

**UCEA PROFESSORS' PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL PREPARATION  
PROGRAM CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING CANDIDATES FOR THE  
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP ROLE**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Current demands on campus principals require them to be instructional leaders who understand the complex nature of teaching and learning and communicate clear expectations for the academic success of all students. The school principal is a critical influence in a student's success, and as a critical influence, university principal preparation programs must insure that principal candidates are well prepared for the instructional leadership role. The traditional university principal preparation program is the primary system for grooming aspiring principals to be leaders of teaching and learning; however, the research on how preparation programs specifically prepare candidates for instructional leadership is limited. Although there have been numerous studies conducted on the overall quality of principal preparation programs, the majority of these studies are descriptive studies or case studies about exemplary programs, or they are quantitative studies that yield statistical data on the current challenges of principal preparation programs. There are very few qualitative studies where researchers provide the perspective of the university faculty in a broader context on why the challenges in principal preparation programs exist or how they should be addressed. Through this phenomenological study, I provide valuable insight into the experience of university principal preparation faculty and their perception on the challenges in preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. Furthermore, the present study contributes to the knowledge base about how these professors' define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and develop coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in principal

preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for instructional leadership. The respondents in my study cited several challenges for preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader. These challenges included online learning, time, mind-sets, pedagogical knowledge, and the professor's knowledge/experience. The professors also suggested making changes in curricular content and programming to meet these challenges.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my mom who passed away in 2007. Mom, every day I think of you, and I wish more than anything you could be here to see me fulfill my dream of finishing my Ph.D. As a single mother of four, you always struggled financially, and you instilled in me the tenets of hard-work and perseverance. I am forever grateful for your belief in me and for your love and support. I love and miss you.

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## **NOMENCLATURE**

NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NCES	Nation Center for Educational Statistics
ISLLC	Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium
UCEA	University Council for Educational Administration
CCSSO	Council of Chief State School Officers
NPBEA	National Policy Board for Educational Administration
NCAELP	National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation
PSR	Plenary Session Representative
UCEA	University Council for Educational Administration

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
NOMENCLATURE .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Principal Factor .....	2
Problem Statement .....	6
Statement of Purpose.....	7
Significance of Study .....	8
Definition of Terms .....	10
Conceptual Framework .....	11
Research Questions .....	12
Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions.....	12
Summary.....	13
Organization of the Dissertation .....	14
CHAPTER II CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE.....	15
Literature Critique Process .....	15
Introduction.....	17
Instructional Leadership .....	19
University Principal Preparation Programs .....	35
Curriculum in University Principal Preparation Programs.....	57
Changes in University Principal Preparation Programs .....	63
Summary.....	69
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODS .....	70
Introduction.....	70
Research Design.....	70
Context.....	72
Population and Sample .....	74

Instrumentation .....	77
Data Collection .....	78
Data Analysis .....	80
Validity and Reliability .....	82
Researcher Perspective .....	84
Summary.....	85
 CHAPTER IV RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	 86
Introduction.....	86
Discussion of Findings .....	86
Stage I: Presentation of Open-Ended Survey Findings .....	87
Stage II: Discussion of Interview Findings .....	106
Cross-Analysis Structural Description .....	140
Summary.....	145
 CHAPTER V SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	 147
Introduction.....	147
Summary of the Study .....	147
Summary of Findings .....	150
Summary of Discussion.....	171
Implications for University Principal Preparation Programs.....	172
Limitations of Findings .....	177
Recommendations for Future Research.....	178
Concluding Thoughts and Final Reflection.....	181
 REFERENCES .....	 184
 APPENDIX A .....	 206
 APPENDIX B.....	 207
 APPENDIX C.....	 208

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	University Demographic Data of Survey Participants .....	76
2	University Demographic Data of Interviewed Participants .....	77
3	Open-Ended Questionnaire.....	78
4	Selected Significant Statements for Definition of..... Instructional Leadership	88
5	Selected Significant Statements for Challenges in..... Preparing Candidates for Instructional Leadership	93
6	Selected Significant Statements for Designing Curriculum for..... Instructional Leadership	97
7	Curriculum Courses for Instructional Leadership.....	99
8	Selected Significant Statements for Changing Curriculum for .....	102
9	Selected Significant Statements for Improving .....	103
	Principal Preparation for Instructional Leadership	

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) began the most recent educational reform movement that iterated standardization and accountability. When NCLB was passed in 2001, it required that all school districts in every state develop teaching and learning strategies to ensure that every student was proficient in reading and math by 2014. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 43 states had to apply for a waiver to exempt their districts from NCLB mandates, and the Obama administration has repeatedly allowed flexibility to states for their school districts not meeting the 100% target (New America Foundation, 2014). As schools continue to search for ways to meet the diverse learning needs of its students, educational reform efforts spotlight the campus principal. The Wallace Foundation (2013) reported that school leadership ranks as one of the highest priorities to address school improvement.

School leadership is a top priority in school improvement because NCLB mandates that schools who fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for 2 consecutive years are identified as “schools in need of improvement” (NLCB, 2014). When a school is in need of improvement, some of the actions that can be taken are (a) the restructuring of the school and (b) the removal of the campus principal (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). Moreover, in 2009, Arne Duncan, U.S. Department of Education Secretary, stated to the National Education Association that “Great principals lead talented instructional teams that drive student performance and close achievement gaps....but if they’re not up to the job, they need to go” (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013, p.

2). The campus principal became the focal point in 2004 when the U.S. Department of Education stated, “Great schools have great leaders” (Brown, Finch, MacGregor, & Watson, 2012). Such principals are leading schools in the twenty-first century, and those schools are “more complex, (where) change is constant and increasingly rapid, public accountability is more overt, and society demands more from schools’ graduates” (Scott & Webber, 2008, p. 764). According to Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, and Hensley (2012), these leaders understand that “schools become better places for kids when teachers become better teachers, when they relentlessly improve their practice, and when they are learners” (p. 28). Consequently, successful principals understand that directly improving teaching and learning in every class is the most important school improvement effort facing them today.

### **The Principal Factor**

A teacher’s classroom instruction is the most influential factor in student achievement (Hattie, 2009; Skourdoumbis, 2014; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), but a number of researchers have indicated that the campus principal is also a critical influence in improving student achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Hattie, 2009; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of over 70 school leadership studies and found a “substantial relationship between the campus principal and student achievement” (p. 5) and the total direct and indirect effects of a campus principal on student learning account for 25% of total school effects (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty,

2005). Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found in their study that these effects include influencing variables such as the school's vision and mission, a teacher's pedagogical and content knowledge, a teacher's instructional practices, and the school's culture. Similarly, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) found in their meta-analysis of 27 research studies that a principal's instructional leadership has 3 to 4 times more impact on student learning than other leadership roles. Hattie (2009) also concluded in his meta-synthesis of a meta-analysis of 800 studies on student achievement that a principal's instructional leadership has a strong effect on student learning. Hattie asserted that within the instructional leadership role, the principal has the most influence on student outcomes by "promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, strategic resourcing, establishing goals and expectations, and insuring an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside the classroom" (pp. 83-84). Comparatively, Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) found in their study that "highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount" (p. 63). The researchers in these studies highlight that there is a definitive and impactful relationship between the principal being an instructional leader and student achievement. This relationship is illustrated through (a) the principal's role in establishing the school's mission for high standards and best instructional practices for all students (Lynch, 2012); (b) supporting teachers through active supervision and instructional leadership (Waters et al., 2003); and (c) monitoring

students' academic growth and adherence to state expectations for student performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Seashore-Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) summarized the importance of the campus principal by stating:

In developing a starting point for this six-year study, we claimed, based on a preliminary review of research, that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning, after six additional years of research, we are even more confident about this claim. To date we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership. (p. 9)

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the concept of twenty-first century learning became the latest trend for educators, and the Four Cs--*critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration* soon became the buzz words for preparing students for a global market (Kay & Greenhill, 2013). With the adoption of the Common Core in 2008 in 43 states, lawmakers made a fundamental statement by requiring students to learn twenty-first century skills that will empower them for college and career readiness; consequently, they need instruction with strategies and skills to meet their diverse needs. The principal's role has evolved from simply being a school manager to providing leadership that "moves past the practices that were successful in an industrial model of education and to address the ambiguity and complexity of working in a rapidly changing, diverse society" (Scott & Webber, 2008, p.10). In essence, it has evolved to include more complex and demanding responsibilities including instructional leadership that focuses on improving student learning and academic performance and



supervising and supporting teachers in effective teaching and learning practices (Lynch, 2012). Moreover, state and federal policies are increasingly holding principals accountable for student growth, closing performance gaps, decreasing drop-out rates, and increasing college and career readiness for all students (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Principals are being asked to be the experts in teaching and learning for their campus to improve student outcomes. According to Taylor Backor (2013):

Schools with high academic performance have principals who are recognized by their teachers as instructional leaders because of their instructional guidance, ability to effectively define and communicate the school mission and desired instructional goals, visibility on campus, active participation in staff development, facilitation of instructional needs, ability to build a positive campus climate, and fostering of teacher morale. (p. 3)

To that end, the campus principal influences student learning by shaping the classroom conditions by hiring quality teachers, influencing best practices in pedagogy, and enforcing high expectations and curriculum alignment (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Therefore, campus principals need to be a strong presence on the campus, who understand the complex nature of teaching and learning, and communicate clear expectations for the academic success of all students. The school principal has become one of the most critical factors in a student's success, and as a critical factor, university principal preparation programs must insure that principal candidates are well prepared for this demanding role.

## **Problem Statement**

In order for the principal to meet the expectations of an effective instructional leader, university principal preparation programs must prepare them with the knowledge and skills needed for this demanding role. Because 90% of principal candidates are prepared for licensure through traditional university principal preparation programs (Bogotch, 2011), university preparation programs are the primary means of preparing future campus principals for instructional leadership. This expectation brings questions and concerns about how effective university principal preparation programs are in preparing principals to be instructional leaders. Murphy (2007) questioned the effectiveness of preparation programs when he asserted, "What universities have been doing to prepare educational leaders is, at best, of questionable value and, at worst, harmful" (p. 582). Brown (2006) supported this assertion by stating, "If current and future educational leaders are expected to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, then substantive changes in educational leadership preparation and professional development program are required" (p. 705). Since a fundamental role of the principal is to improve school performance, then university principal preparation programs need to emphasize coursework related to instructional leadership; however, on the whole, university preparation programs emphasize the managerial role (Mohn & Machell, 2005).

According to Young, Petersen, and Short (2002), there is a strong consensus that there is no connection between what school leaders actually do in their schools and what is taught in university preparation programs. As an instructional leader, principals need

to be tooled to assist teachers with improving learning outcomes for all students; however, Duncan, Range, and Scherz (2011) found in their study on leadership preparation that the majority of principals felt that their university preparation program did not prepare them for instructional leadership. Consequently, university principal preparation programs have become the “focus of blame with the charge that isolated theories and outdated management models are not relevant to the primary need of today’s schools” (Harris, 2002, p. 30). Schools are in need of instructional leaders who know good teaching methods that improve student learning outcomes, and “future principals will have to know a great deal more about teaching and learning and associated support systems than they currently do” (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006, p. 96). University principal preparation programs need to respond and prepare principals for the instructional leadership role.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The traditional university principal preparation program is the primary system for grooming aspiring principals to be leaders of teaching and learning; however, the research on how preparation programs specifically prepare candidates for instructional leadership is limited. Although there have been numerous studies conducted on the overall quality of principal preparation programs, the majority of these studies are descriptive studies or case studies at specific institutions, or they are quantitative studies that yield statistical data on the current challenges of principal preparation programs. The majority of this data is “based upon the self-reported perceptions of principals or the perceptions of various school stakeholders” (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson,

Orr, & Cohen, 2007, p. 26). There are very few qualitative studies where researchers provide the perspective of the university faculty in a broader context on why the challenges in principal preparation programs exist or how they should be addressed.

Hackmann and McCarthy (2011) are known for their foundational research on the educational leadership faculty and the university departments in which they work. They conducted a series of quantitative surveys in 2008 on “the characteristics, activities, and attitudes of educational faculty members involved in university-based educational leadership programs” (p. xi). In their presentation at the 2015 University Council for Educational Administration national conference, they commented that their research is from a quantitative lens and further analysis using qualitative methods is necessary to capture the thoughts of university faculty about principal preparation programs. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of professors in 99 universities that are members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. I sought to determine how these professors’ defined instructional leadership, how they designed curriculum and coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they felt needed to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders.

### **Significance of Study**

Dupree (2004) stated in his book, *Leadership is an Art*, that “concepts of leadership, ideas about leadership, and leadership practices are the subject of much

thought, discussion, writing, teaching, and learning” (p. 11). For educational leaders, instructional leadership is one of the most popular educational leadership concepts in America (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach, 1999), but it is not a well-defined concept (Marzano et al., 2005). Without a consensus on what constitutes effective instructional leadership, university principal preparation programs are left to develop curriculum and coursework on what their current beliefs are in regards to instructional leadership (Augustine & Russell, 2010). Although most universities have state standards that are used to guide curriculum design, these standards are often left to the interpretation of the university professor, and a professor’s values, beliefs, and research practices influence curriculum design (Augustine & Russell, 2010). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) postulated that university principal preparation programs should implement programs that are researched-based, have curricular coherence, provides experiences in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaboration between university and local school districts.

Additionally, evaluating the effectiveness of principal preparation programs on campus leadership is still scrutinized, and there is little research to support the role of the university program and how it impacts campus leadership. In a study conducted by Davis and Darling- Hammond (2012), they found that there are few quantitative studies on university principal prep programs and their relationship to principal effectiveness. Furthermore, the majority of qualitative studies are descriptive studies focused on a singular exemplary program. In this study, I explored the opinions of the university professors charged with preparing principals for instructional leadership about program

challenges. Since I focused on UCEA schools across the U.S., I also identified current trends and practices for developing instructional leadership in principal preparation programs across the nation and offered a collective paradigm of what changes may need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare future instructional leaders.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms used in the context of this study are as follows:

#### **Common Core**

Released in 2010 and adopted by 43 states in the U.S., the Common Core represents national standards in English Language Arts and math that are focused on the development of college and career readiness in K-12 schools (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2014).

#### **Educational Leadership Standards (ELCC)**

Created by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, the ELCC standards are the standards that are used by universities to guide advanced programs at the master, specialist, or doctoral level that prepare assistant principals, principals, curriculum directors, supervisors and other educational leaders in a school building environment (NPBEA, 2011).

#### **Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)**

Drafted by The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), the ISLLC Standards are model leadership standards that outline what education leaders should know and be

able to do to ensure that all students graduating from high school are prepared to enter college or the modern workforce. These standards outline foundational principles of education leadership, which cut across grade levels and help improve student achievement and engagement (CCSSO, 2014).

### **Instructional Leadership**

Instructional leadership is generally defined as school leadership which is focused on the improvement of quality teaching and the improvement of student learning (Harvey, 2013).

### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) is the reauthorized version of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (1965). NCLB put in place measures that exposed achievement gaps among traditionally underserved and vulnerable students and started a national dialogue on educational reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

### **University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)**

According to the Executive Director for UCEA, Michelle Young, “The University Council for Educational Administration is a consortium of higher education institutions committed to advancing the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of schools and children” (UCEA, 2014, p. 1).

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study was framed by the concept of instructional leadership which is discussed in the literature review.

## **Research Questions**

The following four research questions guided my study:

1. How do individual UCEA professors define instructional leadership?
2. What are the perceptions of UCEA professors' in educational leadership programs of the challenges in preparing future principals for the role of instructional leader?
3. How do UCEA professors design curriculum and develop coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders?
4. What changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders?

## **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

The limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of this study were identified and noted.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study was that only UCEA professors who volunteered to be interviewed for the study were included. Therefore, the study was limited by the number of professors who chose to participate in the study. A second limitation of this study was access to the UCEA professors in the educational leadership field. The study was limited by the availability of UCEA professors in educational administration programs and their time constraints.



## **Delimitations**

One of the delimitations of this study was that principal preparation programs comprise multiple leadership strands, including community engagement, transformational leadership, operations and management, ethics, and community care for students, but the focus of this study was only on the instructional leadership strand. This strand only focused on a principal's role for improving teaching and learning.

A second delimitation was that the study was focused on the perceptions of UCEA professors in educational leadership programs and did not include professors for principal preparation programs in non-UCEA affiliated schools.

A third limitation was that only UCEA affiliated schools located in the United States were considered in the study.

## **Assumptions**

Three assumptions of this study were: (a) the researcher assumed that the selected participants were honest and forthcoming with their responses; (b) the participants all developed their own coursework and curriculum for their university's educational leadership preparation program; and, (c) the interpretation of the data accurately captured the perceptions of the participants in this study.

## **Summary**

When considering the educational reform efforts in the past 15 years, the role of the campus principal cannot be understated. Principals are a key element in school improvement efforts, for the emphasis on school accountability demands that campus leaders improve teaching and learning for all students (U.S. Department of Education,

2014). The emphasis on effective school leaders has created a sense of urgency among policy makers and educational researchers to improve school leadership (Shelton, 2011), and the effects of principal preparation programs on improving principal quality are being examined (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The people charged with developing the principal preparation programs, the university professors, are a critical piece in understanding the complexities of developing campus leaders. By focusing on the role of the university professor and understanding their perspective on the challenges in preparing aspiring administrators, I hope to have added a critical piece to the existing literature and to have opened doors for future researchers.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is comprised of five chapters. In Chapter I, I have discussed the purpose and the problem, explained the significance of the study, stated my research questions, and defined key terms. In Chapter II, I presented my critique of the literature on university principal preparation programs and built a conceptual framework on instructional leadership. Chapter III detailed my methodology which included the participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity. Chapter IV comprised a discussion of the findings of my study. Chapter V included a summarization of the study, implications for university principal preparation programs, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II

### CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

#### Literature Critique Process

Within this chapter is a critique of literature related to instructional leadership, university principal preparation programs, and challenges facing university professors in preparing principal candidates for instructional leadership. Databases searched were ERIC, ProQuest, EBSCO, LibCat, JSTOR, Google, and Google Scholar for scholarly papers published between 2000 and 2015. Keywords used to identify literature regarding instructional leadership were: *instructional leadership, educational history, school leadership, leadership training, and principal preparation*. From instructional leadership, the concepts of supervision, curriculum and instruction, cultural responsive leadership, vision, and professional development emerged. The keywords used for these concepts were: *principal and teacher supervision, democratic schooling, distributed leadership, principal and curriculum, principal and instruction, culturally responsive leader, social justice, principal and vision, principal and professional development*.

The keywords used for the search on literature related to university principal preparation programs were: *UCEA, principal preparation, leadership training, college programs, administrator education, program administration, criticism, instructional leadership and university administration programs, principals, school leadership, educational change, educational administration, educational leadership preparation, and university faculty*. Additional studies were identified in the reference lists of related literature and retrieved for review. LibCat identified books *on instructional leadership,*

*the principal as leader, the learning leader, distributive leadership, and school leadership*, which were also reviewed.

A matrix method (Garrard, 2011) was used to assist with organizing the literature into key points and concepts. According to Garrard (2011), a review matrix is the primary tool for organizing the literature, analyzing the texts, comparing the literature, and writing a synthesis for a critique of literature. He believed the literature review matrix should include three elements: the title and author of the journal, the date of the article, and key points from the article. An example of the matrix method that I used for this literature review is illustrated in Figure 1.

<b>Title &amp; Author</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Key Points</b>
<i>Balanced Leadership, Waters, Marzano, McNulty</i>	2003	Instructional Leadership, Principal's effect on student achievement, Meta-analysis
<i>How to improve instructional leadership, Hassenpflug</i>	2013	Focus on instructional leadership; how to improve principal effectiveness, Ohio Principal Evaluation System
<i>Leadership for Learning, Walker &amp; Downey</i>	2011	Leadership for learning; Principals key to students' educational success; distributed leadership
<i>Preparing Instructional Leaders, Brazer &amp; Bauer</i>	2013	Instructional leadership; leader prep programs; organizational leadership; pedagogy content knowledge
<i>Finding the time and capacity to lead, Hallinger &amp; Murphy</i>	2012	Instructional leadership; barriers to principal success; leadership for learning
<i>Innovative Principal Prep Programs, Davis &amp; Darling-Hammond</i>	2012	effective principal prep programs; five university principal programs; instructional leadership
<i>Collaborative Principal Preparation Programs, Parylo</i>	2013	Studies on partnerships in school leadership programs, educational leadership programs, systematic lit review on qualitative research

Figure 1. Sample of the matrix method used for organizing the critique of literature.

## Introduction

Historically, the preparation of school principals focused on the traits and characteristics of effective managers that were developed from a business model, and principals were considered mid-managers who were taught good management techniques (Black & Murtadha, 2007). In the 1980s, two critical events occurred that changed the paradigm of role of the school principal: (a) *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983 that criticized the state of public schools in the United States; and, (b) in 1987 UCEA published a comprehensive report titled *Leaders for America's Schools* which critiqued the state of principal preparation programs (Bogotch, 2011). Both of these publications paralleled the effective schools research of the 1980s; and more importantly, they launched policy and research that focused on the principal as a leader of learning and “shifted the conversation to specific ways educational leaders exercised a powerful influence on student achievement” (Black & Murtadha, 2007, p. 2).

As researchers began to grapple with the role of the principal and the principal's effect on student achievement, policy-makers began tackling education reform primarily through school standardization and accountability. This educational reform not only impacted public schools, but it also impacted the higher education institutions that prepare future teachers and principals. In 1987, UCEA commissioned a study to review the state of educational leadership in the United States. In this report, *Leaders for America's Schools: The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration*, the researchers called for a drastic overhaul of the educational administration field at all levels, especially in administrator preparation

programs (UCEA, 1987; Young, Peterson & Short, 2002). The report listed nine deficiencies of the educational administration field in general and included significant, specific recommendations for “public schools, professional organizations, universities, state and federal policy makers, and the private sector” (p. 1). The researchers also recommended terminating at least 300 college and university educational administration programs for being ineffective.

Following the UCEA report, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) was founded in 1987, and in 1989, the NPBEA published a report entitled *Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform*, which cited recommendations for improving principal preparation programs (Bogotch, 2011). This report created a research agenda focused on improving school leadership preparation for both principals and superintendents. In 2001, the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP) was established with funding from the Wallace Foundation, and its primary purpose was to study exemplary leadership programs (The Wallace Foundation, 2013). For the past three decades, researchers and policy-makers have focused their attention in regards to school reform on the principal as an instructional leader and principal preparation programs. Through this literature review, I have (a) discussed instructional leadership and built a conceptual framework that defines it; (b) discussed university principal preparation programs, including the standards that guide principal preparation programs, the current criticism of university principal prep programs, and the challenges that university principal preparation programs have in regards to preparing candidates to be

instructional leaders for their schools; (c) discussed the curriculum of university principal preparation programs; and (d) discussed the changes that need to be made to better prepare candidates for the role of instructional leader.

### **Instructional Leadership**

This study was framed by the concept of instructional leadership. Traditionally, instructional leadership encompasses the teaching and learning strand of a principal's job, but the exact parameters surrounding this role are debated, and there is little consensus on what instructional leadership actually is (Horng & Loeb, 2010; Neumerski, 2012). The concept of instructional leadership emerged from the beginnings of effective schools research in the 1970s with a "vague notion that successful school leaders are not just managers but are instructional leaders" (Neumerski, 2012, p. 318). Edmonds (1979) propelled empirical research on instructional leadership when he asserted that the "principal was instrumental in setting the tone of the school, helping decide on instructional strategies, and organizing and distributing the school's resources" (p. 16). For more than 30 years, researchers have attempted to define instructional leadership and delineate its impact on student achievement. I elaborated on some of the more recent studies and framed the literature on the more universal definitions of instructional leadership.

One of the first attempts to define instructional leadership was in the 1980s when Philip Hallinger developed a tool for measuring instructional leadership called the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). This tool identified principal behaviors and assessed three dimensions of instructional

leadership: (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive learning environment (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Within each of these dimensions, he elaborated on the specific behaviors that a principal exhibits:

1. Defining the school's mission: framing and communicating goals;
2. Managing the instructional program: supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, and monitoring student progress;
3. Promoting a positive learning environment: protecting instructional time, professional development, visibility, & promoting high expectations.

Hallinger's work influenced the creation of the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium's (ISLLC) standards which guide principal licensure in 43 states in the nation.

Much of the research and literature on instructional leadership is characterized by the influence of the principal's behavior on teaching and learning. Traditionally, instructional leadership is defined by how a principal affects teaching and learning, and it focuses on improving student achievement. Blasé and Blasé (2004) reviewed the literature on instructional leadership and found "connections between the actions a principal takes and the professional growth of teachers, teacher commitment, involvement, innovativeness, and increases in student learning" (p. 10). Believing a principal's role should move from a management and compliance role to an instructional leadership role, Blasé and Blasé initiated a study on instructional leaders' successful practices that "enhance teaching and learning and the 41 effects that their behaviors have



on teachers' performance and well-being" (p. viii). Their outcome provided in-depth knowledge of "what good instructional leaders are doing but also what can be expected when they support teachers, teaching, and learning in schools" (p. xv). Their study revealed that principals who were successful instructional leaders possessed skills necessary for conducting instructional conferences, providing staff development, and encouraging the development of teacher reflection. These principals' behaviors were being visible, encouraging, and promoting autonomy of instructional practices.

Brazer and Bauer (2013) defined instructional leadership as "the effort to improve teaching and learning for PK-12 students by managing effectively, addressing the challenges of diversity, guiding teacher learning, and fostering organizational learning" (p. 650). This definition encompasses teacher learning as a means to improve student learning. Likewise, McKenzie, Christan, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley, Gonzalez, Cambron-McCabe, and Scheurich (2008) contended that "instructional leadership assumes a focus by the principal on teaching instructional behavior that affected student outcomes and that consisted of a blending of supervision, staff development, and curriculum development" (p. 124). This definition focuses instructional leadership on the principal's behavior in the areas of teacher supervision, staff development, and curriculum development and how these areas affect student performance.

The Center for Educational Leadership (2014) outlined four strands of instructional leadership in its framework. These strands include: (a) vision, mission and culture building; (b) improvement of instructional practices; (c) allocation of resources;

and, (d) management of people and processes. This framework defined instructional leadership as learner focused leadership that includes “learning for both students and adults and learning which is measured by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning” (Center for Educational Leadership, 2014, p. 1). Comparatively, Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008) explained that instructional leadership comprises five strands: (a) building and sustaining a school vision; (b) sharing leadership; (c) leading a learning community; (d) using data to make instructional decisions; and, (e) monitoring curriculum and instruction. They asserted that instructional leadership is focused on teaching and learning—especially in terms of measuring student progress” (Stronge et al., 2008, p. 5).

Other researchers also defined instructional leadership through a teaching and learning lens. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2008, pp. 5-10) defined instructional leadership by setting out six standards of what principals should know and be able to do: (a) lead schools in ways that place student and adult learning at the center; (b) set high expectations for the academic and social-emotional development of all students; (c) demand content and instruction are based on standards; (d) insure continuous professional development for improving student achievement; (e) utilize data-driven decision-making; (f) community engagement focused on student performance. The U.S Department of Education (2014) also offered five elements of instructional leadership, which include: (a) prioritization on teaching and learning; (b) knowledge of effective instruction; (c) a focus on curriculum alignment to standards, instruction, and assessment; (d) data-driven instruction; and, (f) a culture of continuous

learning for adults. Similarly, the Wallace Foundation (2013) identified five practices of instructional leadership: (a) a campus vision focused on the academic success of all students; (b) school climate; (c) building leadership capacity among teachers; (d) improving teaching and learning; and, (e) managing people and resources to improve student performance. In summary, instructional leadership implies that principals should be leaders for learning who have the “ability to stay consistently focused on the right stuff—the core technology of schooling, or learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment” (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter, 2007, p. 179).

Although most researchers have agreed that instructional leadership encompasses teaching and learning, there are researchers who assert that a principal’s direct involvement in teaching and learning has a minimum effect on student achievement. Horng and Loeb (2010) posited that instructional leadership, which “emphasizes organizational management for instructional improvement” (p. 66) rather than a focus on curriculum and instruction yields higher effects on student learning. They emphasized that a principal’s impact on teacher retention, professional development, and allocation of resources affect student learning by “influencing teachers’ motivations and working conditions” (p. 67). Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, and Samuelson, (2009) also found that principals who create systemic structures that allow teachers to work collaboratively to improve instruction have a higher impact on student achievement than a principal who is directly involved in teaching. Likewise, Grissom and Loeb (2011) asserted in their study that there is a stronger correlation between student achievement and organization management than a principal’s focus on instructional leadership. They

further stated that “principals devoting significant time and energy to becoming instructional leaders in their schools are unlikely to see improvement unless they increase their capacity for organizational management as well” (p. 23).

Indirectly, organizational management skills are important components of instructional leadership, because principals “create opportunities for teacher collaboration and learning,” (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59), opportunities for professional development, and opportunities for educational programming. Principals need strong organizational skills in order to be effective instructional leaders to insure that the learning organization is working towards its instructional goals (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). According to the Robinson et al. (2008), in their meta-analysis of leadership effects, goal setting had a moderately large and significant indirect effect on student outcomes. The authors indicated that leadership made a difference to students through the degree of emphasis on clear academic and learning goals” (p. 659) in the context of organizational structure and influencing teaching and learning. Through organizational leadership, principals create the conditions to lead teaching and learning by budgeting for instructional resources, hiring and retaining effective teachers, and scheduling time for planning and collaboration. Lunenburg and Irby (2006) confirmed this connection when they asserted that a principal’s role in teaching and learning is to accommodate teachers in their learning to meet the needs of diverse students, to assess teaching based on learning outcomes, and to facilitate instructional planning (p.87).

Despite the varying definitions of instructional leadership, a conceptual definition was formed by synthesizing the literature and forming a conceptual

framework. Generally speaking, a conceptual framework is defined as a system of assumptions, expectations, beliefs, theories, and concepts that support and inform research (Maxwell, 2012). According to Kumar and Antonenko (2014), “The use of concepts, theories, and methodologies from various disciplines enriches and extends research-based knowledge in education. Thus, in most cases it is the researcher’s responsibility to construct a conceptual framework by critically analyzing the relevant theories and empirical evidence and extracting the most useful and pertinent pieces” (p. 55). Based off of the numerous frameworks, theories, and definitions provided in the literature, the concept of instructional leadership was defined through the common strands of campus vision, curriculum and instruction, supervision, professional development, and data-driven decision-making to serve as the framework for my study.

### **Vision**

Establishing a vision for a campus is a critical piece of instructional leadership as it “paints a picture of what a school can become” (Blanksetin, 2004, p. 77). Instructional leaders collaborate with school stakeholders to create a vision for the campus that provides a compelling picture of where the school is headed and exemplifies the possibility of what the school can achieve. Vision is the overall big picture for a school and encompasses the mission and goals of a campus. As an instructional leader, the principal aligns instructional decisions to the vision and protects the teachers from initiatives that are outside the scope of the school’s vision, mission, and goals (Reeves, 2002). Vision is important to instructional leadership as it sets the climate for curriculum

and instruction decisions, fosters a philosophy of teacher-centered supervision, and helps teachers grow and flourish in their craft.

The Wallace Foundation (2013) asserted that “effective principals are responsible for establishing a school-wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students” (p. 7). The key words in this assertion are high standards and success of all students. What is missing from the literature on instructional leadership is the growing demand for culturally-responsive leadership to meet the needs of the nation’s diverse students (Marshall & Oliva, 2012). Students in public schools are more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than ever before (Ng, 2003), and public schools are “under increasing pressure to effectively educate a student body that is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, national origin and native language, sexual orientation, and physical disability” (Riehl, 2009, p. 3). Additionally, more than one in five children or 15.75 million children live in poverty (McCartney, 2011), and children of color are three times more likely to live in poverty than White children (Riehl, 2009).

A challenge facing principals is building a vision for culturally responsive teaching and learning among all staff and insuring high expectations for all children. The majority of teachers entering the profession are predominantly White and middle class, and they bring their own prejudices and biases to the classroom (Milner, 2012). White middle-class bias is predicated by meritocracy and the belief that “failure is solely a result of making bad choices” (p. 40), and teachers fail to recognize how their economic privilege has helped them obtain their own academic achievement (Milner, 2012). A teacher’s belief in meritocracy serves as a barrier to helping poor students of color,

because the teacher fails to recognize the “systemic barriers and institutional structures that prevent opportunity and success” (Milner, 2012, p. 43). Middle class teachers sometimes harbor low expectations for poor students (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012) and may believe because students are poor or racially diverse, they do not have the ability to perform at high academic standards. They may dumb down the curriculum or give students a canned curriculum that offers worksheets and book work (Caldas & Bankston, 1997).

In their effort to make the curriculum easier for low-income students to master, educators perpetuate the belief that poor and racially diverse children are intellectually inferior to affluent White children. Howard (2003) contended that there is a universal “culture of disbelief in the learning of our children of color and economically disadvantaged” (p. 7). His research showed that middle class White teachers hold innate beliefs about intelligence and academic ability when it comes to minority and economically disadvantaged children. Middle class teachers hold the tenet that intelligence is innate, and they see the social conditions that poor students of color bring to school, and they respond with low expectations and excuses for why students cannot learn challenging curriculum (Howard, 2003).

Being a culturally responsive leader by establishing high expectations and combatting prejudice and bias directly relates to vision as a principal has to create a school environment that focuses on the teaching, learning, and achievement of all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, disability, language, or sexual orientation. McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley,

Gonzalez, Cambron-McCabe, and Scheurich (2008) agreed that principals who are culturally-responsive instructional leaders establish a vision that “identifies good instructional behaviors and ensures these behaviors meet the learning needs of every child every day” (p. 124). Vision is an important strand of instructional leadership as it addresses the inclusivity of all students and the philosophy that all students can achieve at high levels. In a school culture that has a shared vision for the high academic success of all students, the adults take the responsibility for students to achieve both academically and socially, and the principal is an “assertive instructional leader who assumes responsibility for insuring the achievement of every child” (Banks, 2004, p. 21).

Instructional leadership that focuses on cultural responsiveness involves identifying and undoing oppressive and unjust practices and replacing them with more equitable, culturally appropriate ones (Furman, 2012). Being an instructional leader is not just a matter of learning a cultural responsive skill set, but it involves fundamental changes in philosophy about the way schools educate all students (Hassenpflug, 2013). The leadership of the principal is critical in improving the academic achievement of all students as principals are responsible for building cultural competency among their staff, demonstrating critical consciousness as they advocate for all children, and insuring the academic success of every child they serve.

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

The Wallace Foundation (2013) found that effective instructional leaders relentlessly work to align the curriculum to state standards and improve the instructional strategies of teachers for the improved learning of all students. City, Elmore, Fiarman,



and Teitel (2009) advocated for principals to be instructional leaders with expertise in high quality instructional practices and deep curriculum alignment. However, Yliminski and Jacobson (2013) argued that the focus of instructional leadership is moving away from the principal's direct involvement in curriculum and instruction and is moving more towards democratic leadership or distributed leadership. The idea that a principal can directly work with teachers on curriculum alignment and best instructional strategies is "short-sighted" and perpetuates a principal's feelings of inadequacy and causes principal burn-out (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012, p. 6). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) argued that there is no way possible that a principal can know everything there is to know about the curriculum of every subject and the best instructional strategies to meet the needs of every student. Being an effective instructional leader is recognizing the talents of the teachers in the building who are the professionals in their field for curriculum and instruction and using these talents to improve student learning. Brazer and Bauer (2013) contended that instructional leadership that is focused on curriculum and instruction is "most powerful when leaders learn alongside teachers and engage in learning conversations with their teachers (p. 648). Distributed leadership is a way of making this happen (Spillane, 2006).

Distributed leadership stems from the premise that principals recognize that they cannot accomplish great things alone (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Instructional leaders acknowledge that leading for effective instruction is "broadly distributed in the population and is accessible to anyone who has passion and purpose to change things as they are" (Kouzes & Posner, 2010, p. 5). Leading learning (especially in curriculum and

instruction) in schools must expand beyond the school principal (Barth, 1990; Spillane, 2006, Fullan, 2006), and effective instructional leaders “engage teachers in both formal and informal leadership roles” (Spillane, 2006) and enable them to create meaningful curriculum across the department and coach others in best instructional strategies (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012).

### **Supervision**

The principal’s role in instructional leadership includes the supervision of teaching and learning. Historically, supervision developed from a principal’s role in the administration of curriculum and instruction and “operated from within a conventional paradigm that attempted to control teachers’ instructional behaviors” (Glickman, Gordon, Ross-Gordon, 2010, p. 6). Traditional supervision evolved from three schools of thought: (a) traditional scientific management (top-down and insured compliance); (b) human relations (focused on job satisfaction and insured malleability); (c) neo-scientific management (accountability to standards) (Sergiovanni, 1976). Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2010) referred to these models of supervision as “conventional or congenial” (p. 7), for they all expected teacher compliance rather than a focus on teacher improvement. Each of these methods of supervision focused on the philosophy that teachers are incapable or unwilling to be vested in the educational outcomes of their students or the progress of the school (Sergiovanni, 1976).

Instructional supervision (Sergiovanni, 1985) or collegial supervision (Glickman et al., 2010) is offered as a modern paradigm for supervision. Sergiovanni (1985) explained that instructional supervision “exists to enhance the teaching and learning

process as it unfolds,” (p. 3) and it is meant to improve teaching and learning.

Sergiovanni and Starrat (1983) described principals engaging in instructional supervision as clinical supervision. Clinical supervision encompasses leadership behaviors that includes both supervising and coaching teachers. Traditional supervision implies inspection and evaluation, but clinical supervision juxtaposes coaching and structured supervision to promote teacher efficacy.

Clinical or collegial supervision is also referred to as developmental supervision in the literature. Developmental supervision is a collaborative approach to supervision that “denotes a common vision of what teaching and learning can and should be” (Glickman et al., 2010, p.8). It focuses on the growth of a teacher and improved student achievement (Bernauer, 2002). When an instructional leader engages in collegial or developmental supervision, then they recognize the value of their teachers and work with them to improve instruction. When teachers are empowered to grow in their craft through a collegial relationship with their supervisor, then they have a vested interest in improving their instruction to meet the learning needs of their students (Glickman et al., 2010). Consequently, when teachers and supervisors work together to create common goals for teaching and learning, student achievement increases (Bernauer, 2002). Instructional leadership requires that principals have the “knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills” (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 9) to be effective supervisors that can build a collaborative culture focused on one goal—improved learning for all students.

## **Professional Development**

Professional development is often referred to adult development in the literature because the goal of professional development is to develop teachers in their craft. Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Hoffman (2012) asserted that “scholars have identified a need to help aspiring and practicing principals learn how to support their own and other adults’ learning in schools to deal with the many challenges they face” (p. 45). As an instructional leader, a campus principal will develop their teachers and provide ongoing, rigorous professional development that furthers the achievement of the children they serve (Walker & Downey, 2011). Principals emphasize research-based teaching strategies that improve learning (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), and they model these practices for their teachers. Moreover, instructional leaders engage in professional dialogues with teachers about the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom (Hassenpflug, 2013). Drago-Severson and Blum-Destefano (2012) proposed a learner-centered model for instructional leadership based on four pillars: “teaming, mentoring, collegial inquiry, and providing leadership roles” (p. 1) that can be used to support professional growth for teachers.

One of the more popular concepts for developing teachers in the four pillars is the creation of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities (PLC) started as a research phenomenon by Judith Little (1981) with her work on collegiality, and it was expounded on by Susan Rosenholtz (1989) and her work on teacher collaboration. Both of these researchers studied how teachers worked together to improve student learning, and their research laid the foundation for the research on PLCs

(Fullan, 2006). Louis, Kruse, and Raywid (1996) identified five critical elements of an effective PLC: “reflective dialogue, de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms and values” (p. 13). Therefore, a professional learning community is comprised of a group of educators who collaboratively work together to improve student results. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improving student learning is on-going, job-embedded professional development for teachers (DuFour, Eaker, & Many, (2006). A PLC is a form of collaborative teaming that supports adult learning as it creates opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection (Drago-Seveson & Blum-Destefano, 2012). When instructional leaders build professional learning communities for supporting teachers in their craft, they foster collegial relationships (Barth, 2006), reduce isolation, build capacity, promote collegial inquiry and mentoring (Little, 1981), and engender innovation (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Drago-Severson & Blum-Destefano, 2012). The instructional leader is critical in building a collaborative structure that nurtures a community of learners (Barth, 2006) who are focused on continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

### **Data-Driven Decision Making**

NCLB began an era of standardization and accountability, and principals became responsible for analyzing student achievement data for all students. As instructional leaders, principals work with teachers to collect multiple sources of data, analyze them, and use them to drive decisions on instruction and to address barriers to student learning (Dufour, 2002). Although teachers have access to multiple forms of data, they

sometimes struggle with how to use data in a way that leads to improving instruction and student outcomes (Marsh & Farrell, 2015); consequently, principals are tasked with building teachers' capacity to analyze data to improve student outcomes (Marsh & Farrell, 2015).

Principals play a crucial role in facilitating data-driven decision-making. There are three key areas in which principals insure data-driven decision-making is occurring on their campus: (a) they schedule time for data analysis and allocate the necessary resources (Peterson, 2007); (b) they cultivate a climate of trust with a continuous improvement spirit rather than a spirit of assigning blame when analyzing the data (Schildkamp & Kuiper, 2010); and, (c) they work to establish data teams that respect each other and understand that data-rich collaborative environments are the means to improving student outcomes (Hamilton, Halverson, Jackson, Mandinach, Supovitz, & Wayman, 2009). All three components—time, trust, and teams—are important foundations as principals work to develop school cultures that are focused on improving instructional practices and student learning using data-driven decision making.

Instructional leaders understand that data must be used to inform and improve instruction. According to Young (2006), teachers and instructional leaders use data to analyze student performance results as a means to improve their instructional practices. She argued that teaching is a continuous improvement process in which “practitioners become proficient—not simply by repeating routines, but by adjusting routines based on systematic input” (p. 522). Likewise, Boudett, City, and Murnane (2005) identified the examination of instruction as one of the eight primary steps in data-driven decision

making. The authors advised teachers to recognize problems with student learning in the data and transform them into problems in instructional practice. This shift involved seeing data as a means to improve instruction rather than to identify student failures. One of the goals associated with examining instruction is for teachers to collectively identify effective instructional practice. Teachers should use data to examine instructional practices and identify which of those practices are effective in improving student learning. Simply having access to student performance data is not enough to improve student learning outcomes, but teachers must know how to use the data to alter their instructional practices (Hamilton et al., 2009). Principals play an important role in helping teachers build connections between data and instructional practice by providing ongoing data leadership (Hamilton et al., 2009).

### **University Principal Preparation Programs**

Traditional university principal preparation programs are the predominant method that states use to prepare campus leaders (Hale & Moorman, 2003). The empirical research on university principal preparation programs and what constitutes best practice in preparing future principals has been sparse (Donmoyer, Yennie-Donmoyer, & Galloway, 2012; Hackman & McCarthy, 2015; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). Part of the reason is that there are various contextual factors that influence principal prep programs, including “economic and societal globalization, technological advances that have revolutionized communication and where education takes place, the shift from government control toward market control of education, and the changing demographics in the United States” (McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009, p. 1). Moreover, the

knowledge base for educational leadership programs “draws heavily from social and behavioral science disciplines and from corporate management, as well as educational literature” (Lamagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, & Reed, 2009, p. 129), and students are often exposed to a curriculum that is heavy on theory and limited on practical application; consequently, there is “a lack of clear understanding about what educational leadership preparation programs should be and what content, instructional methods, and structures should frame them” (Lamagdeleine et al., 2009, p. 130).

The structure and content of university principal prep programs vary by institution, and the interrelated systems that produce the nation’s principals are complex and governed by each individual state (Hale & Moorman, 2003; McCarthy & Forsyth, 2009). Each state establishes licensing and certification standards for principals, and in most cases, approves the college and university programs that prepare school principals (Preis, Grogan, Sherman, & Beaty, 2007). Currently, there are over 500 principal preparation programs in the United States, and they vary in content, focus, and duration (Ylimanski & Jacobson, 2013). The majority of the states in the United States use the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards and the Educational Leadership Constituencies Council (ELCC) standards for their campus principal licensure; however, Texas is one of the seven states that does not use the ISLLC standards and serves as an example as one of the states that created their own standards. The ISLLC standards, the ELCC standards, and the Texas standards are reviewed and discussed as they influence the curriculum design for university principal preparation.



## **ISLLC Standards**

The intent of the ISLLC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2015) is to offer “guidance to state policymakers as they work to improve education leadership preparation, licensure, evaluation, and professional development” (p. 1). The ISLLC standards were first drafted in 1996, revised in 2008, and are currently being rewritten and are in draft form for 2015. In the 2015 draft, there are eleven standards that include:

1. Vision and Mission
2. Instructional Capacity
3. Instruction
4. Curriculum and Assessment
5. Community of Care for Students
6. Professional Culture for Teachers and Staff
7. Communities of Engagement for Families
8. Operations and Management
9. Ethical Principles and Professional Norms
10. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
11. Continuous School Improvement

The latest version of the ISLLC standards places a greater emphasis on instructional leadership as five of the 11 standards deals primarily with improving instruction and learning. Additionally, a separate standard for equity and cultural responsiveness was created which was previously embedded in the various indicators of the 2008 standards.

In this respect, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) asserted that “the extensive use of the standards to guide leadership preparation, practice, and evaluation has solidified their role as the de facto national education leadership standards” (CCSSO, 2014, p. 23). Since the inception of the ISLLC standards, 43 states have employed them as a template from which to develop their own state-mandated standards for preparation programs (Taylor-Backor, 2013).

### **ELCC Standards**

The Educational Leadership Constituencies Council (ELCC) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration adopted the ELCC standards in 2002, which “were developed to assist current and future school administrators meet the changing demands of society and schooling” (NCATE, 2011, p. 1). The ELCC standards seek to provide the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) with guidance as to what should be expected from leadership preparation programs. The ELCC document offers preparation programs guidance by “authoring standards intended to address three dimensions: (a) Awareness—acquiring concepts, information, definitions, and procedures; (b) Understanding—interpreting, integrating, and using knowledge and skills; and (c) Application—apply knowledge and skills to new or specific opportunities or problems” (Carpenter & Diem, 2015, p. 519). The standards focus on instructional leadership, organizational leadership, community leadership, and leadership for social justice.

The ELCC standards were developed from the ISLLC standards and were revised in 2011. They currently serve as the standards that serve as “consistent criteria for

national principal program quality recognition” (Vogel & Weiler, 2014, p. 325).

Nineteen states use the ELCC standards verbatim for state principal licensure, and the other 31 states use the ELCC standards in the development of their own state’s principal licensure (Vogel & Weiler, 2014).

There are seven ELCC standards, and each standard has a corresponding indicator. The seven standards for a building level principal as outlined by NCATE (2011) are as follows:

1. Promotes the success of every student by collaboratively facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared school vision of learning through the collection and use of data to identify school goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement school plans to achieve school goals; promotion of continual and sustainable school improvement; and evaluation of school progress and revision of school plans supported by school-based stakeholders. (p. 1)
2. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning through collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students; creating and evaluating a comprehensive, rigorous and coherent curricular and instructional school program; developing and supervising the instructional and leadership capacity of school staff; and promoting the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning within a school environment. (p. 3)

3. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by ensuring the management of the school organization, operation, and resources through monitoring and evaluating the school management and operation systems; efficiently using human, fiscal, and technological resources in a school environment; promoting and protecting the welfare and safety of school students and staff; developing school capacity for distributed leadership; and ensuring that teacher and organizational time is focused to support high-quality instruction and student learning. (p. 5)
4. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources on behalf of the school by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to improvement of the school's educational environment; promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources within the school community; building and sustaining positive school relationships with families and caregivers; and cultivating productive school relationships with community partners. (p. 8)
5. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner to ensure a school system of accountability for every student's academic and social success by modeling school principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the school; safeguarding the values of

democracy, equity, and diversity within the school; and promoting social justice within the school to ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling. (p. 11)

6. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context through advocating for schools, families, and caregivers; acting to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning in a school environment; and anticipating and assessing emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt school-based leadership strategies. (p. 13)
7. Applies knowledge that promotes the success of every child through a substantial educational leadership internship experience that has school-based field experiences and clinical internship practices within a school setting and is monitored by a qualified, on-site mentor. (p. 15)

The ELCC standards are critical to understanding how university principal preparation programs develop curriculum and course content for their programs. In order to receive certification from the Council for the Accreditation of Educational Programs (CAEP), university principal preparation programs must show how their courses align with the ELCC standards.

### **State Standards**

Since the U.S. Constitution does not have a provision for education, the implementation and governance of public schools falls under the 10th amendment which gives this authority to each individual state. Although 43 states use the ISLLC standards,

there are some that do not. Texas is one of the seven states that does not use the ISLLC standards and is discussed as an example of how some states develop their standards.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed nine competencies for principal certification. These nine competencies are nested under three domains that principal candidates must know:

1. Domain I: School Community Leadership
2. Domain II: Instructional Leadership
3. Domain III: Administrative Leadership

Domain III specifically addresses instructional leadership and comprises 45% of the Texas certification exam (TEA, 2010). The instructional leadership domain includes four competencies and over 30 descriptors of things the principal must know. The four competencies (TEA, 2010) are:

1. The principal knows how to facilitate the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning: ensure alignment of the curriculum, instruction, resources, and assessment; and promote the use of varied assessments to measure student performance. (p. 15)
2. The principal knows how to advocate, nurture and sustain an instructional program and a campus culture that are conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. (p. 16)
3. The principal knows how to implement a staff evaluation and development system to improve performance of all staff members, select and implement

appropriate models for supervision and staff development and apply legal requirements for personnel management. (p. 17)

4. The principal knows how to apply organizational, decision-making and problem-solving skills to ensure an effective learning environment. (p. 17)

Each competency is composed of two major parts: “(a) the competency statement which broadly defines what an entry-level principal in Texas public schools should know and be able to do, and (b) the descriptive statements which describe in greater detail the knowledge and skills eligible for testing” (TEA, 2010, p. 3). These competencies are the basis for the Texas Examination of Educator Standards and affect all approved Texas Principal Preparation Programs (TEA, 2010).

### **Criticism of University School Leadership Programs**

The research at the turn of the twenty-first century regarding university principal preparation programs primarily criticized the programs for being out of touch with current school practices and slow to change (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Murphy, 2001; Norton, 2003). In the Institute for Educational Leadership (2003) report on principal preparation programs, Hale and Moorman asserted that “the consensus in most quarters is that principal prep programs (with a few exceptions) are too theoretical and totally unrelated to the daily demands of contemporary principals” (p. 5). They asserted that low university admission standards, a “poorly sequenced and unorganized” curriculum (p. 5), a lack of clinical supervision, and limited partnerships with school districts all contribute to ineffective university principal prep programs. Levine (2005) reported that “collectively, educational administration programs are the weakest programs at the

nation's education schools" (p. 23). He cited the following reasons for his assessment: (a) curricula is "disconnected from the needs of campus leaders and their schools" (p. 23); (b) low admission standards; (c) professors who are ill-prepared to educate school leaders; (d) insufficient attention paid to clinical supervision; (e) inappropriate awarding of degrees to meet the demands of the school leader's role; (f) insufficient resources and research (p. 23). Moreover, in 2006 the president of the Southern Regional Educational Board asserted that "although universities report program change, they really are in no particular hurry to redesign their programs to ensure that aspiring principals are thoroughly prepared for their role in improving curriculum, instruction, and student achievement" (Dave Spence as quoted by Young & Brewer, 2008, p. 107). Likewise, a 2007 Wallace Foundation survey of 22 higher education institutions concluded that "many universities are not getting the job done . . . [they] have moved at a glacial pace to make improvements, or have made only cosmetic changes" (p. 10). Furthermore, the report criticized leadership faculties for being overly concerned with the maintenance of existing course work in the name of maintaining standards, faculty independence in course content development, and potential losses in enrollment that might translate to decreases in revenue for the university.

English (2008) also argued that university principal preparation programs are mostly centered on the functional and managerial ideology of the principal role and the processes of the program. When determining what needed to be improved in university-based leadership programs, Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) recommended, "leadership standards must shift away from the traditional pre-occupation with school management



and must put the highest priority on results for students” (p. 7). Additionally, Hess and Kelly (2005) found that traditional principal preparation programs are under pressure to reexamine the effectiveness of the longstanding methods used to develop school leaders. They asserted that if traditional programs are to be relevant and effective in the 21st century, then they must reinvent themselves to better prepare the next generation of campus principals (Hess & Kelly, 2005). The criticism that plagues educational administration programs, especially in the area of preparing principals for instructional leadership, has launched additional studies in the quality and effectiveness of university principal prep programs (Donmoyer et al., 2012).

Among the criticism of university principal preparation programs is the growing debate over the quality of programs that are offered among different institutions. Baker, Orr, and Young (2007) noted that there has been a rise in the number of programs of educational leadership preparation located in many smaller, less research-oriented institutions. Using a Carnegie Institute classification that groups universities and colleges by size, level of graduate courses, and amount of annual research funding, the point is made that some smaller, less research-oriented universities and colleges have added principal preparation programs. Many of these programs have more difficulty in providing materials and opportunities for scholarship than those found in larger, more research-oriented universities, and they are often regarded as easier to gain admission to than more traditional research universities (Robey, 2011). Some colleges are accused of adding principal preparation programs because such programs often make money which

is sometimes diverted by university leaders into less profitable programs (Baker, Orr, & Young, 2007; Levine, 2005; Orr, 2007).

### **Challenges in Preparing Principals for the Role of Instructional Leader**

Drago-Severson et al. (2012) asserted that “the principal assumes a critical role in ensuring that quality teaching and learning takes place in schools, and leadership preparation programs have a major responsibility to ensure that the principals are well equipped to be successful” (p. 47). The literature is scant on exactly how leadership preparation programs are to achieve this assertion; however, there are several challenges mentioned in the literature regarding principal preparation programs and preparing aspiring principals for instructional leadership. Among these challenges in which principals need to be equipped to handle are pedagogical knowledge and addressing diversity through social justice. Also included in the literature are the challenges that university faculty face in teaching in principal preparation programs. These challenges include a professor’s knowledge and experience in instructional leadership and programming and teaching instructional leadership through online learning.

**Pedagogical knowledge.** One of these challenges in preparing aspiring principals is developing pedagogical knowledge. According to Brazer and Bauer (2013), “pedagogical knowledge helps to frame a set of insights that the well-prepared novice administrator ought to have in order to engage in instructional leadership” (p. 659). Secondary principals often lament that do not have the content knowledge to effectively supervise the various subjects offered in middle and high schools; however, they should have pedagogical knowledge that spans all content areas for improving student outcomes

(Nixon, Packard, & Dam, 2013). The challenge in preparing future principals in pedagogical knowledge is that most programs focus on what the principal should do and not what the principal should know (Stein & Nelson, 2003); consequently, principal preparation program need to find ways to teach aspiring principals effective teaching and learning strategies.

Pedagogical knowledge does not have an exact definition in the literature (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008), but generally it comprises “knowledge and skills about learning, a knowledge of general principles of instruction, and a knowledge of classroom management” (Nixon et al., 2013, p. 60). Nixon, Packard, and Dam (2008) found in their study that “principals selected pedagogical knowledge as the most relevant criteria for teacher contract non-renewal issues” (p. 69). Principals need a strong understanding of how students learn, effective instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques focused on student learning. From this understanding, principals are able to have critical conversations with teachers, provide professional development and resources, and coach teachers in improving their instruction (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). For principals to be strong instructional leaders, then they need a strong background in pedagogical knowledge. College professors have an expectation that principals enter the program with a foundation in pedagogical knowledge from their teaching experience; consequently professors in educational leadership programs do not teach pedagogical knowledge to their students who will one day lead and supervise teaching and learning in K-12 schools.

**Social justice.** Another challenge for principal preparation programs is teaching aspiring principals about diversity-related issues. Hawley and James (2010) found in their study of 62 universities affiliated with UCEA that most of the universities fall short in preparing school leaders for the challenge of meeting the needs of diverse learners. The results of the survey indicated that “universities focus on the sociological and economic conditions face by students of color, the persistence and damage of discrimination, inequities in learning resources, and the responsibilities leaders have to pursue social justice...but there is very little curricular content dealing with diversity issues that school leaders face in their daily lives” (p. 2). Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) argued that “school leaders must possess new analytical skills, knowledge, and dispositions to promote social justice in schools” (p.214), and they asserted that principal preparation programs must respond by teaching future leaders the skills needed to insure the academic and social success of all students.

Leadership preparation programs must address diversity with their candidates along “two different dimensions: (a) the candidates own knowledge, skills, and dispositions with respect to diversity and (b) candidates’ abilities to create culturally proficient schools” (Brazer & Bauer, 2013, p. 660). The literature offers limited suggestions on how principal preparation programs are to achieve this task. Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) suggested that “University principal preparation programs should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership praxis, critical discourse, and developing critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice” (p. 20), and these opportunities should be grounded in

instructional leadership. Likewise, McKenzie et al. (2008) found three key areas in which university principal programs should focus: (a) select students who have a propensity for social justice; (b) place more emphasis on instructional leadership; and, (c) teach students how to create inclusive school environments. Advocates of social justice have also argued that aspiring principal candidates can learn about social justice by studying “how the social, political, and economic context of the larger society influence educational policies and practice (Osterman & Hafner, 2009, p. 275). Others have asserted that social justice issues should be taught using Starrat’s model for ethical school leadership (Place & Reitzug, 1992); however, these critics have argued that traditional principal preparation programs do not include the requisite knowledge and skills to recognize inequities to make ethical decisions for social justice (Osterman & Hafner, 2009).

Included in the literature on the challenges of preparing aspiring leaders for social justice is the topic of special education. Special education laws and programming are critical challenges for principals. These challenges became significant for school leaders with the passage of the historical landmark legislation 1975 Public Law 94-192 followed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) (Robicheau, Haar, & Palladino, 2008). IDEA is federally mandated and regulated, and it increased a principal's instructional leadership responsibilities by guaranteeing that students with disabilities received individualized instruction in the least restrictive environment (Lynch, 2012). Despite the increased responsibility and challenges of IDEA, critics of principal preparation programs assert that universities are failing at preparing principals

for the demands of special education. Pazez and Cole (2013) argued that even though most professors in educational leadership programs assert that their programs have a social justice orientation, the “scarcity or absence of general training about a historically underserved population is particularly troubling” (p.245). They argued that most programs do not include adequate coursework on leadership for students with disabilities, and that special education as well as other equity-oriented educational issues have been a ignored within administrator preparation programs.

Robicheau, Haar, and Palladino (2008) found in their study of eight university programs that there is a lack of emphasis on special education in principal preparation. Of the eight programs studied, only one university program required a course in special education and that was a one credit special education law class. The other universities offered special education courses as electives. Because special education is the most litigious area of education (Zirkel & Johnson, 2011), principals need to know special education law and understand the roles teachers play in the provision of services.

Bateman and Bateman (2015) surveyed principals and reviewed university principal preparation programs across the U.S. They “found that even nearly 40 years after IDEA, most states continue to certify principals without requiring even one course relating to students with disabilities...and most universities continue to advertise principal preparation programs without including even a passing mention of laws pertaining to the education of children with disabilities” (p. 21) .

**University professors.** Currently, principal preparation programs employ three different types of professors: tenure-track, clinical, and adjunct. The majority of tenure-

track professors have not been employed in the field as either a principal or a superintendent (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011). Although tenure-track professors teach courses in the educational administration program, their primary focus is on research and grant writing to fund their research (Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Soho, 2012; Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011). Clinical professors are full-time professors who “bring practitioner credibility to programs perceived as disengaged from the real world of schools” (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011, p. 184). Clinical faculty comprise approximately 16% of university educational administration faculty and can teach courses, advise students, supervise internship placements, and maintain field relationships (Hackmann and McCarthy, 2011). Although clinical faculty members are often recognized as being the solution to bridging research and practice, a disconnection still remains between research and practice because of the separation between clinical faculty and tenured faculty. Hackmann and McCarthy (2011) asserted that role conflicts have historically existed between clinical and tenured faculty, and clinical faculty often feel isolated within their department because of differing goals and schedules. Therefore, one of the challenges facing professors in principal preparation programs is bridging the divide between clinical and tenured faculty by collaborating through professional development to blend theory and practice to improve principal preparation programming.

Many principal preparation programs are accused of being slow to change, so it is not surprising that many of them lack the necessary professional development to better inform university faculty on current trends and practices in school leadership education (Robey, 2011). A common criticism of preparation programs is that they teach theory

but fail to link leadership theory to practice. Unfortunately, in states with shrinking support for higher education, reduced resources have not allowed much in the way of faculty professional development (Young, Peterson, & Short 2002). Professional development for faculty could offer professors the opportunity to learn new trends and practices to better prepare students and improve preparation programming (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). As Young and Creighton (2002) stated, “Recognizing and admitting our weaknesses are crucial and a necessary process in growth and improvement. Equally important is the identification of and focus on the strengths of our professions (e.g., exemplary programs), to ensure that our policy and practice decisions are informed by effective practice and based on accurate and reliable data” (p. 234).

Another challenge in regards to the university professors in principal preparation programs is the current culture of higher education and the manner in which professors are rewarded in terms of tenure and recognition. University faculty are recognized in the higher education community for their research, and they may be reluctant to address program development that would take time away from their research (Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Soho, 2012). Additionally, program change is also hindered by the higher education’s organization and structure. Crow et al. (2012) explained that most professors are tied to a nine month calendar, and many of the professors do not work in the summer months. Most tenured-faculty use the summer months to work on research projects or prepare for conferences. As a result, there is little to no work done during the summer on principal preparation programming, and program development is halted. Finding the



time to review and evaluate principal preparation programming is a challenge facing university faculty, and consequently, it is often overlooked.

**Online learning.** Higher education institutions developed online learning as a means to decrease facility costs, increase student enrollment (Angiello, 2010), and modernize education (Reese, 2014). Many colleges and universities have adopted online courses in online-only and blended formats. Online-only courses are courses where students interact with peers and instructors solely through the use of technology, whereas blended courses (sometimes referred to as hybrid) use online learning as a supplement to face-to-face interactions (Reese, 2014). Romero (2014) indicated that “online learning enables adult learners to study despite professional, family, location, and time constraints” (p. 191). However, in a study conducted by Hackmann and McCarthy (2011), online learning was considered a challenge by university professors in educational leadership preparation programs. Although 81% of UCEA schools reported delivering part or all of their program online, 53% of the professors in Hackman and McCarthy’s (2011) study cited online leadership principal preparation programs as problematic (p. 155). Because that study was quantitative, there was no indication given as to why professors found online programming challenging.

Initial faculty members who implemented online learning did so on a voluntary basis, expecting compensation and other extrinsic rewards (Wolcott, 2004); however, more universities have adopted online learning, and faculty have been expected to teach online courses as a part of their regular duties (Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009). Despite this expectation, faculty have still been hesitant to convert their traditional courses to an

online format (Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009). Some researchers have found that a number of faculty members are tentative and apprehensive towards online learning because they harbor uncertainties regarding the quality of learning and student learning outcomes. This uncertainty stemmed from assumptions concerning the nature of learning and mode of learning (Appana, 2008); subscribing to myths and misconceptions of online learning (Fish & Gill, 2009); a lack of competency in technology and online learning methods (McGuire, 2005); and, institutional incongruence with relation to faculty, attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009; Simpson, 2010). Further, Saba (2005) revealed that faculty who teach online courses are often unsure how to teach in this format due to a lack of training and experience in an online environment. Kidd (2011) cited two reasons for professors' hesitation in teaching online courses: support and fear.

Support for online learning may be a reason why some professors are challenged by it. Mitchell and Geva-May (2009) conducted a study on university faculty's attitudes towards implementing online learning and found that a lack of institutional support contributed negatively to university faculty's implementation of online learning. They asserted that "unwillingness arises when faculty perceive little support from their department or colleagues, and a lack of assistance in the form of inadequate resources" (p. 74). Adding to this assertion, Reese (2014) elaborated that online learning in higher education "often reflect stagnant, closed systems" (p. 580), because professors treat online learning similar to traditional classroom learning where they only expect to deliver knowledge. Professors do not necessarily have the skills or support to create

online learning in a democratic environment where they feel connected to their students and support constructive learning (Reese, 2014). Caruthers and Friend (2014) argued that for professors to be successful in teaching online courses, then they must be given the time to develop new online programming and learn new technologies and practices. Crow et al. (2012) have indicated that professors are rewarded with tenure and rank through their academic research and not through program development, so professors may be weary of learning new teaching methodologies for online courses, or they may be experiencing faculty fatigue with developing online courses. Halfond (2014) explained that originally, professors developed online courses as a means to supplement their income, but “the novelty of online teaching quickly was supplanted by the reality of how much time it consumes and how much less satisfying it can be than the in-the-moment excitement of the live classroom” (p. 2). Online learning requires a different skillset that is “more methodical and precise in preparation, more continuous than episodic in delivering instruction, more willing to constantly tinker and improve each iteration of an online course, and more open to unrelenting virtual communication with students” (Halfond, 2014, p. 3). Faculty members need to be committed to continuous professional learning of this skillset in order to be effective, but many faculty find online learning to be burdensome. As suggested by these researchers, faculty who are forced to teach in online learning may have a negative view of online classes and may not understand how to create online classes that facilitate student learning.

Student engagement is also mentioned in the literature as another reason that online learning may be challenging. In an online course, professors have a difficult time

encouraging participation from all students and insuring that all voices are heard (Caruthers & Friend, 2014). Choi, Browne-Ferrigno, and Muth (2005) found in their study of online principal preparation programs that not all students readily embraced the idea of actively participating in online learning. They asserted that “while some students in the cohort reported enjoying online activities, several revealed their reticence for sharing personal views and reflections in the public domain of an online course” (p. 111). Gulati (2008) suggested that students are often silent in online environments because they do not feel safe or connected to others in the course. She asserted that students may feel uncomfortable in sharing their experiences with others or lack confidence in making their ideas public. Romero (2014) also indicated that current online courses in higher education lack socialization tools that help students become part of a group. However, Caruthers and Friend (2014) argued that professors can establish socialization in an online learning environment where students interact with one another and engage in “critical dialogue and practices” (p. 12). Garrison (2009) indicated that “the nature of the interaction must be more structured and systematic if a collaborative process of critical inquiry is to be initiated and sustained” (p. 98) but can be accomplished if the professor creates a process for collaboration.

As indicated in the literature, university principal preparation programs will need to consider several areas for the future of their programs in instructional leadership: (a) how to build pedagogical knowledge to prepare principals to coach teachers; (b) how to lead for social justice to prepare principals to serve in diverse schools; (c) how to prepare university faculty to stay abreast of current research through professional development

opportunities; (d) how to create incentive programs for university faculty to want to address program change; and (e) how to create meaningful learning experiences through online learning. All of these areas are challenges mentioned in the literature for university principal preparation programs to prepare school leaders for the twenty-first century.

### **Curriculum in University Principal Preparation Programs**

The studies on curriculum design in principal preparation programs have been limited, and the academic community has argued over the curricular content of principal preparation programs for the past few decades (Hackman & McCarthy, 2015). In 1992, UCEA created a panel of scholars, known as PRIMIS, to “define the knowledge in the field, set curriculum goals, and foster systematic inquiry” (Hoy, 1994). PRIMIS identified the essential knowledge for principal preparation program curriculum and outlined it into seven domains: (a) societal and cultural influences on schooling; (b) teaching and learning processes; (c) organizational studies; (d) leadership and management processes; (e) policy and political studies; (f) legal and ethical dimensions of schooling; and, (g) economic and financial dimensions of schooling (Osterman & Hafner, 2009). Although PRIMIS “provided an overview of an identifiable and stable knowledge base” (Hoy, 1994), it did not “grapple with epistemological and ontological questions, such as how knowledge and the process of knowledge development reflect values, interests, and bias” (Donmoyer, Imber, & Scheurich, 1995, p. 6). Between 1986 and 2006, educational researchers have advocated for curriculum changes, especially in

the areas of educational equity and social justice (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2006).

### **Curriculum Content**

Some researchers have conducted curriculum audits on university principal preparation programs. Osterman and Hafner (2009) conducted a literature review of all studies done on principal preparation programs and their curriculum content and found that traditionally, the educational administration curriculum is delineated into several areas: social justice, educational improvement and change, and managerial competencies. They found that these areas were taught on a continuum of what knowledge candidates needed, what skills needed to be taught, and what dispositions candidates should possess. Hess and Kelly (2005) analyzed the curriculum of 31 university principal preparation programs and over 210 course syllabi and found the following:

1. 29.6% of curriculum was focused on law, finance facilities, data and research training, and technology. Courses included school funding, budgeting, due process, church and state, student and teacher freedoms, tort laws, and research methods.
2. 15.7% of the curriculum was focused on school-level program implementation, evaluation, and organizational change. Courses included accountability, evaluation, assessment, data management, and organizational structure and change.

3. 14.9% of the curriculum focused on human relations. Courses included teacher evaluation, clinical supervision, professional development, and conflict management.
4. 12.1% of the curriculum was focused on pedagogical philosophies and included courses on constructivism, multiculturalism, and social justice.
5. 10.9% of the curriculum focused on the leader's role in influencing student learning. Courses included pedagogy, instructional leadership, learning theories, and classroom management.
6. 8% of the curriculum focused on parent and community relationships. Courses included public relations, politics, and policy.
7. 6% of the curriculum focused on leadership theory. Courses included symbolic leadership, leadership vs. management, school culture/climate, and vision.

This audit revealed that the majority of universities spend less than 35% of the curriculum on instructional leadership.

Included in the literature on curriculum design for university principal preparation programs is an explanation on university faculty's governance of coursework. Researchers have explained that course content reflects the individual professor's interest and knowledge on the standards (Augustine & Russell, 2010; Beck & Murphy, 1994; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Mulkeen & Cooper, 1992; Osterman & Hafner, 2009), and it does not reflect the realities of working on a campus as a school administrator (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009). University faculty have complete autonomy over the curriculum. According to the American Association of

University Professors (2001), “the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process” (p. 221). The purpose of faculty governance is to promote consensus around particular ideas and build support and ownership, but it is criticized for being one of the reasons why preparation programs are slow to change (Crow et al., 2012).

The curriculum of principal preparation programs is also criticized as being outdated. When it comes to course design, some scholars have suggested that some professors of education leadership often put more emphasis on trying to meet ISLLC Standards than evaluating and creating curriculum content to meet current needs (Quinn, 2005). Course names are sometimes changed without changing what is actually taught, and other times, a few minor adjustments are implemented with information that is either outdated or unneeded (Robey, 2011). Curriculum changes are often mediocre in effectiveness because professors put academic freedom ahead of curricular need (Quinn, 2005). In addition, much of what is taught fails to pay attention to the challenges of twenty-first century school leadership, such as the need to focus on student achievement or using data to inform instruction (Hess, 2006; SREB, 2008). The curriculum in principal preparation needs to “blend theory with strategic thinking skills in order for school leaders to know how to plan and be aware of how actions within a social system affect one another” (Robey, 2011, p. 39). Hackmann and McCarthy (2011) suggested that faculty members should regularly review curriculum and instructional practices and



revise them to “reflect new understandings of effective leadership behaviors that promote school improvements” (p. 67)

### **Field-Based Experiences & Cohort Models**

The curriculum of university principal preparation programs should also support a sustained field-based placement and complement what is being learned in all areas of the program (Sherman, 2008). The majority of principal preparation programs have some form of field-based experience or internships. The ELCC Standards advise university principal preparation programs that experiences in the field should include an internship that extends the duration of the program and culminates in a full-time placement of at least one semester in a school-based leadership position that offers realistic opportunities (NPBEA, 2002). Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) have indicated that exposure to real-world experiences can increase a leader’s ability to consider, analyze, and systematically plan strategies for action. Principal candidates gain learning experience by watching effective principals, observing good models, and putting one’s own expertise to trial and error in a school environment (Daresh, 2004).

The internship is the method in which candidates combine their classroom learning with real-world experience. Although the internship is listed by aspiring principal candidates as a valuable learning experience, student interns often define their experience as mediocre because they are placed in the schools that they serve and do not complete leadership tasks (SREB, 2005; Robey, 2011). Though professional expectations for school leadership require internship experiences to “provide interns

with substantial responsibilities that increase over time in amount and involvement with staff, students, parents, and community leaders” and “have a minimum of six months of full-time experience” in school settings (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, p. 16), internships in many leadership programs fail to meet the basic requirements (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008). In order for future principals to succeed, they need the chance to not only participate in school district activities but to also lead activities (Southern Regional Education Board, 2005). Gutmore, Gutmore, and Strobert (2009) asserted that through internships, pre-service principals gain the knowledge and skills needed to become leaders. Interns need experience in leading activities such as modeling effective instruction, evaluating teaching practices, implementing curriculum initiatives, and developing professional development (Southern Regional Education Board, 2005).

Well-designed preparation programs also involve the use of cohort teams, which not only allow learning collaboration for the educational leadership student, but teach the value of leadership teamwork as well. Student cohort teams allow groups to take on various problem-based questions with a variety of approaches. Group members share insights and experiences from their own worlds and compare and contrast in formulating best solutions (Jackson & Kelly, 2002). The use of cohort teams promotes trust among students and allows for students to engage in critical conversations and diverse opportunities.

## **Changes in University Principal Preparation Programs**

University principal preparation programs are under increasing pressure to change and to “offer relevant yet effective preparation programs to meet changing societal demands” (Crow et al., 2012, p. 174). The critics of leadership development programs falsely assume that all that all principal preparation programs are the same (Young, 2013), but university preparation programs vary across the nation. Due to the criticism that plagued principal preparation programs at the beginning of the twenty-first century, many programs have undergone program reform in the past ten years. Robey and Bauer (2013) found in their quantitative study on the extent of change in principal preparation programs that many universities have reformed their programs to meet the recommended standards and made improvements in both online learning and the internship. This study does not specifically recommend changes in principal preparation because it only assessed if universities were responding to the criticism of being slow to change. Additionally, in the past 10 years, there have been various qualitative studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of school leadership preparation programs, and the majority of these studies consisted of case studies or descriptive analyses on innovative or exemplary programs (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2015). Orr and Orphanos (2011) found in their study that the effect sizes of principals who graduated from exemplary preparation programs were significantly larger than principals who graduated from other traditional programs. They asserted that exemplary programs impact effective leadership practices, school improvement practices, and effective school culture. By identifying and studying universities that have innovative and stellar programs, suggestions of what

changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs can be distinguished.

Jackson and Kelley (2002) conducted a qualitative study on six different exemplary programs across the United States. These six programs differed from other traditional programs because “they tend to be more demanding of participants, have more careful selection and screening processes, and are more coherent and focused, with attention to sequencing of courses, scheduling, and strong collaboration with area districts” (p. 198). They found that all of the programs in their study had the following characteristics: (a) a collaborative faculty who continuously worked to update the program; (b) a strong criteria for admitting candidates; (c) a clear, well-defined curriculum that blends theory and practice; (d) collaboration with school districts for a relevant internship; and, (e) a strong connection between students and faculty in a cohort model.

Parylo (2013) conducted a systematic literature review of principal preparation programs looking for studies that were qualitative and focused on university district partnerships. She found eight qualitative studies in the past ten years on principal preparation. These studies were conducted primarily at the state or regional level and focused on building a collaborative leadership program with district and university partnerships. In her study, Parylo recognized the importance of university principal preparation programs partnering with school districts to give candidates a field based internship with practical, hands-on experiences in instructional leadership. Myran, Crum, and Clayton (2010) also advocated for university and school district partnerships by

identifying four pillars for effective partnerships. These four pillars are (a) take a developmental view, (b) find the balance between theory and practice, (c) maintain an effective communication system, and (d) enact instructionally focused leadership. Crow et al. (2012) referred to effective university and school district partnerships as “symbiotic partnerships” (p. 178) because it looks at the partnership as collaborative rather than cooperative.

Davis and Jazaar (2005) conducted a study of principal preparation programs that yielded effective school leaders. In their study of 14 leadership development programs, they identified seven habits of highly effective principal preparation programs. These habits included coursework on curriculum and instruction, collaborative experiences, clinical learning internships, providing mentors, authentic assessment, research-based decision making, and turnkey transitions. Davis and Jazaar emphasized that to become strong instructional leaders, principal candidates need time to engage in work with the curriculum and instruction to grasp how curriculum and instruction fit into school improvement efforts.

Brown (2006) found in her study that effective principal prep programs: “(a) raise admission requirements for candidates to include a minimum of 4 years teaching experience and proven leadership skills; (b) transform coursework from a theoretical base curriculum to a practical application base curriculum; (c) establish standards that align to NCLB requirements and hold all principal candidates accountable for mastering the standards; and, d) broaden the learning experiences to include settings outside of a school campus” (i.e. business settings) (p. 526). Brown emphasized that preparation

programs that focus on blending theory and practice better prepared aspiring principals for instructional leadership. Similarly, Gil (2012) asserted that “strong principal training programs remain the exception not the rule” (p. 25) when it comes to preparing future campus leaders, but she found that exemplary principal programs are: (a) more selective as “exemplary programs take considerable care in reviewing an applicant’s skills, experience, and leadership potential”; (b) preparing aspiring principals to be instructional leaders whose focus is on teaching and learning; (c) demanding standards and applying them; and, (d) implementing quality internships and mentoring (pp. 26-27).

Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) conducted a study of university leadership preparation programs in the United States to find examples of exemplary programs. They identified “seven key features of effective leadership preparation programs” (p. 25) from five university based principal preparation programs. These seven features are:

1. Clear focus and values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized;
2. Standards-based curriculum emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management;
3. Field-based internships with skilled supervision;
4. Cohort group that create opportunities for collaboration and team-work in practice oriented situations;
5. Active instructional strategies that link theory and practice, such as problem based learning;
6. Rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty;

7. Strong partnerships with schools and districts to support quality field-based learning.

By studying exemplary principal preparation programs, faculty can look at their current program to ascertain what changes are needed to better prepare their students for instructional leadership.

Young, Crow, Ogawa, and Murphy (2009) and Hackman and McCarthy (2015) argued that the majority of studies being conducted on principal preparation programs are being done by doctoral students through their dissertations. In reviewing ProQuest for the past five years, there are 22 dissertations that reviewed the effectiveness of principal preparation programs. The majority of these dissertations were confined to case studies of specific universities within an individual state. Some of the studies reviewed the preparation program's effectiveness on organizational leadership, leadership for technology, leadership for social justice, or on implications for policy reform; however there was one dissertation that focused on principal preparation and improving instructional leadership.

Taylor-Backor's (2015) dissertation focused on the supervision component of instructional leadership and offered suggestions for university program improvement in the area of supervision to prepare aspiring candidates for the role of instructional leader. In her findings, she gave suggestions for improving the coursework for instructional leadership. She stated:

Faculty should develop their own model of the screening, knowledge, skills, dispositions, tasks, teaching and learning strategies, field experiences, and

internship activities that they feel should be incorporated in their program. After coming to a consensus on what screening process, supervision and instructional leadership content, teaching and learning strategies, and induction support should be included in the program, the faculty can revise the program accordingly.

(p.166)

She summarized, “I am convinced that university preparation programs can prepare aspiring principals to be instructional leaders if the faculty of such programs makes use of and expands the research base on preparing effective supervisors and instructional leaders” (p. 171). Taylor-Backor’s dissertation was conducted on a state level, but her findings on sequencing coursework and improving the quality of principal preparation for instructional leadership offered the following suggestions for all university programs: (a) form an advisory committee to regularly review and revise the course sequencing and curriculum of the principal preparation program to insure alignment; (b) regularly interview former candidates to see if the coursework had prepared them for the role of instructional leader; (c) regularly review the current research and practices of experts in the field of instructional leadership (Taylor-Backor, 2013). Comparing all the researchers’ recommendations for improving principal preparation programs, there are five recurrent themes in their studies that promote instructional leadership: (a) enforce a standards-based curriculum; (b) prepare principals to be leaders of teaching and learning; (c) blend theory and practice; (d) build school district and university partnerships to offer relevant field-based, supervised internships; and (e) stay abreast of current research and



continuously improve the curriculum and coursework for the principal preparation program.

### **Summary**

Researchers have been discussing instructional leadership for the past 40 years, and although there are varying definitions and constructs surrounding instructional leadership, there are two themes that remain constant in the literature: instructional leadership is associated with school improvement, and successful schools have principals who are strong instructional leaders (Breidenstein et al., 2012). The university principal preparation program is the first caveat to preparing candidates to be great instructional leaders who understand that for schools to improve, the teaching and learning of all students must be the most important aspect of their job.

University principal preparation programs are under increasing pressure to reform their programs to insure that candidates are prepared for the instructional leadership role. According to The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2007), redesigning principal preparation programs around leadership practices that have an impact on students' learning should be of high priority in all university preparation programs. This assertion indicates that university principal preparation programs will continue to be scrutinized and undergo reform efforts in the future.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of professors in 99 universities that are members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. I sought to determine how these professors' define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders. In Chapter III, I explain my research methods including: the research design, context of the study, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

I conducted a phenomenological qualitative study on the perceptions of UCEA professors about the challenges of preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader. The phenomenological approach was founded in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, who suggested that one's experience of a phenomenon is the starting point of knowledge (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological study is aligned to understanding about the principle and the underlying structure of a phenomenon. (Merriam, 2002). "From phenomenology comes the idea that people interpret everyday experiences from the perspective of the meaning it has for them.

What phenomenologist emphasize, then, is the subjective aspects of people's behavior. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects in order to understand how and what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives" (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). Through this phenomenological study, I wanted to (a) understand the experiences of UCEA professors who teach principal preparation courses about the challenges of preparing principals for instructional leadership; (b) discover the beliefs of the participants regarding instructional leadership and how they define it; (c) explore how these beliefs influence their curriculum design and instructional practices in principal preparation programs; and, (d) ascertain from their perspective what changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare candidates for instructional leadership.

I attempted to "gain entry into the conceptual world of my participants in order to understand how and what meaning they construct" (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). Phillips and Burbules (2000) stated that "if researchers are to contribute to the improvement of education—to the improvement of educational policies and educational practices—they need to raise their sights a little higher than expressing their fervent beliefs or feelings, no matter how compelling these beliefs are" (p. 3). Since I was researching from a social constructivism philosophy (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), then I was not trying to prove there is only one answer to instructional leadership or prove my own beliefs about instructional leadership, but rather, I was trying to show that there are different meanings and interpretations of instructional leadership among the professors charged with preparing future principals. My goal was to seek understanding and to add to the

meaning of instructional leadership as it pertains to the development of university principal preparation programs and to identify the current challenges of preparing aspiring candidates for instructional leadership. I asked the UCEA professors to define instructional leadership, what it means to them, and how they prepare their students for the instructional leadership role. The variance of the responses added a thick description to the research as it honored and valued the opinions of the research participants (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

### **Context**

I researched principal preparation programs across the nation in universities that are members of UCEA. UCEA is a consortium of 99 major public and private doctoral-degree granting research universities in the United States, Australia, Canada, and China, but this study is limited to the 96 universities in the United States. These 96 universities include both public and private institutions. Additionally, this consortium of higher educational institutions is “committed to advancing the preparation and practice of educational leaders for the benefit of schools and children. This is done by the promotion and sponsorship of research, improvement of professional development for educational leaders and professors, and by influencing state and national policy” (Robey & Bauer, 2013, p. 274). UCEA established the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation in 2001, and it has stringent membership requirements including: (a) member institutions must offer a doctorate in educational administration/leadership or an equivalent program; (b) the member institution must also be rated in the Carnegie classification system as a Doctoral Extensive or Doctoral

Intensive institution, or a comparable rating for international institutions; (c) evidence of a critical mass of full-time tenure track faculty (five or more) in its preparation programs is required; and (d) faculty must exhibit excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service, and the majority of the coursework must be taught by the full-time faculty (UCEA, 2015). Schools who are members of UCEA are assumed to be leaders in the research and practice for educational administration and leadership. UCEA “provides credibility for research institutions to acknowledge the urgency of programmatic reform within the complex context of higher education in which faculty negotiate teaching, research, and service roles” (Crow et al., 2012, p. 185).

Furthermore, principal preparation programs should maintain a standard of ongoing evaluation, and UCEA’s standards are comprehensive and include clear requirements in the areas of diversity recruiting, professional development, and clinical practice, as well as the enhancement of leadership and research methods skills of preparation program faculty. The programs of member institutions must use advisory boards composed of both educational leadership stakeholders and practitioners. UCEA also promotes collaboration, specifying that members must develop relationships with other universities and associations committed to its mission (UCEA, 2015). Moreover, the organization hosts international conventions; produces several scholarly, peer-reviewed publications; has numerous graduate student development programs, fellowships, and resources; and various program centers. UCEA recognizes school personnel for their contributions to the professoriate and mentorship through its awards program (UCEA, 2015). My study was conducted in the fall of 2015.

## **Population and Sample**

There are 99 universities that are members of UCEA, but three universities are not within the United States. Therefore, the sample only included the 96 schools in the United States. I used a purposive criterion sampling technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) to identify the participants for the study. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to establish a set of criteria before sampling the population (Hays & Singh, 2012). The initial criteria for this sample were: UCEA universities in the United States and the plenary session representatives (PSR) of those universities. According to UCEA (2015):

The University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) is governed by a representative body from member institutions known as plenary session representatives (PSR). The UCEA Plenum, which is composed of one representative from each of the member institutions, also establishes goals and priorities, reviews and approves organizational policies, and examines and approves the budget. Representatives to the plenary session serve as official liaison among the universities, the board, and the UCEA Executive Director. (p. 1)

UCEA Plenary Representatives are either elected or appointed by faculty members and/or their Department Chair or Dean and serve for a term of 3-6 years renewable. The PSR is an active teaching professor in the principal preparation program, and as the program representative of the member institution, the PSR will be able to speak to their institutions' principal preparation program. The PSR representatives of this sample are

homogenous (Hayes & Singh, 2012) as they share similar experiences in their role as professor in principal preparation programs.

### **Participants**

The professors in the study were concerned with confidentiality, so to protect their identity, I identified the professors only through a generic label of their higher education institution. Because I only studied professors in universities that are members of UCEA, I identified the university by region as some states may only have one or two universities that are members of UCEA. To give context to the universities where the participating professors are employed, I present demographic data that include U.S. regions based on *National Geographic's* region designation (Northeast, Southwest, West, Southeast, and Midwest), size of the school designated by Carnegie (small, medium, large), and the Carnegie Classification for “recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education” (Carnegie, 2015, para.1). I used the Carnegie Classification to determine the research institute type for each university specifically for comparison purposes. The Carnegie Classification has been widely used in research on colleges and universities since its introduction in the early 1970s (McCormick & Zhao 2005). Normally, it is cited as a way to represent differences in institutional mission or purpose. “Due to its wide adoption and longevity, the classification is also an important touchstone for institutional uses, such as peer comparison or even as an object of strategic action” (McCormick, Pike, Kuh, & Chen, 2009, p. 145). Table 1 illustrates the demographics for all 21 universities. Each university is identified by a number to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

**Table 1**  
*University Demographic Data of Survey Participants*

University Number	Region	Size	Carnegie Classification
1	Southeast	Medium	High Research University
2	Southeast	Small	High Research University
3	Northeast	Small	High Research University
4	Southeast	Large	Very High Research University
5	Midwest	Medium	High Research University
6	Southwest	Medium	High Research University
7	Northeast	Large	High Research University
8	Southwest	Large	Very High Research University
9	Southwest	Large	Master's College
10	Northeast	Large	Very High Research University
11	Midwest	Medium	High Research University
12	Southeast	Large	Very High Research University
13	Midwest	Medium	Very High Research University
14	Southeast	Medium	Very High Research University
15	Northeast	Medium	High Research University
16	Midwest	Large	Very High Research University
17	Southwest	Medium	Very High Research University
18	West	Small	Research University
19	West	Large	Very High Research University
20	Southeast	Large	Very High Research University
21	Southeast	Large	Very High Research University

From the returned 21 open-ended surveys, I asked eight professors from eight different schools to participate in a semi-structured interview. These professors represented both clinical and tenured faculty, and they currently serve as their institution's PSR for UCEA. My criterion for selecting these eight professors were: U.S. region, university size, and Carnegie classification. I included at least one professor from each region in the United States (West, Southwest, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast). All of these professors represented schools that varied in size—medium or large, and each school varied in Carnegie Classification--either High or Very High Research



University. There were three professors from small universities that responded to my open-ended survey but indicated that they did not wish to interview. The university demographics of the eight participating professors are illustrated in Table 2. The professors are identified by an alphabet letter to protect their identity.

**Table 2**

*University Demographic Data of Interviewed Participants*

Professor Letter	Region	Size	Carnegie Classification
A	Northeast	Large	Very High Research
B	Southeast	Medium	High Research University
C	Midwest	Medium	High Research University
D	Southwest	Large	Very High Research
E	Southeast	Medium	Very High Research
F	West	Large	Very High Research
G	Midwest	Large	Very High Research
H	Southwest	Medium	Very High Research

Additionally, out of the eight participants, two of the professors were clinical professors and six were tenured professors. Three of the professor were male, and the other five professors were female.

### **Instrumentation**

I created an open-ended questionnaire based on my research questions to survey the UCEA PSRs in all 96 schools in the United States. I gave directions to the PSR to answer the questions based off their own perception of their university’s principal prep program (Appendix A). Table 3 displays the open-ended questions I used to solicit the professors’ responses. The use of an open-ended survey allowed me to give every UCEA school an opportunity to participate in the study, and it allowed time for the participants to reflect on their answers.

**Table 3**  
*Open-Ended Questionnaire*

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Questions

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1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. What are some of the challenges in preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader?
3. How do you design your university course curriculum for instructional leadership?
4. How often do you change the curriculum for instructional leadership courses?
5. What courses are currently taught that prepare candidates for instructional leadership?
6. What changes do you feel are needed to improve principal preparation to better prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role?
7. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview either in person, online, or via telephone?

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I validated the open-ended survey instrument through face validity (Edmondson & Irby, 2008) and used university faculty members, who are not PSRs but who teach principal preparation courses, to validate the questions on the questionnaire. According to Edmondson and Irby (2008), face validity “relates directly to the question content” (p. 71) and requires a pilot focus group of professors who are not part of the study but are similar to the sample. Four university professors in four different UCEA schools, who teach courses in the principal preparation program, reviewed the questions to determine if the questions in the questionnaire solicited the feedback that I needed for my study (Edmondson & Irby, 2008). From their feedback, I tweaked some of the questions for clarity.

### **Data Collection**

The UCEA website lists every member school, its faculty, and its PSR, so it is a matter of public record. I created a spreadsheet that lists the university and its location,

the PSR faculty member, and the email address for each PSR. From that spreadsheet, I omitted the schools that are non-U.S. universities, and I created a master email list with the remaining 96 PSRs. I emailed each PSR and explained the purpose of my study, assured them of confidentiality, and included a copy of the questionnaire to be completed (Appendix B). Because the questionnaire was open-ended, I gave them a month to complete it, and I sent two email reminders during the month. My intention was to allow enough time for an adequate survey response rate. Jacob and Jacob (2012) conducted a study in which they tested survey response rates. They found that the average response rate for an email survey with follow-up reminders was 18.4% (p. 410). My goal was to have at least a 25% response rate on the questionnaire, which would be 24 university professors. Although I only had 21 responses for a 21.8% response rate and did not meet the 25% goal, my survey response rate was higher than the 18.4% average that Jacob and Jacob cited.

From the returned questionnaires, I determined which professors were willing to be interviewed. From that sample, I used a pre-determined criteria based on national region (Northeast, Southwest, West, Southeast, and Midwest), and university size (large—more than 25,000 students; medium—15,000-25,000 students) to select professors for follow-up interviews. My goal was to have a sample of professors from various schools that differed in size and region. I interviewed eight professors that met the pre-determined criteria. All of the interviews were conducted via telephone or on Skype.

I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Kvale, 1996) that included self-created follow-up questions from the open-ended questionnaire that needed clarification or elaboration and included other questions that emerged from the responses (Appendix C). The preference for using a semi-structured interview was to use a set of questions that sought an answer to the research problem but also allowed for the member's voice to emerge (Hays & Singh, 2012). The semi-structured interview allowed for some structure to begin the interview, but it also allowed for the researcher to ask follow-up questions or for the participant to elaborate on an answer during the interview. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using various phenomenological analysis steps developed by Moustakas (1994). In explaining the analysis process, Moustakas emphasized the importance of seeing and explaining phenomena without bias: "This way of perceiving life calls for looking, noticing, becoming aware, without imposing our prejudgment on what we see, think, imagine, or feel" (p. 86). My goal for using Moustakas' transcendental approach to phenomenology was to reduce my own bias, to describe things as they are, and to understand meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. Moustakas (1994) explained that "meaning is created when the object as it appears in our consciousness, mingles with the object in nature: what appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears to the world is a product of learning" (p. 27). I assumed a phenomenological mind-set to analyze the data. This mindset included adopting the phenomenological attitude of bracketing which is

essential to phenomenological methodology. Bracketing consists of reducing bias from an individual's attitude or experience informed by culture and education, including his/her "past knowledge of the phenomenon encountered" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 240). Bracketing requires a rigorous reflection on one's bias, opinions, and lived experience. I practiced reflexivity (Johnson, 1997) throughout the data analysis process to reduce my own personal bias.

The first step in the data analysis was horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). To complete this process, I read and re-read the open-ended surveys to clearly understand the experience described. In reading the questionnaires, I sought to discover and list significant statements that described the participant's experience of the phenomenon. During this stage, I treated each statement with equal worth, developing a list of "non-repetitive, non-overlapping" statements that related to the topic (Moustakas, p. 122). I then analyzed these significant statements to develop initial themes that I would further investigate in the follow-up interviews.

After completing the follow-up interviews, I transcribed the data and read through all of the transcripts multiple times in order to repeat the process of horizontalization. Through this process, I "highlighted significant statements, sentences, or quotes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 82) that expressed a description of the professors' experiences. I then developed clusters of meanings from these statements and developed central themes that I used to code the data (Hayes & Singh, 2012). I used different colored highlighters to highlight key statements and quotes that matched the varying themes. From these themes, I wrote a "structural description" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120)

of the professors' beliefs and experiences and how these beliefs and experiences influence their principal preparation program design in instructional leadership. This represented regularities found in how the participant experienced the phenomenon. Finally, through cross-analysis of both the significant statements in the open-ended surveys and the structural description from the interviews, I found commonalities and "wrote a composite description that presents the essence of the phenomenon." (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). By using a holistic approach to analyze the open-ended surveys and the interviews, I was able to write a composite description of how professors' define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders. I utilized the composite data to answer the stated research questions. Throughout the data analysis process, I maintained integrity by interpreting the data by what was actually said or written and practicing reflexivity.

### **Validity and Reliability**

#### **Validity**

Creswell (2013) asserted that qualitative researchers should utilize validation strategies to document the accuracy of their findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term *credibility* in lieu of validation, so the terms are often interchanged in the literature. Validity is achieved when a researcher triangulates the data and uses multiple sources and methods to corroborate the evidence (Johnson, 1997; Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation occurred in my data participants, for I surveyed and

interviewed multiple professors in different schools across the United States.

Triangulation was achieved in my data collection as I used two different forms of data collection: (a) open-ended survey and (b) interviews. Lastly, to triangulate my data analysis and findings, I used two different validation strategies: (a) member checking and (b) reflexivity or clarifying researcher bias.

The data were validated through member checking (Bloor, 1983; Creswell, 2013). Member checking was achieved by allowing the participants to review results of the findings and for verification and feedback (Johnson, 1997). I asked the professors whom I interviewed to review my findings and to make corrections as needed in order to confirm the meanings and interpretations assigned to their interviews. A transcript of the interviews and a copy of the findings was given to participating professors to evaluate if I accurately captured their voice and beliefs. Once the professors reviewed the transcript and findings, I emailed or telephoned them to ascertain if they have any edits to my findings.

Validity was also achieved by practicing reflexivity or clarifying researcher bias (Creswell, 2013; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Johnson, 1997; Merriam, 2002) in my data analysis to determine if my own biases, personal opinions, and experiences influence the research results. I practiced reflexive writing throughout the data analysis process by utilizing Roger's (1961) authenticity questioning techniques. By using this technique, I reflected on questions such as: *What are my thoughts regarding principal preparation? About instructional leadership? About professors in university programs? What do I expect the data will show? Are my thoughts and beliefs influencing my*

*interpretation of the data? Is my experience as a secondary principal or a graduate teaching assistant in a principal preparation class influencing my findings?* By practicing reflexivity, I was able to limit my own perceptions and feelings regarding instructional leadership, university professors, and university principal preparation programs from the data findings.

### **Reliability**

I assured reliability of the data in two different ways. First, the initial open-ended questionnaire was emailed to professors and gave the professors an opportunity to reflect and answer the questions in their own words. I gathered the open-ended responses and analyze them based on what the professors actually wrote. Reliability was achieved as I used the exact written words of the sample population. Secondly, I insured reliability when I interviewed the participants by using a tape recorder and capturing their exact thoughts and words. According to Creswell (2013), “reliability can be enhanced in qualitative research if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good tape recorder and transcribing the notes” (p. 253).

### **Researcher Perspective**

As a 15-year practicing principal and a Ph.D. student in an UCEA school who has co-taught in the principal preparation program, I bring my own bias and perspective to the study. I recognize that I have my own definition of instructional leadership and my own opinion on the challenges of preparing aspiring principals to be instructional leaders, and my experiences may likely influence my research (Hays & Singh, 2012). To



counteract my bias, I practiced reflexive writing while analyzing the data and while writing the findings.

### **Summary**

Creswell (2013) stated that ‘phenomenology is not only a description but an interpretative process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meanings of the participants’ shared experiences’ (p. 80). By interpreting and analyzing the data, I am able to: (a) understand the experiences of UCEA professors who teach principal preparation courses, (b) determine how meanings of instructional leadership are formed though and in the university’s principal preparation culture, and (c) discover the beliefs of the participants in regards to instructional leadership, and how these beliefs influence their curriculum design in principal preparation programs. The data methods resulted in findings that are valid, reliable, and protected from researcher bias.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of professors in 99 universities that are members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. I sought to determine how these professors' define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and develop coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders. In this chapter, I discuss the findings that emerged from the examination of the perceptions of professors in universities that are members of UCEA about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. Using a phenomenological approach, I conducted a qualitative study in two different stages. In the first stage, I sent an open-ended survey to the 96 PSRs who teach in UCEA schools across the United States. I received responses from professors from 21 different schools that varied in region, size, and institute designation. In the second stage of the study, I chose eight professors from eight different universities to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview.

#### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings for this study are presented in three different stages. In the first stage, I present the findings from the open-ended survey and discuss the significant

statements from the questionnaire. In the second stage, I discuss the significant findings from the focused interviews by framing this discussion through the research questions. In the final stage, I present a cross-analysis of both the open-ended survey and the focused interviews and write a composite description.

### **Stage I: Presentation of Open-Ended Survey Findings**

In the open-ended survey, I asked the professors six qualitative questions. The following six questions framed the findings for Stage I.

1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. What are some of the challenges in preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader?
3. How do you design your university course curriculum for instructional leadership?
4. How often do you change the curriculum for instructional leadership courses?
5. What courses are currently taught that prepare candidates for instructional leadership?
6. What changes do you feel are needed to improve principal preparation to better prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role?

I read through all of the returned open-ended surveys to identify significant statements for each question which is the first step in the analysis process of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). I offer the significant statements for each question in Tables 4-9 and a discussion of each table. These selected statements represent “non-

repetitive, non-overlapping significant statements” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95) and are verbatim from what the professors wrote.

### **Significant Statements: Definitions of Instructional Leadership**

All 21 professors gave their own definition of instructional leadership on the open-ended survey. These definitions are presented verbatim from what the professors wrote in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Selected Significant Statements for Definition of Instructional Leadership*

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Question 1. How do you define instructional leadership?

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1. With a pre-identified goal or target (i.e. curricular standard) providing instructional guidance, direction, and support to teachers and staff to increase the likelihood of students demonstrating achievement (i.e. mastery) of the stated curricular standard.
  2. Instructional leadership is a multi-faceted job today. Anyone in the setting that takes ownership over facilitating excellent learning, modeling best practices, exhibiting a passion and desire to continue to improve.
  3. Instructional leadership is the leadership in schools that focuses on teaching, learning, curriculum, professional development, and growing teachers to meet the needs of students.
  4. Instructional leadership is behavior that influences teachers and other instructional personnel to provide the best education for the students in their care.
  5. Instructional leadership is the leadership in schools that is expressly for the improvement of instruction/pedagogy from the teachers.
  6. Leadership that assists teachers/educational professionals in understanding how to incorporate best practice and content knowledge into their teaching while coaching them to improve their practice and being able to assess (formative and summative) how well teachers are at developing students for success.
  7. Instructional leadership is the way which school leaders support the work of teachers in the classrooms by providing meaningful and timely professional development.
  8. Instructional leadership involves improving teaching and learning through supervision, professional development, and data monitoring. A leader who works with teachers to make the best instructional decisions for their students.
-

**Table 4** Continued

9. An instructional leader supports teachers through observation and feedback, coordinating professional development, and facilitating professional learning communities.
10. Instructional leadership includes vision, mission, shaping a learning-focused culture, observation, and sense-making of classroom instruction and student work, and organizing communities of practice to create clarity on what students should know and be able to do.
11. A leader who has a commitment to improve the culture of the school. An instructional leader understands that the culture of the school is the defining factor for student learning.
12. Someone who can create a shared vision that focuses on collaboratively building a learning focused culture.
13. An instructional leader who has the big picture and can articulate that picture. Someone who knows where we are going, what we are going to do, and why we are doing it.
14. Instructional leadership is when a campus leader creates a vision for all stakeholders to learn and grow at high levels and find success. Instructional leadership includes professional development and creating PLCs to help teachers learn and grow in their pedagogy.
15. Leadership that builds a socially just culture focused on learning for all students through vision, mission, and values.
16. An instructional leader focuses on creating a school culture where all students can find success. A visionary leader who holds all the adults in the building accountable for improving student learning.
17. Leadership that primary looks to support teachers in their teaching through coaching, supervision, and professional development. An instructional leader puts student learning at the center of their focus.
18. A leader who can create and sustain a vision for high expectations for a diverse population and creates a culture of respect.
19. A leader who drives the teaching and learning culture of a school. They focus their time on improving teaching and improving instruction.
20. Instructional leadership is a principal's ability to create a shared vision for a campus that is focused on high expectations for all students to excel academically.
21. A principal who is a leader of teachers to insure best pedagogy practices and curriculum alignment to meet the needs of diverse students. Instructional leadership encompasses professional development to help teachers. Principals need to assess the needs of their teachers and find professional development to support those needs.

The professors' definitions of instructional leadership fit within the conceptual framework developed in the literature review that included: campus vision, curriculum and instruction, supervision, professional development, and data-driven decision-making. The professors' definitions by these common strands are presented as follows.

**Vision.** Eight of the professors spoke of vision when defining instructional leadership. One professor wrote that instructional leadership is a "principal's ability to create a shared vision for a campus that is focused on high expectations for all students to excel academically." This statement reflects the sentiments of the majority of the professors that the principal is responsible for having a compelling vision that supports the learning of all students. Also within the context of vision, seven of the 21 professors directly mentioned culture and creating a positive learning culture for all students to achieve at high levels. One of the professors wrote, "Someone who can create a shared vision that focuses on collaboratively building a learning focused culture." As indicated by several professors, the idea of culture is a central component of vision in terms of insuring the academic success of all students.

**Curriculum and instruction.** One of the more recurrent themes in the significant statements was that instructional leadership primarily focuses on curriculum alignment and strong pedagogy practices. All 21 professors defined instructional leadership through a teaching and learning lens. One of the professors provided this definition for instructional leadership: "Instructional leadership is the leadership in schools that focuses on teaching, learning, curriculum, professional development, and growing teachers to meet the needs of students." Another professor commented that an

instructional leader has to have “an understanding of how teachers can incorporate best practices and content knowledge into their teaching.” Out of the 21 professors, 18 of them stated it was important for an instructional leader to have strong pedagogy knowledge and understand how teaching practices impact student learning. One of the professors wrote, “Instructional leaders are focused on improving the well-being and academic achievement of all students through pedagogical best practices and research-based instructional strategies. In reviewing the significant statements it is important to note that the professors used the verbs “influence,” and “facilitate” in their definitions of instructional leader. From the connotation of these verbs, the goal of an instructional leader is to shape, inspire, enable, and guide teachers in their curriculum and instructional practices.

**Supervision.** Instructional leadership was also defined through a supervision lens. Seven professors included supervision in their definition of instructional leadership. Four of the professors defined supervision as the principal’s role in conducting “observations and providing feedback.” These professors also used terms such as “supporting” and “coaching.” In this context, it is apparent that some of the professors believe that supervision should be collegial rather than evaluative. Therefore, instructional leadership encompasses coaching and supporting teachers in their instructional work.

**Professional development.** Seven professors directly mentioned professional development in their definition of instructional leadership. One of the comments made in regards to professional development was: “Leadership that supports the work of teachers

in classrooms by providing meaningful and timely professional development.” Similarly, another professors wrote, “Instructional leadership encompasses professional development to help teachers. Principals need to assess the needs of their teachers and find professional development to support those needs.” Based on the professors’ comments, the main idea of professional development is to support teachers in their work. If professional development is to be meaningful, then it must address the needs of the teachers. As instructional leaders, principals will provide meaningful professional development to support the learning and the work of teachers.

**Data-driven decision-making.** Another common theme in defining instructional leadership was data-driven decision-making. Nine professors listed data-driven decision-making in their definition of instructional leadership. One of the professors wrote, “Instructional leadership is being able to assess how well teachers are developing students for success, collecting data, and using the data to improve instruction.” Another professor added that instructional leadership “encompasses the use of assessment to drive instructional decision-making.” The study participants indicated that the most critical component of data-driven decision-making is using data to improve student learning and teacher quality.

### **Significant Statements: Challenges**

The professors in educational leadership programs offered several challenges for preparing future principals for the role of instructional leader. The challenges cited by the professors are presented verbatim in Table 5. Some of the challenges were repetitive, so I only cited one example of repetitive challenges.



**Table 5**

*Selected Significant Statements for Challenges in Preparing Candidates for Instructional Leadership*

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Question: What are some of the challenges in preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader?

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1. Knowledge and competence of professor's in instructional processes.
  2. Lack of cultural competence by the students.
  3. Support system availability from others in the field.
  4. Changing mind-sets--instructional leadership is often equated with supervision and evaluation rather than in growing teacher practice to improve student learning.
  5. One of the challenges is time. We don't have enough time in the program to teach students the standards to enough depth. There also isn't enough time in the internship for them to get the practical experience they need.
  6. Addressing the growing need for social justice. Our students don't always know about inclusivity and equity.
  7. Building pedagogy knowledge—helping students understand and recognize good teaching practices or the ways student learn.
  8. Most aspiring principals have little training or experience in supporting instructional improvement efforts.
  9. Experience—they have little experience in a leadership role so helping them understand what they will face is a big issue.
  10. Getting students to understand that schools should be about learning and not about state testing.
  11. Helping them understand that instruction and or teaching/pedagogy is connected to learning objectives, outcomes, and assessments—connections between how we teach, what is taught, and how we assess it.
  12. Helping students understand how instructional leadership is related to culturally responsive leadership, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally responsive curriculum.
  13. The level of fear in schools these days is an impediment to trust, creativity, and innovation. Our students are deeply immersed in the fear-based culture.
  14. Helping principals understand that instructional leadership is about growing teachers, not punishing them.
  15. Professors who teach instructional leadership courses who have no experience as a principal or instructional supervisor.
  16. Time for professors to stay abreast of current research and practices.
  17. Online classes are challenging. It is better when we can see them face-to and get to know our students better and can mentor and support them.
  18. Helping students connect theory and concepts to practical situations in a meaningful way.
-

These challenges were coded into five different themes: online learning, time, mind-sets, pedagogical knowledge, and the professor's knowledge/experience.

**Online learning.** One of the challenges that materialized from the data was teaching instructional leadership through online learning. Out of the 21 surveys, 16 professors indicated online-programming as a challenge for preparing candidates for instructional leadership. Most of the professors simply listed, "teaching instructional leadership classes online" or "online courses" on the open-ended survey, but one professor stated, "Online classes are challenging. It is better when we can see them face-to-face and get to know our students better and can mentor and support them."

**Time.** Another challenge that surfaced in the data was time. 18 out of the 21 professors mentioned time as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals to be instructional leaders. The concept of time was mentioned in two different contexts. Time to teach the standards is the one of these contexts. Whether the standards are state, ELCC or ISLLC, 11 out of the 21 professors specifically mentioned that there is not enough time to teach all the standards in great depth. The other context for time was time in the internships for on-the-job training. Fourteen professors mentioned "more time in the field" and "more time in internships" as challenges facing them in preparing students for instructional leadership.

**Mind-sets.** There were three different challenges that nested under the theme of mindsets: (a) developing a growth mind-set among aspiring principals; (b) changing a candidate's mind-set to meet the needs of diverse learners; and, (c) overcoming a fear-based mind-set from the standardization movement. The idea of helping aspiring

principals develop a growth mind-set was a recurrent trend in the data. Fifteen of the professors mentioned it as a challenge for preparing candidates for instructional leadership. One professor wrote, “Changing mind-sets--instructional leadership is often equated with supervision and evaluation rather than in growing teacher practice to improve student learning.” Additionally, another professor wrote, “Helping principals understand that instructional leadership is about growing teachers, not punishing them.”

The second mind-set that professors mentioned as a challenge was helping candidates foster a mind-set towards social justice. Eighteen of the professors asserted that nurturing a student’s mind-set to understand that they must set up instructional systems to meet the needs of diverse learners is challenging. One professor wrote, “Helping students understand how instructional leadership is related to culturally responsive leadership, culturally responsive teaching, and culturally responsive curriculum.” Moreover, eight professors mentioned that one of the challenges in teaching social justice is that students come to them with a “lack of cultural competence,” or they are “not social justice advocates.”

The third mind-set challenge cited by the professors was helping students overcome a fear based culture from the standardization movement. Twelve professors cited this as a challenge in the open-ended survey. One of the professors wrote:

The level of fear in schools these days is an impediment to trust, creativity, and innovation. The standards movement stemmed from some justified concerns about inequity of opportunity to learn among the students in our country, but the

methods for addressing those concerns have proven to be counterproductive. Our principal preparation students are deeply immersed in this fear-based culture. Another professor agreed by writing, “Our students come to us thinking they have to hold teachers accountable for teaching to the mandated test because if their students don’t perform, then they [the principal] will lose their job. The challenge for us is to help them see that education is about learning, growth, and preparing students for a global work force.”

**Pedagogical knowledge.** Another theme that emerged in the data as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leadership is developing pedagogical knowledge. Nineteen of the 21 professors cited it as a challenge. One of the professors wrote, “Most aspiring candidates have not had the opportunity to develop their instructional practice base by observing others nor have they been given feedback on good instructional practices.” Another professor penned, “Helping them understand that instruction and or teaching/pedagogy is connected to learning objectives, outcomes, and assessments—connections between how we teach, what is taught, and how we assess it.”

**Professor’s knowledge and experience.** The last theme derived from the data in understanding the challenges professors face in preparing instructional leaders is the professors’ knowledge and experience in P-12 administration. 10 of the professors mentioned that a professor’s experience and position can be a challenge in teaching aspiring principals. One of the professors wrote, “Some professors are content to sit in their offices to research and write. They never get out of the building and visit schools

or meet with school partners; and consequently, they have a limited understanding of strong pedagogy or the current research on effective school leadership.” Six professors wrote that a challenge was having professors on staff who teach and supervise students who have no experience as a school principal. One professor noted under challenges, “Professors who teach instructional leadership courses who have no experience as a principal or instructional supervisor.”

**Significant Statements: Curriculum Design for Instructional Leadership**

In Table 6, I list the significant statements by the professors on how they design curriculum that relates to instructional leadership in university principal preparation programs. Some of the statements were repetitive, so I only listed the non-repeating statements.

**Table 6**

*Selected Significant Statements for Designing Curriculum for Instructional Leadership*

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Question: How do you design your university course curriculum for instructional leadership?

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1. We use many case studies to provide simulations of various learning environments, and many times try to replicate the real-world through the use of anecdotes, qualitative research describing instructional leadership.
2. We use the ISLLC standards, the ELCC standards, and state standards.
3. We use the standards and the state certification test to design our courses. All of our courses also have a culturally responsive and social justice emphasis.
4. Our courses were designed in the mid-1990s and remained the same.
5. We have a great deal of problem based learning, case studies, and outside internship experiences.
6. We designed a set of core competencies and descriptive standards for knowledge, application, and developing capacity in others.
7. The course curriculum was designed by a committee of university educational faculty along with our K-12 advisory partners.
8. We research best practices for learning, socio-economic factors, individualized instruction, and assessment strategies.

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All 21 professors indicated that principal preparation courses are created and aligned to meet the standards governing that state, whether those standards are ISLCC, ELCC, or state standards. They also indicated that they look at the state's licensure exams to insure alignment so that their students are prepared for their state's certification test. Some of the professors also indicated that they use clinical-based activities and case studies in their curriculum design.

### **Significant Statements: Curriculum Courses for Instructional Leadership**

Table 7 displays the 21 schools, the number of courses for instructional leadership, and the general heading of the courses taught in their program that focus on instructional leadership. The professors listed these courses in the open-ended survey under this question: *What courses are currently taught that prepare candidates for instructional leadership?* The professors determined which courses focus on instructional leadership based on how they defined instructional leadership.

**Table 7**  
*Curriculum Courses for Instructional Leadership*

University Number	Number of Courses	General Names of Courses
1	5	Principal Leadership, Instructional & Curriculum Development, Supervision, Leadership & Learning, Internship
2	3	Curriculum & Instruction, Instructional Leadership, Principalship
3	6	Principalship, Data-driven Leadership, Staff Evaluation & Development, Special Education Leadership, Instructional Strategies & Models, Internship
4	3	Administering Ed programs, Assessment & Evaluation, Supervision & Professional Development
5	5	Principalship, Data-driven Leadership, Supervision & Professional Development, Instructional Leadership, Internship
6	4	Teaching & Learning, Professional Development, Curriculum & Instruction, Supervision
7	5	Principalship, Curriculum, Professional Development, Supervision, Internship

**Table 7 Continued**

University Number	Number of Courses	General Names of Courses
8	2	Instructional Leadership, Coaching
10	4	Educational Leadership, Supervision, Curriculum & Instruction, Internship
11	4	Educational Leadership Instructional Leadership, Supervision, Curriculum & Instruction
12	6	Principalship, Professional Practice, Change Leadership, Special Pops, Organizational Leadership, Internship
13	5	Principalship, Data-Driven Decision-Making, Instructional Theories, Supervision, Internship
14	4	Principalship, Educational/Instructional Leadership, Supervision, Data-Driven Decision- Making
15	4	Leadership Development, Curriculum Theories, Supervision, Internship
16	5	Teaching & Learning, Professional Development, Organizational Change, Curriculum & Instruction, Contexts of Learning



**Table 7 Continued**

University Number	Number of Courses	General Names of Courses
17	4	School Principalship, Curriculum Planning, Instructional Leadership, Supervision, Internship
18	6	Educational Leadership Instructional Leadership, Supervision, Curriculum & Instruction, Organizational Leadership, Internship
19	8	Principalship, Data-driven leadership, Social Justice, Supervision & Teacher Development, Educational Leadership, Instructional Strategies & Models, Organizational Leadership, Internship
20	4	Educational Leadership, Leadership for Social Justice, Curriculum Development; Instructional Support
21	5	Instructional Leadership, Supervision, Curriculum, Change Leadership, Internship

The curriculum among the 21 university preparation programs vary from institution to institution. The number of courses taught for preparing candidates for

instructional leadership vary from as low as two courses to as high as eight courses with the mode being four courses.

**Significant Statements: Changing the Curriculum for Instructional Leadership**

In the open-ended survey, I asked the professors how often they changed the curriculum for the instructional leadership courses offered in their program. Table 8 lists the significant statements for the professors' answers to this question. These statements are verbatim form what the professors listed and only non-repetitive statements are listed.

**Table 8**

*Selected Significant Statements for Changing Curriculum for Instructional Leadership*

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Question: How often do you change the curriculum for instructional leadership courses?

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1. When the standards change.
  2. When we get a new professor.
  3. The courses have remained the same; however, the learning activities change on a regular basis depending on student feedback and the instructor's continued growth of the content.
  4. I meet at least 3 times a year with the instructors for the courses to fine tune the curriculum, readings, and expectations.
  5. We review when the standards change.
  6. We don't review it regularly, usually only when the standards change.
  7. We review every 3 years or when we hire a new professor.
  8. We go through a process of program evaluation every year to improve our course offerings.
  9. If not yearly, then bi-yearly.
  10. The curriculum is perpetually in flux as the educational environment shifts.
- 

All 21 professors also indicated that they do review the coursework and the sequencing but this review varies by institution. Eight professors specified that they

review the curriculum only when the standards change or when a new professor is hired.

Only two professors indicated that course reviews occur on an annual basis.

### **Significant Statements: Changing the Curriculum**

Lastly, the professors offered changes to improve the quality of university principal preparation programs to better prepare candidates for instructional leadership.

Table 9 lists the significant statements for these changes.

#### **Table 9**

##### *Selected Significant Statements for Improving Principal Preparation for Instructional Leadership*

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Question: What changes do you feel are needed to improve principal preparation programs to better prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role?

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1. More time in the field.
  2. Tenured-Professors' connections to K-12 schools.
  3. Partnerships with K-12 schools.
  4. Utilizing cross-sector research.
  5. Better balance between research and practice.
  6. Add courses in adult learning—students need to know how to develop teachers in teaching and learning.
  7. Internships need to be spaced throughout the program and integrate what they are learning in their current class.
  8. More instruction on the effective teachers' research and more focus on social justice.
  9. More emphasis on a strengths-based orientation and developing a growth mind-set.
  10. Include courses on moral and ethical leadership.
  11. More professional development for professors to stay abreast of current practices and trends.
  12. More time in the internships in various contexts (elementary, secondary, rural, urban, and suburban).
- 

From the significant statements listed in Table 9, I clustered the statements and developed three different themes for improving principal preparation program to better

prepare candidates for instructional leadership. These themes included time, curricular content, and a professor's agenda and experience.

**Time.** Eighteen of the professors mentioned time as something they would change in principal preparation programs. One professor wrote, "When our program decreased from 48 credit hours to 36, our ability to teach the all the required standards diminished." Another professor asserted. "12 courses is not enough to cover the breadth of the standards. We have to pick and choose which concepts are the most important." The majority of the professors also indicated that they would change the internship experience to either embedding the internship throughout the coursework or have a longer internship in varying contents. Seventeen professors recommended adding time or changing the internship to an embedded model in their suggestions for change.

**Curricular content.** Some of the professors also indicated making changes to curriculum content. Thirteen of the 21 professors made course content suggestions mostly in adult learning, ethics, and social justice. Some of the statements on the survey included: "add courses in adult learning—students need to know how to develop teachers in teaching and learning;" "more instruction on the effective teachers' research and more focus on social justice;" and "include courses on moral and ethical leadership."

**Professor's time and experience.** The last theme addressed a professor's time and experience. Eleven of the 21 professors mentioned changing some aspect of the professoriate. Some of the comments from the professors in addressing change at the professor level were: "more coordination among instructors on case studies;" more collaboration among professors;" "more connection with professors to K-12 schools;"

“more time for tenured professors to spend in the schools;” “more professional development for professors on current issues in educational leadership.”

### **Reflexive Voice**

As part of reducing my own bias, I practice reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as explained in my methods. My reflexive questions and personal reflection are italicized to convey my thoughts on what I expected to find in the data.

*What do I expect to find in the data? When I started the data collection process, I was not sure exactly what I would find or what the professors would say. My initial thoughts were (a) the professors would all have very different definitions of instructional leadership because the definitions varied in the literature; (b) the challenges would include using online programing and having the students think more globally about instructional leadership because those were the challenges I found when I co-taught the principal class; (c) the professors chose the curriculum based on their own interpretation of the standards, and they gravitated towards their own research because that is what I have experienced being a student in higher education; (d) the professors did not care about improving the principal preparation program because that is what the literature indicated. I also had no idea how professors developed the course sequencing, or how they determined the number of courses in the Master’s program. Additionally, I was unclear of the politics in higher education and the faculty culture, so I was surprised at how many professors expressed concern over confidentiality. As I used the data from the open-ended surveys to create interview questions and initial*

*themes, I made sure that I minimized any wording that would identify the professors or their institution.*

## **Stage II: Discussion of Interview Findings**

In the second stage of the data collection, I interviewed eight professors in a follow-up semi-structured interview. The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the significant statements found in the open-ended survey. I used a holistic approach to code the data based off of the themes developed from the open-ended surveys and explored these themes in the focused interviews.

### **Focus Interview Statements: Definitions of Instructional Leadership**

All eight of the professors gave their own definition of instructional leadership and elaborated on that definition in the interviews. All of their definitions fit within the conceptual framework developed in the literature review that included: campus vision, curriculum and instruction, supervision, professional development, and data-driven decision-making.

**Vision.** Six of the professors spoke of vision when defining instructional leadership. Senge (1990) defined vision as a process that “involves building a sense of commitment within particular work groups, developing shared images of common and desirable futures, and the principles and guiding practices to support the journey to such futures” (p. 85). The study participants expressed vision in similar terms for instructional leadership by stating:

1. An instructional leader is someone who has a commitment to improve the culture of the school. An instructional leader understands that the culture of the school is the defining factor for student learning. (Professor F)
2. An instructional leader is someone who can create a shared vision that focuses on collaboratively building a learning focused culture. (Professor B)
3. An instructional leader has the big picture and can articulate that picture. Someone who knows where we are going, what we are going to do, and why we are doing it. (Professor A)
4. Instructional leadership is a principal's ability to create a shared vision for a campus that is focused on high expectations for all students to excel academically. (Professor D)
5. Instructional Leadership is leadership that builds a socially just culture focused on learning for all students through vision, mission, and values. (Professor H)
6. An instructional leader is someone who can create and sustain a vision for high expectations for a diverse population and create a culture of respect. (Professor C)

Included in the conversation of vision were the ideas of collaboration, social justice, and a safe and nurturing learning environment. Professor A commented that “a principal has to get the faculty on board when it comes to vision and mission. They have to know where you are going.” Principals are responsible for knowing the big picture of the school and communicating that vision to all stakeholders. This vision should be inclusive of all students and supports all students in high levels of learning. Social justice

leadership is a key component of many of the principal preparation programs. Professor D commented that “we teach our students to be stewards of culturally-responsive cultures...social justice is threaded within all of our instructional leadership courses.” The over-arching incorporation of social justice in all courses was prevalent in all eight programs and many focus their entire program on visionary leadership for inclusivity. Professor H asserted that their program teaches students about social justice by weaving it throughout the program, and they inspire aspiring principals to create a vision for cultural competence and inclusivity. In speaking with the professors, they were very adamant that a principal cannot lead in today’s diverse schools without having a strong vision for a socially just education for all children.

**Curriculum and instruction.** One of the more recurrent themes in the data findings was that instructional leadership primarily focuses on curriculum alignment and strong pedagogy practices. All eight professors defined instructional leadership through a teaching and learning lens. Professor D provided this definition for instructional leadership: “It is leadership in the schools that is expressly for, specifically for, the improvement of instructional pedagogy or the pedagogy of teachers.” It is important for an instructional leader to have strong pedagogy knowledge and understand how teaching practices impact student learning. Instructional leaders are focused on improving the well-being and academic achievement of all students through pedagogical best practices and research-based instructional strategies. Professor E added “It’s facilitating excellent work in the classroom, modeling best pedagogy practices for teachers, insuring student engagement, and seeing and knowing what engagement looks like.” The professors



iterated that instructional leaders should have a strong foundation in pedagogy content knowledge if they are to be effective at leading teaching and learning.

Curriculum alignment was also considered an important strand of instructional leadership. One of the professors discussed using the standards to make curriculum decisions and insuring that assessment and instruction were aligned to those standards. Professor F stated that their program uses the *5 Dimensions of Educational Leadership* from the Center for Educational Leadership, and this professor spoke of the third dimension for curriculum alignment. This professor stated that “instructional leaders understand the connection between curriculum and high quality cognitive demand for students. They are very clear about looking at lessons and materials and insuring they are challenging, relevant, and aligned to the standards.” It is critical for aspiring principals to understand that instruction is connected to the learning objectives, learning outcomes, and assessments. Professor H clarified that curriculum alignment is important for instructional leadership: “Your job as an instructional leader is to make sure that you have a good understanding of what is being taught, how it is being taught, and how it is being assessed.” The professors agreed that principals do not have to know every concept in the curriculum, but they do have to know the scope and sequence, best practices for teaching the concepts, and how the concept is assessed. More importantly, principals need to understand how to monitor curriculum alignment.

**Supervision.** Instructional leadership was also defined through a supervision lens. Several of the professors discussed supervision in the context of distributed leadership. These professors made comments such as: “an instructional leader can be

more than a principal,” “an instructional leader can be a teacher leader, a curriculum writer, or an instructional coach—anyone who can supervise and support teachers,” and “principals can be instructional leaders but so can instructional coaches and district leaders.” The significance in these statements is that principals are not the only ones responsible for instructional leadership. Professor H commented, “A principal or an instructional leader, I’m going to use them interchangeably, although all kinds of people can be instructional leaders including teachers and instructional coaches and other folks like curriculum coordinators and department chairs.” The idea of supervision in this context is that supervision is shared among teachers to improve teaching and learning. Professor G added that their program is “thinking about how we create distributed leadership by activities in the school that could make teacher evaluation a part of the instructional leadership strategies rather than something that’s separate from it.” Throughout the interviews, the professors asserted that effective principals are those that recognize the importance of empowering others to be effective instructional leaders for different grade levels or departments. They argued that principals cannot be the only ones on the building developing teachers because supervision should not be punitive or evaluative but rather collegial and empowering.

All eight professors discussed supervision in terms of coaching and developing teachers. Professor A asserted that classroom observations for evaluative purposes are “mindless and ineffective.” Professor A censured the “popular 3-minute walk through” by stating, “You can’t observe effective teaching in a short amount of time. It takes several days to see a lesson cycle.” This professor added that supervision is really about

coaching teachers to help them improve their practice. Professor C also discussed supervision through a coaching lens. This professor stated that “an instructional leader assists teachers in understanding how to incorporate best practices in their classrooms and helps teachers when they are struggling.” The professors mentioned that supervision should move from an evaluative model to a collegial model that focuses on developing teachers to be effective in the classroom. Professor F stated, “Supervision is about understanding effective instruction and coaching teachers to improve their instruction to support students.” Instructional leaders work with and guide teachers in their instructional practices by giving meaningful feedback and coaching them to improve.

**Professional development.** Some of the professors asserted that professional development was essential to instructional leadership as it is the means to support teachers and help them improve in their craft. Included in the conversation of professional development was the idea that professional development needs to be individualized to support each teacher’s needs. Professor F commented, “An instructional leader works with teachers individually using classroom walk-throughs as data to determine what it is the teacher can do—what is the teacher on the verge of and is capable of doing. The next step is to determine the professional development needs and arranging the professional development that targets that practice.”

The professors were also in agreement that the one-sized fits all approach to professional development was void of making improvements in a teacher’s learning. Additionally, some of the professors commented that their students will serve schools with limited resources, and as aspiring principals, they will one day serve as the

professional developers for their campus. Professional development in this sense mirrored the professors' beliefs about supervision in that it should be collegial, distributed, and empowering.

**Data-driven decision-making.** Another common theme in defining instructional leadership was data-driven decision-making. The interview participants indicated that the most critical component of data-driven decision-making is using data to improve student learning and teacher quality. Professor G asserted, "Data is the key to school improvement, and instructional leaders must know what is good data and what is not good data. They need to align data to improving student outcomes and teacher performance." Professor A added, "Instructional leaders need a strong understanding of data, how to aggregate data, and how to use that data to determine if students are learning." The consensus of data-driven decision-making was that data should be used formatively to drive instructional improvements and not used summatively to punish teachers or students.

### **Reflexive Voice**

As part of reducing my own bias, I practice reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as explained in my methods. My reflexive questions and personal reflection are italicized to convey my thoughts on instructional leadership.

*How do I define instructional leadership? As a practicing principal for 15 years, I am convinced that the most important part of my job is instructional leadership. In my experience I believe instructional leadership is the work that I do that directly empowers teachers to enhance their craft to improve student learning. This work includes*

*conveying high expectations for bell-to bell, engaging lessons; monitoring instruction to insure alignment to the curriculum; auditing the curriculum to insure a multi-cultural view and inclusive practices; supporting teachers through professional development; and using data to identify learning gaps and implement prevention and intervention strategies. Most importantly, instructional leadership is concerned with developing a teacher's efficacy so that they believe they are a powerful catalyst in a student's academic and social development and will continuously work to self-improve.*

### **Focus Interview Statements: Challenges in Preparing Candidates**

The professors in educational leadership programs offered several challenges for preparing future principals for the role of instructional leader. These challenges were coded into five different themes: online learning, time, mind-sets, pedagogical knowledge, and the professor's knowledge/experience which reflected the challenges discussed in the literature review. In the focus interviews, I asked the professors to elaborate on some of these challenges found in the open-ended survey.

**Online learning.** One of the challenges that materialized from the data is teaching leadership in an online class. A common theme among the professors is that university programming that is 100% online for principal preparation is a challenge in preparing candidates to be instructional leaders. Four of the eight professors interviewed discussed this challenge as their university programs currently offer principal preparation programs 100% online. One of the professors from a program that is 100% online commented, "It's hard to teach leadership online. How do you really know how they are going to behave with other people?" Another professor in an online only

program also stated, “If I had it my way, we wouldn’t teach online courses. I think you lose a lot of information not having your people face to face.” Professor D who teaches in an online only program stated, “It’s much better when we can see people’s reaction and expressions when we can see them face to face, so we know if they are struggling with something. We miss a lot of teachable moments teaching courses online.” Professor H added, “Being able to provide feedback and discuss case students and give opportunities to role play” are limited in online courses. These professors asserted that although online learning has its advantages, it also has its challenges in preparing aspiring principals for instructional leadership. They specifically mentioned engaging students in critical conversations about sensitive topics and building mentoring relationships with their students.

Comparatively, Professor B, who teaches face-to-face courses in a university program that uses a hybrid model, commented, “Some of the professors teach in a hybrid model, but I haven’t given up my face-to-face. I am stuck on my ground on that because I see how much they [the students] grow from learning from each other. The conversations in the classroom are remarkable.” Some of the other professors also talked about the possibility of moving to an online program. Professor E who teaches in a pure face-to face programs spoke of the increased pressure to target an online market, but stated, “I worry about the level of engagement and sustaining the relationship our program allows us to have with our students.” Professor H, who also teaches face-to-face remarked:

There is growing pressure to go to online courses, but we haven't done that yet.

We are purposeful in recruiting students who can meet face-to-face. Online learning does not bode well with teaching instructional leadership. Principals will be leaders of people, and to prepare them for this, they need interactions with people. I don't know how professors in online programs do it.

According to the professors, one of the problems with teaching online courses is establishing trust in the learning community and having critical conversations about difficult topics. Professor C observed, "People are hesitant to actually ask some questions that they think may not be found appropriate or something may sound a little off. They're afraid to be embarrassed, so they won't ask the question. But if they were sitting in class, it might come up in a discussion and be discussed and then they can ask it and not feel that way." Building trust and establishing relationships was a recurring phenomenon in the data. All of the professors spoke of the human relationships that principals will develop with teachers, students, and parents, and some of them mentioned that online learning limits human interaction. Professor A mentioned:

The principalship is very rarely an online experience—it's mostly a face-to-face experience. Principals are in the business of people and they need to know how to interact and build trust with people. You can't do that online with students who have never met and really don't know one another. How can you teach relationship building and trust-building in an online class?

This comment illustrates the challenge of creating a collaborative environment through an online program, and this was a recurrent declaration from the majority of the professors in the interviews.

The professors who teach in traditional face-to face programs also agreed that establishing trust and rapport among the student cohort is critical for preparing students to be instructional leaders. Professor F asserted:

We really capitalize on the idea of the cohort. We bring folks in and do a face-to-face cohort model. We have a summer retreat for one week, and that retreat is actually a residential retreat where they are off-site. The idea of the retreat is [for students] to really get to know themselves as an individual and to get to know the members of the cohort, so they can quickly start to build some trust. So that we can dive into questions about race and equity and achievement and good learning outcomes.

Professor B agreed by stating, “The whole program is designed around collaboration—they [the students] have to collaborate with one another in a cohort model.” This professor went on to explain that their program spends a lot of time developing trust and understanding among the students so they can learn and work together throughout the program.

The professors also mentioned that another challenge with teaching online courses is that it limits the student’s ability to have real world experiences. Professors who teach online classes rarely meet their students face to face, and some of the professors mentioned that they teach students all over the world. Professor D and



Professor A both commented that they have students in other countries including Thailand, Egypt, and China. Professor A mentioned, “I don’t think it [online learning] reflects reality well—you can’t prepare students for stuff like there’s a fight at your school, and you have parents waiting in your office to see you, and there are six other things needing your immediate attention—online doesn’t prepare you for that.” The professors who teach online courses explained that some of the courses may be conducted through video-conferencing software a few times a semester, but it is not enough to prepare students for real-world learning. Professor G, who teaches courses face-to-face, reported that teaching online courses is not bad when you have the right technology to engage students in real world experiences, such as problem-based learning. However, this professor stated, “I fell out of love with online learning when we got rid of the technology that allowed us to do synchronous online classes— asynchronous online classes are challenging.”

The professors indicated that instructional leaders will not supervise teachers or work with their students in a virtual world, so it is challenging to prepare them for real world work in a virtual classroom. Additionally, they asserted that it is hard to supervise internships in a real world context when students are not taught face-to-face. All four professors who teach in online-only programs explained that they rely on the on-site mentor (usually the campus principal) and a paid adjunct professor to monitor the internship by completing written updates either weekly or monthly.

**Time.** Another challenge that surfaced in the data was time. Many of the interviewed professors mentioned time as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals to

be instructional leaders. The concept of time was mentioned in two different contexts: time to teach the standards and time in the internships. Time to teach the standards was mentioned by three of the interviewed professors. Whether the standards are state, ELCC or ISLLC, these professors specifically mentioned that there is not enough time to teach all the standards in great depth. Professor A commented:

I don't think that the problem is that we don't cover a big enough waterfront. I think it's that we're a mile wide and an inch deep, and so if you look at the ELCC standards and covered all of those components in adequate depth, you'd cover a lot of important stuff. But we don't cover them in enough depth and there is not enough rigor because students want to sequence where they only take seven courses in 15 months. We just don't have time to cover enough depth.

Other professors agreed that time to teach the standards, is challenging and cited reasons such as course sequencing, breadth of content within one course, and staying abreast of the latest research. Professor B commented that "we have to have time to teach the instructional leadership standards." Likewise, Professor E asserted, "Although we align our coursework to the ELCC standards, if you look at the standards, they are very complex. It takes time to teach them the way they need to be taught, and it takes time to prepare for the class. Professors are often too busy with their own research to read other's research on the courses they are teaching." The time to develop the standards through rigorous coursework and the time for professors to stay abreast of the current research was routinely iterated by the professors as a challenge in principal preparation programs.

The other context for time was time in the internships for on-the-job training. Four of the programs interweave the internship component throughout the entire program, and students are expected to complete internship hours every semester. These professors felt strongly that their students get adequate time experiencing instructional leadership in real world experience as their students complete anywhere from 200-400 hours just in instructional leadership spread throughout the program. Others, however, still have the traditional end of the program internship that lasts for one or two semesters, and they felt like their students needed more time in practical on-the-job experience. Some of the professors mentioned “more time in the field” and “more time in internships” as challenges facing them in preparing students for instructional leadership. Professor E commented that “the principal internship should not mimic the teacher preparation program as it doesn’t allow for enough time for relevant and practical experience.” Professor C agreed by stating, “I would like to see at least a year-long internship. I would like for them to have more on-the-job learning—until you get on the job and experience it first hand, you don’t always understand. They need more time.” Professor H also commented:

One of the biggest challenges is that the way the internship takes place, the students have to have time for it in their day because they don’t get leave from work to do the administrative internship. We have to work around the limitation in terms of student access to the principal and to instructional practices, and all the things that go on in a school that a teacher might not be aware of because she’s in her classroom.

These professors felt like students should have meaningful internships either throughout the program or for a full year at the end of the program to better prepare them for the role of instructional leader. An example of an embedded internship was provided by Professor F. This professor explained that their program has expanded the number of hours in the internship to give students more practical experience in campus leadership. Their students are required to complete 1000 hours in a year-long internship and 400 of these hours are specifically in instructional leadership. Professor F asserted that this requirement is atypical of the other programs in the study and “is a departure from most programs because it requires the students to reduce teaching loads to 60% or work in a flexible position such as an academic dean or instructional coach.”

**Mind-sets.** There were three different challenges that nested under the theme of mindsets: (a) developing a growth mind-set among aspiring principals; (b) changing a candidate’s mind-set to meet the needs of diverse learners; and, (c) overcoming a fear-based mind-set from the standardization movement. The idea of helping aspiring principals develop a growth mind-set was a repeated trend in the data. Professor F elaborated by stating:

One of the challenges in preparing them [the students] for instructional leadership is to give them information that they need to approach work with a growth mind-set. We want our candidates to see what teachers can do and build upon their [the teachers’] strengths. So having them make a philosophical shift from principals who evaluate to principals who are teacher developers is a big piece of it.

Other professors also mentioned developing a growth mind-set when it comes to coaching and developing teachers. Some of their comments included: “helping them to understand that they are growing teachers,” “teaching them how to coach and train teachers,” and “teaching them to support teachers and help them grow in their pedagogy.” Professor A also commented that “no longer can principals lead with a mind-set of I’ve got you. We teach our principals to be leaders of teaching and learning and to be effective, they have to change their mindset to understand that they are in the business of developing teachers.” This theme resonated with the professors’ beliefs on supervision and professional development. It echoed their definition of supervision of being a collegial process rather than a punitive process.

The second mind-set that professors mentioned as a challenge is helping the candidates to foster a mind-set towards social justice. Several of the professors asserted that nurturing a student’s mind-set to understand that they must set up instructional systems to meet the needs of diverse learners is challenging. These professors specifically mentioned that their program has a social justice component to it whether it is directly or indirectly taught. Professor B commented that one of the challenges in teaching social justice is that students come to them with “a lack of cultural competence,” or they are “not social justice advocates.” The professors have to work to help students adopt an equity agenda for all students. Some of the professors explained how this is done.

Professor D explained by saying:

They have to reflect on their own station in life—who they are and their own identity. Reflection and reflective practice on teaching and leadership

components. They need to know what a culturally responsive curriculum looks like and we work on that—they need to know what an inclusive vision looks like. Be aware of the words that they are saying and how it might be perceived by children, youth, adults, parents and the community—understand about communication. They need to know about students and demographics to understand the school and the groups in their school—to look at gaps that might exist. They need to understand what democratic society looks like on a campus. Some professors explained that their university program has undertones of social justice in every course, and it is a process of developing a social justice mind-set. Other professors explained that they actively recruit students who have a propensity towards social justice thinking or are “already demonstrating that they are equity driven” (Professor F). Professor E also expounded on the challenges of promoting a social justice mind-set among students:

One of the challenges is that our education system is becoming more and more diverse. With diversity comes different cultures and different ways of knowing. Most students come to us only understanding their culture or their way of knowing, and we are challenged to break-down their way of thinking and help them see and appreciate another way of thinking. It takes critical conversations, understanding the global picture, and self-reflection, but more importantly it takes time.

All eight professors iterated throughout the interviews the importance of over-coming the constraints that many of the students have in regards to inclusivity and culture. They

expounded on the importance of developing instructional leaders who will build a social justice agenda in the schools they will someday serve.

The third mind-set challenge is helping students overcome a fear based culture from the standardization movement. Professor C explained by stating, “Our students come to us thinking they have to hold teachers accountable for teaching to the mandated test because if their students don’t perform, then they [the principal] will lose their job. The challenge for us is to help them see that education is about learning, growth, and preparing students for a global work force.” Professor A affirmed that “helping students overcome the fear of standardized tests and to move to a learning mind-set” is a challenge facing university professors. The interviewed professors expressed that students have a hard time reconciling the fact that schools are about learning and student growth, and they are not about testing. Changing this mind-set to prepare aspiring principals for instructional leadership is paramount in creating engaging learning environments for all students. Professor G added the importance of changing fear-based mind-sets by stating, “[For] instructional improvement, we are not going to start with improving test scores, we are going to start with improving the quality of [K-12] student experiences and engagement.” By creating schools that focus on student engagement and building life-long learners rather than focusing on standardized testing, the professors explained that the students will be able to critically think and pass any test that they might encounter. The professors summarized by explaining that schools should be in the learning business and not in a standardized test-taking business.

**Pedagogical knowledge.** Another theme that emerged in the data as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leadership is developing pedagogical knowledge. Out of the eight professors I interviewed, seven of them stated that understanding good instructional practices and recognizing them in the classroom are critical challenges to overcome in developing instructional leaders. Some of the professors explained that knowledge of pedagogy is critical for all grade levels, but that secondary teachers think that they have to know the content of the subject matter in order to supervise teachers. Professor B commented, “I try to teach my students that “it isn’t about the content of every subject. When you understand good instructional practices, then you can identify them in any class no matter grade level or content.”

All eight professors also explained that they expect students to come to the program with a background and experience in teaching, and they do not teach courses in pedagogical knowledge. Students are expected to have pedagogical knowledge when they enter the program. Professor C, Professor G, Professor H, and Professor D all mentioned that if a teacher does not have a background in a core content area or they have little experience, then they tend to struggle with pedagogical knowledge. Professor D stated that “a student who has not been a teacher for very long is an issue because they don’t have the experience to recognize good instructional strategies.” Professor D also mentioned that teachers who have taught in non-core subjects have a difficult time recognizing good pedagogy or have little knowledge of recognizing good instructional practices. Professor G affirmed by stating, “Some of our candidates come from a counseling or a School Psychology background, and they don’t know anything about



good pedagogy.” Professor H added, “Students who come from an alternative teaching certification or out of PE or music, they don’t really understand good, strong instructional practices.” In contrast to this assertion, Professor F spoke of screening candidates to insure appropriate pedagogy knowledge. Professor F asserted that their program “screens for prior experience in leading other adults in improving learning outcomes and most candidates come with experience as instructional coaches and/or team leader/department chair.” This professor indicated that although they do admit some candidates that have not had experience with leading adults, these candidates still have the same expectation for understanding and recognizing good pedagogy practices in the classroom.

Some of the professors also felt that many of the aspiring principal candidates had been isolated in their own classroom and had not had the opportunity to observe good instructional practices to enhance their pedagogical knowledge. One of the professors asserted that most aspiring candidates have not had the opportunity to develop their instructional practice base by observing others nor have they been given feedback on good instructional practices. Professor E elaborated by saying:

Most College of Education students don’t know the effective teachers research and so they are not completely clear on what good pedagogy looks like. Almost all of them have no experience is observing other teachers. I would say the average teacher has spent less than an hour in any class other than their own. So they become principals, and they think good pedagogy is what they did when they were teachers.

Professor A also mentioned that teachers come as principal candidates without a strong knowledge base on pedagogy and what is effective practice and what isn't. Professor A specifically stated, "The effective teacher research—research that indicates how kids learn and what instructional methods are best to meet their needs--is not taught to aspiring principals. Most of what they get in pedagogical knowledge is what they learned on the job as a teacher." It was apparent in the interviews that the professors felt strongly that instructional leaders need to know what good teaching is based on research and how to recognize it in the classroom. Equally important is the ability to give teachers critical feedback on their teaching to help them improve.

**Professor's knowledge and experience.** The last theme I derived from the data in understanding the challenges professors face in preparing instructional leaders is the professors' knowledge and experience in P-12 administration. Some of the professors mentioned that a professor's experience and position can be a challenge in teaching aspiring principals. A professor's knowledge and competence in the current research and practices of campus leadership often presents itself as a challenge. One of the professors stated that "some professors are content to sit in their offices to research and write. They never get out of the building and visit schools or meet with school partners; and consequently, they have a limited understanding of strong pedagogy or the current research on effective school leadership." The professors also indicated that a challenge was having professors on staff who teach and supervise students who have no experience as a school principal. Four of the professors mentioned that some of the professors on

their staff are out of touch with current research, and their curriculum is out of date.

Professor E stated:

I am hypercritical of what we [professors] do for educational leaders especially in technology leadership and culturally competent leadership. We are more than adequate, but we can drill down and do better. Our program has four to six to eight professors in the department. Those that are tenured are research driven, and those that are clinical professors have large teaching loads. We have to take time out of research, service and teaching loads and purposely look at the courses and the program and evaluate how we are doing. We are not effective if we are not evolving and continually improving.

Professor H also commented on the professors' knowledge and professional experience as a challenge. This professor specifically spoke about professors staying current with what is actually happening in current practice and research.

For us, we have to stay current so that we can provide them [the students] with what practitioners are saying right now in the field—what practitioners are experiencing—and you know there are some good materials, but you have to constantly be on your guard about updating your materials and paying attention to what's going on. The faculty has to communicate and collaborate with one another to insure we are meeting the needs of the students we serve.

Professor G added that collaborating with other professors to stay abreast of current trends is also a critical piece to developing instructional leaders. This professor commented:

We are trying to build our instructional leadership program by working with the professors in Curriculum and Instruction. We can't really do teacher leadership without having the curriculum and instruction people at the table. We are going through our curriculum mapping and really rethinking which courses meet the standards and how we are going to teach the content to reflect the realities of school leadership.

The persistent perception is that collaboration, experience, and professional development for the professors who teach aspiring principals is a critical need and serves as a challenge to preparing candidates for the instructional leadership role.

### **Reflexive Voice**

As part of reducing my own bias, I practice reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as explained in my methods. My reflexive questions and personal reflection are italicized to convey my thoughts on whether or not my experience is influencing the data findings.

*Is my experience as a co-teacher in a principal preparation class or as a principal influencing the data findings on the challenges? I personally found teaching the principal class online to be challenging because the students did not want to engage in the Blackboard Collaborate classroom discussions nor could I monitor student engagement. However, I was hyper-aware of my own personal opinion, and I only included it as a theme once I analyzed the open-ended surveys and found that 16 of the 21 professors mentioned it as a challenge. I had no idea why they thought it was challenging, so when I asked the question in the interview, I left it very open-ended. I*

*was also careful not to elaborate on my own experience teaching the class online. Other than what I reviewed in the literature, I was not cognizant of the challenge regarding professor tenure or background experience. I don't think that I influenced this finding because until the professors mentioned it, it was not one of my concerns. The other challenges of mind-sets and pedagogical knowledge were a concern for me because I knew the literature spoke of these challenges, and I have experienced these challenges in mentoring novice assistant principals and principals. I did not want to influence the professors to speak of these challenges or guide them to speak of these challenges. As the questionnaire was open-ended and the question about the challenges was generic, I feel that I in no way influenced the professors to speak of mind-sets or pedagogical knowledge as a challenge.*

#### **Focus Interview Statements: Curriculum Courses for Instructional Leadership**

The courses among the university preparation programs differed from institution to institution. The number of courses taught for preparing candidates for instructional leadership varied from as low as two courses to as high as eight courses, with the average being five courses. All of the interviewed professors indicated that principal preparation courses are created and aligned to meet the standards governing that state, whether those standards are ISLCC, ELCC, or state standards. They also indicated that they look at the state's licensure exams to insure alignment so that their students are prepared for their state's certification test. The majority of the courses taught for instructional leadership include supervision and professional development, teaching and learning, and data-driven decision-making. In interviewing the professors, seven of them

explained that vision is taught in the introductory class and weaved throughout other courses. Professor C elaborated by stating:

Principalship I is developing mission and vision. It aligns with Standard I and is looking at change leadership and the protocols you might use to develop teams and the activities you might use to get people on board. It's the kind of activities you might use to and how you get people engaged and on board with your vision.

Some of the other professors explained that they have courses strictly on instructional leadership which includes vision, mission, and culture-building.

Five of the interviewed professors included organizational leadership in their courses for preparing instructional leaders because they felt that organizational leadership supports instructional leadership. Professor D asserted, "Administration of Change in Educational Organizations is a part of instructional leadership because that's the change that has to work with teachers in improving pedagogy and instruction."

Common themes that emerged from the data on principal preparation program curriculum and coursework were: (a) collaboration with K-12 partners to create a relevant curriculum; (b) review of the program coursework; and (c) course curriculum is left to the autonomy of the professor.

**Collaboration with K-12 partners.** Out of the interviewed professors, several of them indicated that they collaborate with school districts for two different purposes. The first purpose is for advisement and the second purpose is for internships. These professors explained that they "use public school partners on an advisory board to review the coursework and make recommendations for improvement." Professor E

commented that “our K-12 partners are an invaluable resource is providing us with real world, practical application to the theory.” The professors also discussed the importance of partnering with K-12 schools for internships and embedding the curriculum into the internship. Professor F stated that, “our students spend quite a bit of time at the school sites in varying contexts. We couldn’t run our program without the support of district partners.” Professor B added that the students in their program “have to serve their internship in one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. They also have to serve in a school that is outside of their comfort zone—one that is unlike their own school.” District partners are important for internship sites and supporting aspiring principals.

**Review of coursework.** The professors also discussed reviewing and updating the curriculum. All eight interviewed professors indicated that they do review the coursework and the sequencing. Five of the professors indicated that this review only happens when the standards change or when a new professor is hired. Professor D stated, “I reviewed the coursework and sequencing when I got here. I don’t know when it was done prior to that. Of course we will look at it when the standards change.” Professor E added, “I think we can get better at this—it seems we only discuss it when we have a new faculty member or when the standards change.” Professor A stated, “I did a program evaluation in 2015, but prior to that, we hadn’t looked it in a long time.” Another professor stated, “The program’s curriculum changes only when the state licensing requirements change or the state department develops new standards.” It was

evident that these professors felt like there wasn't enough time to regularly update the courses or review the curriculum.

Some of the professors indicated that they review the curriculum as a faculty every 2-3 years. Professor H explained, "I can't give you an exact timeline because it is kind of fluid. We will spend some time aligning the Master's program, and then we move to the doctoral level. I would say it's about a 3 year cycle." Another professor stated, "We review every three years or sooner if we hire a new professor." Two of the professors stated that they review the curriculum and coursework as a faculty on a yearly basis either through an annual course review or a full program evaluation. Professor F commented, "I meet with the instructors in the program three times throughout the year to fine tune curriculum and readings." Although the programs review the curriculum and the coursework differently, the eight professors agreed that regularly reviewing and updating the principal preparation program is critical in staying up-to-date for preparing their candidates for the demands of instructional leadership.

**Professor autonomy.** All of the professors mentioned that although the course curriculum is aligned to the standards, the specific content and instructional materials are left to the autonomy of the professor. Professor E commented, "One of the unique parts of Higher Ed is that it [curriculum development] is professor dependent, and it can be both a frustrating and a positive experience." This professor explained that it is positive because professors can create their own courses and create meaningful experiences for students, but it is frustrating because there is no oversight, and some professors are not vested in the quality of the program.



Some of the professors spoke of the curriculum content. Professor C stated, “It [curriculum content] is up to the professors. We look at the standards and review what books are out there. One of the professors uses his own book, but most of us go to conferences and look for current articles.” Some of the other professors indicated that professors develop coursework from what has been traditionally done. Professor D mentioned that the staff on their campus “will mentor new professors and offer them previous syllabi and resources used for the course.” Professor H added, “We have syllabi from the previous years, and we make sure people who are teaching the course see those.” Using other’s syllabi was seen by some as problematic because the syllabi are often outdated. Professor A stated, “Three years ago, I looked through all the syllabi in our program, and two of them did not have a single reference to the twenty-first century, and that was in 2012. I would bet you in a fair number of places, there are professors who are not staying up-to-date with current research and teaching.” The professor elaborated by explaining that professors are not concerned with “reinventing the wheel” every year, and most of the time, they won’t change their courses unless there is a change in personnel or standards.

Other professors specifically discussed how they teach courses aimed towards instructional leadership. Several professors indicated that they stay abreast of current research and incorporate case studies and real-world learning experiences. Professor B stated, “I have a great deal of problem-based learning, case studies, and outside experiences to help students learn.” Professor E added, “I include the latest research on best practices, research on the ways students learn, research on socio-economic factors

in education, how to individualize instruction, and assessment strategies.” Professor G also asserted, “We use case studies to provide simulations of various learning environments, and many times try to replicate the real-world through the use of anecdotes and qualitative research describing instructional leadership.” Trying to bring relevance to the curriculum and blending theory and practice were iterated by all of the professors throughout the interviews.

### **Reflexive Voice**

As part of reducing my own bias, I practice reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as explained in my methods. My reflexive questions and personal reflection are italicized to convey my thoughts on what I thought the data findings would show. *What did I expect the data findings to show? I had no clue what the data would indicate on curriculum. The literature review indicated that the curriculum for principal preparation programs was standards-based, but I was not sure what else the professors would say about designing the curriculum. I was surprised at some of the findings, especially that many of the programs coordinate with district partners and that professors have complete autonomy over designing their courses, so I do not believe I influenced these findings at all. I was also surprised that many of the professors said they only reviewed the courses when the standards change.*

### **Focus Interview Statements: Changes in the Program**

There were several changes offered by the professors to improve the quality of university principal preparation programs to prepare candidates for instructional

leadership. These changes are developed into three different themes: time, curricular content, and a professor's agenda and experience.

**Time.** Most of the professors mentioned time as something they would change in principal preparation programs. The professors want more time to go deeper into topics and more time for students in the internships. The majority of the programs in the study offer a 36 credit hour Master's degree, which is 12 classes. Four of the interviewed professors felt like they needed additional courses to cover the standards in more depth. Professor B explained:

The standards cover a lot of ground, and we try to combine as many as we can in the current courses, but we are skimming them [the standards]. Our program is 36 hours, but 6 of those hours are clinically based. We need to increase the number of hours for the Master's program—the students need more classes than are currently offered.

Professor A and Professor G both discussed the problem with universities using principal preparation programs as “cash cows—filling seats and a quick turn-around of [graduating] classes.” These professors explained that rigorous programs take the time to develop curricular knowledge aligned to the standards, but it is “difficult to have a rigorous program when students want to take as few courses as possible.”

The majority of the interviewed professors also indicated that they would change the internship experience to either embedding the internship throughout the coursework or have a longer internship in varying contents. Seven professors recommended adding time or changing the internship to an embedded model. In their suggestions for change.

Professor H commented, “I would go to a model where all students were co-taught by both a university professor and a practicing principal, and I would have them complete a year-long internship.” Professor E added, “The internship is at the end of the program, but ideally, it would start from day one with a mentor who has proven themselves to be an effective school leader.” Professor B also wanted interns to have “a year-long paid internship” for better on-the-job experience. The professors who were most satisfied with the internship were those that had 20+ hours of required internship hours embedded throughout the program.

**Curricular content.** The professors also indicated changes to curriculum content. The recommended curriculum changes are in these areas:

1. More focus on leading social justice issues, especially in the area of special education.
2. More preparation on instructional coaching strategies, building leadership capacity in others, and teaching adult learners.

***Social justice.*** A reoccurring statement among the professors is that aspiring administrators need more coursework in social justice issues, especially in the area of special education (SPED). Professor B stated, “They need more classes in SPED law. We only cover one week of it in school law, and our school partners really want us to teach more in special education.” Professor F asserted, “I would like to give them more specific strategies to promote deeper depths for special education needs.” Professor C agreed, “I do not think we are offering enough instruction in the special education process or being a special education school leader. When issues with special education

come up, that's when you get sued. I just don't think we are providing the right kinds of instruction in this area, and we need to provide more." These professors specifically want courses added on instructional leadership for special populations that cover inclusivity and not just compliance.

Included in this discussion was the comment made by three professors that courses in ethical and moral decision-making would be a great addition to the social justice conversation. Professor F mentioned that "students need to look at everything through an ethical lens—how do you make decisions that are inclusive and culturally responsive." Most of the professors agreed that ethical leadership should be its own course and not interwoven in all the courses.

**Coaching and adult learning.** Another common need mentioned is offering courses in adult learning. Because principals will be a teachers of teachers, they need the skills to coach and support them. One of the professors indicated that adult learning theory was needed because "principals need to understand how to develop teachers and coach them in their practice." The professors indicated that one of the most significant changes needed was more coursework and practice in developing teachers. The professors believed that principals need to become better at developing the adults in their building. Professor C asserted, "Students need more preparation on instructional coaching strategies, and they need to know how to facilitate the instructional leadership in others." Professor A agreed when he stated, "We need to teach students what good or excellent instruction looks like, and how to assist teachers to improve their instruction to become that exemplar." It was apparent that the professors felt that helping aspiring

candidates understand that the importance of coaching teachers is a critical component of instructional leadership. Professor F summarized that “there needs to be greater emphasis on coaching skills, taking a strengths-based orientation, and on cultivating empathy for teachers.” The professors recognized the importance of teachers as a mitigating factor to student learning, and they want to help aspiring principals recognize that developing the adults in the school is a critical piece of school improvement.

**Professor’s time and experience.** The last theme addressed a professor’s time and experience. All eight professors interviewed explained that different professors have different career agendas depending on their title. Tenured professors are focused on research and clinical professors have large teaching loads. The professors indicated that they would like to see more collaboration among the professors in the department, professional development opportunities to stay abreast of current practices and trends, and more experience in working with schools. The overall recommendations for change included:

1. Improving the professors’ connection to K-12 schools and building partnerships
2. Improving the professor’s knowledge through better research on effective teaching learning and staying up-to-date with current research and practice
3. Improving collaboration among peers both within the program and with other universities.

Professor A commented that programs need “more coordination among instructors on case studies and more collaboration among professors.” Professor B elaborated that preparation programs would benefit by having “more connection with

professors to K-12 schools” and suggested “more time for tenured professors to spend in the schools.” Professor D recommended “more professional development for professors on current issues in educational leadership.”

I asked some of the professors what changes they would make to improve their program, and Professor E made the following statement:

I would hire the right people for the program—get the right people on the bus—people who are equally committed to building a strong program and developing research. I would have a series of reflective retreats with the professors in the program to do course evaluations and review sequencing. I would also evaluate and audit other universities and look at the ones that were effectively preparing principals for meaningful leading in different contexts. I would make all the classes clinically based, and I would offer aspiring candidates clinical experiences in different contexts.

Repeatedly iterated was the importance of bridging the experience of clinical-track professors with the research of tenured-track professors to improve the program for future principals.

### **Reflexive Voice**

As part of reducing my own bias, I practice reflexivity by answering reflexive questions as explained in my methods. My reflexive questions and personal reflection are italicized to convey my thoughts on whether or not my work and school experience is influencing the data findings.

*Is my experience influencing the findings? All of the findings for this research question were new to me, and I had to go back into the literature review to add these components, so I do not feel that my experience in any way influenced these data findings. Although I agreed with the professors beliefs in the interviews, I did not tell them that I agreed with them. I remained neutral in the interviews to control my own bias.*

### **Cross-Analysis Structural Description**

Although university principal preparation programs have been critiqued as being slow to change (Hess & Kelly, 2006; Levine, 2005), many programs have made efforts to improve (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2015; Robey & Bauer, 2013). Through this study, I had the opportunity to receive in-depth comments from 21 professors in different universities across the United States and to interview eight professors who teach in different universities that are members of UCEA. I found that the participants' perceptions challenge Spence's (2006) assertion that "although universities report program change, they really are in no particular hurry to redesign their programs to ensure that aspiring principals are thoroughly prepared for their role in improving curriculum, instruction, and student achievement" (p. 106). The respondents in my study were aware of the challenges facing them in preparing candidates for the role of instructional leader, and they are currently making program changes to meet the growing demands of the instructional leadership role. Utilizing a cross-analysis of the survey and interview data, I discuss the meaning of instructional leadership, the current challenges of principal preparation programs, the curriculum and coursework that focuses on



instructional leadership, and the recommended changes offered by the participants through this composite structural description.

### **Instructional Leadership**

All 21 professors understood the meaning of instructional leadership, and their definitions mirrored the literature cited in the conceptual framework. Not one professor used the word *manager* or *school management* in their definition of instructional leadership. The data findings showed that although the professors defined instructional leadership through the conceptual lens framing this study, they did not separate instructional leadership from culturally responsive leadership or from organizational leadership. The professors did not delineate three separate leadership strands but rather a blending of the three as a means for principals to improve teaching and learning for all students. Additionally, the professors also indicated that there is a shift from the principal being the only instructional leader on the campus, and they emphasized the need for principals to build leadership capacity in others and distribute the instructional leadership role. Finally, the professors asserted that instructional leadership is synonymous with teacher development, and instructional leaders should use data and professional development to support teachers in improving curriculum, pedagogy, and student learning.

### **Challenges**

All of the professors cited similar challenges in preparing aspiring principals for instructional leadership. The challenges primarily focused on what candidates should know especially in the areas of social justice and pedagogy content knowledge. The

majority of the professors indicated that there is an expectation for students to enter the program possessing an understanding of effective pedagogy and a proclivity towards social justice advocacy. Without either of these, preparing students for instructional leadership is challenging. Part of the challenge is time. The professors lamented that there was not enough time to teach the standards guiding their programs, and they felt like the current course offerings lacked depth and rigor. Time compounds the problem of students lacking knowledge in pedagogy and social justice because there is not enough time to adequately teach what students should already know. Some of the programs are addressing this challenge by tightening the admission policy and requiring candidates to have at least three years of teaching experience and/or by interviewing students to determine if the candidates have a propensity towards social justice issues. Other programs are embedding social justice paradigms within all of the course offerings and challenging students to recognize and address their own biases so they can lead diverse schools.

Another common challenge focused on the culture of higher education and the ways in which professors are rewarded. Many of the professors spoke of the divide between clinical and tenured professors. The clinical professors in the study understood that tenured professors had to spend most of their time researching, publishing, and applying for grants. The tenured professors mentioned that the clinical professors had large teaching loads and often had a large number of interns to supervise. Both sets of professors expressed the need to collaborate more and learn from each other, but they were unclear how exactly to do that when everyone had heavy workloads. Tenured

professors spoke of the need to review and revise programming to stay current with school practice, but they also expressed time as an issue in achieving this task. The tenured faculty explained that in order to win awards or move in the ranks, then the majority of their time has to be spent researching, publishing, and obtaining grants for the school.

Another challenge mentioned was teaching instructional leadership through online courses. The professors who mentioned online teaching were specifically concerned with teaching candidates how to be instructional leaders in an online class. They understood the value of online learning in terms of a global base of students, but they expressed that teaching students to be leaders of teachers was challenging through online courses because it was hard to establish trust and build relationships. Online learning was mentioned by professors who teach in both online-only programs and face-to-face programs. The professors felt like the hybrid model was the best of both worlds because students could complete their research and analysis on their own, but meeting face-to-face for collaboration and discussion supported the work the students were doing online.

### **Curriculum and Coursework**

The majority of the professors indicated that their principal preparation program was a 36 hour program that included six hours of internship and ten courses. The curriculum for the principal preparation programs varied from institute to institute, and the professors expressed that the curriculum is developed from the standards that guide the state's principal certification process. The courses specifically aimed towards

teaching instructional leadership varied as well. The professors in the study self-selected the courses in their programs they felt concentrated on instructional leadership. Many of the professors thought the majority of their courses focused primarily on instructional leadership and others felt that only the supervision and curriculum and instruction courses focused on instructional leadership. Many of the programs also emphasized that they have an over-arching social justice philosophy threaded throughout their entire program, but only two professors specifically mentioned how they incorporate social justice within the program. Although all of the interviewed faculty professed their duty to prepare future school leaders for diverse communities and schools, very few of them actually explained how they weave social justice or cultural responsiveness within their coursework.

Within the conversation of curriculum was the discussion of the internship. Every principal preparation program has an internship component to it, but all of the professors explained that the internship is at the discretion of the school. The NPBEA recommends that “Candidates participate in planned intern activities during the entire course of the program, including an extended period of time near the conclusion of the program to allow for candidate application of knowledge and skills on a full-time basis” (p. 17). The majority of the professors indicated that their students complete the internship at the end of the program usually within the school where the students are employed. Some of the professors indicated that they are varying the internship so that students have to complete it within different school contexts, or they are embedding it throughout the entire program.

## **Changes**

Although many of the professors indicated they have redesigned their programs over the past five years, many of them would still like to see some changes. Most of the changes included time—more time in the internship and more time in the courses in the program. Some of the professors discussed changing the program back to a 48 hour program and having a year-long paid internship to better prepare candidates for instructional leadership. One of the reasons mentioned for expanding the program was to offer more courses on adult learning, special education, and ethical leadership. The professors also would like to see more collaboration among the department and professional development to support the blending of research and practice. Some of the professors specifically mentioned visiting other programs, attending conferences for P-12 practitioners, and expanding the effective schools research.

## **Summary**

In Chapter IV, I introduced the data in three different stages. In the first stage, I presented data results from an open-ended survey received from 21 professors in universities that are members of UCEA about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. I used a phenomenological approach to identify significant statements and cluster the statements into themes. In Stage II, I explored these themes in more detail by interviewing eight of the 21 professors and discussing the focused- interview findings through the research questions that guided this study. In the final stage, I cross-analyzed the data findings from both the surveys and the interviews, and I wrote a composite structural description of the phenomenon. The findings in

Chapter IV represented the perceptions of professors who serve in university principal preparation programs that vary in size and research classification from six different regions in the United States.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

Through this study, I had the opportunity to learn about the perceptions of university professors who teach in different universities that are members of UCEA about the challenges of preparing aspiring principals for the instructional leadership role. The professors in this study are aware of the challenges facing them in preparing candidates for the role of instructional leader, and they gave insight into university principal preparation programs, preparing candidates for instructional leadership, and what changes should be considered for the future of principal preparation. In Chapter V, I summarize this phenomenological study, discuss implications for university principal preparation programs, and offered recommendations for future research.

#### **Summary of the Study**

In Chapter I, I introduced the problem that influenced this study, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. In the introduction to the problem, I established the importance of the campus principal by citing several studies that support the significance of the principal being an instructional leader to improving student outcomes. Devita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, and Haycock (2007) supported this assertion by claiming,

Leadership is an essential ingredient for ensuring that every child in America gets the education they need to succeed. Indeed, education leadership has been called the “bridge” that can bring together the many different reform efforts in

ways that practically nothing else can. Teachers are on the front lines of learning. But principals at the school level are uniquely positioned to provide a climate of high expectations, a clear vision for better teaching and learning, and the means for everyone in the system – adults and children – to realize that vision. (p. 2)

With the understanding that principals are a critical factor in improving teaching and learning, I discussed the problem of university principal preparation programs in reforming their programs to prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role. I also highlighted that improving principal preparation programs to prepare candidates for instructional leadership is on-going reform effort.

After establishing the problem, I then explained the purpose of this study. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of professors in 99 universities that are members of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) about the challenges of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. I sought to determine how these professors define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and develop coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do individual UCEA professors define instructional leadership?
2. What are the perceptions of UCEA professors' in educational leadership programs of the challenges in preparing future principals for the role of instructional leader?



3. How do UCEA professors design curriculum and coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders?

4. What changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leader?

In this study, I attempted to explore the perceptions of the university professors charged with preparing principals for instructional leadership in order to make suggestions for improving principal preparation programs for candidates in the area of instructional leadership. I delimited the study participants to professors who work in universities that are members of UCEA in the United States, and I framed this study through a conceptual lens of instructional leadership.

In Chapter II, using Gerrard's matrix method to review and organize the literature, I critiqued the literature related to instructional leadership, university principal preparation programs, and the challenges facing university professors in preparing principal candidates for instructional leadership. Elaborating on the current research, I (a) discussed instructional leadership and built a conceptual framework to define it; (b) discussed university principal preparation programs, including the standards that guide principal preparation programs, the current criticism of university principal preparation programs, and the challenges that university principal preparation programs have in regards to preparing candidates to be instructional leaders for their schools; (c) discussed the curriculum of university principal preparation programs; and (d) discussed the changes to principal preparation programs that need to be made to better prepare candidates for the role of instructional leader.

In Chapter III, I explained the research methods for this study. After obtaining IRB approval, I used a phenomenological research design to conduct a qualitative study by collecting and analyzing data in two different stages. In the first stage, I sent a self-created open-ended survey to the 96 PSRs who teach in UCEA schools across the United States. I received responses from professors from 21 different universities that varied in region, size, and research designation. In the second stage of the study, I chose eight professors from eight different universities to participate in a follow-up semi-structured interview. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews. The data was analyzed using various phenomenological analysis steps developed by Moustakas (1994) that included bracketing, horizontalization, thematic coding, and synthesizing a composite description. The data findings for this study were discussed in Chapter IV.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this study were presented in three different stages in Chapter IV. In the first stage, I explained the process of horizontalization and presented significant statements for each of the six open-ended questions that 21 professors from 21 different schools who are members of UCEA answered and returned to me. I examined the identified significant statements and then clustered the statements into themes (Moustakas, 1994). I used these themes for the follow-up semi-structured interviews of the professors for the second stage. In Stage II, I asked eight professors from eight different schools to participate in a semi-structured interview, and I asked them questions relating to instructional leadership, challenges of preparing aspiring principals for instructional leadership, curriculum and course design in their university's principal

preparation program, and changes for the future of principal preparation programs. In the third stage, I synthesized the data from the open-ended surveys and the individual interviews to generate a composite structural description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To summarize the findings, I present a holistic, composite review of the themes discussed in the findings from both the open-ended surveys and the focused interviews through the research questions that guided my study.

### **Research Question One**

**How do individual UCEA professors define instructional leadership?** All of the professors gave their own definition of instructional leadership which fit within the conceptual framework developed in the critique of literature that included: campus vision, curriculum and instruction, supervision, professional development, and data-driven decision-making. The professors primarily emphasized that the purpose of instructional leadership is to improve student learning and student outcomes and to improve teacher effectiveness. According to the interviewed professors, the concepts of vision, curriculum and instruction, supervision, professional development, and data-driven decision-making all serve as tools to support the instructional leader to improve teaching and learning. The participants in the study also alluded to the urgency of instructional leadership in improving teaching and learning. According to Reames (2010), “Instructional leadership has become a focus of much attention from the educational community. A number of reasons for this attention include the scrutiny schools and school systems are receiving from accountability measures like NCLB and the ever increasing demands placed on administrators from external and internal

sources” (p. 437). The professors in the study confirmed Reames assertion and spoke of the urgency to prepare aspiring principals to be instructional leaders that are focused on improving student outcomes.

***Vision.*** When the professors spoke of vision, they included the concept of social justice or culturally-responsive leadership to meet the needs of the nation’s diverse students. Professor D commented that “we teach our students to be stewards of culturally-responsive cultures...social justice is threaded within all of our instructional leadership courses,” and this sentiment was expressed by the majority of the participants. Participants in the study revealed through the data that principals who are culturally-responsive instructional leaders establish a vision that “identifies good instructional behaviors and ensures these behaviors meet the learning needs of every child every day” (McKenzie et al., p. 124). Based on the participants’ perceptions, this vision confirms the literature that emphasized a principal’s role for being an “assertive instructional leader who assumes responsibility for insuring the achievement of every child” (Banks, 2004, p. 21). Vision is an important strand of instructional leadership as it addresses the inclusivity of all students and the philosophy that all students can achieve at high levels. The professors were adamant that a principal cannot lead in today’s diverse schools without having a strong vision for a socially just education for all children.

***Curriculum & Instruction.*** The majority of the professors included curriculum alignment and strong pedagogy practices in their definition of instructional leadership. Eighteen of the professors stated it was important for an instructional leader to have strong pedagogy knowledge and understand how teaching practices impact student

learning. One of the professors wrote, “Instructional leaders are focused on improving the well-being and academic achievement of all students through pedagogical best practices and research-based instructional strategies. Professor E added “It’s facilitating excellent work in the classroom, modeling best pedagogy practices for teachers, insuring student engagement, and seeing and knowing what engagement looks like.” The professors iterated that instructional leaders are focused on improving the well-being and academic achievement of all students through curriculum alignment and research-based instructional strategies. Professor F stated that “instructional leaders understand the connection between curriculum and high quality cognitive demand for students. They are very clear about looking at lessons and materials and insuring they are challenging, relevant, and aligned to the standards.” They confirmed the assertion in the critique of literature provided by the Wallace Foundation (2013) who explained that effective instructional leaders relentlessly work to align the curriculum to state standards and improve the instructional strategies of teachers for the improved learning of all students.

***Supervision.*** The professors also defined instructional leadership through a supervision lens. Seventeen of the professors included supervision in their definition of instructional leadership. Supervision was specifically discussed in the context of distributed leadership. The professors made comments such as, “an instructional leader can be more than a principal,” “an instructional leader can be a teacher leader, a curriculum writer, or an instructional coach—anyone who can supervise and support teachers,” and “principals can be instructional leaders but so can instructional coaches and district leaders.” The professors stressed that principals are not the only instructional

leaders on campus, and they asserted that instructional leadership has evolved into the idea that principals engage with others in collaborative goal setting, distributed leadership, and school improvement (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). They agreed with Yliminski and Jacobson's (2013) assertion that the focus of instructional leadership should move away from the principal's direct involvement in curriculum and instruction and move more towards democratic leadership or distributed leadership. The study participants iterated the need for distributed leadership and building instructional leadership through different educators on the campus or within the district to support the campus principal.

Additionally, the study participants discussed supervision in terms of coaching and developing teachers, and they echoed the idea of collegial supervision (Glickman et al., 2010) that was examined in the critique of literature. The professors defined supervision as the principal's role in conducting "observations and providing feedback." Professor A asserted that classroom observations for evaluative purposes are "mindless and ineffective" and asserted that supervision is really about coaching teachers to help them improve their practice. Professor C added that "an instructional leader assists teachers in understanding how to incorporate best practices in their classrooms and helps teachers when they are struggling." Collegial supervision is a collaborative approach to supervision that "denotes a common vision of what teaching and learning can and should be" (Glickman et al., 2010, p. 8). It focuses on the growth of a teacher and improved student achievement (Bernauer, 2002). The professors considered supervision as a collegial model that focuses on developing teachers to be effective in the classroom.

They emphasized that instructional leaders should focus on coaching and guiding teachers in their instructional practices by providing meaningful feedback and supporting them.

***Professional development.*** The professors affirmed that professional development was essential to instructional leadership for it serves to support teachers and help them improve in their craft. Professor F commented:

An instructional leader works with teachers individually using classroom walk-throughs as data to determine what it is the teacher can do—what is the teacher on the verge of and is capable of doing. The next step is to determine the professional development needs and arranging the professional development that targets that practice.

Included in the conversation of professional development was the tenet that instructional leaders grow their teachers and provide ongoing, rigorous professional development that furthers the achievement of the children they serve (Walker & Downey, 2012). The professors agreed with the assertion of The Wallace Foundation (2013) that instructional leaders find research-based teaching strategies that improve learning, and they model these practices for their teachers. Moreover, instructional leaders engage in professional dialogues with teachers about the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom (Hassenpflug, 2013). Professional development in this sense mirrored Drago-Severson's & Blum-Destefano's (2012) research on professional development in that it should be collegial, distributed, and empowering.

*Data-driven decision-making.* The last premise in defining instructional leadership was data-driven decision-making. Professor G asserted, “Data is the key to school improvement, and instructional leaders must know what good data is and what not good data is. They need to align data to improving student outcomes and teacher performance.” The study participants indicated that the most critical component of data-driven decision-making is using data to improve student learning and teacher quality. The professors confirmed that principals in their instructional leadership role work with teachers to collect multiple sources of data, analyze them, and use them to drive decisions on instruction and to address barriers to student learning (Dufour, 2002). Professor A explained, “Instructional leaders need a strong understanding of data, how to aggregate data, and how to use that data to determine if students are learning.” The consensus among the professors was that data should be used formatively to drive instructional improvements and not used summatively to punish teachers or students. This consensus directly reflected the research of Boudett, City, and Murnane (2005) who advised teachers to recognize problems with student learning in the data and transform them into problems in instructional practice. This shift involved seeing data as a means to improve instruction rather than to identify student failures or punish teachers.

### **Research Question Two**

**What are the perceptions of UCEA professors’ in educational leadership programs of the challenges in preparing future principals for the role of instructional leader?** Several themes emerged from the data concerning challenges in preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader. These themes included



online learning, time, mind-sets, pedagogical knowledge, and the professor's knowledge/experience. All of these themes were discussed in the critique of literature.

***Online learning.*** Out of the 21 surveys, sixteen professors indicated online-programming as a challenge, and four of the eight professors interviewed discussed this challenge as their university programs currently offer principal preparation programs 100% online. The two concerns that the study participants discussed with online learning involved building and establishing trust and creating meaningful and relevant learning experiences. There is a vast amount of research regarding online versus traditional classroom instruction, and the research community is divided on the benefits and the challenges of online learning.

In this study, some of the professors indicated that building relationships and establishing a learning environment of trust through online learning can be difficult. One of the professors commented, "It's hard to teach leadership online. How do you really know how they are going to behave with other people?" The study participants reaffirmed the reviewed in the literature in regards to online learning. They explained that they have a difficult time encouraging participation from all students and insuring that all voices are heard (Caruthers & Friend, 2014), and students are often silent in online environments because they do not feel safe or connected to others in the course (Gulati, 2008). Professor C observed, "People are hesitant to actually ask some questions that they think may not be found appropriate or something may sound a little off. They're afraid to be embarrassed, so they won't ask the question. But if they were sitting in class, it might come up in a discussion and be discussed and then they can ask it and

not feel that way.” The professors also mentioned struggling with a lack of knowledge on how to generate meaningful online experiences for students that reflect real-world situations, and they endorsed Caruthers and Friend’s (2014) argument that for professors to be successful in teaching online courses, they must be given the time to develop new online programming and learn new technologies and practices.

*Time.* The study participants also mentioned time as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals to be instructional leaders. Eighteen out of the 21 professors mentioned time as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals to be instructional leaders. The concept of time was mentioned in two different contexts: time to teach the standards and time in the internships. Some of the professors agreed that time to teach the standards is challenging and cited reasons such as course sequencing, breadth of content within one course, and staying abreast of the latest research. Professor B commented that “we have to have time to teach the instructional leadership standards.” Likewise, Professor E asserted, “Although we align our coursework to the ELCC standards, if you look at the standards, they are very complex. It takes time to teach them the way they need to be taught, and it takes time to prepare for the class. Professors are often too busy with their own research to read other’s research on the courses they are teaching.”

The latest version of the ISLLC standards contain 11 standards and each standard has accompanying indicators that must be taught (CCSSO, 2014). Likewise, the ELCC standards have seven standards, and each standard has a corresponding indicator (NCATE, 2011), and state standards are very similar to both ISLLC and ELCC

standards. The time to develop all of the standards through rigorous coursework was routinely iterated by the professors as a challenge in principal preparation programs.

The other context for time was time in the internships for on-the-job training. Fourteen professors mentioned “more time in the field” and “more time in internships” as challenges facing them in preparing students for instructional leadership. The ELCC Standards advise university principal preparation programs that experiences in the field should include an internship that extends the duration of the program and culminates in a full-time placement of at least one semester in a school-based leadership position that offers realistic opportunities (NPBEA, 2002). However, the professors who have the traditional end of the program internship that lasts for one semester felt that their students needed more time in practical on-the-job experience. They felt like students should have meaningful internships either throughout the program or for a full year at the end of the program to better prepare them for the role of instructional leader. Professor E commented that “the principal internship should not mimic the teacher preparation program as it doesn’t allow for enough time for relevant and practical experience.” Professor C agreed by stating, “I would like to see at least a year-long internship. I would like for them to have more on-the-job learning—until you get on the job and experience it first hand, you don’t always understand. The professors’ beliefs about the internship indicated that exposure to real-world experiences can increase a leader’s ability to consider, analyze, and systematically plan strategies for action (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). Additionally, they felt like more time was needed for principal candidates to gain learning experience by watching effective

principals, observing good models, and putting one's own expertise to trial and error in a school environment (Daresh, 2004).

*Mind-sets.* There were three different challenges that nested under then theme of mindsets: (a) developing a growth mind-set among aspiring principals; (b) changing a candidate's mind-set to meet the needs of diverse learners; and, (c) overcoming a fear-based mind-set from the standardization movement. The idea of helping aspiring principals develop a growth mind-set was a repeated trend in the data. Fifteen of the professors mentioned it as a challenge for preparing candidates for instructional leadership. Professor F elaborated by stating:

One of the challenges in preparing them [the students] for instructional leadership is to give them information that they need to approach work with a growth mind-set. We want our candidates to see what teachers can do and build upon their [the teachers'] strengths. So having them make a philosophical shift from principals who evaluate to principals who are teacher developers is a big piece of it.

Developing a growth mind set for aspiring principals to be leaders of teachers endorsed the literature on collegial supervision and adult learning. The professors reiterated that adult development is critical for instructional leaders to support teachers in learning strong pedagogy. Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Hoffman (2012) asserted that "scholars have identified a need to help aspiring and practicing principals learn how to support their own and other adults' learning in schools to deal with the many challenges they face" (p. 45). The professors felt strongly that supporting their students and helping

them understand that they are responsible for developing teachers in teaching and learning is critical challenge in developing them for instructional leadership.

Adopting a social justice or culturally responsive mind-set was also conveyed as a challenge by the study participants. Eighteen of the professors asserted that nurturing a student's mind-set to understand that they must set up instructional systems to meet the needs of diverse learners is challenging. Eight of these professors mentioned that one of the challenges in teaching social justice is that students come to them with a "lack of cultural competence," or they are "not social justice advocates." The professors have to work to help students adopt an equity agenda for all students. The professors supported the premise that leadership preparation programs must address diversity with their candidates along "two different dimensions: (a) the candidates own knowledge, skills, and dispositions with respect to diversity and (b) candidates' abilities to create culturally proficient schools" (Brazer & Bauer, 2013, p. 660). They also indicated that preparing students for leading special education students is a key challenge for social justice. Their perspective affirmed the literature presented in the critique of literature on creating socially just schools for special education. They spoke of the litigious nature of special education (Zirkel & Johnson, 2011) and how principals need to know special education law to understand the roles teachers play in the provision of services. They also reiterated that their programs continue to certify principals without including classes on how to lead teaching and learning, specifically for special education students (Bateman & Bateman, 2015).

The professors also mentioned that helping students overcome a fear-based mind-set was another challenge. Twelve professors cited this as a challenge in the open-ended survey. One of the professors wrote:

The level of fear in schools these days is an impediment to trust, creativity, and innovation. The standards movement stemmed from some justified concerns about inequity of opportunity to learn among the students in our country, but the methods for addressing those concerns have proven to be counterproductive. Our principal preparation students are deeply immersed in this fear-based culture.

Another professor agreed by writing, “Our students come to us thinking they have to hold teachers accountable for teaching to the mandated test because if their students don’t perform, then they [the principal] will lose their job. The challenge for us is to help them see that education is about learning, growth, and preparing students for a global work force.” As indicated in the introduction of this study the NCLB act mandated that schools who fail to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for 2 consecutive years were identified as “schools in need of improvement” (NLCB, 2014). When a school was in need of improvement, some of the actions that were taken included (a) the restructuring of the school and (b) the removal of the campus principal (Branch et al., 2013).

Moreover, in 2009, Arne Duncan, U.S. Department of Education Secretary, stated to the National Education Association that “Great principals lead talented instructional teams that drive student performance and close achievement gaps....but if they’re not up to the job, they need to go” (Davis, Leon, & Fultz, 2013, p. 2). The professors indicated that the culture of fear that has been established by NCLB and government officials has

created a generation of educators who believe that they have to hold teachers accountable for teaching to a mandated test because if their students do not perform, then the principal will lose their job. The study participants expressed that the challenge is changing the mind-set of these individuals to help them understand that schools are supposed to be about creativity, collaboration, and learning. By creating schools that focus on student engagement and building life-long learners rather than focusing on standardized testing, the professors explained that the students will be able to critically think and pass any test that they might encounter.

***Pedagogical knowledge.*** Another theme that emerged in the data as a challenge for preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leadership is developing pedagogical knowledge. Out of the eight professors I interviewed, seven of them stated that understanding good instructional practices and recognizing them in the classroom are critical challenges to overcome in developing instructional leaders. Principals need a strong understanding of how students learn, effective instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques focused on student learning. From this understanding, principals are able to have critical conversations with teachers, provide professional development and resources, and coach teachers in improving their instruction (Brazer & Bauer, 2013). For principals to be strong instructional leaders, then they need a strong background in pedagogical knowledge. College professors have an expectation that principals enter the program with a foundation in pedagogical knowledge from their teaching experience; consequently professors in educational leadership programs do not teach pedagogical knowledge to their students who will one

day lead and supervise teaching and learning in K-12 schools. The professors emphasized this fact and asserted that students who come to them without a strong foundation in pedagogy often have a difficult time with the coursework in the educational leadership program.

*Professors' knowledge and experience.* The last theme derived from the data in understanding the challenges professors face in preparing instructional leaders is the professors' knowledge and experience in P-12 administration. Some of the professors mentioned that a professor's experience and position can be a challenge in teaching aspiring principals. A professor's knowledge and competence in the current research and practices of campus leadership often presents itself as a challenge. Professor H also spoke about professors staying current with what is actually happening in current practice and research.

For us, we have to stay current so that we can provide them [the students] with what practitioners are saying right now in the field—what practitioners are experiencing—and you know there are some good materials, but you have to constantly be on your guard about updating your materials and paying attention to what's going on. The faculty has to communicate and collaborate with one another to insure we are meeting the needs of the students we serve.

The professors also discussed the divide between clinical and tenured professors that was reviewed in the critique of literature. They confirmed that the primary focus for tenure-tracked professors is on research and grant writing to fund their research (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011; Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Soho, 2012), and clinical



professors are primarily responsible for teaching courses, advising students, supervising internship placements, and maintaining field relationships (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011). They indicated that there is a disconnection between research and practice because of the separation between clinical faculty and tenured faculty (Hackman & McCarthy, 2011). Additionally, they expressed that tenured-faculty are recognized in the higher education community for their research, and they are often reluctant to address program development that would take time away from their research (Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Soho, 2012). This was presented as a challenge because it is sometimes difficult to update the principal preparation program and connect current research to practice.

### **Research Question Three**

**How do UCEA professors design curriculum and coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders?** The courses among the university preparation programs differed from institution to institution. The number of courses taught for preparing candidates for instructional leadership varied from as low as two courses to as high as eight courses, with the mode being five courses. The professors indicated that the average principal preparation program is 36 credit hours or 12 classes, and the average program spends approximately 42% of their coursework on instructional leadership. This is slightly higher than Hess & Kelley's (2005) audit that revealed the majority of universities spend less than 35% of the curriculum on instructional leadership. Of course, this assertion could be considered non-comparable as Hess and Kelley reviewed course syllabi and the professors self-reported their courses.

All of the professors denoted that principal preparation courses are created and aligned to meet the standards governing that state, whether those standards are ISLCC, ELCC, or state standards. They also indicated that they look at the state's licensure exams to insure alignment so that their students are prepared for their state's certification test. The majority of the courses taught for instructional leadership include supervision and professional development, teaching and learning, and data-driven decision-making. Many of the professors included organizational learning in their definitions of instructional leadership which endorsed the researchers in the literature review who believed that indirectly, organizational management skills are important components of instructional leadership, because principals "create opportunities for teacher collaboration and learning," (Portin et al., 2009, p. 59), opportunities for professional development, and opportunities for educational programming. These professors believed that principals need strong organizational skills in order to be effective instructional leaders (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

The professors also revealed that university faculty members have complete autonomy over the curriculum. Professor E commented, "One of the unique parts of Higher Ed is that it [curriculum development] is professor dependent, and it can be both a frustrating and a positive experience." Professor C also stated, "It's [curriculum content] is up to the professors. We look at the standards and review what books are out there. One of the professors uses his own book, but most of us go to conferences and look for current articles." According to the American Association of University Professors (2001), "the faculty has primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as

curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, research, faculty status and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process” (p. 221). The purpose of faculty governance is to promote consensus around particular ideas and build support and ownership, but it is criticized for being one of the reasons why preparation programs are slow to change (Crow et al., 2012). The professors confirmed the criticism of faculty autonomy and explained that course content reflects the individual professor’s interest and knowledge on the standards (Augustine & Russell, 2010; Beck & Murphy, 1994; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Mulkeen & Cooper, 1992; Osterman & Hafner, 2009), and it does not always reflect the realities of working on a campus as a school administrator (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009). However, the professors addressed how they teach courses aimed towards instructional leadership that reflect real-world experiences. They signified that they stay abreast of current research and incorporate case studies and real-world learning experiences through internships, all of which are indicated in the critique of literature as being best practices of exemplary programs (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Davis & Jazaar, 2005).

#### **Research Question Four**

**What changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for their role as instructional leaders?**

There were several changes offered by the professors to improve the quality of university principal preparation programs to prepare candidates for instructional leadership. These changes were developed into three different themes: time, curricular content, and a professor’s agenda and experience.

*Time.* Most of the professors mentioned time as something they would change in principal preparation programs. The professors want more time to go deeper into topics and cover the standards. They indicated that they would lengthen the program to better cover the standards in more depth and add more course pertaining to instructional leadership. One professor wrote, “When our program decreased from 48 credit hours to 36, our ability to teach the all the required standards diminished.” Another professor asserted. “12 courses is not enough to cover the breadth of the standards. We have to pick and choose which concepts are the most important.” Many of the professors felt like principal preparation programs were adequate but could do better if they had more time to cover the standards.

The professors also indicated that they would also change the internship experience to either embedding the internship throughout the coursework or have a longer internship in varying contents. Seventeen professors recommended adding time or changing the internship to an embedded model in their suggestions for change. Professor H commented, “I would go to a model where all students were co-taught by both a university professor and a practicing principal, and I would have them complete a year-long internship.” This recommendation for change mimics the National Policy Board for Educational Administration’s recommendation to “provide interns with substantial responsibilities that increase over time in amount and involvement with staff, students, parents, and community leaders” and “have a minimum of six months of full-time experience” in school settings (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002, p. 16). The professors also indicated that interns need experience in leading

activities such as modeling effective instruction, evaluating teaching practices, implementing curriculum initiatives, and developing professional development (Southern Regional Education Board, 2005) to reflect real-world application of theory.

***Curricular content.*** The professors also suggested changes to curriculum content. The recommended curriculum changes were in these areas:

1. More focus on leading social justice issues, especially in the area of special education.
2. More preparation on instructional coaching strategies, building leadership capacity in others, and teaching adult learners.

***Social justice.*** A reoccurring statement among the professors is that aspiring administrators need more coursework in social justice issues, especially in the area of special education (SPED). The professors specifically wanted courses added on instructional leadership for special populations that cover inclusivity and not just compliance. They echoed the sentiments of Pazey and Cole (2013) who argued that “at a time when the latest trend in educational leadership is a social justice orientation, the scarcity or absence of general training about a historically underserved population is particularly troubling. In fact, special education as well as other equity-oriented educational issues have long been a neglected area within administrator preparation programs (p. 245). Included in their recommendation for change for social justice was also the addition of courses in ethical and moral decision-making. Most of the professors agreed that ethical leadership should be its own course and not interwoven in all the courses (Starrat, 2010).

*Coaching and adult learning.* Another common need mentioned was offering courses in adult learning. Because principals will be a teachers of teachers, they need the skills to coach and support them. The professors indicated that one of the most significant changes needed was more coursework and practice in developing teachers. The professors believed that principals need to become better at developing the adults in their building. Some of the professors spoke of teaching students the process of building professional learning communities (PLCs) as a means to support adult learning. A PLC is a form of collaborative teaming that supports adult learning as it creates opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection (Drago-Severson & Blum-Destefano, 2012). When instructional leaders build professional learning communities for supporting teachers in their craft, they foster collegial relationships (Barth, 2006), reduce isolation, build capacity, promote collegial inquiry and mentoring (Little, 1981), and engender innovation (Drago-Severson & Blum-Destefano, 2012; DuFour & Mattos, 2013).

*Professor's time and experience.* The last change suggested was in regards to a professor's time and experience. The professors in the study indicated that different professors have different career agendas depending on their title. Tenured professors are focused on research and clinical professors have large teaching loads. The professors explained that they would like to see more collaboration among the professors in the department, professional development opportunities to stay abreast of current practices and trends, and more experience in working with schools. This change reflected some of the content in the critique of literature that indicated professional development for

faculty could offer professors the opportunity to learn new trends and practices to better prepare students and improve preparation programming (Jackson & Kelley, 2002).

The overall recommendations for change included:

1. Improving the professors' connection to K-12 schools and building partnerships.
2. Improving the professor's knowledge through better research on effective teaching and learning and staying up-to-date with current research and practice.
3. Improving collaboration among peers both within the program and with other universities.

The professors' recommendations for change resonated with the changes provided in the critique of literature: the importance of university principal preparation programs partnering with school districts to give candidates a field based internship with practical, hands-on experiences in instructional leadership (Parylo, 2013); advocating for university and school district partnerships that find the balance between theory and practice (Myran, Crum, & Clayton, 2010); endorsing a collaborative faculty who continuously work to update the program (Jackson & Kelley, 2002); forming collegial connections between clinical and tenured-professors (Hackman & McCarthy, 2011); and, collaboratively sequencing the coursework and improving the curriculum by university faculty who stay current with the latest research (Taylor-Backor, 2013).

### **Summary of Discussion**

This phenomenological research study was based on the perceptions and experiences of professors in principal preparation programs in universities who are

members of UCEA about the challenges of preparing candidates for the instructional leadership role. The study participants all recognized the importance of instructional leadership and defined instructional leadership using the same terms developed in the conceptual framework. Through this study, I learned that there are several challenges facing faculty in principal preparation programs, but faculty members are poised to meet these challenges and continue to improve preparation programs for future campus leaders. Among these challenges are online learning, changing mind-sets of candidates, a candidate's understanding of strong pedagogy, time in the program and in the internship, and the differences in faculty responsibility and rank. To address these challenges, the study participants recommended changes to principal preparation programs by expanding the program in curricular content, improving the internships, and focusing on faculty collaboration and development.

### **Implications for University Principal Preparation Programs**

There have been studies conducted on the quality of principal preparation programs, but the majority of these studies are descriptive studies or case studies about exemplary programs or quantitative studies that yield statistical data on the state of principal preparation programs or the challenges of these programs. There are very few qualitative studies where researchers actually explain university professors' perspectives on why the challenges in principal preparation programs exist or how they should be addressed. Additionally, the research on instructional leadership and how university principal preparation programs specifically prepare candidates for instructional leadership is limited. The present study provides valuable insights into the experience of



university principal preparation faculty and their perception on the challenges in preparing principals for the role of instructional leader. Furthermore, the present study contributes to the knowledge base about how these professors' define instructional leadership, how they design curriculum and develop coursework to prepare future principals to be instructional leaders, and what changes they feel need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare campus leaders for instructional leadership. The results from this study have several implications for university principal preparation programs in the following areas: faculty development, curricular content, and internships.

### **Faculty Development**

Young and Creighton (2002) stated, "Recognizing and admitting our weaknesses are crucial and a necessary process in growth and improvement. Equally important is the identification of and focus on the strengths of our professions (e.g., exemplary programs), to ensure that our policy and practice decisions are informed by effective practice and based on accurate and reliable data" (p. 234). All of the professors in this study echoed this sentiment as they expressed the need for a commitment to continuously improve preparation programming for the future of P-12 leaders. They specifically mentioned the need for professional growth through quality professional development opportunities and collaboration both among the professors within their department and with professors outside of their institution. They wanted the opportunity to visit programs who are identified as exemplary and learn from them. They also mentioned connecting to the practitioner world by attending conferences that P-12

principals would attend. University principal preparation program coordinators or department heads could create systems that support faculty development and foster collegiality among all faculty.

The professors who teach in online courses also expressed concerns about the challenges of teaching 100% online. This was surprising since much of the literature in regards to online learning was favorable. This could be an indication of a lack of faculty development in preparing them to teach in an online course. Caruthers and Friend (2014) argued that for professors to be successful in teaching online courses, then they must be given the time to develop new online programming and learn new technologies and practices. University program coordinators will need to stay abreast of the latest technology and continuously work to prepare faculty members to teach in online courses. This is another area of professional development that should be considered for the future of principal preparation programs since many more programs are moving towards online learning.

Crow et al. (2012) asserted that “most university programs, daily operations and program work are tied to the 9-month academic calendar. Although many programs operate during the summer, they tend to strictly adhere to teaching courses and not program development. As a result, program change is disrupted for 3 months, and momentum is halted. This has an adverse effect on a program’s ability to change and to be innovative” (p. 177). The summer months are valuable months to review and evaluate the principal preparation program for its effectiveness. Universities should consider

rewarding faculty for their work on program evaluation and program development so that faculty members will want to engage in change and innovation.

### **Curricular Content**

The curricular content of university principal preparation programs needs to be continuously reviewed and updated because it is often criticized as being outdated. The professors indicated that a review of the curriculum and the coursework is primarily done with the standards change or when a new faculty member joins the department. Hackmann and McCarthy (2011) suggested that faculty members should regularly review curriculum and instructional practices and revise them to “reflect new understandings of effective leadership behaviors that promote school improvements” (p. 67), but a regular review of the curriculum and course sequencing only occurred in a few of the programs in this study. The curriculum in principal preparation needs to “blend theory with strategic thinking skills in order for school leaders to know how to plan and be aware of how actions within a social system affect one another” (Robey, 2011, p. 39). Additionally, the curriculum needs to address how theory connects to practice, but more importantly, how it connects to student outcomes. Implementing a system for an annual review or audit of the curriculum would benefit the students in the program and assure that professors are staying abreast of the most current research.

### **Internships**

The professors who felt that their preparation program more than adequately prepared their students for instructional leadership had internships that were either embedded throughout the program and reflected the coursework the students were

currently taking or was a year-long internship that was completed in different contexts. The internships that were embedded corresponded to the courses students were taking, and the students had practical experiences in schools that mimicked the theories they were learning in class. In this model, students complete at least 10 internship hours for every semester in the program. The professors with this model explained that students had practical experience in developing a campus improvement plan, supervising teachers, developing and implementing professional development plans, and reviewing data to improve systems. Embedded internships also embraced collaboration between tenured and clinical faculty members as they had to work together to blend theory and practice.

The internships that were a year-long were lauded as being relevant because the students actually had the opportunity to serve in various schools in different locations. The professors explained that the students had to complete their internship at both the elementary and secondary level; they had to serve schools in urban, suburban, or rural areas; and they had to work in both affluent and low-income schools. These professors spoke highly of this model as their students had varying opportunities to explore the different schools and compare and contrast the systems and resources. University faculty, who are currently in programs with the traditional end of the program internship, may consider embedding the internship within the entirety of the program or increasing the length of the internship. Embedding the internship would require a strong working partnership between the professor teaching the course and the professor supervising the interns; however, the students would greatly benefit from this partnership by seeing how

theory directly connects to practice. Similarly, expanding the internship to a year-long model in varying school contexts would require strong university partnerships with P-12 schools. This partnership would require professors to form collaborative relationships with local districts and the active monitoring of their students to insure that both students and the schools have a mutually beneficial experience.

### **Limitations of Findings**

Findings of this study should be understood with consideration of the following limitations:

1. Data were obtained by means of self-report, which may be impacted by recall and bias.
2. Data and descriptions cannot be generalized due to the restricted population, the small sample size, the low response rate, and the homogeneity level of the sample.
3. The sample consisted of only faculty members from schools who are members of UCEA.
4. My own experience as a campus principal and a PhD student in an institution that is a member of UCEA may be viewed as influencing the development of the open-ended questionnaire, the interview protocol, and the interpretation of the participants' experience. To offset this possibility, I used reflective practice, triangulated the data, and allowed the interviewed participants to verify the accurateness of the interpretations. Additionally, I disclosed my personal experience in Chapter III.
5. My experience with principal preparation programs may have affected how the

participants described their own experiences. To counteract this possibility, I did not share my experience of attending a principal preparation program or of co-teaching in a principal preparation program during the interviews.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Through this phenomenological study, I provide the foundation for further significant research. First, future researchers may consider the findings of this study. The findings can be used to design a larger-scale, quantitative study that explores the perceptions of faculty members in principal preparation programs to include members who are not Plenum Session Representatives (PSR) but still serve as faculty of universities who are members of UCEA. Consideration should also be given to include faculty members of universities who are not members of UCEA. It would be interesting to compare the results of faculty between non-UCEA member institutions and UCEA member institutions. Another consideration in a quantitative study would be to look at the experience level of the faculty members to determine if novice faculty members have different perceptions than veteran faculty members. Researchers should also consider ways to increase response rates by university professors to reduce bias in the sample.

Second, future researcher should consider additional qualitative research that looks at the differences between tenured-track faculty and non-tenured track faculty involved in teaching in principal preparation programs to determine if there is a difference between their perspectives and experiences. Additionally, researchers should consider qualitative studies that present transferability of the instructional leadership conceptual framework that emerged inductively from the research to other contexts such

as how principals or aspiring principals define instructional leadership. Such a study would allow for greater confirmability and transferability.

Third, future researcher may consider the study participants' concerns with the challenges of preparing aspiring principals to be culturally responsive and create socially just, inclusive environments for all students. Future researchers may consider conducting a study on culturally responsive instructional leadership and how university principal preparation programs are preparing future principals to be both culturally responsive leaders as well as social justice advocates. Researchers should consider including the perspectives of both the professors and the students in the programs in a future study for variability.

Fourth, researchers may also want to consider conducting a comparative study between universities whose principal preparation programs are 100% online and those that are still face-to-face. The researchers should include the perspectives of both faculty and students about program quality. Researchers could also study graduates of both types of programs to determine if there is a difference between how well-prepared the candidates from each program feel in regards to their experience as a campus leader.

Fifth, researchers may want to consider expanding the research on principal preparation programs as a *paradigm* or *discipline*. According to Kuhn (1962) a paradigm is a set of practices that define a scientific discipline at any particular period of time. There are paradigms with sets of practices in the field of principal preparation which come with their own vocabulary, operational definitions, purposes, strategies, outcomes, theoretical structures, programs, methods, and standards. Kuhn used the term discipline

within the concept of paradigm. Riggio (2013) indicated that there is not a clear answer as to what specifically defines an academic discipline; however, he stated that a discipline emerges with consensus. "Consensus refers to shared agreement about: (1) a circumscribed knowledge base, (2) research methodology, (3) content and procedures for training, and (4) professional, scholarly journals and association(s)" (Riggio, 2013, p. 10). I believe principal preparation is an academic discipline as it (a) has a defined knowledge based with over 20 years of published knowledge in books and journals, (c) has published studies using quantitative and/or qualitative methods grounded in the social sciences, (d) has content and procedures for training, and (e) has professional, scholarly journals and associations.

Finally, future researchers may also consider studies that directly link the effectiveness of principal preparation programs to a candidate's success as a campus leader. Many of the principals indicated that they are now developing systems to track students once they graduate. A future researcher could conduct a study that assesses how successfully or unsuccessfully candidates perform once employed as campus leaders and compare against other candidates in similar roles from different graduating institutions to determine a connection.

### **Concluding Thoughts and Final Reflection**

I started my dissertation by mentioning the NCLB policy and its implications on the school principal. As I conclude my dissertation, I am reminded that the U. S. House of Representatives and Senate recently passed a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that President Obama signed which replaces the *No*



*Child Left Behind Act* (Korte, 2015). This new act is entitled *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), and educators are patiently waiting to ascertain what this act will mean for the future of public schools. I cannot help but wonder if principals will continue to feel the same sense of urgency to be instructional leaders who ensure that every child is not only proficient in reading and math but has the knowledge and skills to pursue whatever post-secondary career they want to pursue. I also wonder how principal preparation programs will respond and if their response will continue to focus on innovation and reform.

As a current instructional leader, I have a strong sense of obligation to the students I serve. I have collaborated with my staff to build a culturally responsive vision that specifies high expectations for all students to learn challenging and relevant material that will prepare them for a global economy. I have budgeted resources for professional development that support teachers in their instruction, and I have modeled best pedagogy practices for my teachers. I have attended grade level PLCs and utilized a backwards by design approach to evaluate the curriculum, and I have empowered my teachers to align their assessment to their instruction and to the depth and complexity of the standard. I have also taught my teachers the value of data-driven instruction and understanding how they directly impact student outcomes. More importantly, I have inspired my teachers to believe in their own self-efficacy, so that they believe they have the power to influence student learning and outcomes. I have served as a campus principal for the past eight years, and I am not sure when I started to believe that I am an effective instructional leader. As I reflect on my 14-year tenure as a campus administrator, I honestly cannot recall specific coursework in my principal preparation program. I do remember that it

was all face-to-face, and I also recall that I did very well on my certification exam; however, the question remains if it was my program that prepared me for instructional leadership or if it was my experience as an assistant principal and a novice principal that prepared me. I honestly believe it was both.

Principal preparation programs are only a starting point for aspiring principals to be strong and successful instructional leaders, but they are an invaluable starting point. Prior to starting my principal preparation program, I had never heard of social justice, and I did not understand the importance of coaching and developing teachers. These are concepts that I learned in my program, and my program gave me a strong foundation to build my skills as a campus leader. That same foundation is critical for a future principal's success and for the school he or she will someday serve. University principal preparation programs are instrumental in developing mind-sets, bridging theory with practice, and tooling their students with the skills they need to be democratic leaders. I am convinced that the campus principal is an important factor in influencing teaching and learning, and I am equally convinced that principal preparation programs are an important factor in preparing aspiring principals for the instructional leadership role. Regardless of any policy or act that surfaces in the next few months or even in the next ten years, principals cannot stop being instructional leaders because the children in this country will continue to need teachers who are culturally responsive, understand good pedagogy, and are committed to excellence in teaching and learning. These teachers will need campus leaders who are stewards in understanding the importance of vision, professional development, supervision, data-driven decision-making, and teaching and

learning. These campus leaders will continue to need principal preparation programs who will strive to give them a strong foundation in instructional leadership that blends current research and practice. In essence, university principal preparation programs are the catalyst for principals becoming strong instructional leaders, and as such, they must continuously strive to be innovative in meeting the ever-growing demands placed on future school leaders.

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## APPENDIX A

### EMAIL TO PROFESSORS

Howdy!

I am a doctoral student at Texas A&M University under the direction of Dr. Beverly Irby. I am interested in examining the perceptions of UCEA professors in principal preparation programs about the program challenges in developing principal candidates for the instructional leadership role. I selected this topic for my dissertation in hopes to identify current trends and practices for developing instructional leaders in principal preparation programs across the United States and to offer a collective paradigm of what changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare instructional leaders.

I realize that your time is limited, and your schedule is full. Please know that you have no obligation to complete the open-ended survey. Any information obtained in connection with this study that could be identified with you or your university will remain confidential. Each survey will have an assigned participant number. Since I am specifically looking at principal preparation programs, then I ask that you reflect on the principal preparation program at your institution and answer the attached open-ended survey. The survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete. In order to analyze the data, I would like to receive the surveys back by October 1, 2015. I have also attached an information sheet about the study for your review. If you have any questions about the survey, you may contact me at the phone number or by the email listed below.

I appreciate your time and effort in this matter. Your input will be valuable in adding to the information about the principal preparation programs in UCEA schools across the nation. Thank you for your cooperation.

Respectfully,

Sonya Hayes, Doctoral Candidate

**APPENDIX B**  
**OPEN-ENDED SURVEY**

1. How do you define instructional leadership?
2. What are some of the challenges in preparing aspiring principals for the role of instructional leader?
3. How do you design your university course curriculum for instructional leadership?
4. How often do you change the curriculum for instructional leadership courses?
5. What courses are currently taught that prepare candidates for instructional leadership?
6. What changes do you feel are needed to improve principal preparation to better prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role?
7. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview either in person, online, or via telephone?

## APPENDIX C

### STUDY INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

**Project Title:** The perceptions of UCEA professors in principal preparation programs about the program challenges in developing principal candidates for the instructional leadership role

**You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Sonya Hayes for her dissertation under the direction of Beverly Irby, a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.**

#### **Why Is This Study Being Done?**

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of UCEA professors in principal preparation programs about the program challenges in developing principal candidates for the instructional leadership role. I selected this topic for my dissertation in hopes to identify current trends and practices for developing instructional leaders in principal preparation programs across the United States and to offer a collective paradigm of what changes need to be made in university principal preparation programs to better prepare instructional leaders.

#### **Why Am I Being Asked To Be In This Study?**

You are being asked to be in this study because you are the PSR for a UCEA affiliated university, and as the PSR, you teach in the principal preparation program for your university and are considered an expert in the field.

**How Many People Will Be Asked To Be In This Study?**

One person (the PSR) will be invited to participate in this study from each UCEA school within the U.S. Overall, a total of 96 PSRs will be invited at 96 universities affiliated with UCEA in the U.S.

**What Are the Alternatives to being in this study?**

The alternative to being in the study is not to participate.

**What Will I Be Asked To Do In This Study?**

You will be asked to reflect on the principal preparation program at your institution and answer an open-ended survey. Your participation in this study will last up to 15-20 minutes and may include an optional follow-up interview that lasts 30-45 minutes. You may opt to do the open-ended survey only and not participate in the follow-up interview.

***If you volunteer for the Follow-Up Interview:***

The interview will last about 30-45 minutes. During this interview, I will either interview you by phone or Skype to ask you follow-up question form the open-ended survey. This interview should only last 30-45 minutes. **I will ask you to sign this consent form and indicate if you are willing to be audio or video recorded. You will only need to sign this form and return to me if you are participating in the interview.**

**Will Photos, Video or Audio Recordings Be Made Of Me during the Study?**

The researchers will make an audio and/or video recording during the study so that the data can be validated only if you give your permission to do so. If you do not give permission for the audio/video recording to be obtained, you cannot participate in the follow-up interview.

Please indicate your decision below by initialing in the space provided.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for audio/video recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I **do not** give my permission for audio/video recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

**Are There Any Risks To Me?**

The things that you will be doing are no more risks than you would come across in everyday life. The risk associated with participation in this study may be associated with a breach of privacy or confidentiality.

**Will There Be Any Costs To Me?**

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.

**Will I Be Paid To Be In This Study?**

You will not be paid for being in this study.

**Will Information From This Study Be Kept Private?**

The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Sonya Hayes and Beverly Irby will have access to the records.

Information about you will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Beverly Irby's office at TAMU; and computer files will be protected with a password. This consent form will be filed securely in an official area.

People who have access to your information include the Principal Investigator and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.

Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

**Who may I Contact for More Information?**

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Beverly Irby, PhD, to tell him/her about a concern or complaint about this research at xxx-xxx-xxxx or [beverly.irby@tamu.edu](mailto:beverly.irby@tamu.edu).

You may also contact the Protocol Director, Sonya Hayes at xxx-xx-xxxx or [sdhayes216@tamu.edu](mailto:sdhayes216@tamu.edu).

For questions about your rights as a research participant, to provide input regarding research, or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office by phone at

1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**What if I Change My Mind About Participating?**

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University.

**STATEMENT OF CONSENT**

**I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.**

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Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:**

Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.