budgets. Time management, school culture, instructional leadership, and special education needs

to be included in professional development programs. School financing was the most frequently reported professional development need on this survey. A limitation of the study was similar results may not be generalizable to other regions or states. According to Cheney and Davis (2011), future research is needed to address the needs, professional development, and career advancement of assistant principals. The results of this study were used to guide the development of the Northern Kentucky Assistant Principals' Network, which provided professional development to support Northern Kentucky's local assistant principals as they aspired to become principals.

Effective principal preparation programs are research-based, provide authentic experiences, offer curriculum coherence, provide mentoring, and are structured for collaborative activities (Cheney & Davis, 2011). According to Cheney and Davis (2011), exemplary principal preparation programs were selective in admission requirements. High-quality graduate students were needed for the success of principal preparation programs. Course content had to be current and aligned to state and national leadership standards. District identified participants seemed to be better suited for principal preparation programs. Students who were part of a cohort benefitted from shared knowledge.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Educational Leadership Coordinating Council provided an accreditation review for some university-based principal preparation programs. The ISLLC provides standards to university-based programs for improved quality and accountability (Orr, 2011). University-based principal preparation programs needed these guidelines for improved program quality. Increased entrance requirements, cohort models, performance-based standards, individualization,

skill development and assessment, reflective practices, and continuous program review were included in the principal preparation programs offered at universities (Lauder, 2000).

Preparing Assistant Principals

Catherine Marshall was the first person to write a book focused on the assistant principals' role and the problems encountered in the assistant principalship (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). She expressed her belief that assistant principals needed to be prepared to face the fundamental dilemmas encountered while serving in this role. Marshall and Hooley (2006) suggested that training programs needed to be implemented to prepare assistant principals for the principalship. The roles of assistant principals were inconsistent nationwide because different schools had different needs. The principal was responsible for determining the role of the assistant principal. According to Weller and Weller (2002), not having a clear job description made it difficult for leadership programs to prepare assistant principals to lead a school.

Due to the importance of the principal serving as the instructional leader, the selection process, and training of school principals are common topics in educational research (Karakose, Yirci, & Kocabas, 2014). The role of assistant principals was to offer support and assistance to principals in managing and leading schools (Reich, 2012). Examining how assistant principals develop and transition professionally into a principal role is a topic addressed in educational leadership preparation programs and university courses (McClellan & Casey, 2015). According to Grissom and Loeb (2001), professional development programs enhanced overall principal effectiveness by integrating leadership competencies. The best principal preparation programs are not

overly theoretical and included on-the-job experiences (Levine, 2005). Bloom and Krovetz (2009) believed that central office administrators need to require their principals to serve as mentors to assistant principals to help them develop into successful future principals. Successful administrators are strong instructional leaders, maintained high expectations for teaching, and fostered a school culture that focused on learning (Wood et al., 2013). Administrators face leadership experiences with complex challenges necessitating the provision of support and guidance during preparation and induction of principals (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Building practical readiness through coaching, mentoring, residencies, and internships is an integral part of school leadership preparation programs (Zubrzycki, 2013).

Aside from acquiring new knowledge, assistant principals need to apply and practice the skills needed to be a successful principal (May, 2016). Full-time, job-embedded internships allow assistant principals to immerse themselves into experiencing the role of a principal completely. A detached internship only provided a few hours of experience working alongside a principal (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Gurley, Anast-May, and Lee (2015) noted that collaborating with peers and locating resource networks that offered support were vital to the success of assistant principals. Professional development is another method used to offer continual growth in effective leadership practices (Enomoto, 2012). According to Mushaandja (2013), there were three necessary phases to professional development: pre-service preparation, induction, and continuous job-embedded professional development. Skill development was an important component in professional development for assistant principals (Oliver, 2005). Instructional leadership is another area of need for the professional development of assistant principals to equip

them to serve as the school instructional leader (Oliver, 2005). Because budgeting and finance were usually not part of an assistant principal's role in a school, professional development in this area would have been beneficial for aspiring principals (Enomoto, 2012).

Mentoring was another critical component of administrative professional development (Enomoto, 2012). Mentoring relationships facilitated and sustained professional growth (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Knobl (2010) noted that when principals utilized mentors and built strong networks, they felt an improved likelihood for success. Mentoring programs illustrated a commitment of support for new principals (Daresh, 2004). According to Daresh (2004), the mentor-principal relationship had the greatest impact on leadership longevity and effectiveness. Mentors offer emotional and practical support as problem solvers and are available to listen, provide perspectives, ask reflective questions, and provide support during the school year (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). A high-quality mentoring relationship takes time to build. Mentors taught skills that helped strengthen the efficacy beliefs of the assistant principals mentored (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). When new principals shadowed veteran principals at their schools, the experience provided a new insight about the other school's programs and procedures (Smith, 2014). Principal-makers were principals who helped their assistant principal's succession into the role of a principal (Retelle, 2010). Holmes (2001) posited that principals needed excellent communication skills to persuade, motivate, and delegate effectively. To prepare assistant principals for the principalship, these communication skills need to be developed. Mentoring allowed assistant principals to see the educational theory learned in the classroom become relevant to their daily practices (Daresh, 2004).

Legislative policies that support mentoring programs aimed to help assistant principals develop into instructional leaders were implemented in Colorado, Maryland, and Kentucky (Searby, 2013).

Some states require assistant principals to earn principal certifications prior to applying for a principal position (Weller & Weller, 2002). The ISLLC developed standards for the professional practice of principals. The standards provided expectations for knowledge, skills, and disposition of principals with a focus on teaching and learning (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Several states required principal certifications for assistant principals as a prerequisite for a principalship (Weller & Weller, 2002). ISLLC standards have influenced the design of leadership development programs (Davis et al., 2005). Several states have implemented standards-based program development framed around ISLLC standards as their principal licensure criteria (Davis et al., 2005).

According to Walker and Qian (2006), a gap existed between what students learned in formal training at a university and what they needed to learn to become resilient principals. Traditional programs offered by many universities were criticized for not adequately preparing students to be principals (Levine, 2005). According to Marshall and Hooley (2006), coursework provided at universities was disconnected from the reality of the job. Universities needed to address discipline, student supervision, ethics, and staff evaluation (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Instead, university preparation programs were built around a set of core competencies, such as the School Leaders Licensure Assessment administered by the Educational Testing Service (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Because of this criticism, universities were developing pre-service and in-service

programs to provide experiential learning opportunities to their educational leadership students (Pounder, 2011). According to Johnson (2016), university preparation programs had to include curriculum based on strategic alignment to state mandates and the accrediting bodies of universities. Curriculum should be aligned with the needs of local school districts and with the needs of principals and community stakeholders. The aligned curriculum required collaboration, research, and willingness to revise programs to meet the needs of principals as their roles changed periodically (Johnson, 2016). Parylo (2013) suggested the development of collaborative partnerships between school districts and universities. The state of Hawaii developed a university-school district professional development partnership to address five areas in need of growth: content knowledge and skill development, application to school standards, networking opportunities, conversations with principals, and reflections for continuous learning (Enomoto, 2012).

As National efforts by States intensified to ensure effective training for the principalship, assistant principals usually started out as teachers who eventually transitioned into a leadership role and went on to gain formal training and licensure (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009). Unlike new teachers, new principals were expected to be experts and ready to take on the job immediately (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Denver public schools created a New Leaders Academy for new assistant principals to help them develop necessary leadership skills (Superville, 2015). Maryland's Department of Education created a model program that offered support, provided networking opportunities, and provided practical training for assistant principals who wanted a principalship (Corey, 2015). Kentucky's Educational Professional Standards Board did not issue teaching certificates until educational leadership candidates performed field

experiences (Dodson, 2014). Programs that included field experiences were more effective than programs that did not offer field experiences as part of their curriculum (Dodson, 2014). Tennessee's principal interns are required to conduct a minimum of 180 hours of field-based experiences (Kearney & Valadez, 2015).

According to Weller and Weller (2002), effective assistant principals needed to expand their role beyond school disciplinarian. The role of the assistant principal remains largely undefined (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Collaborating with the principal regarding planning the school's vision and leadership initiatives is beneficial to the assistant principal (Weller & Weller, 2002). Marshall and Hooley (2006) argued that the principal's leadership style directly impacted responsibilities assigned to the assistant principal. A shared leadership style allowed the assistant principal to serve in a co-principal capacity expanding their leadership experiences (Weller & Weller, 2002). Transformational leadership provides assistant principals room for growth while remaining focused on the common vision. The managerial method placed assistant principals in the role of being delegated tasks that the principal did not want to carry out (Yukl, 2006).

Marshall and Hooley (2006) believed assistant principals gained the most training through direct conversations with their principal. Scott (2004) stated that the degree to which an assistant principal was able to be immersed in school leadership depended on the openness of the conversations with the principal. The principal's opinion of the assistant principal significantly impacted the level of responsibility given to the assistant principal (Weller & Weller, 2002). According to Weller and Weller (2002), this opinion was formed based on the ability level of the assistant principal, a willingness to co-

principal, and the level of trust involved in open conversations. Strategic leadership enabled the principal and assistant principal to hold conversations that were critical to the success of the school (Yukl, 2006).

The NASSP developed the National Assistant Principal Leadership Community to focus on the professional development needs of secondary principals. The program strives to increase the job performance of assistant principals and help prepare them for the principalship (NASSP, 2014). To provide support for new assistant principals in their county, Miami-Dade County Public Schools developed the Assistant Principal Induction Academy. The program provides a network of support to new assistant principals, so they were able to impact student achievement and understand how their work aligned with the district's mission and vision (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2014). New York City developed the Advanced Leadership Program for assistant principals. The program was created to help build leadership capacity of their assistant principals as they moved toward the principalship (Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011). Participants had the opportunity to attend advanced leadership seminars and receive mentoring by New York City principals, coaching, networking opportunities, and optional after-school sessions (Drago-Severson & Aravena, 2011).

Some school districts identified potential assistant principals by focusing on creating teacher leaders within their own schools. These teacher leaders were being groomed to serve as the next generation of school principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). This type of grow-your-own initiative expanded across the nation as a viable solution to the principal shortage in schools (Oliver, 2005). District-based preparation programs allowed districts to tailor the content and discuss what was expected of the new

principals. District-based preparation programs help with the socialization of new principals (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015). New principals had to learn the norms, values, and expectations of the organization for socialization to be effective (Grodzki, 2011). According to Daresh (2004), mentoring helped assistant principals with professional growth and socialization. Increased job satisfaction, social integration, role performance, lower role ambiguity, and stress were outcomes of effective socialization (Grodzki, 2011). Socialization allowed for the needs of the organization and the needs of the novice administrator to be intertwined (Grodzki, 2011).

When assistant principals were able to work closely with the principal on school issues, they had the opportunity to lead collaboration, reflect on their leadership practice, take active roles in curriculum and instruction, and implement professional learning communities; therefore, their chances for success dramatically increased as did their job satisfaction (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). In some districts, teacher leaders who aspired to be administrators were given roles as apprentices. These teachers were given an opportunity to work closely with current assistant principals and see first-hand the tasks required on the job (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Serving as an apprentice allowed the teacher to partner with the local university and gain the benefits of one-on-one mentoring of an administrator, which allowed them to experience the various duties associated with the role of assistant principal (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). California's Capistrano School District designed a principal preparation program in which aspiring administrators were exposed to a range of leadership experiences while they received a small stipend (Lovely, 2001). These programs provided real-life experiences for future principals that extended beyond university offerings.

Currently, the Georgia educational leadership certification is available in two tiers. Tier I programs are designed for educators who are looking to transition into school-level leadership. Tier II is focused on job-embedded learning for current school leaders and is required for principals. The 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders document was published by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration and serves as the basis for Georgia's educational leadership programs (GaPSC, 2016). Beginning in 2018-2019, the GaPSC will be implementing Preparation Program Effectiveness Measures (PPEM) to assess educator preparation program effectiveness. The goals of this new evaluator program are to ensure high program standards in educator preparation programs, to develop consistent state-determined effectiveness measures in principal preparation programs, and to provide Georgia citizens with information regarding principal preparation programs. PPEM is designed to raise the quality of principals in order to improve student learning (GaPSC, 2016). Georgia is participating in an initiative funded by the Wallace Foundation to develop models for principal preparation programs at universities. This grant is focused on developing high-quality instruction paired with practical on-the-job experiences, establishing meaningful partnerships between districts and universities, and developing state policies for program accreditation and principal certification (EdQuest Georgia, 2018).

Current literature is varied as to which method is best to develop educational leaders. Researchers do not agree on a specific leadership framework, program, or practice that works best to prepare future principals (Sergiovanni, 2001). There does not seem to be a straight-line approach to educational leadership. Administrators must be trained to function in an ever-changing environment with no clear linear matrix to follow

regarding a leadership approach. Additional information is needed from current administrators to determine their perceptions of their preparedness to take on the role of the principal in order to improve educational leadership preparation programs (Sergiovanni, 2001).

Summary

According to Bennis (1999), a common leadership myth is that *leaders were born* the reality was *that leaders were made*. Bodger (2011) advocated for ongoing support of new principals to be successful in today's educational landscape. Assistant principals wanted professional development opportunities, allowing for the opportunity to learn content knowledge and skills necessary to lead a school. Unfortunately, many of them lacked the opportunities for specialized professional training to help them grow as principals. Assistant principals require context-specific learning experiences that prepared them to serve as a resilient principal in a school (Zubnycki, 2013). The goal was to equip assistant principals with the knowledge and skills necessary to oversee the education of the students in their school (Kearney & Valadez, 2015). Educational leadership candidates who participated in programs were still left with self-doubt as to their level of competency when entering the role of a principal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Leadership educators had to understand how to best prepare assistant principals for their role as a principal. A leadership model for assistant principals was needed so that the concept of the assistant principal was suited for the changing role of leadership. The role of the assistant principal needed to be defined clearly to best utilize this leadership asset in the face of the ever-changing educational landscape (Stecher & Kirby, 2004). Assistant principals are a vital part of the school leadership team. To grow as leaders, assistant

principals would benefit from the opportunity to perform the responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). Student discipline experience and routine managerial tasks do not prepare assistant principals to face the challenges of the principalship adequately (Umphey, 2007). Assistant principals need intentional mentoring, access to strong support systems, and specialized training to help them become effective principals (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The role of the principal is complex and multi-faceted. According to Hargreaves (2005), a change in leadership is one of the most significant events to occur in a school. Preparing assistant principals who may one day assume the duties of the principalship is critical to minimizing the disruption caused during this transitional period and to ensuring there are no lapses in viable school leadership. The majority of individuals who serve as principal begin their administrative career as an assistant principal. The assistant principal position in public K-12 education allows those individuals who aspire to become a principal to have on-the-job training to develop the skills needed to take on this role (Lightfoot, 2014).

Research Design

A mixed methods research design was selected based on the research questions because utilizing either a quantitative or qualitative approach singularly would not collect sufficient data needed to address those research questions (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). A convergent mixed methods research design was chosen because the data were collected from potential participants at the same time using a combined online measure.

For the quantitative data, a correlational research design allowed the study to determine if a relationship existed between predicting variables and principal readiness (Ellis & Levy, 2009). For the qualitative data, a descriptive case study research design

allowed the researcher to describe perceptions of the principal readiness phenomenon within the bounded system where it occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Causal comparative research design was not considered as a research design because this study did not examine group differences between participants who experienced the same intervention (Mertler & Charles, 2010). Combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in mixed methods research integrated the strengths of both research methods (Fetters et al., 2013). Quantitative methods allowed the researcher to examine relationships through numerical data, but qualitative methods provided an understanding of how participants perceived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions for this convergent mixed methods research study were:

RQ1 (Quantitative): What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness?

H1_O: There is not a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness.

H1_A: There is a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness.

RQ2 (Qualitative): What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness?

Population

The researcher selected principals who served as an assistant principal prior to the principalship. The population for this study included public school principals from five high schools, eight middle schools, and 23 elementary schools in a Middle Georgia school district. The Middle Georgia school district selected for this study served 29,490 students on 39 campuses in 2017. In 2016, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students was 60.4%, 11.6% were students with disabilities, and 14% were enrolled in the district's gifted program. The teachers in this school district were deemed 100% professional qualified by the Georgia Department of Education. The district's College and Career Ready Performance Index score for 2017 was 81. The researcher chose pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the district, school, and individuals participating in the study. Tables 2, 3, and 4 represent demographic, climate, and academic performance data for the schools that were included in the study.

Table 2

Demographic, Climate, and Academic Performance Information for District High Schools

High School	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multiracial	Free and Reduced Lunch	Climate	Academic Performance
1	64%	23%	6%	0%	5%	26%	4	94.6%
2	54%	25%	9%	7%	5%	28%	4	97.0%
3	54%	35%	6%	2%	3%	49%	3	86.5%
4	35%	48%	9%	3%	5%	66%	3	80.2%
5	31%	52%	9%	2%	6%	68%	3	73.8%

Table 3

Demographic, Climate, and Academic Performance Information for District Middle Schools

Middle School	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multiracial	Free and Reduced Lunch	Climate	Academic Performance
1	27%	58%	9%	0%	5%	97%	4	76.0%
2	63%	23%	7%	4%	3%	28%	4	82.2%
3	47%	31%	8%	7%	6%	36%	5	88.3%
4	53%	37%	5%	0%	4%	57%	4	76.7%
5	37%	44%	9%	5%	5%	66%	3	75.0%
6	64%	20%	8%	0%	6%	29%	4	82.3%
7	31%	50%	13%	0%	5%	97%	3	64.9%
8	36%	42%	13%	3%	5%	97%	3	78.3%

Table 4

Demographic, Climate, and Academic Performance Information for District Elementary Schools

Elementary School	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multiracial	Free and Reduced Lunch	Climate	Academic Performance
1	42%	32%	12%	7%	7%	55%	3	79.0%
2	20%	59%	12%	0%	9%	97%	3	-
3	51%	21%	12%	10%	6%	28%	4	-
4	52%	29%	9%	2%	8%	47%	4	-
5	58%	27%	7%	2%	6%	48%	4	87.4%
6	17%	62%	14%	0%	6%	97%	4	70.0%
7	30%	60%	5%	0%	4%	97%	3	75.2%
8	49%	34%	7%	2%	7%	46%	3	77.2%
9	54%	27%	8%	6%	5%	46%	4	90.3%
10	63%	23%	7%	0%	6%	34%	4	89.5%
11	48%	25%	14%	8%	5%	30%	4	86.1%

Elementary School	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Multiracial	Free and Reduced Lunch	Climate	Academic Performance
12	63%	22%	8%	2%	5%	45%	3	79.7%
13	69%	16%	8%	2%	5%	25%	3	76.8%
14	48%	35%	9%	0%	7%	97%	3	85.0%
15	24%	69%	2%	0%	5%	97%	3	72.5%
16	20%	55%	16%	0%	7%	97%	2	61.4%
17	16%	61%	17%	0%	5%	97%	2	55.2%
18	55%	38%	3%	0%	3%	97%	3	82.5%
19	74%	16%	6%	0%	3%	41%	4	92.2%
20	8%	77%	10%	0%	5%	97%	3	65.1%
21	34%	41%	15%	0%	7%	97%	3	83.7%
22	23%	60%	10%	0%	5%	97%	3	76.0%
23	42%	43%	5%	0%	9%	97%	3	80.7%

Participants

The 33 participants in this study were public school principals currently employed in a school district in Middle Georgia. Principals employed in non-traditional schools, such as alternative, private, or charter schools, were not included in this study. These schools were structured differently than traditional schools and were not mandated to follow Elementary Secondary Education Act guidelines, which affected administrative roles and responsibilities. All high school principals queried responded to the survey. Four male principal participants and one female principal participant took part in the survey. All middle school principals queried responded to the survey. Six male principal participants and two female principal participants took part in the survey. Nineteen of the 23 elementary principals responded to the survey. Five of the elementary participants were male, and 15 of the participants were female. Convenience sampling was the sample

technique for the study. Convenience sampling involves selecting a sample of subjects from a population based on their availability to participate in the study (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

Instrumentation

Quantitative

Demographics Survey. The demographics survey consisted of 13 items (Appendix A). Table 5 displays the demographic items. Each categorical item was dummy coded for data analysis. The dummy variable method is used when categorical variables are involved in quantitative methods (Crown, 2010).

Table 5

Variables and Responses for the Demographic Items

Variable	Type	Responses
Gender	Categorical	Male = 1 Female = 2
Year Obtained Initial Educational Leadership Certification	Continuous	Given year
Year Obtained First Assistant Principalship	Continuous	Given year
Total Years of Teaching Experience	Continuous	Number of years
Total Years of Assistant Principal Experience	Continuous	Number of years
Assistant Principal at More Than One School	Categorical	No = 1 Yes = 2
Assistant Principal under More Than One Principal	Categorical	No = 1 Yes = 2
Total Years of Principal Experience	Continuous	Number of years
Current Level Assignment	Categorical	Elementary (K-5) = 1 Middle (6-8) = 2 High (6-12) = 3
Administrative Level	Categorical	Elementary (K-5) = 1 Middle (6-8) = 2

Variable	Type	Responses
		High (6-12) = 3
Level of Teaching Experience	Categorical	Elementary (K-5) = 1 Secondary (6-12) = 2 Evenly split between Elementary and Secondary = 3
Professional Development before Assistant Principalship	Categorical	Mentoring = 1 Professional Learning = 2 District-Provided Programs = 3 University Coursework = 4 Other = 5
Professional Development after Assistant Principalship	Categorical	Mentoring = 1 Professional Learning = 2 District-Provided Programs = 3 Other = 4 None = 5

Principal Readiness Inventory. The Principal Readiness Inventory (Appendix B) was developed and piloted by Jimmy C. Lightfoot (2014) originally. Permission was granted to utilize the Principal Reading Inventory from Dr. Lightfoot (Appendix C). The survey questions examined skills gained through the assistant principalship that enabled principals to feel prepared to assume the role of principal. Demographic data were collected in the opening section of the Principal Readiness Inventory. The following scales were included in the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014).

1. *Administrative skills* are the technical competencies involved in the principal position, including the skills involved in the management of people and resources. This continuous scale contained seven items.
2. *Interpersonal skills* involve maintaining confidentiality, understanding social relationships, and the ability to manage conflict. This continuous scale contained six items.

3. *Conceptual skills* involve problem solving, strategic planning, and establishing team concepts among stakeholders. This continuous scale contained five items.

These items provided data from the principals relative to their level of involvement in tasks related to administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual skills. The questions were developed so that they could be answered utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5 where 0 = *none*, 1 = *very low*, 2 = *low*, 3 = *medium*, 4 = *high*, and 5 = *very high*. The responses in each of these three skills areas were assigned a numeric value in order to calculate a mean score for each category (Lightfoot, 2014).

The last question on the Principal Readiness Survey allowed for the data collection of a single statistical measure of the participants' attitudes and beliefs of how well their experiences in all skill categories prepared them to serve as principal. A Likert scale with values of 1 to 10 was utilized to collect these data. The range consisted of 1 representing *not well prepared*, 5 representing *moderately prepared*, and 10 representing *very well prepared*. The responses to this final question served as the outcome variable (Lightfoot, 2014).

A panel of five current public school principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents was used to determine face validity. Face validity was ensured through reliance on the literature and through a thorough examination of the instrument by a panel of experts in the field of educational administration to determine whether or not all instrument items were reasonable for measuring the constructs of principal preparedness (Lightfoot, 2014).

Reliability allows the researcher to determine if an instrument, such as a survey, will produce similar results under different circumstances and assuming nothing has changed (Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006). Reliability can be improved by the clarity of expression or lengthening the measure. Internal consistency reveals the relationship between items within a particular survey scale (Roberts et al., 2006). A pilot study was administered to determine the reliability of the instrument. The pilot study included 16 participants. The participants of the pilot study met the same criteria as the main study of being current public school principals in East Texas served by the Region 7 Education Service Center (Lightfoot, 2014). The participants completed all sections of the Principal Readiness Inventory and submitted the survey anonymously. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was utilized to determine the internal consistency, or reliability, of the administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and the conceptual skills subscales (Lightfoot, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of a scale or subscale should be above .70 for reliability purposes (Cortina, 1993). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Administrative Skills subscale was .972. The alpha coefficient for the Interpersonal Skills subscale was .723, and the alpha coefficient for the Conceptual Skills subscale was .811. The data indicated that all of the items on the survey provided a reliable measure of the constructs being analyzed (Lightfoot, 2014). Before data analysis began, a reliability analysis was conducted to determine internal consistency for each scale.

Qualitative

The Qualitative Questionnaire consists of three open-ended items (Appendix D). These items allowed the researcher to gather information regarding participants' professional development before and after they received their initial educational

leadership certification and the benefit the professional development provided in the principalship. The researcher also gathered information regarding additional supports identified by the participants that would be beneficial prior to assuming the role of principal.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is vital to the usefulness and integrity of the findings. Amankwaa (2016) identified four areas that support trustworthiness in a qualitative study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) conformability. Credibility offers assurance that there is truth in the findings. The researcher ensured anonymous data collection by not collecting any identifying information from the participants. The researcher provided participants with information regarding the researcher's qualifications, background, and experiences. The researcher related the previous findings in the literature in order to assess congruency. Transferability implies that the findings can be applied in other contexts. The researcher provided details regarding the number of participants involved in the study, the number of schools involved in the study, and the data collection methods that were implemented. Dependability means that the findings are consistent and can be repeated. The researcher ensured dependability by explaining the research design in detail and fully outlining the procedures for data collection and analysis. Conformability offers assurance that findings of the study are shaped by the participants and not biased by the researcher. The researcher provided detailed information regarding data collection and analysis. The researcher provided the reasons for choosing one method over another (Shenton, 2004).

Data Collection

The procedure for data collection involved a single-phase gathering of data from principal participants through the utilization of an online Demographics Survey (Appendix A), Principal Readiness Inventory (Appendix B), and Qualitative Questionnaire (Appendix D) using Survey Monkey[®]. The three data sources were combined into one measure for data collection purposes. A list of email addresses for the potential participants was collected from the school system's global email directory, which was available to the public. A recruitment email was sent from the researcher to the potential participants. The email explained the reason for the survey, gave the approximate amount of time needed to complete the survey, and informed the potential participants that the survey responses were anonymous (Appendix E). The email included information regarding web-based informed consent and Internal Review Board approval. The researcher provided her contact information in the email.

According to Baruch and Holtom (2008), response rate is typically 50% and tends to be closer to 35% with top executives at the organizational level. Potential participants, which included 36 principals, were emailed participation requests (Appendix E) and the informed consent (Appendix G). The researcher's goal was to obtain a response rate of 83% for the principals who agreed to participate in the combined online Demographics Survey (Appendix A), Principal Readiness Inventory (Appendix B), and Qualitative Questionnaire (Appendix D) using Survey Monkey[®]. An email was sent one week later to remind participants to complete the survey. After two weeks, all high school and middle school participants had responded to the survey, so the researcher called all elementary participants to request completion of the survey if it had not already been submitted.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

Data were downloaded from Survey Monkey[®] into an electronic file. The downloaded data were uploaded into SPSS for analysis. The predicting variables of the study included total years of teaching experience, total years of administrative experience, total years of principal experience, current campus level assignment, administrative level, and the level of involvement the participants' reported in the areas of administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills. The outcome variable of the study was the participants' attitudes and beliefs of how well their experiences in all skill categories prepared them to serve as principal. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the data and describe the participants. Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages were used for gender, current level of assignment, teaching level, administrative level, assistant principal at more than one school, and assistant principal under more than one principal. Descriptive statistics involving means and standard deviations were used for the total years of teaching experience, total years of assistant principal experience, total years of principal experience, administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, principal readiness outcome variable, year obtained initial educational leadership certification, and year obtained first assistant principalship. All scale items from the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014) were computed as mean, which ranged from 0 to 5. The model assumptions of a normal distribution of variables and a linear relationship between predicting variables and outcome variable were assessed. Bivariate correlations were conducted to determine linearity and multicollinearity among the

predicting variables. Assessment of linearity helped determine how closely the data points formed a straight line (Paulson & Wachtel, 1995). Multicollinearity will occur if two or more predicting variables are correlated highly (Paulson & Wachtel, 1995). To answer Research Question #1, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine the relationship between principals' attitudes and beliefs about administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences gained in the role of assistant principal and principal readiness. First, the predicting variable with the highest correlation with the dependent variable was analyzed. Next, the variables with weaker correlations with the dependent variable were analyzed.

Several assumptions supported the study design for collecting information.

Measures were taken to ensure the assumptions remained valid during the study. The first assumption was that study participants were a representation of a sub population of all principals who have administrative experience. The second assumption was that the principals chosen to take part in this research study would answer all questions truthfully. Myers (2000) noted people form naturalistic generalizations when answering questions based on their personal life experiences. Study participants were required to sign an informed consent stating that their participation involved answering all survey questions honestly and being ethical and unbiased in their responses. The following assumptions were based on this research:

- 1) Each participant was honest in his or her responses during the survey response process.
- 2) Principals' beliefs and perceptions on their preparedness to serve as principal provided insight into how we can better prepare future administrators to lead.

Qualitative

A descriptive case study research design was used to explore which skill sets and professional development experiences would be most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to become principals. The same participants from the quantitative instrument were used to collect qualitative data from an online questionnaire. The Qualitative Questionnaire consists of three items about the professional development participants received before and after their initial educational leadership certification, the benefits of that development once they assumed the role of principal, and additional supports that would have been beneficial prior to assuming the role of principal. Data from the qualitative questionnaire were downloaded from Survey Monkey® into an electronic file. For Research Question #2, a thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaire.

The researcher implemented pattern coding in the study. Pattern codes require coding the collected data to link reoccurring themes. Pattern codes were established as a priori and emergent. A priori codes are created before the study begins using the conceptual framework, research questions, and key concepts. Emergent codes develop during data collection, which prevents the researcher from forcing the data into previously developed codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to recognize patterns within the data. These emerging themes become the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher performed coding and category construction. The researcher demonstrated the connection between categories and codes and the connection between subthemes and themes in order to determine whether the themes emerged from the data or the themes were imposed on the

data. Validity of the findings can be established by providing a detailed analysis of the steps involved in the study (Choudhuri, Glauser, & Peregoy, 2004). Once the categories were identified, the researcher was able to take simple counts of how many times a particular category was used. The simple count gave the researcher a rough estimate of the relative importance of the theme. Categories and themes were represented in a table.

Integration

A mixed methods convergent design was used to collect quantitative data through the 13-item Demographics Survey, the 19-item Principal Readiness Inventory, and the Qualitative Questionnaire, which contained three unstructured open-response items. The same participants were used to collect data concurrently from the Demographic Survey, Principal Readiness Inventory, and Qualitative Questionnaire. Integration through connecting occurs when the study uses the same participants for quantitative and qualitative data collection (Fetters et al., 2013). Databases from the quantitative and qualitative instruments collected from the same participants were merged to answer Research Question #3. Integration through merging allows the researcher to take two separate databases and bring them together for analysis and comparison (Fetters et al., 2013).

Limitations

The features of research studies of which researchers have no control or could potentially cause negative effects to the findings or the generalizability of the findings are considered to be limitations (Gay & Airasian, 2000). One area in which the researcher had no control was the level of honesty with which the participants answered the survey questions. Self-reporting has a few known drawbacks (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

Consistency motif is a general problem associated with self-reporting. Consistency motif is the urge to maintain a consistent line in a series of answers. Consistency motif is less likely to be problematic if the participants are asked to recall discrete events. Another issue with self-reporting occurs when participants view some responses as more socially desirable than others. Anonymity was provided to all participants in order limit the risk of false answers. Participants were not asked to provide identifying factors, such as their name and address. The study was limited to principals who served in one Middle Georgia school district. Principals of alternative, private, or charter schools were not included in this study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations arise when research involving human participants is being conducted (Yin, 1994). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), informed consent and informant protection from harm are two subjects that dictate research ethics. Informed consent was adhered to by allowing every principal in the study district the opportunity to volunteer for participation in the survey and sign the web-based informed consent electronically (Appendix G). The informed consent included the researcher's contact information, elements of the study, the rights of the participants, guarantee of participant anonymity and confidentiality, and the participants' predicted time commitment. No gifts, tokens, or rewards were offered to the participants for their consent to serve as a participant in this study. The first question of the survey prompted the participant to review the informed consent. The participant selected "I agree" to continue and participate in this research study or "I do not agree" to end the survey.

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was approved and permission was granted to conduct the study, the researcher requested permission from the school district to conduct the research study. The researcher was required to submit written permission from the researcher's supervisor along with the research proposal. The district required a letter stating that the school system, employees, and students would not be identified in any draft or final results. The researcher agreed to submit the final results to the district's central office.

Once permission was granted, an email of recruitment was sent to all principals in the Middle Georgia school district. The email addresses of all potential participants were obtained through the district's global address directory. A clear description of the study, its purpose, and an explanation of the data collection instrument to be utilized were included in the recruitment email (Appendix E). Assurances of confidentiality and encouragement to participate in the study were included in the initial solicitation letter. This research study was reviewed by the Columbus State University IRB, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations (Appendix F.)

The researcher discussed the purpose and methodology of the study. Informant protection from harm was achieved by ensuring that the participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained. Participants' identities were not revealed in written, nor verbal reporting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To ensure confidentiality, IP addresses of participants were not recorded. The data were stored on the researcher's personal laptop and an external hard drive, which were password protected. The data will be deleted six months after the completion of the research study.

Summary

In this study, the researcher conducted a convergent mixed methods research design to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. Within this chapter, the researcher identified the research design, populations, sample, data collection instrument, and the procedures followed throughout the research. The results of the data analysis will be presented in Chapter IV in the form of text, charts, and graphs.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The need for an individual to serve as principal became apparent as the popularity of schools grew in the early 1800s. The role of the principal became vital to school success. Schools became complex organizations with constantly changing priorities (Morrison, 2008). Educator, supervisor, accountant, counselor, politician, social worker, disciplinarian, visionary, assistant custodian, and bureaucrat were the duties that fell under the role of the principal (Bloom, 1999). As the role of the principal grew, the need for additional support staff became evident. The position of assistant principal arose with a primary purpose to support school administration. According to Goodson (2000), this role provided assistant principals training opportunities to help them prepare for a principalship in the future.

Administering school discipline, supervising lunch, meeting with parents, maintaining a safe school climate, observing teachers, and evaluating staff are duties often assigned to assistant principals (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Madden (2008) stated that assistant principals were also expected to serve as instructional leaders who consistently maintained visibility, solved problems, promoted community awareness, supported staff, communicated the school vision, planned teacher in-service opportunities, developed the master schedule, and promoted a positive school climate.

According to Kwan and Walker (2012), assistant principals did not feel prepared to lead because they did not get enough experience with the instructional aspects of their job.

Marshall and Hooley (2006) suggested that in order to prepare assistant principals for the principalship, training programs were needed. According to Zubnzycki (2013), assistant principals require context-specific learning experiences. Leadership educators need to understand how to best prepare assistant principals for their role as a principal.

This convergent mixed methods research study examined the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data combined the strengths of both research methods. A quantitative correlational research design was used to examine relationships between predicting and outcome variables. In this study, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine the relationship between principals' attitudes and beliefs about administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences gained in the role of assistant principal; and principal readiness using public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district. The qualitative descriptive case study research design explored perceptions of professional development experiences that would be most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to become principals.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research findings were aligned to the following research questions in order to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal.

RQ1 (Quantitative): What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness?

H1_O: There is not a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness.

H1_A: There is a relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness.

RQ2 (Qualitative): What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness?

Participants

The 33 participants in this study included public school principals employed in a school district in Middle Georgia. Principals employed in non-traditional schools, such as alternative, private, or charter schools, were not included in this study. Of the five high schools in the district, four male principals and one female principal responded to the survey. Of the eight middle schools in the district, six male principals and two female principals responded to the survey. Twenty of the 23 elementary principals responded to the survey. Five of the elementary participants were male, and 15 of the participants were female.

The participants' years of experience as a teacher ranged from 4 to 24 years. The majority of the participants (51.5%) indicated spending the majority of their teaching experience in elementary school, 45.5% indicated spending the majority of their teaching

experience in secondary school, and 3.0% indicated spending their teaching experience evenly split between elementary and secondary school. The participants earned their initial educational leadership certificate between 1993 and 2012. The participants reported obtaining their first assistant principal job between 1999 and 2013. The total years of experience as an assistant principal for the participants ranged from 2 to 18 years. The majority of the participants (66.7%) indicated that they had not served as an assistant principal at more than one school while 33.3% of participants reported that they had served as an assistant principal at more than one school. Most of the participants (66.7%) reported serving as an assistant principal under more than one principal while 33.3% reported that they had not served under more than one principal.

Including the current school year, the participants had 1 to 21 years of experience as a principal. The majority of the participants (63.6%) reported currently serving as principal in elementary schools, while 21.2% indicated currently serving as principal in middle schools, and 15.2% indicated currently serving as principal in high schools. Most of the participants (54.5%) indicated spending the majority of their administrative experience in elementary schools, while 21.2% indicated spending the majority of their administrative experience in middle schools, and 24.2% indicated spending the majority of their administrative experience in high schools. Descriptive statistics for total years of experience as teacher, assistant principal, and principal are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Years of Experience

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>
Total years of experience as a teacher	9.97	4.52	4.0	24.0
Total years of experience as an assistant principal	7.03	3.80	2.0	18.0
Total years of experience as a principal (including the current school year)	7.20	5.75	1.0	21.0

The researcher obtained a response rate of 91.6%, or 33 participants out of 36 possible participants, for the combined online Demographics Survey (Appendix A), Principal Readiness Inventory (Appendix B), and Qualitative Questionnaire (Appendix D) using Survey Monkey[®]. An email was sent one week after the recruitment email to remind participants to complete the survey. After two weeks, all high school and middle school participants had responded to the survey, so the researcher called all elementary participants to request completion of the survey if they had not participated. The duration of time from the initial recruitment through the final data collection was 17 days. The average time participants took to complete the survey was approximately 13 minutes. Participant attrition was not a factor, as the procedure for data collection involved a single-phased gathering of data from principal participants.

Findings

Quantitative

This convergent mixed methods research study examined the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to

assume the role of principal. A quantitative correlational research design was used to examine relationships between predicting and outcome variables. In this study, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine the relationship between principals' attitudes and beliefs about administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences gained in the role of assistant principal and principal readiness using public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district.

Demographic Survey. The researcher used the web-based Demographic Survey as one of the quantitative instruments for this study (See Appendix A). The Demographic Survey consisted of 13 questions. Of those 13 items, two items related to the participants' professional development opportunities before and after initial educational leadership certification that was helpful in preparing for the principalship. Of the 33 participants, 75.7% were mentored, 66.7% received professional learning, 57.5% took part in district-provided programs, 57.5% took part in university coursework, and 15.1% received other types of professional training prior to their initial educational leadership certification. After receiving their initial educational leadership certification, the participants reported additional professional training opportunities. Of the 33 participants, 69.6% were mentored, 81.8% received professional learning, 72.7% took part in district-provided programs, 42.4% took part in university coursework, and 6.1% received other types of professional training.

Principal Readiness Inventory. The researcher used the web-based Principal Readiness Inventory as one of the quantitative instruments for this study (See Appendix B). The Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014) consisted of three subscales –

Administrative, Interpersonal, and Conceptual Skills. Questions 1 through 7 assessed participants' level of involvement in administrative skills. Questions 8 through 13 assessed the participants' level of involvement in interpersonal skills. Questions 14 through 18 assessed the participants' level of involvement in conceptual skills. The questions were developed so that participant responses would utilize a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5 where 0 = *none*, 1 = *very low*, 2 = *low*, 3 = *medium*, 4 = *high*, and 5 = *very high*.

A Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was conducted to determine the internal consistency, or reliability. According to Nunnally (1978), .60 alpha coefficients are acceptable. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the administrative skills subscale was .628. The alpha coefficient for the interpersonal skills subscale was .800, and the alpha coefficient for the conceptual skills subscale was .911. These values indicated that each set of questions on the survey was a reliable measure of the construct being analyzed. A mean was calculated for each subscale. Descriptive statistics for administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Subscales

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>min</i>	<i>max</i>
Administrative Skills	3.74	0.56	2.33	4.83
Interpersonal Skills	4.46	0.48	3.50	5.00
Conceptual Skills	4.05	0.69	2.80	5.00

Discriminant validity assesses whether or not the scales are measuring different concepts using bivariate correlations. For discriminant validity, the correlation coefficient should be less than .80 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The correlation

coefficients ranged from .264 to .576, and the subscales were deemed to have discriminant validity. A correlational matrix for the discriminant validity analysis of administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills is represented in Table 8.

Table 8

Correlational Matrix for Discriminant Validity

Variable	1	2	3
1. Administrative Skills	--		
2. Interpersonal Skills	.264	--	
3. Conceptual Skills	.463**	.576**	--

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Administrative Skills. According to the data, the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in instructional leadership and student management while serving as an assistant principal. Of the participants, 60.6% reported very high involvement in instructional leadership and managing students. The participants reported missing training in managing financial resources and managing technology resources. The majority of the participants (51.5%) indicated they had medium involvement in managing financial resources. Most participants (45.5%) reported having medium involvement in managing technology resources. Frequencies and percentages for each item within the Administrative Skills Subscale are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages for Administrative Skills Subscale Items

Item	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Instructional leadership	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	7 (21%)	3 (9%)	20 (61%)
Managing students	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	12 (36%)	20 (61%)
Managing financial resources	4 (12%)	8 (24%)	17 (52%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)
Managing technology resources	2 (6%)	6 (18%)	15 (46%)	10 (30%)	0 (0%)
Generating schedules and rosters	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	8 (24%)	7 (21%)	16 (49%)
Employee management	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	5 (15%)	10 (30%)	17 (52%)
Employee motivation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (21%)	15 (46%)	11 (33%)

Interpersonal Skills. The vast majority of participants (87.9%) reported very high involvement in situations requiring them to maintain confidentiality. Nearly 73% of participants also reported a very high involvement in situations that required maintaining a sense of calmness and resisting hasty decision-making. The participants also reported having plenty of experience in situations requiring an understanding of social relationships that affect the success of the school and situations requiring one to show concern for employees and their families. Frequencies and percentages for each item within the Interpersonal Skills Subscale are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages for Interpersonal Skills Subscale Items

Item	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Maintaining confidentiality	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	29 (88%)
Maintaining calmness	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	8 (24%)	24 (73%)
Assisting through conflicts	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (24%)	10 (30%)	15 (46%)
Understanding social relationships	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	10 (30%)	22 (67%)
Awareness of political factors	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	11 (33%)	11 (33%)	9 (27%)
Concern for employees	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	10 (30%)	21 (64%)

Conceptual Skills. Of the participants, 49% reported high involvement, and 42% reported very high involvement in strategic planning, such as identifying issues and brainstorming action steps, while serving as an assistant principal. The majority of the participants (42%) reported high or very high involvement in problem solving experience. Creating vision involving long and short-term goals and building the team concept among stakeholders were relatively evenly split between medium, high, and very high involvement during the assistant principalship. Frequencies and percentages for each item within the Conceptual Skills Subscale are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Frequencies and Percentages for Conceptual Skills Subscale Items

Item	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Strategic planning (identifying issues, brainstorming action steps)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	16 (49%)	14 (42%)
Strategic planning (networking with stakeholders, building consensus)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	8 (24%)	15 (46%)	9 (27%)
Problem solving	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (18%)	14 (42%)	13 (39%)
Creating vision (long and short term goals)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	10 (30%)	12 (36%)	9 (27%)
Creating vision (building team concept among stakeholders)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	11 (33%)	11 (33%)	10 (30%)

Principal Readiness. The last question on the Principal Readiness Inventory provided data regarding the participants' attitudes and beliefs of how well their experiences as an assistant principal prepared them to serve as principal. The question was developed so that it could be answered utilizing a response scale of 1 to 10 with 1 = *not well-prepared*, 5 = *moderately prepared*, and 10 = *very well-prepared*. Of the participants, 18.2% reported a 5 (*moderately prepared*), and 18.2% reported a 10 (*very well-prepared*) to serve as principal based on the roles and responsibilities assigned during the assistant principalship. Of the remaining participants, 21.2% indicated a 7, 21.2% indicated an 8, and 21.2% indicated a 9 on the response scale of 1 to 10. None of the participants selected options 1 through 4 on the *not well-prepared* side of the scale. The mean response was 7.82 with a standard deviation of 1.69.

The items were analyzed to determine the strength of the relationship between each predicting variable and the outcome variable using a series of bivariate correlations

(Hair et al., 2006). The bivariate correlation provided statistical data to determine which predicting variables to include in the stepwise regression (Petrocelli, 2003). Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the criteria established for correlation coefficients was .10 as weak, .30 as moderate, and .50 as strong. According to the established criteria, Administrative Skills, the total years of experience as a principal, and Conceptual Skills had a weak to moderate relationship with Principal Readiness, the outcome variable. The intercorrelation matrix for the predicting and outcome variables is displayed in Table 12.

Table 12

Intercorrelation Matrix for the Predicting and Outcome Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Total years of experience as teacher	--						
2. Total years of experience as an assistant principal	-.26	--					
3. Total years of experience as a principal	-.24	-.41*	--				
4. Administrative Skills	-.20	.34	-.18	--			
5. Interpersonal Skills	-.22	-.13	.20	.26	--		
6. Conceptual Skills	-.12	.17	.15	.46**	.58**	--	
7. Principal Readiness	.06	.30	-.38*	.46**	.05	.11	--

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

A stepwise multiple regression model was conducted. The multiple regression process allowed the researcher to enhance accuracy by eliminating unnecessary predicting variables (Halinski & Feldt, 1970). The researcher first entered Administrative Skills into the model because this predicting variable had a moderate relationship of .46 with the outcome variable. The next step was to add the total years of experience as a principal to the Administrative Skills because this predicting variable had a moderate

relationship with the outcome variable ($r = -.38$). The third step was to add Conceptual Skills to the total years of experience as a principal and Administrative Skills because this predicting variable had a weak relationship with the outcome variable ($r = .11$). A summary of stepwise regression analysis is displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Summary of Stepwise Regression Analysis

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Administrative Skills	1.38	0.48	0.46**	1.22	0.47	0.41*	1.29	0.55	0.43*
Total Years of Experience as a Principal				-0.09	0.05	-0.30	-0.09	0.05	-0.29
Conceptual Skills							-0.12	0.45	-0.05
R^2		.212			.300			.301	
F for change in R^2		8.327**			3.759			0.078	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

R^2 indicates the proportion of variance created by the outcome variable accounted for by the predicting variables (Pedhazur, 1982). The sum of squares was used to determine percentage of the variance in the participants' attitudes and beliefs of how well their experiences as an assistant principal prepared them to serve as principal: accounted for by Administrative Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Conceptual Skills, and professional experiences. The best model was Model 2 because the R^2 value was .300. Model 3 did not vary much from Model 2 in terms of the R^2 value. Model 3 had an R^2 value of .301. R^2 does not determine if the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, a significance test was conducted for the R^2 change (Petrocelli, 2003). The R^2 change from

Model 1 to Model 2 was 3.759 ($p = .062$). The R^2 change from Model 2 to Model 3 was 0.078 ($p = .782$). Based on the data analysis, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis for Research Question 1.

Qualitative

The qualitative descriptive case study research design examined the perceptions of professional development experiences that would be most beneficial to assistant principals seeking a principalship for public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to combine the strengths of both research methods to investigate the stated problem of assistant principal preparation (Fetters et al., 2013). The researcher began the initial analysis by developing a list of a priori codes generated from the literature review (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As the researcher reviewed the qualitative responses, additional codes emerged, and some of the initial a priori codes were removed. Corresponding statements were highlighted as the researcher read the responses. The codes were aligned with the highlighted participant statements. The researcher then utilized pattern coding to group the codes into prominent themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Next, the researcher began to track the number of responses referring to each theme and code. The findings from the qualitative survey are reported below in Tables 14 through 16 for select themes along with the corresponding participant statements.

The findings of Question 1 included five prominent themes in the principal responses. The identified themes included Teacher Leadership, School Leadership Roles, Teaching Professional Learning, Leadership Professional Learning, and Mentoring. The researcher utilized an external auditor to validate the findings (Appendix G). The external

auditor has been an educator for 23 years. She received her master's degree in science education from the University of Georgia and her educational specialist degree in educational leadership from Columbus State University. In the data regarding professional development before initial educational leadership certification, the external auditor identified two additional codes related to the theme of School Leadership Roles. The two additional codes identified by the external auditor involved working in various organizations within the school and curriculum familiarity. The researcher did not agree. The comment, "working in various organizations," was not specific enough to determine if the comment qualified to be coded as part of the School Leadership Roles theme. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding for School Leadership Roles was 83.3%. The external auditor also identified an additional code related to the Leadership Professional Learning theme. The additional code involved professional learning in management skills as organizational skills, customer service, and soft skills. The researcher agreed that this code should be included in the Leadership Professional Learning theme. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding for School Leadership Roles was 80.0%. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding related to Teacher Leadership Roles, Teaching Professional Learning, and Mentoring was 100.0%. Themes and codes for professional development before initial educational leadership certification are found in Table 14.

Table 14

Themes and Codes for Professional Development before Initial Educational Leadership Certification

Themes Identified	Codes Aligned to Theme
Teacher Leadership Roles (n = 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade Chair • Teacher/coach to take on teacher leadership roles in our school. This experience promoted my confidence and ambition to serve in a formal leadership role. • Literacy coach
School Leadership Roles (n = 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served on the school leadership team • My role as Better Seeking Team member helped me understand the best ways to work with groups and ways to motivate others. • Planning Chair SACS Leadership
Teaching Professional Learning (n = 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I attended several opportunities to participate in PL that taught me research-based instructional practices to enhance my craft as a teacher. • My professional learning prior to my initial leadership certification was primarily to my teaching role. • Just gained a lot of knowledge on how to be a highly effective teacher and doing a good job. I think this PL helped me become a better administrator because I was a successful teacher.
Leadership Professional Learning (n = 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Georgia RESA had a year-long program called Rising Stars. This program allowed focused on multiple facets of school administration. • GLISI was my primary and best PL. • Leadership Development Program helped with decision making and soliciting teacher/stakeholder input.
Mentoring (n = 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I mentored new teachers at my school before my leadership certificate. • Before Educational Leadership, I was part of the Coaching Endorsement Program. • The principal I worked with provided the best training as he exposed me to various responsibilities of the principalship.

The findings of Question 2 included four prominent themes in the principal responses. The identified themes included Workshop/Conference/Professional Development, On-The-Job Training, District Provided Professional Learning, and

Mentoring. In the data regarding professional development after initial educational leadership certification, the external auditor identified one additional code related to the theme of On-The-Job Training. The additional code identified by the external auditor involved shadowing principals. The additional code of shadowing principals seemed like a valid code to add to the theme of On-The-Job Training based on the review of literature. According to Levine (2005), the best principal preparation programs were not overly theoretical and included on-the-job experiences. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding for On-The-Job Training was 85.7%. The external auditor also identified an additional code related to the District Provided Professional Learning theme. The additional code involved the redelivery of professional learning information provided by the county. The researcher did not agree that "redelivering information" from district provided professional learning qualified to be an additional code. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding for District Provided Professional Learning was 92.3%. The level of agreement between the researcher's coding and the external auditor's coding for Workshops/Conferences/Professional Development, and Mentoring was 100.0%. Themes and codes for professional development after initial educational leadership certification are found in Table 15.

Table 15

Themes and Codes for Professional Development after Initial Educational Leadership Certification

Themes Identified	Codes Aligned to Theme
Workshops/Conference/Professional Development (n = 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Conferences • District and State professional development • GASSP which provided insights into better job performance.
On-The-Job Training (n = 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands on experience in the actual leadership position. • I would credit my on the job training as far as providing me the most impactful experience. • Learned more from hands on experiences than college work.
District Provided Professional Learning (n = 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was in the first Leadership Development Cohort that Houston County provides. It touched on many areas of the roles of principal and provided us with methods that best lead a school. • I was placed in the “rising stars” class for assistant principals who were expected to move to principalships. • I participated in the Houston County Leadership Development Program which helped me to better understand my duties and responsibilities by providing information on many topics from experienced principals.
Mentoring (n = 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal mentor groups • County led mentoring programs for aspiring principals was a great resource • The most beneficial PL was being mentored by a strong leader.

The findings of Question 3 included four prominent themes in the principal responses. The identified themes include Budget, Mentoring, Shadowing, and Exposure/Experience. The level of agreement between the researcher’s coding and the

external auditor's coding for additional supports that would have been beneficial prior to assuming the role of principal was 100.0% for Budget, Mentoring, Shadowing, and Exposure/Experience. Themes and codes for additional supports that would have been beneficial prior to assuming the role of principal are found in Table 16.

Table 16

Themes and Codes for Additional Supports that would have been Beneficial prior to Assuming the Role of Principal

Themes Identified	Codes Aligned to Theme
Budget (n = 11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More experience with creating and monitoring budgets • Specific training pertaining to budgeting and finance. • APs/APIs need more help with overseeing the budgets at the school.
Mentoring (n = 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have mentoring as leaders which is great and our system has added PLC groups for us to meet. These have definitely helped me grow. • Future principals are best prepared by the current principals. It really depends on the willingness of the current principal to share insight, mentoring... • Having a principal mentorship like they have now in Houston County would have been great.
Shadowing (n = 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadowing another principal other than my supervisor. • Having the time to really shadow with principals would be beneficial, whether your own principal or at another school. • It would have been beneficial for me to have a principal in another building that could have allowed me the opportunity to observe them in their job.
Exposure/Experiences (n = 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It really depends on the willingness of the current principal to share experiences with APs who desire to hold the principal position. • Assistant principals need to be exposed to all aspects of the principalship and not focus only on one duty (ex. AP of Discipline). • Experience has been the best teacher.

Initialization, construction, rectification, and finalization are the four phases of theme development in qualitative content and thematic analysis. Initialization involves reading the responses and highlighting meaningful units. The construction phase includes labelling and organizing the codes as they relate to the research questions. The rectification phase relates the themes to established knowledge. The finalization phase is where the storyline is developed (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016).

The theme that was reported most often regarding professional development prior to initial educational leadership certification was serving in teacher leadership roles. After initial educational leadership certification, the theme most often reported was professional development in the form of workshops and conferences. The most common themes reported regarding additional supports that would have been helpful prior to assuming the role of principal were budget and shadowing.

Integration through connecting occurs when the study uses the same participants for quantitative and qualitative data collection (Fetters et al., 2013). Databases from the quantitative and qualitative instruments collected from the same participants were merged to answer Research Question #3. Integration through merging allows the researcher to take two separate databases and bring them together for analysis and comparison (Fetters et al., 2013). The quantitative data from the principal readiness item and the qualitative data collected using parallel questions were integrated to explore which skill sets and professional development experiences were most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to become principals. In the area of administrative skills within the quantitative portion of the study, participants reported a lack of training in the area of managing financial resources. A lack of training regarding budget was one of the most common

themes reported regarding additional supports that would have been helpful prior to assuming the role of principal in the qualitative portion of the study. According to the quantitative data collected in the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in the area of instructional leadership while serving as an assistant principal. According to the qualitative data collected, participants reported high levels of involvement in workshops, conferences, teacher focused professional learning, and district provided professional learning after their initial educational leadership certification. Professional development opportunities support the development of instructional leadership capabilities. Overall, the principal readiness data indicated that participants felt moderately prepared to very well prepared to take on the role of principal.

Summary

The purpose of this convergent mixed methods research study was to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal in a Middle Georgia school district. The quantitative data for this study were obtained through the use of several instruments, which were completed by 33 public school principals. The quantitative instruments included the web-based Demographic Survey and the web-based Principal Readiness Inventory. The last question on the Principal Readiness Inventory provided data regarding the participants' attitudes and beliefs of how well their experiences in all skill categories prepared them to serve as principal. The qualitative data for this study were obtained through the use of a questionnaire that explored perceptions of professional

development experiences that would be most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to become principals.

This research study was guided by two main research questions:

RQ1. What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness?

A stepwise multiple regression was used to examine these relationships. The predicting variable with the strongest relationship with the outcome variable was Administrative Skills. Model 2 proved to be the best model, which included Administrative Skills and the total years of experience as a principal. According to the data collected from the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in the area of instructional leadership and student management while serving as an assistant principal. Principal readiness data indicated that participants felt moderately prepared to very well prepared to take on the role of principal. None of the 33 participants reported they were not well prepared to serve as principal.

RQ2. What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness?

The descriptive case study explored which skill sets and professional development experiences were most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to be principals. A thematic analysis was utilized to recognize patterns within the data. Participants reported higher levels of mentoring prior to the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of mentoring after the initial educational leadership certification.

Based on participant respondents, teacher leaders were given the opportunity to benefit from having a mentor than assistant principals were. However, participants reported high levels of professional learning experiences after the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of professional learning experiences prior to initial educational leadership certification. While serving as an assistant principal, professional learning experiences were more prevalent than the professional learning experiences offered to teacher leaders.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter V provides a synopsis of school principals' beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principal preparation for the role of principal. Findings from the current study were analyzed, compared with previous studies, and summarized to determine implications and recommendations. The major sections included were the summary of the study, analysis of research findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications of the study, dissemination of the findings, and conclusion.

Summary of the Study

Schools began as one-room classrooms where the principal-teacher was tasked with teaching students and managing daily schoolhouse operations. The position of school principal was primarily a development of the 20th century in response to increased student enrollment in schools (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). One-room classrooms began to expand to multiple classrooms divided by grade levels (Madden, 2008). Eventually, the principal-teacher stopped teaching and took on the role of principal. The demands of the principalship became almost impossible to meet as school environments grew in complexity (Danielson, 2007). The scope of the principal's role grew, facilitating the need for assistant principals. The initial purpose of the assistant principal was to help relieve some of the burden on the principal if the enrollment of the school was high

enough to justify the position. As expectations of the principal began to change over time, the role of the assistant principal changed.

In 1923, the NAESP conducted the first nationwide study surveying 1,270 assistant principals on their role (Glantz, 1994). Data were collected regarding the experiences, training, working conditions, responsibilities, and financial status. The purpose of the study was to provide a descriptive overview of the assistant principal position. According to the data, most participants regarded discipline and attendance as their primary duties. The study gave a comprehensive overview of the importance of the assistant principalship (Glantz, 1994). Austin and Brown (1970) conducted a study of secondary assistant principals 50 years later. The problem addressed was the lack of significance given to the role of the assistant principal. The purpose was to delineate the nature, function, and relative status of the assistant principal position. An implication of the study was a better understanding of the role of the assistant principal.

In 1992, Glantz conducted a survey to address the assistant principals' current responsibilities compared to the duties the participants believed they should be performing in order to learn how to lead a school. Over 90% of the participants stated that their main duties included student discipline, parental complaints, lunch supervision, scheduling substitutes, and completing paperwork (Glantz, 1994). Glantz (1994) concluded that the duties assigned to assistant principals did not provide adequate training for the principalship.

In the 1990s, educational reforms began to shift the focus to improving instruction. Typically, principals were solely in charge of managing instruction. As the demand to improve instruction grew, the demand for principals to have help with

instructional leadership grew. At this point, job responsibilities of assistant principals shifted from being primarily focused on operational duties to more instructional leadership responsibilities (Pounder, 2011). To fulfill this role, assistant principals needed more time devoted to instructional leadership duties. Assistant principals were valuable assets to principals as instructional leaders if given the time and opportunity.

Even though a shift in the role of assistant principal was evident, many aspiring principals still experienced a misalignment between operational and instructional aspects of their job (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Chen et al. (2003) conducted a study to address the issue of principal shortage even though principals often serve as a mentor for assistant principals beginning their leadership career. The study's purpose was to investigate the beliefs of assistant principals regarding their preparation to lead a school. The participants ranked lack of experience as the main reason they did not feel prepared for the principalship. The results of this study indicated that assistant principals lacked sufficient on-the-job training to prepare them to lead a school (Chen et al., 2003).

According to Oleszewski et al. (2012), the role of the assistant principal was vital to the success of schools but was under-researched. Limited research existed on the transition between roles and responsibilities of assistant principal to principal. Existing research on school leadership focused on the principalship, with very limited research focused on preparing assistant principals to lead a school. As vital members of the school leadership team, assistant principals need to have opportunities to perform responsibilities associated with the principalship (Bloom & Krovetz, 2009). Novice principals feel overwhelmed while serving their first year in this role due to the lack of adequate training received prior to the principalship (Bodger, 2011). Assistant principals

need the opportunity to experience the totality of the principalship to be prepared to lead a school (Madden, 2008). Context-specific learning experiences are needed in order to prepare assistant principals to serve in the capacity of resilient principals (Zubnzycki, 2013).

The findings of this study revealed the common themes of mentoring and exposure/experience as supports that would have been helpful prior to assuming the role of principal. First-hand experience can strengthen leadership resiliency and help develop leadership capacity of potential principals (Smith, 2011). According to the findings of this study, participants reported higher levels of mentoring prior to the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of mentoring after the initial educational leadership certification. Administrators can grow in their ability to face challenges with resilience when they are prepared properly (LeMieux, 2000). Seeking assistance from other administrators who are able to offer a different assessment of the challenges faced can help principals become resilient leaders. Maintaining supportive social networks with family, friends, and colleagues can increase a principal's resilience (Mullen, 2009).

Resilient principals know the value of life-long learning to meet the challenges of change (Allison, 2011). According to the findings of this study, professional learning experiences were more prevalent among assistant principals than teacher leaders. Professional development experiences contributed to development of context-specific learning experiences for assistant principals. According to Soehner and Ryan (2011), assistant principals need substantial training to develop skills necessary to meet leadership challenges posed by public schools.

A common theme reported in the qualitative portion of the study involving additional supports that would have been helpful before being named principal was a lack of training regarding budget. In the area of administrative skills within the quantitative portion of the study, participants also reported a lack of training in the area of managing financial resources. This study addressed was how to best prepare assistant principals for their role as a principal. The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. Understanding the attitudes and beliefs of principals regarding their personal experiences as assistant principals was a critical component in learning how to meet needs of aspiring principals to help make the transition to the principalship easier (Lightfoot, 2014).

A convergent mixed methods research design was chosen because the data were collected from potential participants at the same time using a combined online measure. For the quantitative data, a correlational research design allowed the researcher to determine if a relationship existed between predicting variables and principal readiness (Ellis & Levy, 2009). For the qualitative data, a descriptive case study research design allowed the researcher to describe perceptions of the principal readiness phenomenon within the bounded system where it occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Using a convenience sampling technique, the researcher chose public school principals employed in a Middle Georgia school district. The researcher requested permission from the school district to conduct the research study. Once permission was granted, a recruitment email was sent to all principals in the Middle Georgia school district. The researcher used a convergent mixed methods research design to answer the

two research questions: (1) What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness? and (2) What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness? The three data sources in this study were combined into one online measure for data collection purposes. The researcher obtained a response rate of 91.6% for the combined online Demographics Survey, Principal Readiness Inventory, and Qualitative Questionnaire using Survey Monkey®.

According to the data collected from the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in the area of instructional leadership and student management while serving as an assistant principal. Principal readiness data indicated that participants felt moderately prepared to very well prepared to take on the role of principal. The descriptive case study explored which skill sets and professional development experiences were most beneficial to assistant principals aspiring to be principals. Participants reported higher levels of mentoring prior to the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of mentoring after the initial educational leadership certification. In addition, participants reported high levels of professional learning experiences after the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of professional learning experiences prior to initial educational leadership certification. Professional learning experiences were more prevalent among assistant principals compared to the professional learning experiences offered to teacher leaders.

Analysis of the Research Findings

RQ1 (Quantitative): What is the relationship between administrative skills, interpersonal skills, conceptual skills, and professional experiences that were developed as an assistant principal and principal readiness?

According to the data collected from the Administrative Skills Subscale of the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in instructional leadership and student management while serving as an assistant principal. The literature review supported these findings. According to Tirozzi (2001), the role of principal shifted from centering around management and administration to focusing on instructional leadership that facilitated teaching and learning. Student discipline experience and routine managerial tasks do not prepare assistant principals to face the broad challenges of the principalship (Umphrey, 2007). The participants reported a lack of training in the area of managing financial resources. These findings are also supported by the review of literature. A study conducted by Shoho and Barnett (2010) concluded that administrators did not feel prepared for issues involving budget. Because budgeting and finance were usually not part of an assistant principal's role in a school, Enomoto (2012) suggested professional development in this area as potentially beneficial for aspiring principals. Data collected from the Interpersonal Skills Subscale of the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014) indicated that the majority of participants were highly involved in situations that required them to maintain confidentiality, stay calm, and resist hasty decision-making. The foundation of a good relationship begins with trust, a critical component in bridging opposing positions between principals and stakeholders (Noonan et al., 2008). McMahon (2006) stated that

principals who possessed the ability to stay calm and maintain demeanor during times of difficulty had a greater likelihood to overcome obstacles. The majority of participants understand the importance of social relationships and how they could impact the success of the school. Strong leadership fosters strong stakeholders and building trust between principals and stakeholders adds resiliency to organizations (Guarasci & Lieberman, 2009).

According to the data collected from the Conceptual Skills Subscale of the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), nearly half of the participants reported a high level of involvement in strategic planning, such as identifying issues and brainstorming action steps. As stated in the literature review, principals who were motivated to set goals, allotted energy to complete their goals, and persevered when facing obstacles were resilient leaders (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Most of the participants reported having experience in problem solving. Participants reporting having experience in creating vision and team building were evenly divided.

The last question on the survey provided a measure of how well their experiences in all skill categories combined prepared them to become effective principals. According to the data, assistant principals who were involved in duties requiring administrative skills felt more prepared to become effective principals. Experience involving interpersonal skills provided the greatest benefit in their ability to lead. There was no significant relationship between the level of involvement in conceptual skills and perceived principal readiness. Nearly half of the participants reported high levels of involvement in strategic planning and problem solving which could explain why there was no significant relationship between the level of involvement in conceptual skills and

perceived principal readiness. This finding was not supported in the literature review.

According to Patterson and Kelleher (2005), successful principals understand the importance of strengthening their confidence and competence levels by setting obtainable goals and overcoming setbacks quickly. Weller and Weller (2002) found collaborating with principals regarding planning the school's vision and leadership initiatives is beneficial to assistant principals.

RQ2 (Qualitative): What are the perceived differences in professional development opportunities and principal readiness?

Participants reported higher levels of mentoring prior to the initial educational leadership certification compared to the level of mentoring after the initial educational leadership certification. Teachers and assistant principals benefited from mentoring. According to Alsbury and Hackmann (2006), mentoring relationships facilitated and sustained professional growth. Mentoring allowed assistant principals to see the theory learned in their educational leadership courses become relevant to their daily practices (Daresh, 2004). Participants reported low levels of on-the-job training after their initial educational leadership certification. The literature review supported these findings. According to a study conducted by Chen et al. (2003), assistant principals lacked sufficient on-the-job training to prepare them to lead a school. The best principal preparation programs were not overly theoretical and included on-the-job experiences (Levine, 2005). Assistant principals required context-specific learning experiences that prepared them to serve as a resilient principal in a school (Zubnzycki, 2013). A study conducted by Cheney and Davis (2011) found that effective principal preparation

programs are research-based, provided authentic experience, offered curriculum coherence, provided mentoring, and were structured for collaborative activities.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher's goal was to obtain a response rate of 83% for participation in the combined online Demographics Survey, Principal Readiness Inventory, and Qualitative Questionnaire. The researcher obtained a response rate of 91.6%; 33 out of 36 principals participated. Although the participation rate was high, participants in this study resided in a single urban school district in Middle Georgia and were members of a tight knit community. Generalizing the findings to other school districts with different demographics and socioeconomic status may be difficult due to the study's limited number of participants in the same school district. Participants were not randomly selected, which is ideal for making inferences; instead, convenience sampling was utilized.

Additionally, principal participants may have been hesitant about sharing challenges when answering the survey items. Participants were not asked to provide any identity information to maintain the anonymity of participants. Time may have been another limitation. Principals participants may have encountered time restraints that hindered their ability to participate in this study. The outcome variable was measured by one survey item and might have served as another limitation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings from this study, the researcher suggests the following recommendations:

- 1) Replicate the study using the same data collection instrumentation and data analysis with a larger population from a different region or state.
- 2) Conduct a study focusing on the Administrative Skills Subscale only, to determine which specific administrative skills serve as the best predictors of principal readiness.
- 3) Conduct a study focusing on the Conceptual Skills Subscale only, to determine which specific conceptual skills serve as the best predictors of principal readiness.
- 4) Conduct a study focusing on the Interpersonal Skills Subscale only, to determine which specific interpersonal skills serve as the best predictors of principal readiness.
- 5) Conduct a quantitative study analyzing all principal preparation programs across the state of Georgia to determine how leadership preparation curriculum can be tailored to meet the needs of assistant principals before they transition into the principalship.

Implications of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal, in order to understand how to better prepare assistant principals to serve as the school leader. The findings of this study could aid in the development of effective educational leadership development programs that could help assistant principals make a transition into the principalship. The need for this type of research study was evident in the lack of research addressing the attitudes and beliefs of principals' experiences while

serving as an assistant principal. Meaningful professional development, understanding the role of the principal, and recognizing the challenges that come with the job would give assistant principals context-specific learning experiences needed to serve as resilient principals. According to the literature review, a gap existed between what educational leadership students learned in formal training at a university and what they needed to learn to become resilient principals (Walker & Qian, 2006). The participants indicated a need for additional training in budget and management of financial resources based on the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The participants also indicated that providing mentoring opportunities and the ability to experience all aspects of the principalship prior to leading a school could be beneficial. Finally, the participants indicated that providing professional learning opportunities in order to provide context-specific learning experiences could be beneficial.

Dissemination of the Findings

As requested by the superintendent of the school district where the study was conducted, a copy of the final dissertation will be provided via the email address utilized while requesting permission. Dr. Jimmy Lightfoot, the developer of the Principal Readiness Inventory, requested a copy of the final dissertation. A copy will be provided to Dr. Lightfoot via the email address used to request permission to replicate his study.

The researcher plans to submit the study for academic publication under the direction of the EdD Dissertation Committee Chair, Dr. Gary Shouppe. Once published, this study will add to the current research on preparing assistant principals to make the transition into a principalship.

Conclusion

The demands of the assistant principalship increased significantly since the development of the role of the assistant principal. Assistant principals require professional development opportunities, allowing for the development of content knowledge and skills necessary to lead a school. Unfortunately, many assistant principals lack the opportunities for specialized professional training to help them grow as principals.

According to the data collected from the Principal Readiness Inventory (Lightfoot, 2014), the majority of the participants were able to gain experience in instructional leadership and student management while serving as an assistant principal. The literature review supported these findings. Principals are required to provide instructional leadership that facilitates teaching and learning (Tirozzi, 2001). Assistant principals are often assigned management duties, such as administering school discipline, supervising lunch, and maintaining a safe school climate (Marshall & Hooley, 2006).

One of the most common themes reported in the qualitative portion of the study regarding additional supports that would have been helpful prior to assuming the role of principal was a lack of training regarding school budget. In the area of administrative skills within the quantitative portion of the study, participants also reported a lack of training in the area of managing financial resources. These findings were also supported by the review of literature. A study conducted by Shoho and Barnett (2010) concluded that administrators did not feel prepared for issues involving budget.

Participants reported that additional supports, such as mentoring and the ability to experience all aspects of the principalship prior to leading a school, would have been

beneficial. The literature review also supported these findings. According to Bloom and Krovetz (2009), assistant principals needed intentional mentoring, access to strong support systems, and specialized training to become effective principals.

According to Weller and Weller (2002), collaborating with principals regarding planning the school's vision and leadership initiatives was beneficial to assistant principals. Creating vision involving long and short-term goals, and building the team concept among stakeholders were reported by participants as an area of relatively high involvement during the assistant principalship. However, the data indicated no significant relationship between the level of involvement in conceptual skills and perceived principal readiness.

Understanding principals' beliefs and perceptions on their preparedness to serve as principal provided insight into how universities and districts can better prepare future administrators to lead. University- and district-level educational leadership preparation programs could use the data gathered from this study to determine how educational leadership preparation curriculum could be tailored to meet the needs of assistant principals before they transition into the principalship.

Based on the findings of this study, providing assistant principals with mentoring opportunities could be beneficial in preparing them to become resilient leaders. The findings also supported providing assistant principals with professional learning opportunities, in order to provide context-specific learning experiences. Finally, the findings supported the need to train assistant principals in budget and managing financial resources. Assistant principals can become resilient leaders by improving the educational leadership preparation process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Demographics Survey

1. Gender: Female Male
2. Year in which you earned your initial Educational Leadership certification: _____
3. Year in which you obtained your first assistant principal position: _____
4. Total years of experience as a teacher: _____
5. Total years of experience as an assistant principal: _____
6. Have you served as an assistant principal at more than one school?
 - No
 - Yes
7. Have you served as an assistant principal under more than one principal?
 - No
 - Yes
8. Total years of experience as a principal (including the current school year): _____
9. The campus where I am currently serving as principal:
 - Elementary (K-5)
 - Middle (6-8)
 - High (6-12)
10. The majority of my administrative experience can BEST be defined as:
 - Elementary (K-5)
 - Middle (6-8)
 - High (6-12)
11. The majority of my teaching experience can BEST be defined as:
 - Elementary (K-6)
 - Secondary (6-12)
 - Evenly split between Elementary and Secondary
12. What additional professional training have you received *before* your initial Educational Leadership certification that helped you prepare for the principalship?
 - a. mentoring
 - b. professional learning
 - c. district-provided programs
 - d. university coursework
 - e. other

13. What additional professional training have you received *after* your initial Educational Leadership certification that helped you prepare for the principalship
- a. mentoring
 - b. professional learning
 - c. district-provided programs
 - d. other
 - e. none

Appendix B

Principal Readiness Inventory

Administrative Skills

During my time as an ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, this was my level of involvement in the following administrative skills:

1. Instructional leadership (managing and assessing curriculum and instruction)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
2. Managing students (student behavior and movement in and around the building)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
3. Managing financial resources (budgetary planning)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
4. Managing technology resources (planning and implementing new technologies)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
5. Generating schedules and rosters (master schedule, alternate schedules, duty rosters, tutorial rosters, etc.)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
6. Employee management (appraising teacher/employee performance)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------
7. Employee motivation (communicating expectations, providing incentives, etc.)

Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None
-----------	------	--------	-----	----------	------

Interpersonal Skills

During my time as an ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, this was my level of involvement in the following interpersonal skills:

8. Situations requiring me to maintain confidentiality (students, employees, etc.)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

9. Situations requiring me to maintain a sense of calmness and resist hasty decision-making

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

10. Situations requiring me to assist employees to work through conflicts

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

11. Situations requiring an understanding of social relationships that affect the success of the school

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

12. Situations requiring an awareness of political factors that affect the success of the school

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

13. Situations requiring me to show concern for employees and their families

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

Conceptual Skills

During my time as an ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, this was my level of involvement in the following conceptual skills:

14. Strategic planning (identifying issues, brainstorming action steps)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

15. Strategic planning (networking with stakeholders, building consensus)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

16. Problem solving (identifying problems, gathering resources, taking decisive actions)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

17. Creating vision (establishing short and long term goals)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

18. Creating vision (building the team concept among stakeholders)

Very High High Medium Low Very Low None

Principal Readiness

Consider the three categories of principalship skills (administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual) as you answer this final question. You may look back at the previous sections of this survey if you need to see examples of skills in the three categories.

19. How prepared were you to become a principal based on your roles and responsibilities as an ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL in the areas of administrative skills, interpersonal skills, and conceptual skills?
(Please answer on a scale of 1-10)

(Very well-prepared/10)

(Moderately prepared/5)

(Not well-prepared/1)

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

Appendix C

Consent to Replicate

On Fri, Sep 28, 2018 at 1:35 PM WALLACE, TONYA <TONYA.WALLACE@hcbe.net> wrote:

Good afternoon, Dr. Lightfoot!

My name is Tonya Wallace. I am a doctoral candidate at Columbus State University. My dissertation topic is based on preparing assistant principals for the principalship. I ran across your dissertation while working on my review of literature. Because our topics are so similar, I would like to get your permission to replicate your study based on your recommendations for further study. I would like to replicate the study using the same data collection instrument with participants from a school district in Middle Georgia. Would you have any reservations with me doing this?

Thank you in advance for considering this request!

Tonya Wallace

From: Jimmy Lightfoot <lightfootj@gladewaterisd.com>
Sent: Friday, September 28, 2018 3:10:13 PM
To: WALLACE, TONYA
Subject: Re: Permission to Replicate Study

I would be thrilled for you to replicate the study, Ms. Wallace! This is the first such request I've received since I defended the study in 2014. If you are willing to share your findings with me, I will be very interested to see how they compare to my original findings. If I can help you in any way, please let me know. Best of luck to you!



Go Bears!

Dr. Jimmy C. Lightfoot
Assistant Superintendent
Gladewater ISD

Appendix D

Qualitative Questionnaire

1. Tell me about the professional development *before* your initial Educational Leadership certification and its benefits for you once assuming the role of principal.
2. Tell me about the professional development *after* your initial Educational Leadership certification and its benefits for you once assuming the role of principal.
3. Tell me about additional supports that you think would have been beneficial prior to assuming the role of principal.

Appendix E

Recruitment Email

Dear Principal,

The purpose of this correspondence is to ask for your participation in a study that is a part of an important project being conducted by me in fulfillment of my doctoral degree. The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal. This measure will provide insightful information regarding which skills gained through the assistant principalship that best prepare one to serve as principal. Please help to improve leadership preparation practices. Your feedback will be insightful and informative.

As a principal in the Houston County School District, you have been selected to participate in this study. If you chose to participate in this survey, please click on the following link below and answer all 35 questions. Your answers are confidential and completing this survey will only take 15-30 minutes. The first question of the survey will prompt you to review Informed Consent. If you wish to continue and participate in this research study, simply select "I agree".

This research study has been reviewed by the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. If you have any questions or comments regarding this survey, please feel free to contact me by e-mail wallace_tonya1@columbusstate.edu. You may also address questions to my dissertation chair, Dr. Gary Shouppe at 706-565-1454 or by e-mail at shouppe_gary@columbusstate.edu.

Thank you very much for helping us with this important study.

Survey link:

Sincerely,

Tonya Wallace
Doctoral Candidate
Columbus State University

Appendix F

CSU IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Date: 1/29/19

Protocol Number: 19-034

Protocol Title: Examining the Relationship Between Beliefs and Perceived Experiences
During Assistant Principal Preparation for the Role of Principal

Principal Investigator: Tonya Wallace

Co-Principal Investigator: Gary Shouppe

Dear Tonya Wallace:

The Columbus State University Institutional Review Board or representative(s) has reviewed your research proposal identified above. It has been determined that the project is classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations and has been approved. You may begin your research project immediately.

Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.

Sincerely,

Amber Dees, IRB Coordinator

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Appendix G

Web-Based Informed Consent

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Tonya Wallace, a doctoral student in the Counseling, Foundations and Leadership department at Columbus State University. Dr. Gary Shouppe, a professor at Columbus State University, serves as the faculty member supervising this study.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this study will be to examine the relationship between beliefs and perceived experiences during assistant principalship and readiness to assume the role of principal.

II. Procedure:

You will receive a link directing you to Survey Monkey®. This online measure will contain a Demographics Survey, Principal Readiness Inventory, and Qualitative Questionnaire. The duration to complete this survey is 15-30 minutes. The data collected for this research project will not be used in future research projects.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

To minimize risks or discomforts, the data collected will not be linked to the participants in this study.

IV. Potential Benefits:

The educational community will benefit from an increased knowledge of how to best prepare assistant principals to serve as principal.

V. Cost and Compensation:

Participants will not receive compensation for participating in this study. There will be no financial cost for participating.

VI. Confidentiality:

To ensure confidentiality, IP addresses of participants will not be recorded. The electronic data will be stored on the researcher's personal laptop and external hard drive, which are password protected. The data will be deleted six months after the completion of the research study.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefit.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact me, Tonya Wallace, at [REDACTED] or wallace_tonya1@columbusstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State university Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu. I have read this informed consent form. If I had questions, they have been answered. By selecting the *I agree* radial and *Submit*, I agree to participate in this research project.

I agree

I do not agree

Submit