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Study of Superintendents' Perceptions of Current Superintendent Certification Programs in New York State

Robert M. Dufour

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STUDY OF SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CURRENT SUPERINTENDENT

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IN NEW YORK STATE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Robert M. Dufour

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Robert M. Dufour

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

October 25, 2016	Signature on file
	Douglas Lare, Ed.D.
	Professor of Professional and Secondary Education, Co-Chair
	East Stroudsburg University
October 25, 2016	Signature on file
	Robert E. Millward, Ed.D.
	Professor of Professional Studies in Education, Co-Chair
	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
October 25, 2016	Signature on file
	Mary Beth Allen, Ed.D.
	Professor of Reading
	East Stroudsburg University

ACCEPTED

Signature on file
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Title: Study of Superintendents' Perceptions of Current Superintendent Certification Programs
       in New York State

Author: Robert M. Dufour

Dissertation Co-Chairs: Dr. Douglas Lare
                        Dr. Robert E. Millward

Dissertation Committee Member: Dr. Mary Beth Allen

The position of the Superintendent of Schools is multifaceted and complex. The superintendent is responsible for instruction, personnel, general business operations, budget, finance, law and politics. Do existing superintendent preparation programs adequately prepare individuals for the duties and responsibilities that they will face on a day to day basis? Research on this topic is becoming more prevalent but, because of individual state licensing and certification requirements, the research is often either generalized or it is state specific. There are few identifiable studies on superintendent preparation in New York State.

Current research indicates that superintendents felt that their administrative preparation programs were lacking in specific areas such as finance, budgeting and law and that the programs needed improvement. Therefore, research in this area is important because improving the quality and content of superintendent preparation programs will have a positive impact on the individual's readiness to assume the position.

The study is a qualitative study that will utilize a series of semi-structured interviews with individuals that are currently working as a Superintendent of Schools in New York State. The interviews focused on their perceptions of their administrative preparation programs, their internships, and the relevance of their coursework to the performance of their day to day duties. The interviews were structured to elicit comments and discussion regarding the personal experiences of those interviewed with regards to those aspects of their preparation program that

was most beneficial to their role's as superintendent and those aspects that were least beneficial. Interviewees were also asked to make recommendations regarding ways to improve administrative preparation programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

to administration and earn my Certificate of Advance Study. As I went from teacher to Director to Interim Superintendent and then Superintendent you have always supported me. Thank you for ignoring the rants, the howling from my den downstairs when something did not work out right, and just for listening during these past 6 years to all of the complaining. I would not be here without you – this is our doctorate.

Dedication

 For my husband Charles. In 23 years it has never been about you or me but it has always been about us. I did this for us because you encouraged me to and supported me throughout this entire process. You are all I have in this world and I will do anything for you. Therefore, I dedicate one of the most tangible things I have ever done in my life to you – my dear husband – Charles. It may not be a tattoo but it has the same permanence and meaning.

If I had to choose between

Breathing and loving you,

I would use my last breath to say,

I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Problem

The responsibility for public education is relegated by the Constitution to the states. As states began to allocate funds for public education, local volunteer committees became responsible for the distribution of these funds and monitored the daily operations of the schools. An increase in the number of committees led to the creation of the position of state school superintendents and subsequently county superintendents. In 1812, New York was the first state to appoint a State Superintendent (Houston, 2015). Over time, as the operations of school districts became more complex, there was a movement toward the use of a single administrator to assume the responsibilities for daily operations. Reller (1935, as cited by Candoli, 1995) indicates that by 1860 there were 27 city school districts which had established an office of superintendent.   Boards of Education selected their best teachers to head the school districts and these teachers were given such titles as designated visitor, manager, treasurer, or headmaster and finally superintendent (Townly, 1992).

As the position of Superintendent of Schools became more complex, the discussion naturally turned to the training and preparation necessary for an individual to serve successfully. The majority of superintendent preparation programs are university-based graduate programs in Educational Administration conferring either master's or doctorate degrees. Whether the preparation program is university-based or a private, alternate pathway, the underlying concern is whether these programs are adequately preparing individuals that aspire to the superintendency.

Programs need to be rigorous and relevant to public education in today's world (Rosenberg, 2015). One administrator quoted in an online comment in *Education Week*

lamented, "I need better skills for my job. We are all struggling because the training people like me have received is either too simplistic or too theoretical." (Perry, 2015, p. 22). However, the responsibilities go far beyond the academic and business roles listed above. Other skills required of the superintendent are not addressed in traditional preparation programs.

Dr. Ivan Katz (2006), asks in his article in the *School Administrator* whether anyone can truly ever be prepared for everything he or she needs to know before becoming a superintendent – is experience more valuable than a graduate program? Antonucci (2012) quotes one of his interviewees, Sean, as saying, "I don't know how you prepare anyone for [this job] – what I think struck me early on was the loneliness of the job… so that was one piece I was not prepared for" (p. 126). Sherman et al. (2007) indicate that no leadership preparation program can provide all of the knowledge that a school administrator will need throughout his or her career. Levine (2005) stipulates that current leadership programs offer little in the way of meaningful clinical or field-based education – too much theory and not enough practice. Olson (2001) quotes Vincent L. Ferrandino of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, who questions the ability of current leadership preparation programs to move from a focus on theoretical issues to a more relevant focus on practical issues in education. Superintendents identify the need for challenging learning experiences providing opportunities for real-world problem solving (Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, 2013). There is a need to focus superintendent preparation on course work in systemic change, conflict resolution, delegation, teamwork, and communication (King, 2010; Santiago-Marullo, 2010). The interpersonal and political aspect of the superintendent role with regards to board relations is a key area identified as a weakness in superintendent preparation (Fale, Ike, Terranova, & Zeller, 2016).

The position of Superintendent of Schools requires that preparation programs be relevant and applicable to the demands of the position. The role is too important to our society to permit preparation programs which are inadequate or otherwise lacking. It is imperative to identify research-based best practices to assure that superintendent preparation programs are of the highest quality, are sustainable, and allow for the practical application of their content.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that the superintendency is a complex, demanding position which requires a specific skill set to be executed effectively (Orr, 2007; Wilson, 2010 Orr, 2007). The research indicates that university-based programs designed to prepare individuals for the position of superintendent are not preparing them for the problems that they will encounter on a daily basis (Miller, 2012). Existing programs focus coursework on theory rather than practice (Levine, 2005). Though many programs require an internship, research challenges its quality, rigor, and relevance (King, 2010; Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, 2013). There is a need for additional research in this area to better establish course content and methodologies that will prepare individuals for the complexities of the superintendent position.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to interview superintendents in New York State to get their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of current university superintendent preparation programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of university preparation programs for superintendents?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of internships for superintendents?

3. How do superintendents perceive their on-campus courses?

4. Do superintendents believe that their superintendent preparation program promoted the acquisition of skills in problem analysis, organizational ability, written communication, oral communication, judgment, decision making, etc?

5. What do superintendents recommend to strengthen university administrative preparation programs?

Theoretical Framework

Superintendent preparation programs have considerable impact on the readiness of an individual to become a superintendent. These programs are created by universities to meet regulatory requirements to certify individuals who intend to become school administrators. One might say that academic programs designed to train future superintendents represent an organized system of events, a "set of detailed methods, procedures and routines created to carry out a specific activity, perform a duty, or solve a problem" (Business Dictionary.com, 2016). By this definition, a superintendent preparation program can be described as a system – an educational system. By looking at preparation programs as an educational system, certain defined methodologies can be applied to analyze its effectiveness. Senge (1990) refers to this as "systems thinking" (p. 68) a process by which the whole is seen by interrelationships of the parts. For this aspect of education, systems feedback (research) can be used to analyze administrator preparation programs to improve them (Senge, 2000). In this study, the inputs include coursework, instructor, types of assignments, internship, books, and the interactions that occur in most administrator preparation programs. The feedback would be the data collected during the study from current superintendents. The outputs would be the overall strengths as well as areas

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for improvement of existing programs. Piero (2009) identified this as a repetitive system, a process repeated over time (coursework), and recursive systems, a system's ability to interact with itself where the outputs become the inputs (requirements, standards, identified needs informing what is taught in the program). Senge (1990) refers to this as "seeing circles of causality" (p. 73).

Classifying superintendent preparation programs as an educational system will provide a framework through which to analyze the effectiveness of the programs. Superintendent preparation programs, as educational systems, should be quantifiable and measurable. The programs should exhibit certain temporal patterns that can be analyzed and serve as predictors of the programs' continued success.

Overview of Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach by interviewing current superintendents to determine their perceptions of the strengths and identify areas for improvement of their administrative preparation programs. Qualitative research is designed to obtain an in-depth understanding of a topic, in this instance how the participants perceived their education-administration programs (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Creswell (2007) indicated that qualitative research is conducted to encourage individuals to share their stories to better understand the context or settings of a problem or issue. Antonucci (2012) referred to qualitative research as delving into the lived experiences of the interviewees to get deeper understanding of the subject of the research. Kowalski et al. (2011) recommended additional research on preparation programs, specifically qualitative studies, to provide a more detailed explanation as to why superintendents felt that their academic preparation programs were either effective or ineffective.

The study sample consisted of individuals who were new to the position of superintendent. First-time superintendents were chosen because regardless of the amount of time that had lapsed between the completion of their preparation programs and actually becoming superintendents, they were a similar demographic group (Santiago-Marullo, 2010).

In e-mail correspondence with the researcher, the New York State Council of School Superintendents indicated that there 167 new superintendents were appointed between 2014 and 2015. This number was determined through self-reporting on membership renewals over the two-year period. The information requested was on first-time or novice superintendents as opposed to first-year superintendents who may have served in that position in another district (Quirk, 2012).

A demographic survey was sent electronically to all new superintendents meeting the criterion with a letter attached explaining the purpose of the study. The survey focused on specific demographic information and included an open-ended question as to whether the recipient would be willing to participate in the study. The demographic survey also included two questions designed to elicit preliminary perceptions of the respondents' attitudes about their preparation programs and internships. A purposeful sample of 15 to 20 superintendents was selected from the respondents based upon gender, geographic location, and the institutions where they received their administrative certification (Quirk, 2012). As noted by Gay et al. (2009), in a qualitative study, the selection of participants should be reflective of the potential participants in the setting and the number of participants by the redundancy or point of saturation of the information. A series of on-site and telephone interviews lasting between 30 and 45 minutes was conducted. Although the interviews were semi-structured, the intent was to provide the interviewees a series of open-ended questions to facilitate a dialogue where the subjects could

tell their personal stories as they pertained to their superintendent preparation program (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The interviews were recorded and, whenever possible, transcribed by the researcher to permit the researcher to note the "feel" of the conversation through the cadence, dialogue, and nuances of each interviewee.

Concepts and ideas revealed in the data were coded and compared to establish connections and sort the information into categories, following Creswell's (2007) discussion of the use of emergent coding to better understand qualitative data. Words, phrases, quotations, etc. were analyzed for repetitiveness and recurrence. They were then labeled to help better identify patterns and establish greater meaning. Gay et al. (2009) refer to this as establishing a "web of relationships" between the data. Wolcott, as quoted by Creswell (2007), refers to this process as "winnowing," indicating that not all data collected will be relevant. The coded data were then analyzed to identify central recurring themes in the literature review and among the respondents. The data was correlated to contextualize findings in the literature review.

Definition of Terms

1. Alternate Pathways to Certification – Certification pathways which permit non-educators to become certified as School District Leaders and School Business Leaders. Often referred to as non-traditional pathways (Quinn, 2007). In New York State the Alternative school district leader program is for "exceptionally qualified candidates" who will be issued a Class D transitional certificate, which permits them to be employed in a school district leader capacity while they are working on fulfilling the remaining requirements of the certification (WestlawNext New York Codes, 2015).

2. Certificate of Advanced Study – A Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) is a graduate-level program requiring 60-80 credits of graduate coursework. CAS programs are more

intensive than master's-level coursework but do not have the intensive research requirements of doctoral-level coursework. CAS programs often allow the transfer of up to 30 credits of relevant master's-level coursework towards the CAS program (University at Albany School of Education, 2015).

3. Leadership Experiences/Internships – As defined by the New York State Department of Education, leadership experiences (commonly referred to as internships) shall consist of a fulltime, 15-week, in-district program serving students at different developmental levels and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The program shall be selected, planned, and supervised by (university/college) faculty in collaboration with leadership of host district (NYSED - School Administration (Leadership) Certification Requirements, 2015).

4. Mentoring – A mentor is a person, usually in a like or similar position, who coaches and teaches a less-experienced individual with the goal of moving from a relationship of tutelage to one of mutuality (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007)

5. School District Leadership Certification – This certification is appropriate for districtwide service including the position of Superintendent of Schools, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, and other districtwide directors and administrators (WestlawNext New York Codes, 2015).

6. School Building Leadership Certification – This certification is appropriate for principals, assistant principals, and other building-level administrators (WestlawNext New York Codes, 2015).

7. School District Business Leadership Certification – This certification is appropriate for school-district business officials (WestlawNext New York Codes, 2015).

8. Superintendent of Schools – Chief Executive Officer, instructional leader, person in charge of a school district.

9. Theory vs. Practice – In the context of this research, theory is considered to be abstract knowledge or reasoning; classroom instruction; or book knowledge that is unconnected to practical, "real world" application (Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, Fall 2013, p. 9).

10. University-Based Programs – Educational leadership preparation programs operated by colleges or universities which usually lead to an advanced degree such as a master's, certificate of advanced study, or doctorate. Programs are usually accredited by the respective state education agency or another accrediting agency.

11. Carnegie Type/Classification – Originally published in 1973, the Carnegie classification is a framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education (About Carnegie Classification, 2015).

Limitations of Study

The following factors constitute limitations of the study and as such may influence not only the study but the conclusions arrived at by the researcher.

Because the study focuses on superintendent preparation in New York State, by definition the sample size will be limited. There are only 698 school districts with Superintendents of Schools and 37 Board of Cooperative Education Services, which are headed by District Superintendents. A second limitation of the study is research bias where the researcher's preconceived notions, suppositions, and presumptions can influence the objectivity of the research results (Gould, 2000). The researcher must accept data which is contrary to his or her thoughts or beliefs and use this data as justification for future research (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

There is also a concern with subject bias. Because the researcher has no control over whether the subjects are answering the survey questions in a truthful manner, there are concerns that the subjects are just responding with what they think the researcher wants to hear (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

The results of the study may not be generalizable. The study is limited to New York school superintendents only and as such its findings may not be applicable to other states (King, 2010). The research results are based on individual experience, perceptions, and views and may not be reflective of others in the field (Lawrence, 2008).

The research in and of itself is limited by the fact that it is perceptual and the design is qualitative. A series of structured interviews will be used to determine superintendents' perceptions of the effectiveness of their administrative preparation programs. Murphy (20005) argues that this type of research emphasizes the perceptions of the subject as opposed to other types of evidence. Levine (2005) decries the use of qualitative methodologies relying on descriptive methods and "questionnaires of dubious reliability and validity" (p. 44).

Another limitation is the literature review itself. No literature review can be all-inclusive. Literature reviews are written from the perspective of the reviewer and as such inherently reflect the reviewer's biases. This partiality applies to both the reviewer and the reader (Hart, 2009).

Significance of Study

Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson & Poster (2002, as cited by Kowalski et al., 2005) state that the preparation of school superintendents is fundamental to educational reform. Kowalski et al. indicated that in 1982, 1992, and 2000, 74% of superintendents consistently rated their preparation programs as either good or excellent. Similarly, the American Association of School Administrators 2010 decennial study *The American School Superintendent*, found that 78.7% of

school superintendents rated their preparation programs as either good or excellent (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Though two-thirds of superintendents consistently felt that their educational-administration programs adequately prepared them for their positions, the data are not entirely substantiated by the research in the field. Bredeson and Rose (2007) state that, on reflection, superintendents participating in their study identified several areas where they had wished they had been better prepared.   Kowalski et al. identified deficiencies in respondents' preparation programs. Farkas et al. found that 88 % of their research respondents indicated that overhauling leadership preparation programs for school administrators would be either very or somewhat effective. Respondents to Levine's (2005) alumni survey of educational leadership programs expressed dissatisfaction with their programs as well. Lawrence (2008) interviewed practitioners and scholars (other researchers and individuals who have taught in educational-leadership programs) who identified numerous areas of weakness in existing programs.

Murphy (2005) states that between 1975 and 2002 there were over 2,000 articles published on the topic of administrator preparation, yet fewer than 3% were empirical studies. Murphy contends that empirical studies on the education of future school leaders is "conspicuous by its absence" (pp. 106-107) but indicates that scholarly work on administrator preparation is expanding.   Willower & Forsyth (1999, as cited by Wolak, 2007) indicate that school administration and superintendent leadership in particular suffers from a "weak research foundation" (p. 3).

The research is also limited by the research methodologies. Glasman, Cibulka, and Ashby and Orr and Kottkamp as cited by Murphy conclude that current research on the effectiveness of administrator preparation programs is focused on participant satisfaction, knowledge and skills

acquisition and use, organizational impact and student performance. Levine (2005) states that research in educational administration is non-empirical, disassociated from practice and "atheoretical and immature" (p. 44).

The research is fragmented over multiple domains - urban, rural superintendents, novice, and female superintendents and ethnicity and age. Quinn (2007) contends that current preparation programs are not adequately preparing school leaders for the demands of the urban superintendency. Orr (2007) stipulates that there is a need for more advanced preparation of school superintendents due to the complexity of the position. Wilson (2010), researching rural school superintendents, questions the readiness of new school superintendents despite their preparation programs. Santiago-Marullo (2010), identifying a gap of between 5 to 10 years between certification/coursework completion and when an individual actually becomes a superintendent, questions the relevancy of preparation pathways.

Kowalski (2005) identifies the need to replicate his study of the preparation of first-time superintendents in other states. King's (2010) study focused on Pennsylvania. Lawrence (2008) interviewed superintendents in Texas. Gober (2012) surveyed and interviewed only six superintendents affiliated with the Western States Benchmarking Consortium.

Organization of Study

The study is divided into five chapters. The introduction, Chapter 1, has provided historical context and a discussion of the role of the superintendent and the skill sets possessed by successful superintendents. The types of preparation programs have been identified, followed by a general discussion of the void between theoretical course content and practical applications required by the prospective superintendent. The statement of the problem, purpose of the study, and the research hypothesis have also been identified. Relevant terms and definitions used in the

paper have been listed. Chapter 1 also discussed the limitations and delimitations of the study as

identified through the initial literature review, an indication of the significance of the problem,

and whether institutions offering certification in School Leadership in New York State are

adequately preparing individuals for the position of Superintendent of Schools.

Chapter 2 is the literature review. It analyzes the subject of school-leader preparation, in

particular preparation programs for superintendents in a historical context.   In particular, the

research on the subject of school-leader preparation is analyzed to establish a context for this

study as well as provide the framework to support the significance of the study.

Chapter 3 delineates the methodology and design of this qualitative study. It describes

the targeted population and establishes the desired sample size. The chapter identifies the

process of data collection and analysis. The limitations and delimitations of the study are also

discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 provides the data acquired and analyzes the research findings. The results are

compared to those of similar studies.

The final chapter, 5, begins with a summary of the study. The research problem is

restated, followed by a discussion of the methodology, results, and conclusions. The implications

are discussed and correlated to the research, along with recommendations for further study.

Chapter Summary

In their 2010 report entitled *Effective Superintendents*, the ECRA Group (2010)

compared the job of Superintendent of Schools to that of an orchestra leader, declaring that the

superintendent "directs" all aspects of the district's financial, administrative, and educational

functions. Levine (2005) argues that the quality of our school leadership has never been more

important. From managing the day-to-day operations of the plant and facility to focusing on

instruction, school leaders need to be better prepared than their predecessors. Research indicates

that there is a perceived lack of quality in superintendent preparation programs. There is also a

perception that current university-based programs focus more on theory than practice: "If you

want more qualified superintendents, change the focus of prep programs from making

researchers to creating practitioners that can read and apply research" (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett,

Foleno, & Foley, 2001, p. 31). There is an identified need for superintendent preparation

programs that help prepare individuals to deal with the intricacies of the position where there is

often no right or wrong answer but rather a series of choices with both positive and negative

implications (Houston, 2001). Preparation programs must be grounded in theory, rooted in

practice, timely, flexible programs that focus on the "real world" applications of the

superintendency (Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, Fall 2013, p. 9).

Chapter 2 provides the contextual rational for the study by analyzing the current research

in the field with regard to school-leader preparation in general and superintendent preparation in

particular. The roles of the superintendent are revisited and placed in the context of the research

on superintendent preparation programs. Standards and New York State's licensure

requirements are examined and discussed in the context of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter 2 will present an overview of the literature on the subject of the Superintendent of Schools in general and administrative preparation programs in particular. Where practical, the literature review is presented chronologically to better portray the progression of thought and research on the topic of the superintendency and superintendent preparation. The chapter will begin with a historical perspective of the superintendency. Next, the literature on the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the school superintendent will be discussed, providing a foundation to better understand the curricular design of many superintendent preparation programs. The role of standards and the influence of state certification requirements in the development of preparation programs, specifically in New York State, will be reviewed. The primary types of superintendent preparation programs – university-based and alternative pathway – will be discussed, with a specific focus on the role doctoral programs play in the preparation of superintendents. The chapter concludes with a review of research on what current superintendents valued in their superintendent preparation programs and their recommendations for improving those programs.

History of the Superintendency

The first superintendent of schools was appointed in Buffalo, New York, in 1837. Since that time the role has evolved exponentially (Candoli, 1995). Townley (1992) identifies three distinct phases in the development of the role of the superintendent; from 1837-1910 as supervisor of instruction; from 1910-1945 as business official; and from 1945 to the present as sharer of leadership, with the role becoming increasingly political and community oriented. Dennis W.

Deardon, the Associate Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), states that "the superintendency is a very complex job. It's very political, very challenging" (Rosenberg, 2015, p. 16). Callahan (1966, as cited by Gober, 2012) categorizes the role of the school superintendent as teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, and social scientist. Gober further cites Cuban (1976), who defines the role as teacher-scholar, administrative chief, and negotiator-statesman. Kowalski (2005) adds the important role of communicator. Houston (2001) summarizes the various roles of the superintendent as the "killer B's" – buildings, buses, books, budgets, and bonds; and the "crucial C's" – connection, communication, collaboration, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices. Levine (2005) notes that when states started licensing school administrators after WWI, colleges assumed the responsibility of recruiting and selecting candidates and developing a curriculum that satisfied the quality standards of the state and provided a perception of a meritocracy, depoliticizing the appointment of school administrators.

The Roles of the Superintendent

The role of the superintendent is multi-faceted. The position has evolved from its inception in 1837, where it was a necessary component of the growth of public schools in ever-expanding cities, to the early 1900s, when the position began to firmly take root with the merger and consolidation of common schools in rural areas (Candoli, 1995). Boards of Education initially selected their best teachers to serve as the schoolmasters. The position quickly moved from that of supervisor of students and teachers to that of managing administrator – from control of the day-to-day operations of the school district by the Board of Education to the entrusting of those operations to a professional administrator (Candoli, 1995). The roles, duties, and responsibilities of the position changed as its nature changed. The first superintendents were master teachers, then

managers of schools, and in the modern era they serve as chief executive officers responsible for all administrative, operational, and instructional aspects of complex organizations (Candoli, 1995). Bredeson and Kose (2007) discuss the shift of the role of the superintendent from instructional leader and teacher of teachers to one more defined by political pressures and conflicting interests.

Callahan (1996, as cited by Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al. 2005) discusses the roles of the superintendent as teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist. Kowalski adds the role of communicator (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski et al. 2005). The role of superintendent as teacher-scholar encompassed most of the 19th century. As teacher-scholar, the superintendent's focus was implementation of a state curriculum, supervision of teachers, and the integration of students into American society (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). As managers, superintendents were expected to run their schools by employing the 20th century principles of scientific management that were the driving force behind the industrial revolution. Superintendents were charged with managing operations, personnel, facilities, transportation, food service, and fiscal and budgetary matters (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). As democratic leader, the superintendent serves as politician - lobbying for scarce fiscal resources while rallying the community and employees and other stakeholders behind the mission of the district (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). A component of democratic leadership is shared responsibility and decision making. The superintendent's most critical role is often to cajole and guide rather than dictate in his/her efforts to achieve the vision and mission of the district (American Association of School Administrators, 2006). As an applied social scientist, the superintendent employs the concepts of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, criminology, and scientific inquiry to solve problems and make decisions. Finally, as the nation moved from an economy based on industry and manufacturing to one based on services and information, the role of superintendent as

communicator has become paramount (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). The superintendent must facilitate political dialogue, articulate visionary thinking, and harness community support for district initiatives, and generally keep the public informed (American Asociation of Schoool Administrators, 2006; Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). Kowalski indicates that these five roles are intertwined and inseparable yet provide a framework to better understand the complexity of the role and the skill sets required of an effective superintendent (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005).

Henry et al. (2006) conducted a survey on behalf of the National School Public Relations Association with 17 award-winning superintendents. The survey was conducted by telephone and e-mail and asked the respondents what skills contributed most to their success and the importance of communication to these identified skill sets. The most frequent responses, in order, were leadership/vision/strategic thinker/problem solver, communication, interpersonal skills, and character. Competency/curricular areas, supervisory skills, budget/finance; organizational skills were listed less often. Respondents indicated that good communication skills were an important component of all the other skill sets (Henry, et al., 2006).

Bredeson and Rose (2007) analyzed data collected in two separate surveys conducted in 1993-1994 (response rate 82.1%) and 2003 (response rate 75.2%) distributed to 426 superintendents in a large Midwestern state. The surveys consisted of a six-page questionnaire and included demographic questions, open-ended questions (work priorities, importance, time allocation), Likert-scaled items (involvement in curricular development, satisfaction with their curricular work, instructional leadership) and rank-order items (major factors affecting their involvement in curricular development and instructional leadership) (Bredeson & Kose, 2007). Their findings reveal that budget and finance ranked at the top of the list in both importance and time in each survey, with curriculum development and instructional leadership ranking fourth in

1994 and third in 2003 (Bredeson & Kose, 2007).   The researchers concluded that the importance

of curricular development and instructional leadership as defined by the superintendents surveyed

is often subverted by the time and attention required by legal matters, political issues, and facilities

management. This phenomenon is identified as role overload – a disparity between the critical role

of the superintendent as instructional leader and the realities of daily work (Bredeson & Kose,

2007). The study underscores the need for preparation programs that focus on the critical practical

aspects of the superintendency such as law and finance.

Citing Marzano (2006), the ECRA Group identified the main responsibilities of the

superintendent as being the manager of organizational and environmental capacity, results-driven

leadership, values-driven culture, and providing a clear instructional focus and accountability.

ECRA also examined the AASA performance domains for superintendents. The domains include

policy and government, planning and assessment, instructional leadership, organization

management, communications, and professionalism (ECRA Group, 2010).   The report,

incorporating both Marzano's (2006) principles and the AASA domains, identified six leadership

behaviors that are characteristic of effective superintendents: 1) Vision and Values, 2) Core

Knowledge Competencies, 3) Instructional Leadership, 4) Community Relationships, 5)

Communication and Collaboration, and 5) Management (ECRA Group, 2010). Wilson (2010)

identifies similar skill sets as outlined by the Colorado Association of School Executives 2003

report – flexibility, good communication skills, relationship building, lifelong learner and political

acumen. The superintendency is further defined as a position that presents a comprehensive vision,

integrates managerial and instructional leadership, optimizes interpersonal skills, and assesses

strategic action (ECRA Group, 2010).

The research indicates certain commonalities in the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent of schools. The recurring themes in the studies are the superintendent as:

- Manager – The superintendent is responsible for finance and personnel, legal, and operational matters.

- Communicator - He/she is responsible for communicating the district's vision and mission both to the faculty and staff and the greater community at large.

- Instructional and curricular leader – as lead teacher, the superintendent is ultimately responsible for assuring that students learn.

Therefore, superintendent preparation programs must prepare candidates for their roles as managers, communicators, and instructional leaders.

The Role of Standards

In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration stipulated that each state should devlop specific standards from which to develop their licensing requirements. The ISLLC standards were developed 10 years latter and became the cornerstone for the standards-based movement in educational administration. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2008) stipulates that policy standards, in particular the ISLLC standards, will drive curricular content in leadership preparation programs. The standards serve as a foundation for the development of those specialized skill sets deemed most important for a district leader by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council, which are derived from high quality, real or simulated district experiences obtained as part of the preparation program which must inlcude three dimensions: 1) Awareness – acquiring concepts, information, definitions, and procedures; 2) Understanding – interpreting, integrating, and using knowledge and skills; 3) Application – applying knowledge and skills to new or specific opportunties or problems

(National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007; Nationall Policy Board for

Educational Administration, 2011).

Tripses et al.'s (2013) research surveyed 873 rural, suburban and urban superintendents in

Illinois, and their resarch affirms the importance of both the ELCC and ISLLC standards in the

preparation programs of superintedents.   The study ask the respondants what knowledge and skills

are important to include in superintedent preparation programs. The respondents' answers closely

mirrored the standards (Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, Fall 2013).

The Educational Leadership Policy Standards, ISLLC 2008, provide a framework for

policy development, training-program performance, continuing professional development, and

system supports to better delineate the roles of the superintendent and provide support for

increasing the potential for success (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011).

The ISLLC's were developed using three primary sources of information: 1) empirical evidence

of effective leadership, 2) the practical experience of more than 1,000 school leaders who

participated in focus groups and completed surveys, and 3) values such as equity and ethical

conduct (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014). Revised standards were released in 2008

and 2014. The ILSSC standards are:

Standard 1: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the

development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is

shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating,

nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student

learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

(The Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, pp. 14-15; Wilson, 2010, pp. 19-20).

These standards are intended to guide the setting of broad policy and vision; they are not practice standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

The Educational Leadership Constituent Council's (2011) standards for institutions undergoing National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education accreditation review incorporate the ISLLC standards that guide the accreditation process of colleges and universities offering school-leadership programs. There are seven ELCC standards: 1) vision; 2) promoting a culture of learning; 3) resource management; 4) collaboration; 5) ethical conduct; 6) advocating for students within political, social, economic, and cultural contexts; and 7) significant field experience – a quality internship program (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011). These standards represent the attributes that graduates of administrative preparation programs will strive for upon completion of their programs and therefore constitute the basis for the accreditation of graduate administration programs. The standards have been

both championed and criticized. English (2006, as cited by King 2010) found the ISSLC standards "too generic, fragmented, and missing significant content" (p. 35). Hess (2003, as cited by King 2010) contends that the standards are not grounded in evidence and lack specificity concerning the content knowledge and skill sets required in educational leaders. Currently, there is a debate over the most recent revision of the ISLLC standards that were scheduled to be released in May, 2015. In a recent article in *Education Week*, Joseph F. Murphy, the co-chair of the research panel that developed the original standards in 1996 and the revisions in 2008 and 2014, indicated that the Council of Chief State School Officers reduced the standards from 11 to seven, stripping out key sections (Superville, 2015). The areas eliminated from the original committee recommendations concerned ethical principles and professional norms, equity and cultural responsiveness, and curriculum and assessment. The Council contends that public comment and focus groups indicated that the standards were too numerous, redundant, and did not emphasize the importance of transformational leadership in student achievement. Murphy claims that removing these three key standards would cause districts and states not to incorporate them into their own policies and laws (Superville, 2015).   Despite their critics, the standards have been incorporated into leadership licensure preparation in 43 states (Fessler, 2011). Wilson (2010) asserts that some states adopted their own standards influenced in whole or in part by the ISLLC and ELCC standards.

Certification Requirements

In New York State, teachers and administrators receive either initial or professional licensure certificates. Initial certificates are valid for five years. Teachers and administrators are required to complete the master's degree during this period in order to qualify for professional certification (NYSED - Professional Certificate - Master's Degree Requirement, 2015). NYSED

Commissioners Regulations 8 CR-NY 52.21 (c) 2 i-iv stipulates that candidates for certification as an administrator will be required to hold a baccalaureate degree, must hold either a permanent or a professional certification, and have completed three years of classroom teaching service. The requirement to hold either permanent or professional certification means that the individual must have a master's degree since the degree is required for these certifications. The curricula for School Building Leader and School District Leader usually consist of 60 semester hours of study. Candidates who already hold a master's degree may earn a Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS) upon completion of the program (SUNY New Paltz - Certificate of Advanced Study, 2015). Teachers/administrators are required to complete 175 hours of professional development every five years to maintain their professional certification (NYSED - Professional Development for Professional Certificate Holders, 2015).

The New York State Education Department, in the Commissioners Regulations 52.21 (c), has stipulated the criteria for educational leadership programs in New York State. There are three specific school administrative certification areas: School Building Leader, School District Leader, and School Business Leader. The School Building Leader certification is for deans, department chairs, assistant principals, and principals of a school building. The School District Leader certification is for directors, assistant superintendents, other certified central-office personnel, and superintendents (NYSED - Types of Certificates and Licenses, 2015). For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on the School Building Leader and School District Leader certification programs. Because the program requirements for both certificates are almost identical, many administrative leadership programs in New York State offer both programs concurrently, leading to dual certification.

NYSED Commissioners Regulations 8 CR-NY 52.21 (c) 1 i-vi and 2 i-vi require that the administrative preparation programs shall be graduate programs offered by institutions of higher education. Additionally, the programs prepare the candidate to be an education leader who understands child and adolescent development and learning with a focus on student achievement and a commitment to meeting state learning standards. The program must make a concerted effort to recruit candidates who are otherwise under-represented in educational leadership positions. The programs must prepare the candidates to demonstrate the nine essential characteristics of effective leaders based upon the ISLLC standards :

1. Leaders know and understand what it means and what it takes to be a leader;

2. Leaders have a vision for schools that they constantly share and promote;

3. Leaders communicate clearly and effectively;

4. Leaders collaborate and cooperate with others;

5. Leaders persevere and take the long view;

6. Leaders support, develop and nurture staff;

7. Leaders hold themselves and others responsible and accountable;

8. Leaders never stop learning and honing their skills; and

9. Leaders have the courage to take informed risks (WestlawNext New York Codes, 2015).

Additionally, programs are required to maintain formal relationships with distinguished practitioners and scholars in education and other fields for the purposes of program development, evaluation and improvement. The programs must also provide two clock hours in violence intervention and prevention and two clock hours on the identification and reporting of child abuse.

With the passing of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), programs are also required to provide training on the social patterns of harassment, bullying, and discrimination.

Section 8 CR-NY 52.21 (c) 2 iv a-l and 3 iv a-l content requirements stipulate that candidates must complete a course of study sufficient to demonstrate the ability to:

a) Develop and implement an educational vision,

b) Collaboratively identify goals and objectives to achieve the vision incorporating diversity in view and perspective,

c) Effectively communicate with various constituencies,

d) Undertake comprehensive long-term planning utilizing data to identify the root cause of problems and propose solutions concerning various aspects of school improvement including curriculum development, assessment, support services, professional development, and community relations,

e) Make ethical decisions,

f) Establish accountability systems,

g) Encourage ethical behavior,

h) Effectively supervise and evaluate teachers,

i) Provide a safe and heathy learning environment for students and staff,

j) Establish a school budget and manage finances and facilities sufficient to support educational goals of the building/district,

k) Maintain a working knowledge of relevant educational laws and statutes.

l) Develop a plan for self-improvement and continuous learning.

Section 8 CR-NY 52.21 (c) 2 v and 3 v outline the requirements for leadership experiences or internships as part of the curriculum. The leadership/administrative experience must be in a

district that represents students of different developmental levels and socioeconomic backgrounds. It must be correlated with the program's competencies, coordinated with district leadership, and evaluated on a regular basis by program faculty. A certified school-district leader and a program faculty member with experience in supervision and school-building leadership must supervise the intern. The leadership experience must be a full-time experience and be 15 weeks in duration at a minimum.

Section 8 CR-NY 52.21 (c) 4 (i-vii) provides for an alternative school-district leader certification program. This program is for "exceptionally qualified" candidates who do not have three years of classroom teaching experience or other school leadership experience. This alternate pathway is identified as a transitional D certificate and is designed to encourage non-educators to enter the field of education by providing an alternative to the traditional routes to certification. For a candidate to be eligible for a transitional D certificate, the leadership program must first certify that, through equivalent prior experience, the candidate has demonstrated the general competencies outlined in (c) 4 ii, including; 1) developing a vision, 2) setting goals and objectives to achieve the vision, 3) communication, 4) planning, 5) ethical decision making, 6) accountability, 7) staff development, 8) budget, 9) financial and facilities management, and 10) law. Candidates must pass all New York State assessments for school-district leadership and, while serving as a school-district leader, the candidate must complete all remaining requirements including the leadership experience and all relevant coursework.

Types of Preparation Programs

There are two primary routes to certification for school-building and -district leaders. The first is the traditional route of completing an approved university-based program. The second is non-traditional, in which a candidate completes a course of study through an entity such as the

Broad Foundation's Superintendent Academy (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007; Quinn, 2007). Mazzeo (2003) cites another program, the New Leaders for New Schools program, which is a nonprofit organization training principals in Chicago, New York City, and Washington, DC. Levine (2005) describes these programs as pre-service programs designed for students looking to obtain a job in school administration and in-service programs for those who already hold positions and wish to advance their careers. School leadership programs educate three types of students – current and future school leaders, teachers earning a degree for salary advancement or certification requirements, and students wishing to engage in educational research (Levine, 2005).

The path to certification is often determined by whether the candidate is currently employed in the field of education or in the private sector. Many of those employed in education tend to choose the traditional route to certification through a university-based program. Those employed in the private sector usually chose a non-traditional route. State licensing requirements also influence the path to certification, with candidates selecting the path that will most expeditiously lead to certification – often a traditional academic program offered through a university (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

As noted above, New York State, although it provides an alternative pathway to certification, requires the candidate to complete a university-based program to obtain professional certification – a distinct bias towards these types of programs. The Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Foundation cited the close relationship between states and universities concerning the training and certification of school administrators, calling it a "cartel" that "controls access to school administration, running that system not to benefit the schools but rather themselves (Levine, 2005, p. 19). Mazzeo (2003) indicates that university-based programs have been slow to evolve,

focusing on managerial curriculum and a traditional academic model, contending that the competition from non-traditional programs could ultimately lead to an improvement in all programs. Hess (2003, as cited by Kowalski et al, 2011 and other critics have urged states to relax licensure and certification requirements to permit more non-educators to enter school administration. Quinn (2007) contends that leadership is a transferable skill and that the application of smart business practices from the private sector can only benefit public education. AASA's Superintendent Certification program is designed as a supplemental program for superintendents within their first five years on the job to "fill the gaps" between the knowledge acquired through the candidate's doctoral program and the "quotidian realities of the job" (Rosenberg, 2015, p. 18). Levine (2005) states that the non-traditional programs are long on practice and short on theory, whereas the university based programs are long on theory and short on practice, with little research to substantiate the success of the new programs.

Public Agenda, in a report from *Trying to Stay Ahead of the Game,* conducted a national random sample of 853 superintendents and 909 principals to determine their perceptions on a range of topics that ranged from funding, to academic standards, to professional development and training. The research design was a mixed-methods study utilizing a survey instrument for the quantitative component and interviews with 22 respondents for the qualitative component (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001, p. 47).

The report found that 80% of superintendent respondents felt that there was a gap between theory and practice, with many leadership programs being "out of touch" with the realities of the day-to-day responsibilities of the superintendent and lacking "real world" applications (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001, p. 31). The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987), Levine (2005), King (2010), and Tripses et

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al. (2013) all identified similar disparities between theory and practice, arguing for more relevance and relatability of the curriculum of educational administration programs with the reality of the specific and unique duties and responsibilities of the school superintendent.

Less than half of the superintendents responding to the study found their leadership training to be either very effective or somewhat effective (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001). Farkas et al. reported that 45% of superintendent respondents believed that redesigning educational leadership programs would be a "Very Effective" way to improve the quality of these programs. One respondent stated that "if you want more qualified superintendents, change the focus of the prep programs from making researchers to creating practitioners that can read an apply research" (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001, p. 31).

Arthur Levine is the former President of Columbia University's Teachers College and is one of the most outspoken critics of teacher preparation programs and school-leadership preparation programs (Sawchuk, 2015). Levine's 2005 study, entitled *Educating School Leaders,* was designed to focus on the education and preparation of school administrators. The study was divided into four sections. The first section described a survey that was sent to 1,206 heads of U.S. schools and departments of education and had a 53% response rate. It focused on demographics, practices, perceptions, personal experiences, and attitudes regarding their own programs and education schools in general. In the second section, 5,469 school faculty members were surveyed (40% responded) regarding their work, experiences, and attitudes regarding their programs and educational programs in general. The third section surveyed 15,468 education-school alumni receiving baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees between 1995 and 2000 (34 percent responded) regarding their careers, and their experiences and attitudes towards the

programs that they had been enrolled in. The fourth section surveyed 1,800 principals stratified by geographic region and school type – the response rate was 41%. The focus of the survey was the principals' own education, the education of people that they had hired, and their attitudes towards education schools in general (Levine, 2005).

The study also included 28 case studies of education schools and departments conducted by teams of academics and journalists that were designed to go beyond the survey data and provide a more detailed descriptions of the programs offered by these institutions. The case studies were conducted at schools that represented a cross section of the nation's education schools by region, religion, race, gender, and Carnegie type (Levine, 2005). A nine-point template was used to determine the quality of education administration programs, assessing: 1) purpose, 2) curricular coherence, 3) curricular balance, 4) faculty composition, 5) admissions requirements, 6) degrees conferred and standards for awarding these degrees, 7) quality of research conducted in the program, 8) adequateness of financial resources, 9) self-assessment of the program (Levine, 2005).

Levine (2005) disparagingly refers to university-based programs as "cash cows" that are underfunded by the university and are encouraged to keep enrollments high and reduce costs to generate revenue that is redirected to other university programs. He concurred with Mazzeo, who identified educational administration programs as significant revenue streams generated for the universities by the large number of students attracted to them (Mazzeo, 2003).

Levine's research supports the findings of a 1987 study conducted by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration entitled *Leaders for America's Schools*. That study determined that respondents found that the curriculum and clinical experiences of their preparation programs were not relevant to the job demands of future administrators (Levine, 2005). Admission standards were criticized for being among the lowest of university programs based on

GRE scores and interviews with the deans of several of the programs (Levine, 2005). Respondents identified a lack of current, relevant experience on the part of the full-time faculty and the fact that too many adjuncts lacking scholarly experience were utilized to staff the preparation programs as a major deficiency to the overall quality of the programs (Levine, 2005). The report recommended that 300 of the programs studied nationwide should be closed down (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, 1987). Levine (2005) contends that his research indicates that educational leadership programs are the weakest of all programs at the nation's schools of education.

Mazzeo (2003) also noted that many educational administration programs were initially developed when school leaders were expected to fulfill managerial and political roles and did not prepare candidates for the instructional leadership role of the school superintendent. Levine labeled the curriculum to be little more than a "grab bag of survey courses" (p. 28). Levine's conclusions are damning, finding that curriculum is disconnected from the needs of school leaders and contending that admission standards are low compared to similar graduate programs, that internships and mentoring experiences are lacking in quality, and that there is a disconnect between theory and practice. Murphy (2007) condemned university-based educational leadership programs, deeming them to be "at best, of questionable value and, at worst, harmful" (p. 1). In particular, Levine cites four primary concerns with university-based programs –

> 1) The growing number of off-campus programs which are often of lower quality and employ a greater number of less experienced adjunct professors,
>
> 2) The number of Masters I universities looking to increase their stature by offering doctoral programs in educational administration,

3) The competition for students driving down program quality, leading to lower admissions

criteria and less rigorous programs,

4) States and school districts incentivizing a "race to the bottom" by utilizing credit-based

salary schedules (pp. 23-24).

Most troubling is the tendency of universities to design their programs to be little more

than diploma mills granting credits to individuals who are not interested in becoming school

administrators but rather are garnering credits for salary advances (Levine, 2005; Mazzeo, 2003;

National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007).

Levine also takes issue with universities relying too much on practitioners serving as

adjunct faculty and employing too many full-time professors with little current relevant experience

in the field. As university-based programs expand to include more accessible satellite facilities,

the quality of the programs suffers, and the use of more adjunct faculty becomes necessary (Levine,

2005). Levine further states that often these adjuncts are teaching courses that they have little or

no experience in and lack the scholarly credentials of full-time professors, resulting in their default

teaching methodology being reliant on the use of war stories and personal anecdotes. The National

Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) recommends the use of university faculty who

are not only knowledgeable in the field but who are also experienced practitioners. Many full-

time professors are disconnected from current practice because they have been out of the field for

too long or in some cases have no specific, relevant, educational experience or background in

scholarly research in the field of education (Levine, 2005; Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, 2013).

Murphy (2007) stipulates that "one becomes a professional by engaging in the work of the

profession," (p. 5) indicating that two-thirds of professors in educational administration programs

lack any experience in Pre K-12 education, and 90% lack any Pre K-12 administrative experience.

Lawrence's 2008 qualitative study employed a purposeful sampling of small/rural, medium-size/suburban, and urban/large school districts.   Lawrence conducted structured interviews of six practicing school superintendents and six scholars/policy makers concerning the structure and content of preparation programs, utilizing a survey designed by the University Council for Educational Administration.   Lawrence's findings supported those of Levine concerning the need for university faculty to have relevant experience in the field. He also noted that scholars/policy makers identified that there was a "dearth of faculty" in the university-based programs lacking some relevant experience as practitioners in the field (Lawrence, 2008, p. 100).

The jewel in many university-based programs is the awarding of a doctoral degree in educational administration. However, the actual usefulness and appropriateness of this degree has become a topic of much debate in educational circles (Orr, 2007). Andrews and Grogan (2002, as cited by Kowalski et al. 2005) contends that doctoral degrees in education have become de facto superintendent preparation programs. Perry (2015) identifies the doctorate as little more than a title or credential comprised of theoretical exercises with little practical application to real-world problems. The dissertation is a key component of most doctoral programs. Farkas et al. (2001) called for changing the focus "from making researchers to creating practitioners that can read and apply the research" (p. 31). Levine (2005) questioned the quality of these doctoral programs with respect to their allocation of resources and low completion rates.   Orr (2007) questioned diminished admission requirements and the effect that they had on the quality of the programs.

Research on Superintendent Preparation

The research on educational-administration preparation programs is consistent in its findings regarding the type of course work that superintendents deem to be most relevant to the day-to-day duties and responsibilities that they have. The data provide a foundation upon which

university-based administration preparation programs can be based to provide a core curriculum that would be applicable and relevant to superintendents and superintendent candidates.

Leaders for America's Schools (1987), the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, identified five strands around which leadership preparation programs should be based: 1) the study of administration, 2) the study and acquisition of administrative skills, 3) the application or research methods and findings to problems, 4) supervised practice, and 5) demonstration of competence. Mindful of these shifting roles Candoli (1995) identifies seven functions of the school district and as such the primary responsibilities of the Superintendent of Schools: planning, instructional delivery, evaluation, business management, communications, instructional support (counseling services, library services), and non-instructional support (maintenance, facilities, operations). Current research indicates that these themes are recurring and as such should influence the curriculum of administrative preparation programs.

Farkas et al.'s (2001) research found that school "administrators come out of many of these programs and don't understand how intense the position is going to be" (p. 31). Further, they contend that there are serious issues with the matter of theory versus practice, with 80% of superintendents responding to their survey indicating that graduate leadership programs are out of touch with the daily realities of what it takes to run a school district (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, Foleno, & Foley, 2001).

A Colorado Association of School Executives study (2003) indicated that superintendents felt that their graduate-level coursework did not adequately prepare them for the day to day duties and responsibilities that the superintendency required. The CASE study indicated that superintendents felt that graduate programs should focus on hands-on work, improving the quality

of mentorship programs, using more practitioners as instructors, and focus on "real skills" (p. 9) such as finance, personnel, and politics. Respondents felt insufficiently prepared concerning contract negotiations and community involvement and recommended one-to-one mentoring in the areas of data analysis, technology, conflict management, organizational change, relationship building with school board members, the community, and political leaders (Colorado Association of School Executives, 2003). Kowalski et al.'s study (2005) corroborated these findings, noting that school law and finance courses were found to be the most relevant and beneficial but also to be the most lacking with regard to content, instructor experience, or outright omission from leadership preparation programs. Other omissions noted in the study were courses and practical experience in school board relations, politics, and clinical experiences (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2005).

In 2005, Kowalski et al. conducted research utilizing a Likert-scale survey and three open-ended questions based on these five roles. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, the survey was administered to all first-year superintendents in the states of California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio. The survey was designed to quantify the level of perceived readiness that first-year superintendents were provided by their administrative preparation programs. The respondents felt most prepared for the role of democratic leadership (89%) followed in order of preparedness by instructional leadership and communication. They felt least prepared for political activities (Kowalski et al., 2005). Finance, law, clinical experiences, and school-board relations were rated as the most beneficial aspects of the respondents' preparation programs. However, there was overall dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction in school finance (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Levine's (2005) research recommended the creation of an educational leadership program similar to an MBA. The program's curriculum would include basic courses in management and education taught by "high quality" (p. 66) academics and practitioners. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) also stressed the importance of using professors with experience in the field as well as current practitioners to teach the coursework included in superintendent preparation programs. Lawrence's (2008) research affirmed these findings, attaching the importance of experienced practitioners and professors to the relevance of the program. Selection if instructors should be based on their competencies and effectiveness in relation to the courses they teach. This is important because an individual's standing as a practitioner in the field does not necessarily equate to the ability to teach a specific course (Tripses, Watkins, & Hunt, Fall 2013).

Levine (2005) stipulated that superintendent preparation programs should be a blend of practice and theory focusing on clinical experiences, using "active learning pedagogies such as mentoring, case studies and simulations" (p. 66). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) similarly called for the creation of programs that provide educational leaders with the necessary skill sets to meet state standards and the "realities and challenges" (p. 22) faced by superintendents. The study emphasized the importance of field-based training, internships, and mentoring programs to provide "real-world job competencies" in the preparation of school superintendent's (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007, p. 28). Citing the importance of hands-on experience, Lawrence (2008) identified the need for a good, quality mentoring/internship experience as a key component of a successful superintendent preparation program. One scholarly respondent referred to this as "grounding of preparation in practice" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 106). King (2010) contends that internships should reflect true collaboration

between the college/university and school districts – specifying that for the internship to be meaningful it should be compensated, permitting the intern to concentrate on the learning experience. Tripses et al. (2013) also noted that superintendents often found the quality of their internships lacking and desired a more rigorous, meaningful internship program.

Brederson and Kose (2007) determined that superintendents, in order of importance, identified budget and finance (20.5%), political/legal (18.1%), and curriculum and instruction/evaluation of student learning outcomes (14.4%) as the areas in which they wished they had received better preparation. Lawrence's (2008) research corroborated these findings, identifying courses in finance, funding, and budget as important aspects of the respondents' preparation programs.

Sanitago-Marullo (2010) compared 324superintendents' perceptions of AASA Standards for the superintendency to the pre-service preparation of superintendents in New York State. The majority of respondents felt that they were prepared to perform their duties; however, they indicated that there were two main areas where their lack of skills negatively impacted their effectiveness. The identified areas of weakness were superintendent-board of education interpersonal relationships and maintaining accurate fiscal reporting (Santiago-Marullo, 2010).

In 2009-2010, Fessler (2011) surveyed 314 superintendents in Illinois focusing on their ss perceptions of the effectiveness of their preparation programs.   The respondents recommended practical, internship types of experiences, more finance, more politics and political culture, and coursework on building interpersonal relationship with school boards (Fessler, 2011).   They also recommended that current superintendents should teach the courses because they are better able to relate theory to actual practice (Fessler, 2011).

Kowalski et al. (2011) used the findings of the 2010 decennial study of the school superintendent to analyze the extent to which courses, professor credibility, school district size, and gender accounted for the variability in superintendents' ratings of their academic preparation. The survey instrument was developed by the authors and validated by a panel of former school superintendents currently serving as college professors. Surveys were sent to all superintendents for which e-mail addresses could be obtained. A total of 1,867 surveys were completed and analyzed (Kowalski, Young, & McCord, 2011). Courses in school law and finance ranked at the top of the courses with the professor credibility having the greatest influence on the quality of the program/course and district size accounting for little variance (Kowalski, Young, & McCord, 2011).

Gober (2012) cited more relevant coursework in school law, finance, and school board relations as the most frequently recurring requests of the respondents to his research. The coursework needs to be authentic, relevant, and applicable to the uniqueness of the superintendent's role (Gober, 2012). Tripses et al. (2013) concurred, indicating that superintendents reported the need for "practical know-how" in finance, law, and curriculum with real world applications (p. 9).

Quirk (2012) conducted a qualitative study interviewing eight first-year superintendents in Missouri on their perceptions of their preparation programs. Interview questions were field tested with colleagues for clarity and to ensure that the interviews flowed well (Quirk, 2012). Quirk coded and triangulated the data with the existing literature to better validate the findings. Most interviewees indicated that they were satisfied with their preparation programs, identifying courses in finance, law, and public relations as extremely important (Quirk, 2012). Four of the eight felt that their internships were weak and not a beneficial part of their preparation programs, with one

stating that "there was not much to the internship… bosses just signed off on it…. did not think it was rewarding" (Quirk, 2012, p. 72). Quirk indicated that the participants in his study felt that they were thrust into the position, not adequately prepared for the financial and legal aspects of the job, and wishing that they had more real-world, problem-solving activities as part of their coursework.

Antonucci (2012) conducted a phenomenological study of six rural school superintendents in Massachusetts.   He conducted a series of face-to-face interviews using a standardized, open-ended interview protocol (Antonucci, 2012). The data were coded and themes in the data were identified. A majority of the interviewees indicated that they did not feel prepared for the job and that no preparation program could ever adequately prepare an individual for the job of superintendent (Antonucci, 2012). Among the recommendations made by the participants in the study was more of a case-study approach, field work, and more mentoring (Antonucci, 2012). There was a consensus that the preparation programs focused too much on theory and not enough on practice (Antonucci, 2012)

Kaufman's (2013) research approached leadership preparation programs from a different perspective. His study focused on the perceptions of their graduate school preparation for the superintendency of 11 former Illinois superintendents who were currently serving as professors of educational administration (Kaufman, 2013). This was a qualitative study utilizing semi-structured questions and a purposeful sample. The study was pilot tested with two individuals fitting the criteria but who did not participate in the study. Their answers were used to focus and refine the questions in the final interview (Kaufman, 2013). Kaufman indicated that people skills, finance, and law were all identified as the most important skill sets the interviewees had learned prior to becoming superintendents. Also, the participants indicated their overall dissatisfaction with their

preservice training in that their coursework did not adequately prepare them for the superintendency. Further, they emphasized the importance of practical experiences and mentors in a pre-service training program (Kaufman, 2013).

Several common themes emerged from the literature on leadership preparation programs. They are the importance of training in interpersonal skills/superintendent-board relations, more thorough coursework in law and finance, and the importance of practical field experiences and relevant internships. Superintendents either identified these areas as the greatest strengths or a significant weakness in their preparation programs. The use of case studies and practical field experiences/internships to time the coursework – theory - to actual practice was also important.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 is a review of selected literature regarding the superintendency in general and administrator/superintendent preparation programs in particular. The chapter introduced the position of Superintendent of Schools from a historical perspective. The duties, roles, and responsibilities of the superintendent were discussed in the context of their relevance to the preparation required for the position. The ISLLC and ELCC standards were reviewed and discussed, with particular focus on the influence that they have on shaping the curriculum of superintendent preparation programs. The chapter discussed the specific certification requirements for School Building Leaders and School District Leaders in New York State, with an explanation of the Certificate of Advanced study as an academic credential. Kowalski et al. (2011) note that there is no national curriculum for the preparation of school superintendents. The chapter presented an overview of alternative pathways to certification compared with university=based programs. Chapter 2 discussed concerns and commentary on the failings of university-based preparation programs along with specific recommendations for improving them

(Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). The literature review concluded with a summary of the research on best practices, relevancy of coursework, and recommendations from the field to improve superintendent preparation programs to make them more meaningful and effective. A particular focus of the chapter concerned the ongoing debate between theory and practice and the importance of preparation programs providing opportunities for candidates to put theory into practice through a well-rounded and rigorous internship.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the study's research methodology. It discusses the purpose and the design of the study, the data-collection procedures and analysis as they pertain to the research questions. The assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The role, duties, and responsibilities of the Superintendent of Schools has changed

significantly in the past 150 years, and Levine (2005) has stated that the "quality of leadership in

our schools has seldom mattered more" (p. 5). The position has evolved to that of Chief

Executive Officer. Today, the Superintendent of Schools often manages a budget and workforce

that is larger and more complex than many private corporations. John Kotter, of Harvard

Business School (as cited by Bjork & Kowalski, 2005) identifies the growing need for

superintendents to be "both effective leaders and managers" and the need for equilibrium

between the two roles. The modern superintendent therefore requires a level of preparation

commensurate with the "comprehensive and complex" responsibilities of the position (King,

2010, p. 13). Superintendents not only manage our schools but also lead them through periods of

profound social change (Levine, 2005).

Research Problem

The problem is that the superintendency is a complex, demanding position that requires a

specific skill set to be done effectively (Orr, 2007; Wilson, 2010). The roles and responsibilities

of the position have changed significantly in the past 20 years (Young, 2015). Though the

review of the literature identified numerous state- and regional-specific studies, none is

specifically focused on superintendent preparation programs in New York State. There is a need

for additional research in this area to establish course content and methodologies that are

"authentic, relevant, and applicable" to the intricacies of the position of Superintendent of

Schools (Gober, 2012, p. 85).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine the perceived effectiveness of superintendent preparation programs in New York State by interviewing subjects currently employed as superintendents in the state and analyzing the data to establish specific themes. The study attempts to identify best practices for superintendent preparation programs and make recommendations based on the review of literature and analysis of the research data collected. The research will provide a foundation upon which administrative preparation programs can be improved, made more relevant, and have real-world applications.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the study. They are:

1. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of university preparation programs for superintendents?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of internships for superintendents?

3. How do superintendents perceive their on-campus courses?

4. Do superintendents believe that their superintendent preparation programs promoted the acquisition of skills in problem analysis, organizational ability, written communication, oral communication, judgment, decision making, etc.?

5. What do superintendents recommend to strengthen university administrative preparation programs?

Research Design

This study interviewed current superintendents to determine their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation programs and identify areas for improvement. Qualitative research is designed to obtain a more in-depth understanding of a topic, in particular

how the participants perceive education administration programs (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 12). Creswell (2007) indicates that qualitative research is conducted when we want to empower individuals to share their stories to better understand the context or settings of a problem or issue. Bogdan and Biklin (2007) emphasize the importance of putting the subjects at ease to talk freely, thus providing rich data filled with language that reveals their perceptions. Kowalski et al. (2011) recommends additional research on preparation programs, specifically with qualitative studies, to provide a more detailed explanation as to why superintendents feel that their academic preparation programs were either effective or ineffective.

The study consisted of four phases. The first included the distribution of a short demographic survey to the target population. The survey was distributed to the 161 new superintendents identified by the New York State Council of School Superintendents. The purpose of the survey was to identify those individuals who most closely matched the demographic of the study and who indicated a willingness to be interviewed for the study.

In phase two of the study, using the literature review and the research questions as a foundation, a series of interview questions was developed. The interview questions were designed in such a manner as to elicit the greatest depth of responses from the interviewees. Best and Kahn (2003), citing Patton, stipulate that the purpose of the interview is not to put things into someone's mind but rather to elicit the thoughts and perceptions of the subject with regard to the topic of the study.   The interview questions were pilot tested with a group of five current superintendents to ascertain clarity, relevance, and any perceived deficiencies in the questions or format (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). After that, the questions were refined to reflect any concerns noted in the pilot study.

In phase three of the study, the researcher randomly selected a group of 15 to 20 respondents from those who had earlier consented to be interviewed. On site – where geographically practical – and telephone interviews were conducted using a series of questions designed to permit the subjects to discuss their preparation for the superintendency in general and the value of their preparation programs to their preparedness for the position (Creswell, 2007) . The interview process utilized a series of open-ended questions that served to facilitate a dialogue in which the subjects told their stories in their own words as they related to their superintendent preparation programs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The interviews were recorded and, whenever possible, transcribed by the researcher. The data was coded, comparing concepts and ideas to establish connections between the data and sort the data into categories. Words and phrases were analyzed for repetition and recurrence. They were then labeled to help better identify patterns and establish greater meaning. The coded data were then analyzed to identify central recurring themes found in the literature review and among the respondents. The data were presented in a narrative format and correlated to contextualize the findings in the literature review. The data are presented in a narrative format and correlated to the researcher's quantitative findings (Creswell, 2007).

Participants

The study sample included individuals who were new to the position of superintendent. First-time superintendents were chosen because regardless of the amount of time that had lapsed between the completion of their preparation programs and their becoming superintendents, the subjects still constituted a similar demographic (Santiago-Marullo, 2010). The New York State Council of School Superintendents indicated that there were 161 new superintendents appointed

in 2014 and 2015. This number was determined through self-reporting on membership renewals over the two-year period.

The final sample interviewed was representative of the percentages of men and women reflected in the pool of respondents to the demographic survey. Geography was also a contributing factor to the selection of the sample. Since the study's focus is on the perceptions of superintendent preparation in New York State, it was important that the participants in the study represented its different geographic regions. Geography was also important because for the study to be meaningful it could not be reflective of just one or two institutions that provide superintendent preparation programs.

The New York State Department of Education has two distinct administrative subdivisions. One is the 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and the other the 12 Regional Information Centers (RIC's), which are administratively aligned under a BOCES. These entities are dispersed throughout the state. RIC's may serve more than one BOCES. In order to obtain the desired sample size, the district location of respondents who consented to an interview were correlated with each of the RIC's to assure broad geographic representation. Efforts were made to assure that participants had obtained their administrative certification from different educational institutions.

Procedures

The researcher followed all rules governing research at East Stroudsburg University (ESU) and Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). The required applications and filings were submitted to the respective Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and approved prior to the commencement of the study.

An introductory e-mail was sent to all the Superintendents of Schools and District Superintendents of the 37 BOCES in New York State. The e-mail identified the researcher as a doctoral student at ESU/IUP and described the nature and purpose of the study. The e-mail included an embedded link to an electronic version of the demographic survey instrument. When the response rate remained low over the first several weeks (31%), the "warm introduction" technique was used, and the researcher requested that the 37 BOCES District Superintendents forward the survey to their component districts (Gober, 2012, p. 53) . Only 3 more individuals responded to the survey for a total of 33%. The resulting data were correlated and analyzed by experience, gender, district size, geographic location (RIC), and credentialing institution.   Nineteen participants ultimately consented to be interviewed. They were representative of the ratio of males to females of all those who responded to the demographic survey and represented districts of different sizes as well as geographic diversity in New York State. Multiple credentialing institutions were also represented in the group who were interviewed.

Once the sample group was selected, the researcher contacted the respondents by e-mail to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. Once an individual committed to participating in the study, a time was established to conduct either an in-person or telephone interview depending on the geographic location of the subject.

Interview Design

Creswell (2007) explains that qualitative research provides a more detailed understanding of an issue, empowering individuals to share their stories and thus give voice to them. Bogdan and Biklen say that a major purpose of qualitative research is to provide a contextual framework for the study. Gay et al. (2009) indicate that interviewing can be both a

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complex and difficult undertaking, stipulating that interviewers need to learn to listen, not to interrupt, not to ask leading questions, not to be judgmental, and not to debate or discuss a participant's answer beyond asking for clarification. This type of research is prone to bias, so an interviewer must make a concerted effort not to reveal his or her own thoughts on the subject to avoid the tendency of a participant to say what her or she believes the interviewer wants to hear (Best & James, 2003).

The purpose of the interviews in this study was to ask questions designed to elicit answers that were as specific as possible, reflecting attitudes and feelings regarding the topic of superintendent preparation in New York State. The interview questions were based on the five research questions which were designed to encourage the participants to describe their perceptions of their preparation programs and discuss whether they felt that the programs had prepared them adequately for the position of superintendent. Most importantly, the questions attempted to elicit the "why" from the participants. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discuss the importance of the follow-up question in getting to the "why," calling them probing questions – "What do you mean? ... Would you explain that? ... "Give me an example? ... Tell me about it" (p. 104).

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to assure that the interview questions were clear, concise, and easily understandable (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Face validity was determined by consulting with current superintendents about how well the interview questions aligned with superintendent preparation coursework (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). Interviews were conducted with five superintendents who each had a minimum of five years' experience and held

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a doctoral degree. To help assure anonymity, the participants were identified as PS 1 through PS 5.

1. PS 1 was female and had been a superintendent for eight years. She earned her doctorate at Sage College in New York. Her district's current enrollment is 443. This is her first superintendency.

2. PS 2 was female and had been a superintendent for five years. She earned her doctorate at the University of Rochester in New York. Her district's current enrollment is 1,090.. This is her first superintendency.

3. PS 3 was male and had been a superintendent for 14 years. He earned his doctorate at Nova Southeastern University in Florida. His district's current enrollment is 1,328. This is his second superintendency.

4. PS 4 was male and had been a superintendent for 13 years and a District Superintendent of a BOCES for five years. He earned his doctorate at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

5. PS 5 was male and had been a superintendent for 21 years – 14 in Connecticut and seven in New York. He earned his doctorate at Columbia Teachers College in New York. His district's current enrollment is 1,553. This is his fourth superintendency.

In order to better prepare for the study and hone interview skills, the researcher conducted four practice interviews, each with a school administrator known to the researcher who was not included in the sample population. The pilot interviews were recorded using an iPad II, and copious notes of each interview were taken. The interviews were converted to an MP4 format and retained in a digital format. The practice interviews were not transcribed.

The five superintendents participating in the pilot study were sent a copy of the Informed Consent form, the research questions guiding the study, and a copy of the interview

questions. They were asked to review both sets of questions and to provide feedback about their opinion of the relationship between the interview questions and the research questions. The intent was to conduct several face-to-face interviews as well as several phone interviews. In addition, participants were asked to comment on the clarity of the questions, the quality of the follow-up questions, and finally whether they felt that the stated goals of the research questions were achieved during the course of the interviews. Additionally, the pilot-study interviews were used to better gauge and refine interviewing techniques, pacing, timing, and the length of time transcribing each interview would take.

All interviews were recorded using an iPad II, and the electronic files were converted to an MP4 format and retained in a digital format. Copious, hand-written notes were also taken during each interview. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher using a computer program called *Transcribe* and saved in either a Google Doc or Microsoft Word format. Each interview was printed out and collated with the demographic data collected and the Informed Consent form and stored in a tabbed binder for reference by the researcher.

The following recommendations were made by the participants in the pilot study with regard to the research questions, interview questions, and the study in general.

- PS 1 indicated that the interview questions should be closely correlated to the research questions and said that that the interview questions and research questions should specifically address New York state preparation programs since that was the stated topic of the research. PS 1 also indicated that Research Question 4 listed "sensitivity" but that this was not correlated with interview question 4 (it was ultimately decided to remove any reference to "sensitivity from the research and interview questions).   Additionally, interview question 6

concerning "standards" was not directly correlated with any specific research question. PS 1 did indicate that the question could become relevant if the topic of "standards" did come up during the interviews. PS 1 also made some minor corrections to the language of the questions.

- PS 3 suggested wording changes in both the research questions and the interview questions. PS 3 felt that Research Questions 1, 2, and 5 were not specific enough. PS 3 questioned whether the question was asking about the specific program and internship of the person being interviewed or was a general question about all programs and internships. He suggested narrowing the focus to the specific program of the interviewee.

- PS 4 and PS 5 pointed to a potential issue that would require greater clarity from the interviewer for those interviewees who held a doctoral degree. They indicated that the interview questions could easily be confused as interviewees started to discuss their doctoral programs rather than their initial administrator preparation program. They had no specific suggestions about changing the wording of the questions but indicated that the researcher should be cognizant of this fact and make allowances and distinctions to permit the interviewees to respond accordingly.

- PS 5 also indicated that interview question 5 asking for the interviewees' recommendations had no direct analogue in the research questions. After rereading the research questions, PS 5 said that Research Question 5 would seem to cover what was being asked in the final interview question but the wording seemed to be different in some way.

The pilot study revealed several things to the researcher. The wording of the initial questions and the follow-ups was important for the success of the study. In addition, the researcher needed to be flexible and let the interviewees respond to the interview questions in their own manner while the researcher used the follow-up questions to encourage the interviewees to be more specific and precise in their responses.

It also became apparent that the preferable format for the interviews was "in person" rather than via telephone. During the two pilot study interviews that were conducted in person, seeing the interviewees' facial expressions and mannerisms often provided cues as to the follow-up questions the researcher should ask. A look, a sigh, or a rolling of the eyes was enough to catalyze a series of follow-up questions exploring the reasons for those expressions or mannerisms. Unfortunately, because of the large geographic area covered in the study, virtually the entire state of New York, and the expressed desire to expand the demographic of the study to encompass geographic diversity and to be representative of different institutions of higher education, it was impossible to conduct all the interviews in person. However, in-person interviews were conducted whenever possible because of their importance and value.

Finally, the pilot study revealed that the average time required for each interview was 30 to 45 minutes. The lengthier interviews tended to be face to face. This was likely because facial expressions and mannerisms led to the interview asking more specific follow-up questions and more questions in general. The longer interviews conducted by telephone during the pilot study resulted from the conversations drifting off topic. Sometimes, in an effort to establish a more intimate relationship between the researcher and the person being interviewed, it was necessary to conduct side talk to establish a climate in which the interviewee felt comfortable talking, exploring the topic, and sharing his or her thoughts, concerns and recommendations The

researcher learned the importance of establishing this level of trust and not to rush the interviews as long as the person being interviewed was not pressed for time and was willing to keep talking.

The pilot study also confirmed that the recording methodology was sufficient to meet the needs of the researcher. The *Transcribe* software was serviceable but at times cumbersome to use. Each interview took between two and four hours to transcribe. A copy of the transcription was sent to each person who participated in the pilot study with a short note of thanks and requesting any clarifications, corrections, or revisions.

Interview Setting

Due to the large geographic area covered by the research, it was necessary to conduct the interviews by telephone. In those instances, where it was geographically feasible, every effort was made to conduct the interview in person. Participants were informed that the interviews would take approximately 30 minutes and that all interviews would be recorded. The participants were provided with a copy of the informed consent document as prescribed by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Participants were also advised that they could terminate the interview at any time or continue it at a more convenient time. All participants were informed that the purpose of the interview was to elicit a more in-depth response reflecting their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about superintendent preparation in New York State.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Gay et al. (2009) discuss the importance of ongoing analysis of collected data throughout the research process. During the interviews, the researcher made every effort to assure that the questions and the way they were being asked focused the interviewees' attention on the topic of the research. If the interview seemed to be going off topic or the responses were not otherwise

germane, the researcher attempted to adjust the way that the question was being asked so that it elicited a relevant response. Each interview was used to scaffold and serve as a guide for subsequent interviews.

At the conclusion of the interview process, the researcher's focus turned to making sense of the data collected. Qualitative data analysis is inductive to the extent that a vast quantity of information needs to be categorized and sorted in such a manner that it makes sense. The researcher needed to establish which data were relevant to the topic, discarding data that were not (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The researcher became immersed in the subtleties of the information, noting the tone and inflection of the interviewees when they were answering questions. A change in pitch, a hesitation, a sigh, and an extended period of silence were all relevant to the researcher's being able to form a more complete understanding of the data collected.

The data were coded and categorized using key words, phrases, and common perceptions or references made by the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The coding allowed the researcher to better manage the amount of data collected, making it more useable. Creswell (2007) recommends the use of "lean coding," using five or six broad categories into which data can be subdivided (p. 152). These categories may be broadened as the data are analyzed to include more and more elements of it. Once the data had been coded, the researcher sought to eliminate repetitive categories and merge categories whenever possible to compress the information into five or six central themes (Creswell, 2007).

Once coded and categorized into central themes, the data had to be interpreted. Patton (1990, as cited by Best & Kahn 2003) indicates that "[i]nterpretation involves explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting

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patterns into an analytic framework" (p. 259). In order for the data to be relevant and meaningful, the interpretation must be contextual. The researcher needed to determine what was important in the data and why. The literature review was used as the foundation for interpreting the data and placing it in the context of previous research findings (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Assuring the quality of the data is important. For the research to be valid, the data must be of high quality. Dey (1993, as cited by Gay et al, 2009) identified six questions that a researcher should use to ascertain the quality of data;

1. Are the data based on one's own observation or hearsay?

2. Are observations corroborated by others?

3. In what circumstances was an observation made or reported?

4. How reliable are those providing the data?

5. What motivations may have influenced a participant's report?

6. What biases may have influenced how an observation was reported?

A researcher who follows these guidelines will help to assure that the research is trustworthy.

Assessment of Trustworthiness

There are many schools of thought about the validation of qualitative research, in particular the establishment of the trustworthiness of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited by Creswell, 2007) use the terms "credibility," "authenticity," "transferability," "dependability," and "confirmability" as the qualitative equivalent of the quantitative "internal validation," "external validation," "reliability," and "objectivity" to describe the methodologies of establishing trustworthiness (p. 202). The qualitative researcher looks for confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data. A rich descriptive analysis provides

the reader with the detail necessary to make determinations about the transferability of the research to other settings based on similar characteristics (Creswell, 2007). Efforts were made to minimize researcher bias with the understanding that interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee is often influenced by the interviewer's own knowledge of the subject and by preconceptions about the subject.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 identified the study's methodology. It identified the research problem, the research questions, and the significance of the problem to public education. The purpose of the study was to determine whether current administrative certification programs are adequately preparing individuals for the complexities of the modern superintendency in New York State. This qualitative study was designed to achieve a more in-depth analysis and deeper understanding of the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of their superintendent preparation programs and seek their recommendations for improving these programs. The target population for the study was 15 to 20 superintendents with three or fewer years of experience in the position. Attempts were made to balance the target population by gender, geographic area, and the institutions where they received their superintendent training. The interviews were transcribed whenever possible by the researcher and coded to identify recurring themes in the data. The data are presented in rich narrative format.The chapter discussed the criteria for the collection of the data that were analyzed to answer the research questions. The analysis of the data is presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine superintendents' perceptions of current

superintendent certification programs in New York State. The study consists of a pilot study, a

quantitative demographic survey instrument of self-reported new superintendents of schools, and

a qualitative component consisting of telephone and field interviews. This chapter will present

both the quantitative demographic data and the qualitative interview responses as they correlate

to the following research questions:

1. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of university preparation programs for
   superintendents?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of internships for superintendents?

3. How did superintendents perceive their on-campus courses?

4. Do superintendents believe that their superintendent preparation program promoted
   the acquisition of skills in problem analysis, organizational ability, written
   communication, oral communication, judgment, decision making, etc.?

5. What do superintendents recommend to strengthen university administrative
   preparation programs?

Demographic Data

A list of 161 self-reported new Superintendents of School was obtained from the New

York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS). The list was correlated with a

master listing of school administrators that is publicly available on the web site of the New York

State Education Department to obtain current e-mail address for the names on the NYSCOSS listing.

A demographic survey consisting of 13 questions (Appendix D) was distributed by e-mail to 161 self-reported new superintendents. The e-mail included a letter of introduction and a link to the electronic survey. Surveys were distributed over a four-week period in July, 2016. Each time the survey was redistributed, the names of respondents were removed from the master list. The subject line of the e-mail was also changed for each distribution in an attempt to encourage the recipients to open the e-mail and respond to the survey (Deren, 2016). In the fourth week, the concept of a "warm introduction" was utilized to attempt to increase response rates (Gober, 2012, p. 53). The survey was sent to the district superintendent of the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services with a request to distribute the surveys to his colleagues across the state and requesting that they in turn distribute it in an e-mail from them to the superintendents of their component districts. This method garnered an additional four responses that had not previously been recorded. A total of 53 (32%) responses were received.

Respondents were categorized by gender and enrollment. To account for geographic diversity, respondents were asked in which of the 16 regional information centers their districts were located.

Table 1

Gender

Gender	Count	Percent
Female	15	28.3%
Male	38	71.6%

Table 2

School-District Enrollment

Enrollment	Count	Percent
1-250	5	9.4%
251-500	5	9.4%
501-750	5	9.4%
751-1000	11	20.7%
1001-2500	12	22.6%
2500+	15	28.3%

Table 3

How Long Have You Been a Superintendent?

Tenure as a Superintendent	Count	Percent
1 year	26	49.0%
2 years	8	15.0%
3 years	9	16.9%
5+ years	10	18.8%

Table 4

What Regional Information Center is Your District Located in?

Regional Information Center	Count	Percent
Central New York	7	13.2%
Eastern Suffolk	4	7.5%
Edu Tech	5	9.4%
Greater Southern Tier	1	1.8%
Lower Hudson	4	7.5%
Mid-Hudson	6	11.3%
Mohawk	2	3.7%
Monroe	1	1.8%
Nassau	3	5.6%
Northeastern	8	15.0%
South Central	2	3.7%
Western New York	10	18.8%

The 53 respondents represented 28 different administration preparation programs.

Canisius College

College of New Rochelle

Columbia University/BOCES

Dowling College

Fairfield University, Connecticut

Gannon University

Harvard Graduate School of Education

Hofstra University

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

Mercy College

Niagara University

Rutgers University

Seton Hall

St. John's University

St. Lawrence University

SUNY Cortland

SUNY Albany

SUNY Brockport

SUNY Buffalo

SUNY Cortland

SUNY Fredonia

SUNY New Paltz

SUNY Oswego

SUNY Plattsburgh

Syracuse University

The College of St Rose

University of Toronto, currently in Transitional D Program at Niagara University

University of Rochester

The plan was to interview 15-20 superintendents regarding their perceptions of how well their programs prepared them to become a superintendent. The demographic survey also included two questions designed to elicit preliminary perceptions of the respondents' attitudes toward their preparation programs and internships. Table 5 shows that 58% of the superintendents felt that their preparation programs prepared them for the job. This finding is contrary to the research of Levine (2005), Antonucci (2010) and Kaufman (2013), who found that a majority of the participants they surveyed did not feel that their programs adequately prepared them for their first superintendency. The researcher's current findings were more in line with the AASA survey conducted in 2010 that found that 78.7% of those surveyed rated their preparation programs as either excellent or good. However, Table 6 shows that 45% of the respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree that the internship was relevant to the duties and responsibilities when they became superintendents, while 32% did not find the internship meaningful, and 22% felt that the internship had little meaning or value. The results were indicative of the findings of King (2015) and Tripses, Watkins, and Hunt (2013), who identified weaknesses in the internship programs associated with administrator certification programs in general.

Table 5

My Administration Preparation Program Adequately Prepared me for my First Superintendency

My administration preparation program adequately prepared me for my first superintendency.	Count	Percent
Strongly agree	11	20.7%
Somewhat agree	20	37.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	10	18.8%
Somewhat disagree	7	13.2%
Strongly disagree	5	9.4%

Table 6

My Internship was Relevant to the Duties and Responsibilities of my First Superintendency

My internship was relevant to the duties and responsibilities of my first superintendency.	Count	Percent
Strongly agree	12	22.6%
Somewhat agree	12	22.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	12	22.6%
Somewhat disagree	9	16.9%
Strongly disagree	8	15.0%

Qualitative Data

Of the 53 superintendents who responded to the survey, 34 answered consented to a 30-minute interview to explore their perceptions of their superintendent preparation program. The stated goal was to create a pool of 24 respondents from which to select a target sampling of 15-20 participants in the study. A review of the demographics indicated that the sample would be diverse geographically as well as institutionally.

A thank-you e-mail along with a copy of the informed consent form was sent to each person who responded affirmatively asking them for a time convenient to conduct the interview and requesting that the informed consent form be returned prior to the interview. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. This often resulted in multiple interviews being conducted on the same day because of the availability of the participants, making the goal of transcribing each interview immediately after its conclusion difficult.

Over four weeks during July and August, 2016, only 19 responses were received. Several e-mail reminders were sent to the other 15 respondents reminding them of their willingness to be interviewed, but they elicited no responses. The researcher elected to include all 19 who did respond. Telephone interviews were scheduled. The researcher paid specific attention to the geographic location of each of the 19 participants and sought to schedule an in-person interview with respondents located in the Mid-Hudson region of New York state. As a result, four (21%) of the interviews were scheduled to be face to face.

Demographically, the sample included 5 females (28%) and 14 males (72%), which exactly matched the gender breakdown of all respondents. The student enrollments for each superintendent also corresponded to that of all respondents. Eight had just completed their 1st year as superintendents, six their 2nd year, four their 3rd year, and one had over five years of

experience. Geographically, the sample represented 11 of the 12 Regional Information Centers

with six RIC's represented once. The respondents had completed their administrator preparation

programs at 15 different institutions. Table 7 summarizes the demographic data of the sample

population. To protect the respondents' anonymity, each individual was assigned an identifier

ranging from S 1 – S 19.

It should be noted that four of the participants attended out-of-state colleges or

universities – one in Pennsylvania and three in Massachusetts. The program in Pennsylvania

worked with the participant to tailor the program to suit her New York state certification. The

program in Massachusetts, due to its geographic proximity as an institution on the New York-

Massachusetts border, solicits students from New York, advertising that the program complies

with all New York state requirements leading to certification and facilitates the certification

process. Therefore, these respondents were included in the study as their experiences were

deemed relevant by the researcher.

Table 7

Study Sample Demographic Data

Identifier	Gender	Enrollment	What regional information center (RIC) is your district located in?	How long have you been a Superintendent of Schools?	At what college or university did you complete your administrator certifica...
S 1	Female	2500+	Eastern Suffolk	2 years	College of New Rochelle
S 2	Male	501-750	Central New York	2 years	College of New Rochelle
S 3	Female	751-1000	Northeastern	3 years	St. Lawrence University
S 4	Male	2500+	Western New York	3 years	SUNY Brockport
S 5	Male	751-1000	Mohawk	1 year	The College of St Rose

S 6	Male	1001-2500	Edu Tech	3 years	University of Rochester
S 7	Male	1001-2500	Greater Southern Tier	1 year	SUNY Fredonia
S 8	Male	2500+	Eastern Suffolk	2 years	Hofstra University
S 9	Male	751-1000	Central New York	1 year	SUNY Oswego
S 10	Male	2500+	Northeastern	5+ years	Rutgers University
S 11	Female	2500+	Mid-Hudson	2 years	Gannon University
S 12	Female	751-1000	Central New York	1 year	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
S 13	Female	2500+	Nassau	3 years	Hofstra University
S 14	Male	751-1000	Edu Tech	2 years	SUNY Brockport
S 15	Male	2500+	Mid-Hudson	1 year	SUNY New Paltz
S 16	Male	251-500	Northeastern	1 year	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
S 17	Male	2500+	Lower Hudson	1 year	Columbia University/BOCES
S 18	Male	751-1000	Mid-Hudson	2 years	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
S 19	Male	751-1000	Northeastern	1 year	SUNY Plattsburgh

Table 8 indicates that 68% of the sample either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their administrator reparation program was beneficial, while Table 9 indicates that 42% strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their internship was relevant. Therefore, the sample was reflective of the 53 superintendents who responded to the initial demographic survey.

Table 8

Study Sample – My Administration Preparation Program Adequately Prepared me for my First

Superintendency

My administrative preparation program adequately prepared me for my first supperintendency.	Count	Percent
Strongly agree	6	31.5%
Somewhat agree	7	36.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	2	10.5%
Somewhat disagree	1	5.2%
Strongly disagree	3	15.7%

Table 9

Study Sample – My Internship was Relevant to the Duties and Responsibilities of my First

Superintendency

My internship was relevant to the duties and responsibilities of my first superintendency.	Count	Percent
Strongly agree	5	26.3%
Somewhat agree	3	15.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	5	26.3%
Somewhat disagree	3	15.7%
Strongly disagree	3	15.7%

After an analysis of the demographic data, respondent S 10 was excluded from the final study. During the course of the interview, it became apparent that the respondent did not fit the target demographic of the study. The respondent was in his second superintendency and had been a superintendent for more than 10 years.

The interview questions were designed to elicit responses from the participants that closely paralleled the research questions. The questions focused on the respondents' preparation program, internship, coursework, acquisition of skill sets, and recommendations to improve preparation programs. The data collected for each question was analyzed to identify common themes and concepts. The data are presented and discussed in a narrative format using the research questions to guide the analysis.

Participant Profiles

The following superintendents consented to be interviewed for the study. Size of district, gender, and years as a superintendent didn't seem to play a role in how they perceived their programs. The following brief descriptions of each superintendent provide a glimpse of their districts and where they studied.

S 1 was in her third year as superintendent of a large, suburban school district in eastern Long Island, New York, with an enrollment is 6,200 students. She attended the College of New Rochelle, completed her administrator preparation program in 1996 and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program at St. John's University. In general, she had positive feelings about her administrator preparation program, saying, "I think that a lot of the nitty-gritty manager real stuff I was reasonably prepared for."

S 2 is a first-year superintendent of a small rural school district in central New York near Syracuse with an enrollment of 560 students. He completed his administrator preparation program at the College of New Rochelle in 2000 and had a doctorate from Columbia Teachers College. S 2 had an overall negative experience and was dissatisfied with his preparation program, commenting, "So, I was learning how to do the job [first administrative position], but it was independent of that fact that I went through this program…." This individual was difficult to interview. His answers were short and sometimes curt – "Yes" or "No" – and he often did not respond to requests to elaborate or explain.

S 3 was in her third year as superintendent of a small, rural school district in northern New York near the Canadian border near Montreal, Canada. The district's enrollment was 800. She completed her administrator preparation program at St. Lawrence University in 2006. In general, she was very positive regarding her program, stating, "Because you were able to network with people and got to know people…. It was a really good experience in that respect …. St. Lawrence was more creative with doing things like that."

S 4 was in his third year as the superintendent of a large suburban school district located near Buffalo, New York with a current enrollment of approximately 5,000 students. He completed his administrator preparation program in 2000 at SUNY Brockport and holds a doctorate from the University of Rochester.

S 5 was just completing his first year as the superintendent of a small, rural school district located west of Albany in central New York with an enrollment of 872. He completed his administrator preparation program in 2003 at The College of St. Rose.

S 6 was a third-year superintendent of a medium-sized, suburban school district located near Rochester, New York. The enrollment was 2,130 students. He completed his administrator

preparation program at the University of Rochester in 2007 and also attended the Superintendent Development Program at SUNY Oswego. S 6 had also owned a small business for many years. Generally, he was satisfied with his administrator preparation program, stating, "[P]eople are asking me if this is the program I went to and is it one they should look at – I always encourage them to do so."

S 7 was a first-year superintendent of a small, suburban school district located southwest of Buffalo with an enrollment of 1,100 students. He completed his administrator preparation program at SUNY Fredonia in 2001 and also attended the Superintendent Development Program at SUNY Oswego. S 7 had a very positive experience at SUNY Fredonia, saying, "Truth be known, I had a really, really strong good experience at Fredonia. It was an excellent school."

S 8 was a second-year superintendent of a medium-sized, suburban school district located in central Long Island, New York, with an enrollment of 3,400 students. He completed his administrator preparation program at Hofstra University in 2001 and received his doctorate from Hofstra in 2008. In summarizing his feelings concerning his administrator preparation program, he said, "I was pretty pleased all around with the coursework and professors."

S 9 was just completing his first year as superintendent of a small, rural school district near the Canadian border north of Syracuse, New York. The district's enrollment was 860 students. He completed his administrator preparation program in 2007 at SUNY Oswego. S 9 was the superintendent of the school district he attended as a child and where his father served not only as superintendent but also as a principal.

S 11 was finishing her second year as the superintendent of a large, rural school district located near the Mid-Hudson Valley west of Middletown, New York. The district's enrollment was between 2,800 and 2,900 students. She completed her administrator preparation program in

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2008 at Gannon University in Pennsylvania and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program, calling parts of it "point-blank brilliant."   S 11 was a colleague of the researcher. Her district shares a common border with and is in the same county as the researcher's district. This interview was conducted in person.

S 12 was a first-year superintendent of a rural school district located in central New York between Binghamton and Syracuse with an enrollment of approximately 829 students. She completed her administrator preparation program at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in 2005 and also completed the Superintendent Development Program at SUNY Oswego. Though not dissatisfied with her administrator preparation program, she found that the SDP program at SUNY Oswego was more beneficial to her position as superintendent, stating that "it was a yearlong program that was just geared to the superintendency."

S 13 was a third-year superintendent of a large, suburban school district located in the western part of Long Island, New York, with an enrollment of 7,500. She completed her administrator preparation program at Hofstra University in 2000 and also had a doctorate from Hofstra. Coincidentally, she not only attended school as a child in her current district, she also worked as a teacher there. S 13 was satisfied with her preparation program, saying, "I really felt that every course was very strong, and I was very, very happy with the program."

S 14 was completing his second year as the superintendent of a small, rural school district located in the western part of New York State, southwest of Rochester and southeast of Buffalo. The district's enrollment was 850 students. He completed his administrator preparation program at SUNY Brockport in 2009 and also completed his School District Business Leader certification in 2014 at SUNY Brockport.   Expressing his satisfaction with his program, S 14 stated, "It was a very pragmatic program, and that's what I loved about it."

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S 15 was a first-year superintendent of a mid-sized, rural school district located near the Pennsylvania border west of Middletown, New York, with an enrollment of 3,776 students. He completed his administrator preparation program at SUNY New Paltz in 2003 and also completed the Future Superintendents Academy through NYSCOSS. S 15 was known to the researcher, and his district, though in another county, is geographically situated near the researcher's. The interview was conducted in person. Summarizing his experiences at New Paltz, S 15 said, "[S]ome of it was really good practical stuff [coursework]."

S 16 was completing his first year as superintendent of a small, rural school district located in upstate New York between Albany and Troy. The enrollment was approximately 321. The district is unique in that it is a K-8 district that transports its high school students five high schools located in other districts. S 16 completed his administrator preparation program at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in 2007 and has a doctorate from Sage College. S 16 was generally satisfied with his administrator preparation program, saying, "[T]he MCLA program prepared me for the actual work of the superintendency."

S 17 was a first-year superintendent of a mid-sized, suburban school located near the Connecticut border in Westchester County, New York with an enrollment of 3,200. He completed his administrator preparation program in 2001at Columbia Teachers College through a joint arrangement with Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES. The interview was conducted in person. Commenting on his program, he said, "I happen to think that the program is a very good one …. I think the program did a good job…. I think I was very fortunate to go through a program that was so practically based."

S 18 was a second-year superintendent at a school district in a rural district located near United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. The enrollment of the district was 925. He completed his administrator preparation program in 2002 at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and earned a doctorate from Seton Hall University in 2006. The interview was conducted in person. Indicating his satisfaction with the MCLA program, he stated, "I believe I was well prepared for leading in a fast paced culture of change. It is due to the program, due to my desire to learn and grow; but I had great professors at MCLA, and it is a great program, and I would recommend that program to anybody that is willing to work hard."

S 19 was a first-year superintendent of a rural school district located in central New York between Schenectady and Utica with an enrollment of 800. He completed his administrator preparation program at SUNY Plattsburgh in 2007. S 19's internship was completed through the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, with the credits being transferred to SUNY Plattsburgh. He completed the Future Superintendent's Academy through NYSCOSS and was enrolled in the doctoral program in educational leadership at Sage College. Commenting on his program at Plattsburgh, he said, "[H]ad I not enrolled at Sage and completed the FSA program, I would not have been prepared to be a superintendent."

Research Question 1

What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of university preparation programs for superintendents?

The first research question was designed to collect data on superintendents' perceived strengths and weaknesses of their administrative preparation programs. The interview question asked about perceived strengths, with follow-up questions concerning perceived weaknesses and finally asking about recommendations for improvement.

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The interviewees' responses varied with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of their programs. As in to Quirk's (2012) study, the responses of the interviewees were largely positive when it came to identifying the strengths of administrative preparation programs. S 6 stated, "[P]eople are asking me if this is the program I went to and is it one they should look at. I always encourage them to do so." S 7 had a very positive experience, saying, "Truth be known, I had a really, really strong, good experience at Fredonia. It was an excellent school." Though S 13 indicated that her entire program of study was very strong, she also echoed Dr. Ivan Katz (2006) by saying, "I am not sure if anything really prepares you in the terms of a class for being a superintendent. It's your combined experience that really prepares you for that." S 17 felt very strongly about his program, saying, "I happen to think that the program is a very good one …. I think the program did a good job… I think I was very fortunate to go through a program that was so practically based."

However, others had negative reactions to their superintendent preparation programs. For example, S 2, a 2nd year superintendent, emphatically responded "No, not even close!" S 2 went on to say "So from what I have seen so far, through my five years as an assistant principal and principal, it is not really the institutions that prepare you. It seems the best thing they can do is sharpen skills. But I don't really see from the people that I have worked with that the school [administrator preparation programs] prepared them to be leaders, and that is part of the challenge."

Several distinct themes emerged as the data were collated and analyzed. The themes related to the strengths of the program were the importance of active practitioners as instructors in the programs and the importance of practical, hands-on experiences as an instructional component of the program: theory versus practice. Two minor themes emerged: the preparation

programs appeared to be geared to building-level certification, and many of the interviewees experienced a significant time lag between certification and appointment to their first superintendency. With regard to identified weaknesses, most of those who responded to this question identified flaws that were related to coursework that they found to be lacking or perceived weaknesses in the required internships. Since these topics are the subjects of other research questions, and the perceived weaknesses will be addressed under those headings.

Practitioners as Instructors

Seventy-eight percent of superintendents favored using current school administrators as instructors in administrative preparation programs. The interviewees extolled the value and relevance of being taught by people who were currently serving in various administrative capacities or who were recently retired. They indicated that the ability to correlate theories with actual practice was invaluable to them. These findings corroborate the findings and recommendations of the Colorado Association of School Executives (2003), Levine (2005), Lawrence (2008), and Fessler (2011). All identified the importance of using practitioners as instructors and stressed the practical application of theory to real-life situations. The superintendents equated the use of active practitioners as instructors with professor credibility and overall program quality (Kowalski, Young, & McCord, Summer 2011, p. 20). Gober (2012) cited the need for authentic, relevant and applicable coursework. Tripses et al. (2013) identify the need for "practical know how."

Addressing the importance of being taught by active practitioners, S 1, a second-year superintendent in a large, suburban school district of 6,200 students, stated, "The fact that it was taught by active practitioners in the field, and not by professors who never had the job" made her program relevant. When asked why her program was as relatable to her role as a superintendent,

she said, "[T]here was a little more collaboration and cooperative learning, but for the most part it was very traditional lecture, but it was more about the discussion that you can have with the people around the content."

S 2 was more negative about his program. S 2 was the superintendent of a small, rural school district with an enrollment of 560 students. Even though his program was taught by practitioners, he indicated that he did not find much in the coursework. He said only one professor was relatable and that was because he took an interest in S 2. He also did not feel that his program adequately prepared him for his role as a superintendent.

S 5 had just completed his first year as superintendent at rural school district of 872 students. He indicated that his professors at the College of St. Rose "were former superintendents from large school districts with a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge. That was one of the key strengths." He went on to say that "there were current superintendents … an attorney … a current high school principal with a Ph.D." teaching his classes. S 5 identified the importance of using "real-life examples, real-life problems, real-life situations" in seeing the differences in "how one person handles a problem from somebody else," concluding that "sometimes there are no right answers." He indicated that the rich real-life experiences that his instructors shared made his program relevant.

S 6 had just completed his 3rd year as a superintendent of a mid-sized, suburban school district with an enrollment of 2,130. He went to the University of Rochester, which he said had "a reputation of being an ivory tower focused in a lot of theory and not a lot of practical experience." However, his program was taught by "current or recently retired superintendents or district-office-level administrators with a lot of experience." He indicated that the fact that his instructors were predominantly current administrators made his program relevant and applicable.

The professors would use real life examples and ask, "How would you plan for this? How would you try to work around this, through this, or over this one thing? -- whatever that may be.."

S 8 completed his program at Hofstra and was the superintendent of a mid-sized, suburban district with an enrollment of 3,400. He was in his second year as superintendent. He indicated that "another aspect that was beneficial [in his program] is that more of the professors were sitting superintendents. That just made it all that more practical. It wasn't just a college professor's theory; it was people doing the job or supervising people who were doing the job that definitely made the program beneficial." When asked why this made the program so beneficial, he stated that "I think you got the real-world nature of it – it's one thing to learn about professional development from a superintendent who had provided professional development for 10 to 15 years; it's another thing to be learning about professional development through a college professor who is researching professional development but hasn't been in the field in that capacity in quite some time or it at all."

S 12 was the superintendent of a rural school district with 820 students. She had just completed her first year as superintendent. S 12 lamented that "I got more out of their courses [the superintendents'] than I did from the professors' courses. The professors' courses tended to be more theory and philosophical discussion. The superintendents, what they said – well you knew this is what is going on. So I found their input much more helpful."

The next superintendent, S 14, was completing his second year at a rural school district of 850 students. He said that his was "a very pragmatic program pulling instructors directly from the field …. [M]ost of them were sitting principals or superintendents at the time." He continued that the program was "very pragmatic from the standpoint that you had individuals in the field;

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our assignments were based off of situations" that an administrator would face on the job. He concluded, "It was very pragmatic program, and that's what I loved about it."

S 16 was the superintendent of a K-8 school district with an enrollment of 329. He had just completed his first year. He stated that his coursework "wasn't taught by any practicing or past or present administrator. It was very much your philosopher's [academic's], if you will …. I don't feel that the answers were the same as if the answer would have come from live administrators who would have been in the administrative role [current school administrator]."

S 11 summarized the importance of using practitioners as instructors and of practice over theory. She was a 2nd-year superintendent of a mid-sized, rural school district of 2800-2900 students. S 11 attended Gannon University in Pennsylvania. Gannon tailored its program so that S 11's assignments could be directly correlated with the certification requirements she needed to meet in New York. This often meant that S 11 had to do additional assignments. S 11 not only discussed the use of practitioners, theory versus practice, but also compared her program to a nearby State University of New York program. The comparison is insightful.

> I have to tell you that sitting side-by-side with people that went to SUNY Fredonia who had academics as their professors, my negotiations class I remember sitting side by side, there were two people that completed their internship at the same summer that I did, and I remember sitting there talking to them about their negotiations class. [SUNY Fredonia class] was totally b*******. This guy [at Gannon] had us physically bring in contracts. He had us acting like if this was your contract and your teacher what would you want. He made us study that thing inside out and backwards and then argue as the teacher and sit across the table with him and negotiate out or sit across the table from our colleagues and negotiate out as if we were the teachers, and then he had to switch sides.

It was all very real. Every example was not a generalization and philosophical in

practice. It was philosophy matched with action and it was point-blank brilliant.

Practical Applications - Theory vs. Practice

The importance of administrator preparation programs having real-life practical

applications was made clear in the responses of those who were interviewed. Respondents

expected that their programs would provide them with what S 14 called the tools, the ideas and

resources necessary to tackle the job of superintendent of schools. S 15 commented that "you

cannot do this job without the theory, but the practicality of it is something that a number of

programs do not get enough into, and that is what the job really is and what you have to do with

the job." Theory without practical applications is just not relatable.

Research supports the importance of applied theory. Levine (2005) said that

administrator preparation programs should be a blend of practice and theory using "active

learning pedagogies such as mentoring, case studies and simulations" (p. 66).   The National

Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) called for "real-world job competencies" in

the preparation of school superintendents (p. 22).   Lawrence (2008) cited the importance of

"hands on experiences" and the "grounding of preparation in practice" (pp. 89, 106).

In his response to the question, S 4 discussed the importance of the practical aspects of

his program. S 4 was the superintendent of a mid- sized to large, suburban school district with an

enrollment of 5,000 students. He found that "practitioners that were also leaders of best practice

awesome; they impacted my career even now" and were invaluable for the success of his

program. When asked how the instructors related this, he said,

Well, their ability to share personal experiences as it relates to being a change agent in an institution and being able to articulate how you create new paradigms and institutions and not so much theoretical perspective but in a practical perspective.

When asked about the practical aspects of his program, S 4 said, "I mean these are people who were very up-to-date with their readings, on research-based readings, but who were able to make practical application of [the role of superintendent]." He said that "[i]n the admin training program, the really beneficial part was those particular leaders who were able to help us find best-practice paradigms and how to lead institutions to make those changes."

One application of theory being put in to practice was the use of case studies. S 5 discussed how "there might be a theory they were trying to teach, and they would provide an example and ask which theory it represented and ask you to focus your thoughts on how you would solve the problem." He also found the use of case studies beneficial. "So it is putting it in to practice – based upon theory or multiple theories of what you might do." S 7 agreed about the benefits of using case studies as practical applications of theory, stating, "…the preparation was exceptional in my mind …. [The instructors] were very down-to-earth and practical. I thought the scenarios [for] the different assignments we had were applicable to teach us about everything from budgeting to case studies for issues of the politics involved."

S 6 indicated that the coursework of his program was designed to be practical. For example, he found that professors using scenarios and role-playing was helpful, such as "this happened, and now what are you going to? What would be your reaction? What would your thinking be? How would you plan for this?" He continued by praising "the combination of grounded theoretical approach with very practical real-life applications by people either still in the field or recently retired."

S 6 related that he had one professor who was famous for starting each class with an "inbox" activity tied directly to what he would be covering on that particular day. He said it was

the kind of thing that you would be likely to find that you would have to deal with, but it

was also tied into whatever it was that we would be learning about. So if it was the law

course, the inbox would have something to do with whatever legal precedent we were

going to be talking about. If it was student safety or freedom of speech there was always

a real-life application to that.

The activities made the class relevant by applying what they were learning to practical activities.

S 8 lauded the practical, hands-on nature of his program. S 8 said, "I remember pretty

vividly there was one class that was more of a data-solving-problem class where … we were

presented with a problem and some data ad [and] we had to come up with data-driven solutions

to the problem." S 9 identified a collaborative model of learning where students were put into

situations to solve problems and learn how to work together as a team.   He indicated that "I

think it [collaborative learning model] allowed me to open my eyes and how to work within a

team …. [S]o learning how to navigate personalities, learning styles, working style was probably

the piece of it with the most benefit."

At SUNY Brockport, after completing his program with the tools from his assignments, S

14 had acquired the administrative skills that he would use in his later career. He said that "all of

the assignments, from entry plans to the experiences … I can't tell you during my first couple of

years as an administrator the number of times I went back to my portfolio saying I know I did an

assignment that would help me with this particular experience that I am currently going

through." He identified assignments such as creating entry plans which had practical

applications. The program was pragmatic, and he found that he continued to use his assignments in various administrative settings.

S 17 was completing his first year as superintendent of a mid-sized district with an enrollment of 3,200 students. S 17 said that he took his coursework through a collaborative effort between Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES and Columbia Teachers College. The program was designed by Tom Sobel, a former New York state education commissioner who was at Columbia. S 17 said, "It was run by people who knew how schools functioned and knew what future administrators would need, and they set it up that way." He continued, "The whole program was structured so that the courses we took were the ones that would have us ready; not just a selection of random courses knowing nothing about the school administrator." S 17 explained that his program was

> structured as two hours of class work followed by two hours of meetings run by two local superintendents – they called this a reflection period – where we would have the opportunity to do case studies and ask more hands-on, practical, everyday kind of questions that would take the coursework we were doing and essentially apply the theory but apply it to the daily work of a school administrator.

Discussing the benefits of putting theory into action, S 18 articulated the difference between learning a theory and the benefits of seeing that theory put into action in an actual setting from the perspective of a sitting superintendent or principal. He was completing his second year as the superintendent of a rural school district with an enrollment of 925. He stated, "I have a lot of theory, you're a well-read young man, but I have seen a lot of people with a lot of theory that can't make the theory translate in to action."   Extolling the importance of having instructors who are practicing administrators, he went on to say, "There is a baptism by fire, and

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you learn in the crucible of the challenge how to respond." This type of authentic learning can only come from those who have been in the field and understand the practical applications of the theories being taught in these programs.

S 19 was the first-year superintendent of a rural school district with an enrollment of 800. He indicated that "you can work in theory as much as you want, but the real-world scenarios and discussion you had in class is what I find myself reflecting on even today." When asked why it was important to put theory into practice and whether practitioners played a role, he said, "I think a combination certainly like someone who is well read and grounded in research around best practices but also someone who's been in the position themselves can speak with the voice of experience."

Two subthemes emerged during the course of the data analysis. Though not directly related to the specific research question, they do impact the responses provided by the interviewees and so must be placed in context for consideration.

Building-Level Certification

During the initial part of the interview, some of the participants indicated that there was an underlying issue that needed to be explored. This led to a series of follow-up questions regarding whether the person being interviewed felt that his or her program focused on preparation for an entry-level administrative position or adequately prepared them for their suprintendency. Of the 18 individuals included in the study, 39 % specifically mentioned that they felt their programs prepared them for their initial administrative positions but not specifically for the superintendency. More than half of the respondents, 56 %, indicated that their programs offered dual certification. In these programs, a candidate is working towards the School-Building Leader and School-District Leader certifications at the same time. Some of

these programs require 30 credits for the SBL and 36 credits for the SDL. Others have no additional coursework requirements beyond the initial 30 credits. There is no differentiation in the first 30 credits: candidates are taking the same coursework for both certifications. Therefore, it is evident that many of the respondents were of the opinion that their certification programs prepared them more for the building-level than the district-level certification.

When asked by the researcher if he felt that his program was more geared toward preparing building level leaders, S 4 responded "Yes, definitely." When asked if her doctoral program better prepared her for her superintendency, she replied, "By far."

S 9 was concluding his first year as the superintendent of a rural district of 860 students. He stated that his program provided "a good foundation. There are many things you learn on the job. There was a lot of focus on what a building should look like and how to be an instructional leader. The program helped me in my entry-level position." S 16 felt that his program "very much prepared me for the building level but only provided [me] the 30,000-foot view of the superintendency." S 18 said that

> I think it prepared me very well for the building level, and I say that because I walked
> into a building as an assistant [principal the next day after completing the program]. I
> was as well prepared as anybody to make the mistakes you make in your first couple of
> months on the job.

Many of those interviewed indicated that their doctoral programs had better prepared them for the duties and responsivities of the superintendency. Three of the superintendents, S 6, S 7 and, S 12, had attended the nine-credit Superintendent Development Program at SUNY Oswego. This yearlong program is designed to prepare superintendents by helping them acquire a districtwide perspective on the K-12 school organization (SUNY Oswego, 2016). One, S 15,

had attended the New Superintendents Institute sponsored by the New York State Council of School Superintendents. The Institute consists of five sessions throughout the year on topics such as school board relationships, finance and budget, leadership responsibilities, and ethics (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2016). S 19 attended a similar program from NYSCOSS called the Future Superintendents Academy. The Academy is a yearlong program for aspiring superintendents focused on communications, systems and planning, governance, finances, human resources, instruction, and the search and interview process (New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2016). These more advanced graduate-level programs were cited as being directly relevant to the individual's role as a superintendent as opposed to the initial certification program. The case studies, seminars, and projects were all authentic learning experiences directly correlating to the duties and responsibilities that these individuals were performing on a daily basis as superintendents of schools. When asked if he would recommend the program at SUNY Oswego, S 6 responded, "I don't know if I would go so far as to make it a requirement because I think it is a great idea. I think, if possible, if I was a Board [of Education], I would be looking for somebody who went to some kind of program like that." S 7 said of the same program, "So, for example, they taught us about the domains – political, organizational, instructional and strategic planning. I've sit back after seven months on the job now thinking, holy smokes – everything falls under the political domain – every move that I make I'm thinking strategy three steps." He continued that the program "was really productive: it was nine months."

These findings corroborate Levine's (2005) recommendation to create an educational leadership program similar to an MBA specifically geared to better preparing candidates to become superintendents of schools. A one-size-fits-all dual certification program cannot

adequately address both levels of certification, building and district, in a comprehensive and insightful way.

Time Lag Between Certification and First Superintendency

Of those interviewed for the study, 39% mentioned the length of time that elapsed from the point that they had completed their administrative preparation programs and when they first became superintendents. The respondents indicated that their first administrative position was usually an entry building-level or district-level position. Positions such as dean, assistant principal, principal, and director were the norm. As a result of this time lag, respondents indicated that they had difficulty relating what they originally learned in their administrator preparation programs with their current duties as a superintendent.   The respondents were initially certified between seven and 19 years before their first elevation to the superintendency. With most of the respondents in their first to third year superintendents, it is difficult to discern how much preparation came from their administrative preparation program and what influence their prior administrative experience had on their level of preparedness.

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Research Question 2

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What are the strengths and weaknesses of internships for superintendents?

The second research question was designed to collect data on the respondents' internship programs. The question asked the interviewees to describe the most effective feature of their internship programs, describe why this feature made the program so effective, and whether they had any recommendations to improve their internships.

As the data was analyzed, several themes emerged. One was how the internship was structured, the second was the importance of the role of the onsite intern supervisor, and the third was the level of involvement of the college or university.

This study found that a majority of respondents either commented favorably on their internship experiences or took a neutral stance. These findings are contrary to those of Tripses et al. (2013), who indicated that superintendents often found the quality of their internships lacking.

Structure of the Internship

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2007) called for field-based trainings, internships, and mentoring that stressed "real-world job competencies" (p. 28). Lawrence (2008) indicated that internships were an integral part of a successful and effective superintendent preparation program, calling it the "grounding of preparation in practice" (p. 106). This study corroborates those findings and places great emphasis on the structuring of the internship in order to maximize its effectiveness. A key to a successful internship is a host institution that is committed to making the internship a practical, real-world, relevant experience for the intern. A good, solid partnership between the intern and the host is critical.

A secondary component is the physical structure of the actual internship: when the intern actually does it. The two primary structures identified by the respondents were before and after school/during release times (lunch and preparation periods) or on-the-job training when the intern was actually working in the administrative position, performing all of the daily functions of the position to satisfy the internship requirements: a paid internship. King (2010) indicates that a paid internship is preferable because it permits the intern to focus full time on the internship as a learning experience (p. 133).

S 1 did her internship in her own district. She was serving as a department chair at the time, so many of her internship requirements were among her regular duties. She indicated that

I was in a building that was very progressive, and they were interested in building the

capacities of the teacher, so they were willing to give me all of those jobs that they knew

would need to be tackled for me to go on to a AP [Assistant Principal] or a directorship.

Referring to her school district's willingness to make her internship experience substantive, she

went on to say that "I know mine [internship] was very relevant," and when asked why, she said,

"I was very lucky that they [the school district] allowed me to do that, and I know that that was

not true for everyone that was in my program."

S 2 did not feel that his superintendent preparation program as a whole was beneficial.

When asked to confirm that he had not found it relevant, he stated, "Yes, other than the

internship, because you learn in the internship." S 2 was running the Alternative Education

Program for the Middle School which entailed both administrative and teaching duties. When he

was not teaching, he was performing the administrative components of that job and meeting his

internship requirements at the same time. His internship consisted of a building-level (Alt Ed

Program) and a district-level component to satisfy the requirements for both the building- and

district- level certifications. For his district-level internship, he worked in the central office with

the Director of Human Resources, who was, he said, "an old-school veteran." He indicated that

this experience was "very eye-opening stuff." He indicated that the "learning by doing, doing

district level things like going to teacher recruitment, hiring, interviewing… dealing with

[personnel] problems, … these were the skills that I found very useful." When a follow-up

question asked him to confirm that he had got more out of the internship than the classroom part

of his program, S 2 said, "[B]y far."

S 3 indicated that the convenience of doing the internship in one's own district can have

negative aspects. She was the Reading First teacher in her building and taught for most of her

day, fitting the internship in when she had finished her teaching duties. When asked about the structure of her internship and whether it took place during her lunch and prep periods, she said, "All of that. I also ran the summer reading program for that year." Her district was cooperative in setting up the internship, but her internship supervisor was a friend. She said, "I would have learned more …. I needed to go to a different place, but it prepared me for what I needed."   S 3 said that

> if the principal had something they wanted me to do he would say, 'Hey, take over this, do that.' I did 10 board meetings and presentations, which is stuff I would do as a reading coach anyway, but that was my internship.

> S 4 said that "the internship requirements were very Mickey Mouse. I think I was an assistant principal full time, and that fulfilled the internship requirement." His principal was his intern supervisor in the district. When the researcher said since his supervisor for the internship was his actual work supervisor "so I am sure that he was not in your office every day saying, 'How is it going?'" S 4 replied "Yeah, right."   S 4 said that the benefit he got out of his internship was actually working in the position on a daily basis, saying that it was "learn by fire."

As a school psychologist, S 5's internship experiences were unusual. His duties and responsibilities were not instructional but more student support services. He did his internship before and after school, extending his work day. He was not compensated for his internship. S 5 was working on both of his certifications at the same time. He did his internship with an elementary and high-school principals and in the pupil personnel office. He indicated that he did whatever was necessary and said,

At one point, the UPK [Universal Pre-Kindergarten] grant had not been written, and the

district wanted to start a UPK program, so this was an area they wanted me to work on,

and I had to write the grant and get the program off the ground as part of my internship.

He continued,

I think as far as the superintendent, preparing for the superintendent-ship, it was not very

beneficial aside from the UPK part. The rest was not super-beneficial in that it was strong

preparing me for the principalship perhaps, but not for the superintendent.

In discussing his internship, S 6 said that "10 years ago it [the internship] was a lot

looser." He did his internship in his own district as a teacher on special assignment. By design,

his district and the University of Rochester wanted him to have intern experience at both the

building and district levels. He said,

I ended up doing a year and a half in my district full time as a teacher on special

assignment, and I did part of the day as an assistant principal at our elementary school

and the bulk of the day working in the office of special programs dealing with special

education and literacy initiatives.

When asked on follow-up by the researcher whether the University of Rochester wanted his to

have experience at both the building and district levels, S 6 said,

Yeah, they found that they can't require it because so many districts won't be able to give

a meaningful district office experience to an intern. So sometimes interns are left to do a

project-based thing as opposed to getting into the real work, but the preference would be

to have both.

Continuing, S 6 said that the most beneficial part of the internship experience was "[j]ust the

real-world experience, having to figure it out and, as my internship was ending, the director I

worked under left the district, and I replaced her, so it sort of perfectly prepared me to be able to start in.

Exemplifying the importance of the cooperation between the host school and the internship experience, S 7 felt he was very fortunate, saying,

> We had a phenomenal superintendent at the time who now retired. I did my internship my whole spring semester. I spent five weeks in the elementary school, five weeks in the middle school, and finished the semester in the high school, and I got paid for it.

He indicated that he did not get much central-office experience during his internship. When asked why, he said that "minimal, we did not do much of that; I don't know why ….95% of it" was focused on the building level. S 7 asserted that

> [w]ell, it was full time. You really learned what it was going to be like to be a line principal day to day. The telephone calls, the facilitating meetings throughout the day, faculty meetings, being involved in the building schedule, putting out fires, small fires under the guise of the principal. It was just a day to day regular - but it was helpful to say 'hey – do you really want to do this or not?

He said that although he initially he just sat through meetings as an intern, the structure of the internship benefitted him because:

> At the elementary school, I designed the master schedule with the principal, at the middle school I acted a little bit more like a dean of students … but it was truly at the high school that … I really blossomed. I told the gentlemen I was working with that I want to work and take over this position as much as I can during the four weeks, so that's the way I approached it. By the end I was doing a lot of stuff. The secretaries would come to me for

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guidance, always under his [site supervisor's] watch to some degree, and then he actually

took some days off towards the end of the year, and I ran the building to some degree.

S 8 did three internships for his program at Hofstra. He said, "Hofstra likes to see you

doing two during the school year on the building level and then one on the district office, which

is usually during the summer." Hofstra also encouraged the candidates to get out of their comfort

zones by doing one of the internship outside their own districts. S 8 did one internship with the

high-school science department chair and one as an assistant principal. The third internship was

done as summer-school supervisor in a neighboring district. When asked why he found this

particular configuration beneficial, he said,

> I think you get a taste for [it] and get out of your comfort zone. The aspiring
>
> administrator tends to stay in their comfort zone and work just within their school district
>
> or department. This format gets you a little bit more global out of your comfort zone and
>
> into another district. You just got to experience things that you just wouldn't experience
>
> in typical employment. Being a secondary person but being able to supervise elementary
>
> teachers and summer elementary school helped me get a job back in my district
>
> supervising summer elementary school a few years down the road. The hardest thing for
>
> an aspiring administrator, especially if you want to get to the district level, is an
>
> understanding of K-12. Most of us come from high school, middle school, or elementary
>
> school, but we don't necessarily have the experience in the other two areas, whereas this
>
> internship allowed for the possibility of being exposed to something new.

The next superintendent did not even work in a public-school district but rather at a

Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCS) as a Model Schools Coordinator. S 9's

internship was done at a component district of the BOCES working on a project to implement an

instructional technology program for the district's teachers. Though this arrangement he met the requirements of his internship. He said that "I would say that what was lacking in my preparation for an entry-level position would have been a different piece because I was not really involved in that part of it [building operations]." When asked whether he would have had a different experience if he had worked in a traditional school district, he said, "I think so, yeah; I would say definitely."

S 11 did her internship during the summer. Her program consisted of both a building-level and district-level components. At the building level, she worked over the summer on creating the master schedule and checking and counting hours. "I created a freshman transition program. I worked on discipline – they had kids in summer programs …. I think the biggest part was understanding schedules and teacher clock times – creating schedules that fit with the contract for the teachers." For the district portion of the internship she "created and launched the Academic Intervention Services plan" required by the New York State Department of Education since 2001.

S 12 did her internship with her high-school principal. The district structured her schedule to provide her with a three-hour block of time during her teaching day. She also stayed after school from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. each day to work on the internship. She said that her internship focused on

> student discipline. I learned how to do scheduling for the upcoming school year, I participated in student hearings, I was part of all of the administrative meetings, I presented at faculty meetings, I did some studies for the superintendent on 3-8 data as well as 9-12 regents data and some data analysis. Whatever happened that given day with the principal I was involved in.

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When asked why this structure proved to be so beneficial for her, she said, "That is exactly what the job is, being, sitting there, and these are the things that are going to happen on any given day at any given time. So really just learning through experience."

S 13 also completed her program at Hofstra, so she also had a requirement for multiple internships. One building-level internship was under the supervision of an assistant principal, and two central-office internships were supervised by the assistant superintendent for instruction. When asked how her three internships were structured, she said,

> I did the district-level ones in the summer, so I was able to do more than I had to do. The building-level one I did during the school day. I had certain periods where I had to be with the assistant principal, and then I did after-school activities running those kind of things.

When asked to clarify how she structured the internship during the day, she said that "they were my prep and lunch, no release periods." S 13 said,

> The building-level was less effective than the central-office one. It is really because I ended up with the person that did discipline, and I mean it was OK, but I always felt that there was no real project that I could work on. I was just checking things off a list. In the central office it was really because I was given a project to see through to the end under the department of instruction and that was really very effective because I worked with many different people, and I was really able to lead it.

When asked to describe the project, she said,

> At the time … it was kind of getting all of the data and putting it into a usable form for the schools of the state tests …. I went back maybe five years and put that all in to a database that the teachers could use. I then spoke to the teachers and principals about it.

So I had to get the data, sort it, and supervise what was going into the data base correctly

and then work with the teachers. It was a good project.

New York State issues what is called an Internship Certificate. This certificate can be

issued to someone who is enrolled in a registered/approved, graduate teacher-education program

which includes an internship if the individual has completed at least 50% of the coursework

(NYSED - Certification, 2016). S 14 said,

I was very fortunate in the fact that I completed half of my coursework and I was able to

apply for a certificate of internship. I worked as an administrative intern/assistant

principal/athletic director. I was actually able to do my job and also the internship.

When asked what made his internship so effective he said,

I had probably the best experience that you can have because I basically had a year-long

internship. It was my job, [and] I was able to completely jump in. It wasn't like I taught

for the day and then at 3:30 I went and did a few hours of interning. I was able to live the

administrative life. I was able to do everything. I was able to take on projects assigned

by the superintendent. I was able to do the thing that allows you to learn most, which is

make mistakes in the position – to bounce ideas off of your colleagues and to be

completely engrossed in an internship. The other thing is that it wasn't summer school.

With all due respect to people that participate in programs in a summer school, it is not

the same thing; it's not the same experience. I was fortunate that I was able to do this

during the school year. I was being paid, I was still able to provide for my family.

Underscoring the importance of the relationship between the intern and the host district, he

continued, "I would highly recommend to all individuals that they get an internship during the

school year, but I also know that it's difficult because not every place offers paid opportunities like I had."

S 15 did his internship while he was teaching. He said,

Yes, it was very good here; the district does a lot I think in preparing future administrators. The principal redesigned our schedule [several people were doing their internships at the same time] so that we taught periods 1 to 6, and our lunch and the rest of the afternoon we were scheduled in the office.

He continued,

The principal involved us in everything. We processed referrals; we went to team meetings. Anytime an issue came up, he involved us in it to the point that when there was the need for a 30-day leave replacement in the office, the principal told the superintendent not to worry, he would get a sub for my class and I would cover it.

When asked for additional commentary on his interim assignment, he said, "We were in the advantageous position of having a district that wanted us there and were willing to rearrange our schedule during the day to make sure you had time to go through and do the different things you were doing."

At the time he did his internship, S 16 was a middle-school English teacher. He did his internship under the supervision of the assistant principal, indicating that "because it was a rather large building of 1,800 kids and at that point she oversaw the interns. There were a few of us that had done internships and anyone who did reported to her." He said, "I dabbled in student discipline, the master schedule, proctor scheduling, student supervision, things like that – true assistant principal work … very hands-on, very assistant-principal oriented." S 16 had indicated in the demographic survey that he felt that his internship had helped prepare him for his first

administrative position. When asked how, he said "My first job was actually a dean, so, yes, that very much did prepare me, the internship, for the position. I It was a perfect comparison"

S 17 was working as the chairperson of his school's English department when he did his internship. The position was not considered administrative, but much of the work he did counted towards the internship hours. As a department chair, he had one extra release period a day and did the remainder of his hours after school and evenings. He said, "I was teaching, but I had the release from one of my classes. I did not have my administrative certification yet. But the work I was doing counted towards the internship."

Once again emphasizing the importance of the relationship between the host institution and the intern, S 18 worked with his building principal to structure his schedule so that he could do his internship. He was a teacher and said,

> We had a block schedule, so I asked the principal if he could front load my schedule. I
> basically taught three each semester, and I asked that my three periods be in a row. So I
> was done teaching about noon. I did not take a lunch, so I would do my internship from
> noon to about 4:00 each day.

His first day as an intern was 9-11 and said, "We had a lot of learning to do as a system. We lost five firefighters from our town, so we got a lot of learning to do together as a system that was pretty valuable." He was able to do his internship in both an elementary and a high-school setting:

> My second semester, in addition to all those things, I did my internship in an elementary
> school because I wanted K-12 experience. So I did 9-12, K-6. I did some work in the
> district office on the budget trying to experience – but you never get budget experience

until you become a principal and do your own budget. I think that my internship

requirement was 400 hours but I did over 1,200 hours.

S 19 was not satisfied with his internship experience, indicating in the interview that "the

internship was not anything that I would say where any amount of learning occurred. It was more

checking off the hours of what we did." He did his internship as a summer-school principal.

When asked if he was being paid, he said, "I was not being paid as the summer-school principal.

I was the athletic director and was being paid for some summer hours for that, and the district

chose not to pay me as it was part of my internship." When asked specifically about the

experience and what he got out of his internship, he said,

> [N]ot much different from what I've been doing at school here. I was the dean of students
>
> and athletic director, and when I completed my internship, I became principal, and not a
>
> heck of a lot changed other than the title. But throughout the summer we got some
>
> scheduling experience and more of a primary leadership role with students and faculty.

The responses of those interviewed strongly reinforces the view that a successful

internship depends greatly on the support and cooperation of the host institution. S 1 stated,

"Your internship was really geared towards the things that your school district [host] … would

allow you to do" A strong collaborative partnership between the host school district and the

intern resulted in an experience which was meaningful and relevant. The benefits of a full-time

intern experience made it the preferred structure.

On-Site Supervision of Interns

The research conducted by CASE (2003), Levine (2005), Lawrence (2008) and Kaufman

(2013) identifies the importance of a strong mentoring experience for a new administrator. The

person in the host district assigned to supervise the intern and the internship can often be the

deciding factor as to whether the intern experience is positive, relevant, and beneficial. The respondents varied in their intern experiences. Some lauded their experience and credited the on-site supervisor. Others felt that they received little if any on-site support or described personality conflicts and philosophical differences with their on-site supervisors. They indicated that it was their own desire to have a positive experience that provided that experience.

Discussing the importance of the people she worked with in her internship, S 1 said, "My first principal said to me that their legacy to the district is the teachers they leave behind and to build the capacity of leaders." She continued, "We had an entire group of people in that cohort of young teachers, young mentor-intern program teachers, a dozen of us who were in a like situation, and now all of us are upper administrators, and five of us are superintendents." She credits this to the people who mentored her during her internship: "They just believed in us so much."

S 5 had a more negative experience. "Primarily, I was put in a situation where one of the principals had sort of checked out. So it left me without a lot of guidance." By "checking out," the on-site supervisor negatively impacted S 5's intern experience.

S 6's experience was both positive and negative. Although his elementary and high-school internships were largely positive, his middle-school experience was not. He said,

> I didn't match good with the middle-school principal and her dean. It was more an ideal thing by the way; great people, but it was just an approach. We didn't click. It was her building. I just would have approached things in a different manner or style. I am not saying I was better off or worse off; it was just different.

S 6's experience is indicative of the fact that personality conflicts and philosophical differences can negatively impact the internship.

When asked if she thought she would have gotten the same out of her internship if it had been supervised by other people, S 11 unequivocally said, "No." When asked why, she said,

It was the jobs that they gave me. He literally had me planning opening day. I literally walked in, and he said, 'Administrators are called on to be collaborators. It is July 8th, and I am telling you to plan opening day and you must be collaborative and prove it to me. Go!' Do you know how hard it is to get a hold of teachers during the summer? He forced me, it was delightful. He taught me things I never would have known …. He knew every experience that I had to have to be successful in this job – to see beyond my tunnel vision. It was freaking brilliant.

S 12 commented that

I think that it's important to have somebody that is going to support you. He [her principal supervisor] was very good at asking, 'Now what would you do?' A couple of times – he allowed me to do – and on reflection now – I realize it might not have been the most effective way to do it – but he let me figure it out for myself. But also, allowing conversation and discourse about how to handle situations. So I think it is important to have somebody like that.

Sometimes it is not the person that the intern is paired with but the position that person holds that negatively impacts the internship. Not every administrative function is all-encompassing. Some are very compartmentalized, and that can negatively impact the internship. S 13 said,

The building one [internship] was less effective than the central- office one. It is really because I ended up with the person that did discipline, and I mean it was OK, but I

always felt that there was no real project that I could work on – just checking things off the list. I did that, and that, and that.

When specifically asked whether he felt his internship experience was more positive because of his principal, S 15 said, "I think it was more positive because of my principal …. We were fortunate to have a district that gave us carte blanche and opened you up for everything." The principal "got us involved in stuff around the district. Anytime there were bigger meetings going on, he would bring us to them, so we really had a very good internship."

S 16 credited the assistant principal who supervised his internship with the success of the program. He said, "I think in that case the person made the internship. Her college experience – she had been an assistant principal for 18 years at this point – so I think she gave me what she felt that I needed to know based on doing the job.

S 18 encapsulated the importance of having a strong mentor during the internship experience. He said had three different assistant principals throughout his internship, and they were:

Just phenomenal, phenomenal administrators good with children. They had that balance and knew how to push and pull. They used carrots and sticks and sometimes hit you with the carrot. They knew how to treat children, especially at the high-school level. They knew that sometimes the most challenging children were challenged themselves by factors that were beyond their control, and that is why they were challenging. They just never gave up on a kid as a bad kid. They were just great role models. I thank them for all of the mentoring throughout my teaching career as well.

Role of the College/University

King (2010) contends that internships should reflect true collaboration between the colleges/universities and the school districts. Citing the need to integrate core content and philosophy with the field experience, King indicates that this requires close collaboration between the two. These closer collaborations will also result in greater financial commitments being required of both institutions to make the internships successful. Therefore, in times of tight budgets this may not always be practical (King, 2010). This was not an interview question but developed as a follow-up question asked during the course of the interviews to provide clarification concerning the intern experiences of the superintendents.

The issue of support, or lack thereof, and cooperation of the college or university was a concern for many of the respondents. Many of those interviewed felt that the colleges/universities' involvement was perfunctory at best: just checking off list of competencies or completing required portfolios. Though the college/university signed off on the internship plan, the plan for the most part seems to have been developed by the host school district and the intern candidate.

> When asked to discuss the involvement of the College of New Rochelle, S 1 said,
> They came and talked to myself and my mentor at least once, maybe twice, and honestly
> it was not a field practitioner. It was a professor, so my mentor, who happened to be my
> AP at the time, was completely unimpressed with any conversation that they had. It
> wasn't guided very well by the university.

S 2 also attended the College of New Rochelle, and he indicated that "I made a presentation to them: What I was going to do. Who I was working with. What his role was. What his credentials were. And they said fine.

S 5 indicated that the College of St. Rose was not really too involved in his internship planning, preparation, or experience. When asked during the interview who structured the internship, he replied, "I think the supervisor of my internship, the district level administrator, I feel helped more than anything."

S 6 attended the University of Rochester. He said,

I know it is a lot more in depth now … how they supervise the interns now. When I went

through it more than 10 years ago, it was a lot looser. But it was more of the person who

was overseeing my internship periodically checked in with my principal and the district

administrator, and then there was a wrap-up meeting. But the quantity of work required

now is different than it was …. [I]t beefed up considerably.

When asked about the involvement of SUNY Oswego in the internship, S 9 said,

I think we had seminars. Maybe five or six where you presented to a group about a topic.

You were talking about what you were doing in your internship and rolling it into kind of

a presentation. Sometimes they would bring somebody in. But the real interaction was

with who your internship supervisor was.

When asked about their involvement in the internship, he replied, "Heavily involved, I would say. They were probably weekly reports, so we would have a meeting where we would sit down and talk about progress." Other than a few site visits, S 9 indicated that he crafted his internship "pretty much with the support of the [site] supervisor. Because it was not a typical AP-type position."

S 11 identified the lack of oversight of her internship as a major weakness of her program at Gannon University. She was adamant, stating,

I think the over-sight of my internship, I think that was the one puzzle piece that I

saw...as being too loose in its oversight. …I can't do my job and the academic adviser's

job too. I can't. I'm offering and affording a person an opportunity to be sitting here

interning with me. The check and connect - the outcomes - that really needs to rest on the

hands of the person who was hired by the college and who is getting a paycheck. They

need to make it as simple and outcome-based as possible, and I really feel like they

check[ed] in with me like twice my entire internship.

S 15 attended SUNY New Paltz. When asked about whether New Paltz was significantly

involved in his internship, he said,

Not a lot. We needed to fill out our logs and tell them what we were doing and have our

meetings and stuff, but that was about it. He [intern supervisor] came once to visit, and

then we got switched to another adviser, and she came down once just to walk around

and see what we were doing.

When asked if there was anything else, he said,

Yes, we did seminars once a month. There were eight of them, and you had to attend four

or something like that – that's how I remember it. I mean to tell you … that was so long

ago, and it all kind of blends in.

S 16 attended MCLA and commented that

[t]hey had a coordinator that I think came out twice: once at the beginning of the

internship to kind of spell out what I planned to do. I had to make a proposal. And they

came out at the end once I had submitted my hours to culminate the experience like a

final exit interview. But we had very minimal contact. We communicated through e-

mail at that point, but, yes, they did come out twice.

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S 17 attended Columbia Teachers College through a program at the BOCES. He said,

> I know we had monthly visits from a mentor from the program. She would meet
> with me individually and then meet with me and the principal together.
> Essentially making sure that – I remember that the internship was structured in
> that there was something like five different categories that you had to make sure
> that you had hours devoted to each of the categories – whether one was the
> political realm, or one was the academic realm, and one was the community
> interaction realm – that kind of thing – different segments of the job the internship
> had to be devoted to. There was someone that would come meet with us monthly
> to be sure that the hours were being divided up appropriately so that I was getting
> the experience in all of these different areas.

S 19 did his internship through MCLA but completed his administrator certification at
SUNY Plattsburgh. S 19 lamented that

> it may be different now, but there was not a lot of oversight from or even a
> presence of the college. What I found as a principal in the building is that the
> greater the presence of supervisors from the university, the stronger the
> experience. When I was in Amsterdam as the principal, the student-teacher
> supervisors from the college actually invaded the school. They were there every
> day with the interns, and I think it was a richer experience for them because they
> were being mentored and frequently contacted by their supervisors. I know that is
> not something that would be very practical for an administrator program, but
> maybe more oversight and discussion and feedback would have been better.

It is evident from this commentary that colleges and universities need to do more to improve their oversight of the field experiences of their administrator preparation programs. A strong intern supervisor from the college who works collaboratively with the intern and a strong, invested on-site supervisor lead to a relevant and rich internship experience.

Recommendations to Improve the Internship

Having lived through the experience, the respondents were in a position to make recommendations on how to improve their internship experiences. It should be noted that not all of those interviewed made a suggestion or a recommendation. Some were very satisfied with their internships, both in structure and the intern and on-site supervision.

> S 1 recommended
>
> organizational and people skills – dealing with people who are angry and are never going to be rational …. I am not sure how you would build that into a program, but at the superintendent level, as I am sure you're aware, you deal with absolutely irrational people and to have a course or internship or something where we are taught how to deal with that without internalizing, or without coming back at someone in a negative connotation. I think something along those lines.

S 4 recommend multiple frames of reference "both at the building level and district level …. I think that only providing people with one experience or one frame is a detriment …. [I]t is important for administrators to have as broad a frame of reference as they can."

S 5 and S 12 recommended more time interning in the business office. S 12 indicated that "I would say the weakness was the finance and budgeting." When asked to elaborate on her comments, she said, "At the principal level, you're only involved in your building-level budget,

so the internship did not expose me to anything beyond the teachers, the building-level budget…

but I wasn't dealing with the entire district budget, just dealing with a very small portion."

Respondents also indicated in discussing the structure of their internships that full-time/full-immersion internships were more beneficial than split-day/summer internships. They generally indicated that there was a direct benefit to being compensated for the internship so that the entire focus of the intern could be on the desired outcomes stipulated in the intern plan. Also, recommendations were made with regard to the involvement of the colleges/universities in oversight of the programs. The respondents made the following recommendations.

In general, the respondents found their internships to be effective. Some attributed this to the host school district, others to the on-site supervisor, and some to their own determination to get the most out of the experience. Almost all felt that colleges and universities needed to be more directly involved in planning, coordinating, and supervising the internships.

Research Question 3

How did superintendents perceive their on-campus courses?

The purpose of this question was to determine how the superintendents perceived the coursework associated with their administrator preparation programs. The interviewees were asked which courses they took were most and least effective and why. Respondents were also asked, as a follow up question, to identify whether it was the content, who taught the class, or how the class was taught.

The literature review indicated that a perceived weakness of administrator preparation programs as a whole was the lack of or insufficient coursework in the areas of business and finance. One of the most important roles of a superintendent is that of Chief Executive Officer. As such, the superintendent is responsible for all facets of district operations and governance

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including the financial and budgeting aspects of running a large organization (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005, pp. 6-7). In larger districts, the superintendent is responsible for supervising the district's business operations. In smaller districts, the superintendent may actually be the person responsible for these functions on a daily basis. In either scenario, the superintendent is responsible for the fiscal wellness and financial stability of the district. Brederson and Kose (2007), Lawrence (2008), Santiago-Marullo (2010), Fessler (2011), Kowalski et al. (2011), Gober (2012), Quirk (2012) , and Tripses et al. (2013) all identify the importance of more in-depth, rigorous coursework in finance, budgeting, and district operations.

Case (2003), Kowalski et al. (2005), Santiago-Marullo (2010), Fessler (2011), and Kaufman (2013) also identify a need for coursework in board-of-education/superintendent relations, interpersonal skills, and politics in general. The CASE study identified these as "real skills" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 9). The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality referred to them as "real-world job competencies" (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007, p. 28).

This study's findings agreed with the research discussed in the literature review. Forty-four percent identified a finance business class (this could include budget, finance, personnel, negotiations, etc.) was the most beneficial and effective class that they took. Thirty-nine percent of the superintendents indicated that their law class was most relevant. Other classes that were mentioned were reflective practice (11%), community building (11%), the four frames (11%), and leadership and administration (11%). Others identified a data course, a course on teacher observation, and a curriculum course as most effective.

S1 completed her preparation program in 1996 prior to the Annual Professional Performance Review legislation. When asked to identify her most effective course she said,

We had a course in observing educators, which I think was kind of ahead of its time….[T]hat was probably the most beneficial one there….[T]he observation piece and the utilization of…scripting and the ability to take data down in a vacuum and look at data and …just factual, observable evidence. I think that was way ahead of its time, and it certainly served me well through every step of my career.

S 1 felt that the content and the way it was taught were the reasons the course was so beneficial.

[T]he way it was taught was we observed, we scripted, we used each other as the teachers of the lesson that we observed, and we gave feedback. I think it was probably the best course that we took for all of those reasons.

S 2 indicated that "School law – I always found that impactful because it took away so many gray areas in terms of what the law says you can do and can't do and shouldn't do and should do." He felt that "[j]ust the content of it. The law is the law and what the commissioner ruled, and what the court system said. These were practical things that you should know and go do."

Though no specific course stood out, S 3 provided a different perspective on his experience. He said,

No, you know why? Because even if I didn't feel like I was being quite engaged in the course, I was in there in that class with other like-minded people who would discuss what's going on in their school. So you are always learning from their war stories, so I think anytime you get a group of educators together and they start talking about work, you can always decide what works well and what doesn't work well. So, no, I just felt like every minute counted, and I really don't remember anything standing out as being just a fluff class or a waste of time.

S 6 concurred, stating, "I don't know that I would say any one course stood out. I think there were things about each of the courses that were memorable."

Identifying a course on leadership, S 4 explained that it "focused on practical applications of how to create systemic changes in an organization." He continued, "at the time [2000], the internet and technology were brand-spanking-new, so how do you get an organization to embrace technology?" This was a class project in the course, "but what he [the professor] taught was the notion of collective leadership and how you work with teachers and staff to do collective change versus your traditional top-down change." S 4 credited "the experiences of the person teaching [the class] and the content – it was real-world content" – as the reasons the class was so beneficial and impactful for him. When asked if any other courses stood out, he replied, "Law." When asked why, he said, "Because you usually live in that damn school-law book every day of your job."

S 5 indicated that his classes in school law and personnel stood out as the most beneficial because of the content. His background is in psychology, he explained.

> In particular, as the school psychologist or even assistant principal or principal, you don't get a lot of experience in personnel or human resources, so to speak …. [T]he same was with school law. You're very sensitive about making sure you're doing things appropriately and legal – understanding the nuances of school law. That is why I think it stood out to me because of the importance of it.

He continued "I think the courses were appropriate and effective in preparing you with regards to giving me a theoretical background along with putting theory in to practice." When asked to explain his answer, he said,

There's discussions [in class] that require having to work in collaborative groups, and listen to others, and think about your practice. To think about how you would make a decision, that was helpful. A lot of times, for me, I had a problem in my mind, and hearing other people say, well I would do this or that – it opened my mind a bit.

Citing the use of case studies, S 7 remembered a class that used a reading assignment, a case study, as the foundation of each class. He said, "The questions at the end of the reading focused on how you would handle it [the situation], how would you approach that [a solution]? That is what made it beneficial to me." S 7 also indicated that there were two finance courses that he felt were beneficial, saying, "I remember that it was like speaking Greek to us where you learn about interest rates and all that because as a teacher you don't know anything about that stuff. So, the finance, as much as I hated it was pretty eye opening." When asked what made the course stand out, he said, "It was more the content. The professor was very good - he was dry, but he was a good man. He was very serious in his approach."

S 8 felt that three courses stood out. One was a course on reflective practice, one a data course, and another on the four frames of Bolman and Deal. Commenting on the reflective practice course, he said, "The whole gist of the course was learning, reflecting, and adapting. As I moved up through the ranks over the years that has become critically important." Discussing his data course, S 8 said, "I remember pretty vividly there was one class that was more a data problem-solving class where, I don't remember what the problem was, but we were presented with a problem and some data, and we had to come up with a data-driven solution to the problem." He said the course on the four frames of Bolman and Deal was significant because

you always think in the four frames – you have human resources, symbolic, structural, and political. Whenever you approach a problem, you want to think about which frame

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the problem is. It's just a great course. Fast forward fifteen years, and I've never forgot

that.

When asked if it was the content, the professor, or the way that the course was taught that made

it so effective, he said, "Probably all of the above. We were pretty fortunate that we had

excellent professors who had worked in the field. I found the work very practical and applicable,

so there was that relevance aspect to it."

The Fundamentals of Administration and a law course were identified by S 9 as being the

most beneficial and impactful that he took at SUNY Oswego.   The Fundamentals of

Administration

> was the initial course. It's called "Fix the World," and it was basically you got your first
>
> introduction to group work by solving a problem for a local school district. So we're
>
> going to throw you right in, and we're going to pick a group of people with different
>
> personalities and kick it in to high gear. You had to learn how to work together – that was
>
> the major learning in the course.

He indicated that the cooperative learning aspect of that course made it beneficial. The other

course was the law course "[b]ecause that's an area that as a teacher you don't have any

experience in really. So just really exposing yourself to that information...."   He continued, "I

guess it is an entirely different topic in I which I had no experience." He said the content made

the course useful.

S 11 found her negotiations course and her budgeting course to be the most effective.

Having moved from a small district of 250 to a large district of 2,900, she said,

> I was learning from people that were in the City of Erie school district with 13 to 16
>
> thousand students, so they were teaching that to us from that big bubble. I am not sure

that without those classes and helping me understand the different divisions that I would

have understood [them]…. I understood how to do small….[W]hen I negotiated [in a

small district], I went down the hall and knocked on my union leader's door. Now [in a

larger district] I have to go through a dog-and-pony show.

She indicated that it was because the "program would only allow people who are in the position

they were attempting to prepare you for" to teach the classes that the classes were so effective.

When asked to identify her most effective class, S 12 said, "[I]t was community building,

making your building into a community of leaders. I enjoyed that course. I also enjoyed school

law. Those would probably be the two most beneficial." Discussing why, she said,

Well, school law was just intriguing and very helpful, and I've always been interested in

law anyway. That was a fun course for me, and then the other one, I just really had a

strong interest in how do you build collaborative things among your teachers, and how do

you build a community of teacher leaders to support you and your role as building

leader?

Explaining what made the courses beneficial. she said, "The school law one was a lot of case

studies and discussion. The other one was group projects, proposals, and some lecture. There

were a couple of books to read for both courses, so I would say a more traditional approach."

S 13 identified a course in reflective practice as the most beneficial for him at Hofstra.

He said,

We actually took a course on reflective practice….[Y]ou had to do this project with a

student that kind of annoyed you…a kid that really pushed your buttons. You had to

really analyze that to see what about that kid was really pushing your buttons. Very often

you found out that it was really something about you that was reacting. So getting to that

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theories in use and espoused theories – how are they different –you had to really analyze

that….[I]t was really great because after a while you realize that you are being unfair to

the kid. I It really changed the way I thought and has had a profound effect on my

administrative approach as a superintendent.

S 13 said that the underlying theme of his CAS program was "you need to be reflective about

what you do, and you don't really do anything without thinking it through. So that was the core

of the program."

S 14 completed all three of his certifications at Brockport. Generally, he found his

coursework to be very beneficial and relevant. He indicated that he "had a fantastic instructor

who taught several of the classes in the business cohort. I very much appreciated his leadership

from a digital stand point…. [He provided] just fantastic resources." He continued by saying,

"My legal course was fantastic because once again they were from a very pragmatic standpoint.

These are the legal issues that you are going to be dealing with consistently in the school

district….The personnel course also went in to negotiations:…very beneficial....The instructional

leadership course, program management, and instructional leadership course, was fantastic."

At SUNY New Paltz, S 15 indicated that the first course he took was called Leadership in

the Millennium. It was a week-long course in which different administrators from the building

level to central office were brought in to meet with the students and answer questions. S 15 said,

I thought it was a great experience. It was great exposure to a lot of different things; the

ability to meet different people in different administrative positions….I thought that was

a great first course to take for me to really just get an understanding of what

administration was, what the process was.

He remembered another course

> where you are required to do a full vision and understanding of your district. That was a
>
> great course. There was a lot of practical stuff in there that you had to dive into. [The
>
> professor] gave you the theory end of it but also really took the time to go over the
>
> practicality of the job and what your responsibilities were going to be in the different
>
> roles.

Continuing, he said, "I think it was a good balance between the theory end of it and the

practicality of the responsibilities of the different positions you could potentially take in a

district." S 15 also indicated that his law course was beneficial, saying, "I think you really get to

understand why cases evolve the way they did, and how they end up the way they did, and what

are the pitfalls of decisions you make. I think those are important things for an administrator to

have." When asked why his law course was beneficial, he attributed it to the instructor, saying,

"She was phenomenal. [New Paltz] really work hard to get really good people to teach that

course."

> S16 identified a course in building collaborative communities as the most beneficial. He

said it

> was probably the one that stuck out to me as the most effective and probably the most
>
> transferable to every role I have including dean, principal, or superintendent. It was
>
> based on the idea that whether you are building a PLC or a character committee, how do
>
> you really get the community or entire building truly vested in the initiative or the idea
>
> not just pro-forma participation?

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The course was so impactful because of the person who taught it.

> It was taught by an old academic, someone who really knew culture and more of a
>
> sociology background….The readings were not your traditional readings;... they were
>
> very gender based, culture based, poverty based – very much on cultural views. First,
>
> when you look at the reading list, you ask, What does this have to do with school?, but
>
> truly it was something I found very helpful.
>
> S 17 also discussed the four frames, saying that.
>
> I remember the course that people complained about the most at the time. It was the most
>
> rigorous, and it was one that dealt with politics and culture in schools….The textbook
>
> was the Bolman and Deal book. I It was dense. I remember people complaining about it,
>
> and it was challenging, but in terms of things that stayed with me and things that seemed
>
> relevant today.

He continued by saying, "I just made the transition of being in one culture for 23 years and

moved to another one, and in terms of getting to know it and moving slowly to understand the

culture and the politics, that was extremely valuable."

S 18 said that "curriculum management and staff development and human resources"

were the two courses that were most beneficial. Curriculum management was beneficial because

"it really introduced me to contemporary curricula as well as postmodern theory. It was really

challenging to what we do." Discussing his staff development and human resources course, he

said,

> It was really dial-a-dating. People are the reason we do this and how you treat
>
> them….They [the professors] just worked to have us understand the value of
>
> communication in everything we do – whether it's communication in written form, using

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all caps to yell at someone, or whether it's sitting in a room and how you physically

communicate with a family, or it's how you greet someone when they walk in the

door,…you can learn things, but it's wonderful when you have someone showing you.

How you greet somebody and how you receive them – that's the start of the conversation.

The second part of the interview question asked the superintendents to identify the

courses that were most ineffective and indicate why. Many of them could not identify a specific

course. Some could not remember the course but remembered the reason that they had a negative

experience.

S 1 recalled a class in cooperative learning that she felt was

wonderful, but that is a teacher-based course which, from an administrative point of view,

works in a school district where you want to teach that, you want to give that as a

pedagogical tool, you want to supervise it, but I felt that the course just did not prepare

you for the task of being a school leader.

S 4 took a course in geriatric learning. "It was an adult-learning course. It was geared towards

geriatrics, and for obvious reasons that was least impactful on my work because I don't work

with geriatric folks."

Calling it a "blow-up course," S 7 could not remember the name of the class but vividly

recalled that the instructor did not take it seriously. S 7 said,

He gave an eight- to ten-page paper and said, 'I'll see you in three weeks.' You got two

weeks to work on it and then we would sit down and talk about it. I It wasn't productive

…. We were paying money for this….We wanted to get as much out of it as we could.

S 9 indicated that his course entitled the School Principalship was the least effective. He

said, "We had three and a half instructors, and they all had to put their opinion in. So it wasn't

the content of the course; it was the instructors themselves." When asked if the instructors were

stepping over each other, he said, "You've got it …. To put that much ego in one room, think of

what happens."

Recalling a course called Schools as an Institution, S 12 said, "I think it was only because

of the professor. He was a true professor, and he had us…doing an analysis and comparison of

Walmart's structure as compared to a school district. I did learn a lot about Walmart."   When

asked if the professor was a true academic, she said, "Yes, and we read his book too."

S 13 said,

I cannot even remember the name of the course, to be honest with you, but there was

one….It was really the professor – I don't even remember the name of it because it was

so inconsequential to me. I just forgot all about it. But it was schools in society as an

elective, and you had to go and look at schools throughout the country from newspaper

reports and report on it. It was just ridiculous….I just hated the course; I didn't see any

value in it, to be honest with you.

When asked to explain, he said,

I think it was the professor – he was very inconsistent. I think it was really him. I It could

be an interesting course, if you are thinking about schools in other parts of the country

and how they are portrayed in the press, it could be very interesting, but no, it wasn't.

Interestingly, S 16 felt that his school-law courses were the most ineffective. He said,

I found both not helpful. In the end it was dry, and the MCLA course – it was dry – it was

literally something out of a very dated course – not even the school law textbook –

education law, citing law, and in the end always referring to the answer. When in doubt

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consult your attorney. I felt it wasn't interactive – it was very much lecture but not even a very interesting or applicable lecture.

Several of the superintendents identified shortcomings in the course offerings, especially when it came to business and finance. They did not necessarily identify the courses as effective or ineffective but found their programs lacking in this area.

S 5 identified a need for more coursework in finance and budgeting, indicating that he still "has a lot to learn about the business aspect and budgeting." S 6 indicated that he had only one course on budget and finance and the instructor "who does that work is outstanding, but…he is so specialized in it and he is so good that the rest of the professors don't spend as much time on integrating the budgeting practices into the rest of the content." S 12 also identified shortcomings in her coursework on budget and finance, saying, "I am not sure how you would improve it, but you learn about the different funding sources and where the money comes from, but how do you put it into a class when your district is in financial distress?" S 14 felt that his program lacked the "beef" in the area of preparation for fiscal operations. He said that "I wanted to stand toe-to-toe with the school business administrator knowing that they were pulling the wool over my eyes and be able to fire back at them." He felt ready from an instructional standpoint to be a superintendent but felt inadequately prepared with regard to the finance side of the job, so he went back to school to get his School District Business Leader certification. S 18 recommended having "more instruction on fiscal management of schools."

It is clear from the superintendents' responses that courses in law and budget and finance were the most effective. Courses in board and community relations, reflective practice, and the four frames were also cited. The primary reasons were the instructor and the content. The superintendents agreed that the person teaching the course directly influenced their satisfaction

level. As can be seen from subsequent comments, even the most interesting course was rendered ineffective if the right person was not teaching it. Very few cited the content as a reason that they found the course effective or ineffective. It is also evident that more courses in budget and finance are necessary to adequately prepare superintendents for an era of reduced state aid and a 2% property tax-levy limit in New York State.

Research Question 4

Do superintendents believe that their superintendent preparation programs promoted the acquisition of skills in problem analysis, organizational ability, written communication, oral communication, judgment, decision making, etc.?

The role of the superintendent is multi-faceted. The role has evolved from teacher-scholar, to manager, democratic leader, and applied social scientist (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005, p. 3). These roles require specific, specialized skill sets. Henry et al. (2006) identified these skill sets as leadership/vision/strategic, thinker/problem solver, communication, interpersonal skills, and character. Bredeson and Rose (2007) stated that legal matters, political issues, and facilities management often overshadow the important role of the superintendent as instructional leader. The ECRA Group (2010) identified the roles of manager, communicator and instructional leader as primary for the superintendent. Research Question 4 asked how well the interviewees felt that they were prepared for their positions as superintendents with regard to skills acquisition in the areas of problem solving, organizational ability, communications, judgment, and decision making. No specific themes emerged for this question as each superintendent had a unique experience in skills acquisition and readiness to assume the position.

S 1 did not feel her program prepared her well in any of the areas. In the area of problem analysis, she said, "That is not something we really talked about at all." About organizational abilities, she said,

> Definitely not system-wide thinking at all. I didn't start to encounter anything along those lines until my doctoral program. As far as personal organization, Franklin Covey's *7 Habits* – our professor kind of interspersed it into the curriculum even though it was not part of the curriculum. He wanted us to sharpen our saw. He wanted us to really think of ourselves as a whole package, as a whole human being.

When asked about skills acquisition in the area of written and oral communication, she said,

> This is going to sound crazy. This was a master-level program, and we hardly wrote. We wrote up a couple of observations and made a few presentations, but a lot of the courses were very traditional, so it was teacher directed….So I would say very limited.

She concluded her comments on judgment and decision making by saying,

The coursework I am taking for my doctoral program significantly delved into that. Nineteen years ago they really weren't talking about that kind of decision making….We really didn't do a whole lot of that decision making and weighing different aspects of things in the coursework.

S 2's answers were short and to the point. There was little dialogue when it came to Research Question 4. All of his answers were "No" with no explanation or follow-up. His only comment was about written communication, when he said, "Yes, I remember one professor who helped me understand the importance of writing and how to write to the general public. He started me on that road."

About the skill set of problem analysis, S 3 said,

We did do a lot with scenarios and also people bringing in their issues. Everybody was very confidential about when we would be discussing other districts that they are from. So I think a lot of that was very helpful, just the war stories again. I need to keep going back to that, but that is where we learn the best, I think, from different scenarios.

When asked if there was any case study usage, she replied, "Oh, yes, we did. I think the school-law class was awesome too. I really enjoyed that, and there we did a lot of case studies." She said about her organizational abilities, "I was more organized after taking the classes, but I don't know if that is the case. I'd have to say no. I've got binders with everything in it that I need, but I think I was doing that before." S 3 continued talking about how her program impacted her communication skill sets, stating, "Very much, and that is mostly through what they shared as samples. I think that was very helpful." When asked in what specific way, she replied, "I think it was just the professionalism that was modeled for us through the writings and the materials you need for your toolbox." When the researcher asked if it was the professors modeling or critiquing the work, S 3 said, "A lot of critiquing, because I just pulled out a notebook the other day where I received some critique, constructive criticism." Discussing judgemnt and decision making, she said,

It's interesting that you should say that because I just did not tenure a teacher and when we got right down to the brass tacks of it, I told him and his union rep that I can't teach you good judgment. I can teach you to write a lesson; I can teach you how to communicate with parents; but I can't teach you good judgment, and you lack good judgment. So I don't think good judgment is something you can teach. I certainly think we learn more in our lesson as things are happening and you reflect upon it and you

say, "Oh, I should have done that differently, I should have done this differently." But hearing those war stories and you go, "Oh, that's how you handle that, I understand now." So I guess I would have to say that judgment-wise in making those tough decisions, they did come out of that, and that is mostly from open discussions about real-life cases that are happening in the classroom and district.

S 4 did not feel that his program at Brockport adequately prepared him in the area of problem analysis, organizational abilities, and communications. He said, "I am not sure that it did. My doctorate definitely, but I am not sure that Brockport did." When asked to explain, he stated, "The doctorate was all about decision making – effective decision making. An aspect of that was problem analysis." There was "a lot of coursework on it: OK what is really the problem here? Is this a symptom or a problem? – getting to the actual problem, the true problems themselves and addressing those versus the periphery problems." He indicated that "we did not have any organizational training" and that he completed his program prior to the mass use of the internet or e-mail, so "I remember having to provide memos that I had written as part of my portfolio."

Having a background of owning a small business and being a school psychologist, S 5 had a different perspective on his readiness with regard to the skill sets outlined in the question. When discussing problem analysis, he said,

> I think when I was in the classes I might be thinking about my background in something and experience I had because of that background, and then listening to other people voice their experiences. Teachers, and instructors and students – it opened my mind up a little bit perhaps – but my background was more unique.

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S 5 attributed his organizational abilities more to what he was doing rather than what he was learning: "[W]orking, running a business, and working full time and taking classes really required you to be very, very organized." He attributed his writing skills to his position as a school psychologist and the report writing associated with the position, saying, "I don't know if it really improved my skill set that much. Just because you have to write psychological reports, you get used to writing at a higher level, I guess." As for judgment and decision making, he said, "I think [the program] did [help] because of focus and theory in the discussions. It helped to make sure you had theory to fall back on for the framework in decision making."

S 6 addressed the skill set involved in problem analysis by saying, "[T]he program…was very well grounded in real-life experience of what you need to be able to function." Using a data course as an example, he continued, "[T]he problem-solving skills were sort of built in to the work." S 6 interpreted the questions on organizational skills from a broader perspective of organization as it refers to an entity, saying, "I think that being formally taught about the way different organizations are built and structured….I had only worked in a small school district…so thinking about systems and structures outside of my experience was helpful." Commenting on his acquisition of written and oral communication skills, he said that his program

> definitely pushed my writing. I've always been a decent writer in a particular way, writing clearly, being concise, that kind of thing. I It definitely pushed that. There was also some effort with regards to the verbal skills as well, presentations things like that, but it did not pop as much as the writing. The writing I remember being pushed more.

In discussing the impact of the program on his judgment and decision making, S 6 said,

What it [the program] does, it grounded you and oriented you to how your decisions have

impact beyond either the immediate problem that you are trying to solve or the potential

implications of a decision that can play out later, so I thought there was a fair amount of

time and effort spent on that and skills developed along that line.

Discussing the area of problem analysis, S 7 felt that his program did prepare him,

saying,

When we did those case studies...they got you to think at a very low level instead of a

high level….They got you to think deeper on some different perspectives.…If you are

going to change the dress code, what is going to be the implications and how do you have

to think it through?

He indicated that organizationally,

they [the program] got you to realize that what you need is a level of organization….We

played a game which presented different scenarios and everyone took a turn choosing a

card….It took you through how to multitask these issues.…It did keep you thinking about

your organization and how you were going to multitask and set your agenda every day.

S 7 discussed how his writing improved in the program.

I wasn't a very good writer: it was basic. I taught 6th grade for ten years, and we did a

different type of writing. One of my professors noticed the change. She actually showed

me a paper from the beginning of the program and at the end.

He said that the program helped me refine my vocabulary….They helped me identify my target

audience….I learned to speak with an attorney, and I learned to take off my coat and tie if need

be to speak and make [someone] feel comfortable." When discussing judgment and decision

making, he indicated that it taught him "to slow down a little bit and consider other perspectives"

when considering a problem or making a decision.

S 8 said,

One a scale of 1 to 10, I'd probably give it [the program] a 9. There was a quantitative

problem analysis using data, but then there was also a cohort piece. They ingrained [in]

us that as a leader it's not always your job to have the answers. That's why you have a

team, and it was that team-building piece which I found valuable [with regard to problem

analysis].

He continued discussing written and oral communication:

It definitely helped on the written end of things. I've always been comfortable speaking,

so the oral communication just kind of came naturally, but it definitely helps you write

better.…The synthesis piece…you are reading 10 things and synthesizing them together

and writing about it. That was the higher-order nature of the program.

S 8 indicated that with regard to judgment and decision making, the program "had a definite,

solid impact there. They stressed ethics and integrity, fairness and equity. One of the things about

the Hofstra program is the whole social justice piece. It was all about the kids."

Drawing from his background as a physics teacher, S 9 said, "I was very kind of

mechanical about solving problems: there is a simple solution here, and we need to figure what it

is." He credits his program for helping him "to understand the different personalities in the

problem and what their motivations would be when solving the problem." He did not address

the issue of organizational skills but commented on oral communication skills, saying, "oral

communication…I would say the program didn't impact that." When asked about written

communication skills, he said, "Written for sure was a positive impact.…Learning how to think, learning the business voice, the business tone" was beneficial.

S 11 indicated that her program did not prepare her for problem solving but said,

They gave me the tools that I needed. They said a superintendent will need to run a budget, discipline staff; so instead of doing the whole philosophical crap, they built classes as a tool kit knowing that anybody and everybody will have to do them. But becoming organized, becoming a problem solver, that all came outside the program.

When asked to explain, she continued;

My friend Charlie is a turnaround specialist for hospitals. He is a former Commissioner of Social Services and a multi-millionaire. He has been the greatest mentor I ever had. He taught me about hot files. I can manage my life as an administrator, and I am as successful as I am today because of hot filing. You see it on the wall behind you [a series of labeled letter bins with projects or other matters that required her immediate attention plainly posted on the wall next to her desk]. You must physically see that which is timely and that which you must do, and never get rid of anything for three years that you have dealt with.

When the researcher summarized that Gannon gave her the skill set but it was her personal experiences dealing with other people that helped her put it in to practice, she said, "Correct."

S 12 did not feel that her program at MCLA gave her the problem-solving skills, she needed as superintendent, stating,

I really don't think that the CAS program did, and I don't know if I blame or have issue with the way the CAS program was structured because your entry-level position is going

to be a lower-level administrative job, and through experience you're going to work your

way up.

She felt that her SDP program at SUNY Oswego was more relevant in this regard, saying,

We were given a problem we had to work with.…One of the projects was we were

looking for alternative revenue sources or a local school district. We headed up a

community task force, and we worked together. We did a lot of research on all sorts of

ways schools could possibly gain or get revenue other than through taxes, and then we

did a presentation to the board upon conclusion of that. Community members were

saying, 'Why can't you put advertising on the school buses?' This was something we

explored and delved into the legality of all these different possible revenue sources and

informed the board what ones were feasible for the district to pursue.

When asked about the impact of her program on her organizational skill sets, written and oral

communications, and judgment and decision making, she felt that the SDP program was more

beneficial than the MCLA program. Discussing organizational skills, she said, "I learned

through the program [SDP] the importance of systems and having systems in place as far as

organization of time, duties and responsibilities and what needs to be done and at what point."

Regarding communication skills, she said,

We didn't do many presentations in the MCLA program. We did some group

presentations. There were probably 15 of us in a group, so my contribution was just a

couple of minutes because everyone was participating, so there really wasn't much

opportunity for presentations.

She explained that in the SDP program,

> I absolutely improved my oral communications. I remember for my first presentation I used notes, and my mentor said, "You do not want to use note cards. You know the material, and if you can get up and speak on the material without referring to notes, the audience is going to have more confidence in you." I have done it that way ever since….We had to write lot in that program.

Discussing judgment and decision making, she said,

> Again, being involved in a couple of authentic projects that involved two boards of education, it was definitely decision making: what's important, what I want to keep in this presentation, and what I don't want to keep….I think there was quite a bit of actual on-the-job decision making and experience built in to the program.

> Commenting on the problem analysis skills she received in the Hofstra program, S 13

said,

> It was definitely positive. Reflective practice is all about that. That was the central theme of the CAS: you need to be reflective about what you do, and you don't really do anything without thinking it through. So that was the core of the program.

Though she felt the program had no impact organizationally, she indicated that communications skills were addressed, saying,

> Written, yeah – they were brutal. You would get a paper back, and there would be red marks everywhere, but it was good, constructive feedback. We also did quite a few role-playing exercises where we talked about how to communicate orally as well. Those were very good.

Commenting on judgment and decision making, she said, "That is all part of problem solving, so I guess that it gave you the skills to be able to think something through and follow it through."

S 14 felt very strongly about the benefit of the skill sets he obtained from the program at SUNY Brockport. Of problem analysis, he said,

Really taking a look at identifying what is the real issue here with these particular situations, I think it's even to the point of presenting you with an entire scenario and then really bouncing it off your classmates. What is the real issue here… that is causing all of the other issues? And from there developing a game plan to move forward.

Discussing organizational skills, he said,

I wouldn't say to the greatest extent from an organizational standpoint. I think ultimately individuals have to develop their own style for organization….They provided you with exposure to skills with regards to organization….It wasn't necessarily, you need to do this to survive in the position. It was, here are some tools use them if you wish.

About written and oral communications skills, he said,

I would say that is probably one of the biggest areas where it positively impacted my education. Brockport believes in mastery learning, so if you handed it in and it was not up to standards, they would hand it back and say, "This needs to be corrected." That particular practice…was ingrained in every individual in the program: the idea that you need to make sure as a building- or district-level leader of the school district that the community is going to look to your written and oral correspondence and the importance of that. It is something that was drilled in to our heads in the program, and it's something I continue to drill into the heads of our administrators in this district.

Concerning skills in judgment and decision making, he said,

> Absolutely, I think it was pragmatic from that standpoint. They exposed us to all
> different issues, and I think one of the things that Brockport was really good about…was
> exposing us to all settings and different variables…and how you would respond given all
> those changing environments as far as decision making and how you would proceed with
> that.

S 15 indicated that for problem analysis, it "was important that you really need to think about your actions because you really don't know where it's going to end up at the end of the day with the decision you make, so I think it was part of it that helped." When asked about the impact on his written communication skill sets, he said, "I think it did, I think…I became a better writer because you were forced to write papers and learn how to communicate a little bit better, more efficiently." Continuing, he discussed oral communications:

> [T]here was a good component [in] that you were forced to engage in conversations and
> be careful about your comments and what you said….Whatever came out of your mouth,
> people were going to ask questions about it, and you better have a good understanding of
> what you are talking about.

S 15 concluded by commenting on judgment and decision-making skills: "I think that a couple of the courses had an impact but not all of them." The course on district operations "I thought that was a good course for those types of things, using good judgment in your decision making."

> Identifying the use of case studies to teach problem analysis skills, S 16 said,
>
> I think the problem-solving piece came from case studies or even loose case studies.
> How do you look at an issue? How do you solve it? How would you work together to
> solve it? What are your different perspectives? I found that helpful.

When asked if case studies were used in all his courses or just specific ones, he said,

> That was used in the building a collaborative community course. That's where I
> remember it most in terms of my initial preparation program….How do you get people to
> really buy into that [an idea] and not find every reason why it's not going to work? So I
> found the case-study approach interesting.

He indicated that with regard to organizational skills,

> I think I was able to make a connection. Even now I find, as time goes on I can
> appreciate it more because I think back on pieces of it…but I think more so my execution
> in my organization came from role models and mentors.

Turning to written skills, he said, "Definitely, I would say that particular program [MCLA]
would be the written communication, because a great portion of that was response-based,
research-based, APA-style but definitely the written piece." He indicated that the oral
communication component was weaker: "For the most part, it was small-group work. The
process was small, people communicating in a smaller group." MCLA did positively impact
judgment and decision making.

> It had a pretty significant influence on my ability to make judgments. It was very much
> centered around taking in the whole picture, the whole story, before making a judgment.
> That preparation came with practice: actually having to live your own case studies. I
> found it very enlightening….

> S 17 told the interviewer that 14 years had elapsed between his completing the CAS

program at Columbia through BOCES, stating, "I'm not sure I could say if it helped me so much
to become a superintendent. I did the Future Superintendents Academy, and that program is more
relevant to the work of the superintendent." He continued, "It is hard to separate the program

from where my head was at the time and what my experience was….That program was really geared to the teacher." However, when asked about organizational skills, he recalled,

> If nothing else, the scope of the program, I mean it was a large commitment of time, on top of being a full-time teacher, so it certainly did require a level of management just to get through the program. I don't know if they gave us direct instruction or something as practical as time management, but out of necessity I think I developed some of those skills by being in the program.

Commenting on written and oral communication skills, he said, "There was a lot of writing in that program. They did have us simulate board presentations and faculty meeting presentations, so I would say that there was some preparation for that too [oral communications]." Concluding, he discussed judgment and decision-making skills, stating,

> There were a lot of case studies and a lot of opportunity to reflect. I think they collected reflective papers from us on a pretty regular basis where we had the opportunity to think about decisions we made during the internship and get feedback on that.

> S 18 described how MCLA taught problem analysis skills: "You were reading Senge, *Who Moved My Cheese*, Bolman & Deal. You are reading, and then you are sitting in a lecture hall or sitting in a practicum role playing, problem solving. There was a lot of that at MCLA." Of organizational skills, he said,

> No it did not come naturally. You pick up little things that your professor would say: your one-dollar pile, your ten-dollar pile, your hundred-dollar pile. The tidbits that will always stick with me: Do the paper work when there is no people work to be done; You don't spend your day sitting in your office from 7 to 4 because you got children and teachers in the building and that's your people work and you can't do people work after

hours; You can do paperwork anytime. So just the little tidbits that you pick up along the

way that have truly stuck with me.

Addressing judgment and decision making, he said,

I think that the best information was don't make a hasty decision but make a decision. A

lot of people do not like to make decisions. The program at MCLA taught us that you are

paid to make decisions. I am going to make bad ones, and I am going to learn from them,

and I won't make that same decision again; but make a decision….You don't have to

make it in a hurry either….Some decisions I have to make today – right now – and other

ones I have to make more judiciously. I don't make hurried ones slowly, and I don't

make the long-term ones in a hurry. I think that is one of the things I learned at MCLA:

"Fired in the crucible of experience," where you make mistakes, and I hope that is

something that every program can work with….

S 19 discussed the acquisition of problem-analysis skills is his program at SUNY

Plattsburgh, stating, "I think I grew from [the case studies]. …There was a course…that was

scenario based…that was very helpful."   He indicated that his program had no impact on his

organizational skills. Of written and oral communication skills he said, "Yes, …it continued to

build my comfort and skill in speaking to groups of people. The writing for the course was

mostly reflective in nature and could be helpful. It helped clarifying your beliefs and how you act

on them, but as far as scholarly writing, no, not in my preparation program." He concluded by

commenting on judgement and decision making, saying, "I'd say yes, through the case study

related courses I would say decision and reflection helped build my skills…and provide a

thorough framework for decision making."

In can be seen from the responses of the superintendents that each had a unique experience in the acquisition of skill sets in the areas of problem analysis, organization, oral and written communications, and judgment and decision making. Some of them felt very strongly that their programs prepared them in these specific areas; others felt strongly that they did not. Most felt that their programs prepared them to some degree in some of the areas listed. Interestingly, superintendents who attended the same program could have had a completely different experience depending on when they were enrolled. As indicated in the literature review, what is clear is that the purpose of these preparation programs, according to New York State statute section 8 CR-NY 52.21 © iv a-l and 3 iv a-l, is to prepare candidates with the program competencies outlined in the regulations including communications, ethical decision making, supervision and evaluation, budget, finance and facilities management, and law. Although all of the institutions represented in this study seem to conform to these requirements in course content, the responses from the superintendents indicate that they did not uniformly or always successfully address the stated goals as outlined by the regulation.

Research Question 5

What do superintendents recommend to strengthen university administrative preparation programs?

The purpose of this research question was to determine what, if any recommendations the superintendents had to improve their administrator preparation programs in particular and preparation programs in general. Several of the responses were recommendations regarding their internships which were addressed earlier in this chapter.

Discussing working with others, S 1 said,

There is a lot, but really I think I am going back to conversational leadership, the idea of keeping your mind open. I love the idea of making decisions by hearing everybody's piece and closing yourself off and going into advocacy. I think it is essential, and I think utilizing partnership and having emotional intelligence in this job…to have a course in the pre-practitioner stage to be able to talk about opening up and hearing other people, being out of advocacy [mode], working with others, being able to lead each other is something that is sorely missing because we are a people business.

S 17 continued,

I think that our presentation of ourselves is such an important part of this work: how we are perceived by others, how we build relationships, how we are perceived at all times whether in group meetings or one-on-one meetings – and to get feedback on that on one's presentation of one's self would be valuable.

S 2 recommended practical, relevant coursework, saying,

You have people working on things that a superintendent does, that's the best. Have a person convince a five-member board that you need to end Alt-Ed because it segregates kids; that's work that a principal really does. When they run into something like that, a superintendent would really have something to fall back on. Right now you don't get those kind of challenges.

Thinking back to an assignment his superintendent gave him during his internship, S4 suggested, "Require connecting schools with best practices." When asked to explain, he said,

My superintendent had asked me to show her four schools in the area that exhibited best practices in science. I had to show her why they were best practices, and I had to personally go and visit each school. That was her requirement because her intent was to

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see these four different schools of best practice were doing things four different way but having phenomenal results.

S 5 recommended

the idea of spending some time with the superintendent and making that a part of it. Also, spending time in the school business office and really understanding the function of the school business office. I think that is missed, and people don't fully understand the function of the business office.

When asked how he would structure something like that, he said,

I think that making any competencies that require you to understand how a budget is built. How are financial decisions made? Or how to ensure that there is integrity in the business office and not atypical practice. You have the right people attending to the finances. So if you tied the competencies and required a certain number of hours for the competency, I think that would really help.

S 12 agreed, stating,

There needs to be something about business. I got none of that when I was at Hofstra, and that is a huge thing now – school finance – huge….I think just that more emphasis on the business end would be important. There is nothing on personnel. I would say the nuts and bolts of what you actually have to do – the practical part – it would be nice to have course on that. I didn't have them, but I think that schools are starting to do that.

S 13 continued, "…I would have beefed up the financial portion of the program….If you truly want to be a superintendent, I do think the coursework could have utilized more of that information."

S 6 discussed the need for practical experiences, saying, "I think I would continue to make sure that there is a strong emphasis on real-life experiences that are grounded in solid research-based theory. I think if you lose either one of those two parts of the equation, I think you lose an important part of the experience." S 12 concurred: "Authentic learning: less theory, less textbook, more get out in the field and let's experience it with a strong mentor." S 15 also agreed, saying,

> More courses that can provide the practicality – something along the lines of what they did with the Leadership in the Millennium course [see p. 121]. I think if you could have a couple of these courses as required courses, …I think that would be helpful. I think our jobs have gotten more difficult over the years – we live in a litigious society – and having that practicality of what's going to happen with your decisions and where you're going to end up and how those things occur, I think that's important. Again, theory is important,…but I think knowing what the job is, and knowing how to do the job, and having some people in there to talk to about what the job is, I think that's an important piece.

S 13 discussed the use of data. "Maybe the data piece would be good – a course that had real data. That is what it is all about now." S 18 agreed, saying,

> I truly believe that [data] is something that we fail to do as far as administrator prep goes. I think administrators are ill-prepared to work with their faculty and staff, and children and parents on data-driven instruction. We do not spend enough time teaching administrators how to use data.

S 16 said programs should use data to inform their course content to assure that it is meeting the needs of their students:

I would love to see these programs actually follow up with administrators and not to lose

track of them [and} also …interview them in year two, year four, and year six and mark

and gauge where they are career-wise but also what are they using [skill-wise] and take

the data and use it to inform their program….Did that person wind up rising up the

ladder? Did they stay at the same level and why? If they weren't successful, perhaps if

they did not achieve tenure, what was the reason and is there anything that the program

could have done to make it better assisting them? I think sometimes the programs

superficially research – you know we have a 99% success rate for administrator getting

jobs – but I'd be curious what that looks like in re-informing the program.

The recommendations of the superintendents to improve their administrator preparation

programs fall in to three broad categories: 1) interpersonal skills, 2) relevant, practical, and

relatable coursework, and finally 3) more in-depth courses in business and finance.

Superintendents need to develop the skills sets to work with a diverse constituency – faculty &

staff, students, parent, community members, and political leaders. Coursework needs to be

grounded in theory, but there is also a need for learning the practical application of theory –

theory put into practice. In a time of shrinking revenues and property tax caps, the

superintendents agreed that there is a need for more in-depth courses in business, finance, and

budgeting – not just cursory or survey courses.

Standards

The ISSLC standards were originally developed in 1996 and were revised in 2008 and

2014. The ISSLC standards were incorporated in the NYSED Commissioners Regulations 8

CR-NY 52.21 (c) 1 i-iv and 2 i-iv, which require administrator preparation programs to prepare

candidates to demonstrate the nine essential characteristics of the ISLLC standards.

The final question asked during the interview related to the correlation or link to the ISSLC standards, New York state standards, or Board of Regents requirements. Though not tied to a research question, this was asked as a general follow-up question because of the standards movement throughout the country. Forty-four percent of the superintendents indicated that standards, primarily the ISSLC standards, played some role in the design of the coursework of their administrator preparation programs.

S 5 indicated that "they spent a lot of time on the standards and making sure the person understood what the standards were." S 8remembered that "most of the course syllabuses were connected to ISSLC. I remember when I finished my program, my portfolio was organized by the ISSLC standards….When I did my internship, we were evaluated based on the ISSLC standards." S 11 said, "They used to actually tell us in the course at the beginning of the course which standards the course was aligned to. It was very, very pragmatic, and the professor had the job to tell us that."   S 14 explained that the references to the ISSLC standards were

> made through the syllabi that was released to the students. Brockport, I think at the time, was going through recertification of their accreditation, so they were cognizant of ISSLC standards. Their assignments…were specifically designed to promote those standards….It was very obvious….Every course had at least one mandatory assignment specifically tied to the standards…they were very conspicuous about it.

S 15 said, "Yes, the ISSLC standards: classes were set up that way, that you were going to achieve the following things, what this class is going to do, – and this is the standard connected to that. They [New Paltz] were doing their re-accreditation … so they were very centered on the ISSLC standards and the connection of the courses to the ISSLC standards." S 18 said, "We were made aware of the ISSLC standards."

The emphasis on the standards seemed to depend on the institutions where the superintendents took their coursework. Those institutions going through re-accreditation seemed to put more emphasis on the standards. Superintendents who completed their certification after 2006 appeared to have been more likely to be exposed to the ISSLC standards as part of the curriculum or syllabus.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the research findings. Each superintendent interviewed had a unique administrator preparation program experience, and each had his or her individual perception of what was effective or ineffective in the program and internship. All were specific about which coursework was most beneficial and why as well as the skill sets that they felt their programs provided them with. They also made recommendations to improve the programs for future administrator candidates. The research correlated with the findings reported in the literature review.

Several clear and distinct themes emerged as the superintendents shared their experiences with the researcher. The themes can be summarized as people and practicality. Whether in the coursework or internship, the right people factored heavily into the overall satisfaction rate with the program. Active practitioners as instructors and caring, supportive and involved on-site supervisors in the internship could make or break the program. Coursework needed to be not only theoretical but have practical, real life applications – theory put into practice. The superintendents indicated the importance of coursework in law and budget and finance but also emphasized the use of reflective practice, interpersonal skills, and the use of data. They concurred on the importance of practical skill sets that they could use in the performance of their daily duties and responsibilities.

Chapter 5 will present the summary and conclusions of the study as well as recommendations for further research. The chapter will begin with a general review of the foundation of the study and its methodology. It will discuss the findings of the research and make recommendations to improve administrator preparation programs. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research on the topic.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The position of school superintendent has become more complex, demanding unique skill sets to do the job successfully. Sherman et al. (2007) indicated that no leadership program can provide all of the knowledge that a school administrator will need to do the job. Superintendent 13 addressed this, saying, "I'm not sure if anything really prepares you in the terms of a class for being a superintendent. It's your combined experience that really prepares you for that."

Superintendent preparation programs are usually college- or university-based, offering either a master's or doctorate in educational administration. New York State colleges and universities offer a 30- or 36-credit graduate program called a Certificate of Advanced study in School Leadership. Content requirements for all programs are specified in NYSED Commissioner Regulation 8 CR-NY 52.21.

The position of Superintendent of Schools demands that preparation programs be both practical and relevant to its duties and responsibilities. Administrator preparation programs must be of the highest quality, providing candidates with not only educational theory but also the opportunity to put theory into practice. Programs must be relevant to the all-encompassing position.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of superintendent preparation programs in New York State by interviewing subjects currently employed as superintendents in the state and analyzing the data to establish specific themes. Creswell (2007) indicates that qualitative research is conducted when we want to empower individuals to tell their stories to better understand the context of a problem. Through the

sharing of their life experiences, it is possible to get a deeper understanding of administrator preparation programs in general and their relevance to superintendent preparation in particular (Antonucci, 2012).

A list was obtained from NYSCOSS of 161 self-reported new school superintendents. A demographic survey was sent electronically using Qualtrics to all 161 several times over a four-week period. The survey included a question about whether these individuals would consent to 30-minute interviews about their perceptions of their superintendent preparation programs. At the end of four weeks, 53 superintendents had responded to the survey, and 19 agreed to be interviewed.

An analysis of the demographic data revealed that the 19 respondents were representative of the larger sample of 53 in the areas of gender, district size, geographic location, and the variety of institutions in which they completed their administrator preparation programs. An e-mail was sent to the 19 who had consented to an interview with a copy of the Informed Consent form and a request so schedule a mutually convenient time for the interview. Interviews were conducted by telephone. Four of the interview subjects were located near the researcher, so these interviews were conducted in person. Interview questions were designed to elicit the broadest commentary possible. Follow-up questions were asked where appropriate. The interview questions were aligned to the research questions and validated by a pilot study. The interviews were transcribed whenever possible by the interviewer or a transcription service. The data was coded comparing concepts and ideas to establish connections between the data and then sorted into categories.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of university preparation programs for superintendents?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of internships for superintendents?

3. How do superintendents perceive their on-campus courses?

4. Do superintendents believe that their superintendent preparation program promoted the acquisition of skills in problem analysis, organizational ability, written communication, oral communication, judgment, decision making, etc.?

5. What do superintendents recommend to strengthen university administrative preparation programs?

Discussion of the Findings

After the data was transcribed, the researcher analyzed each interview question and correlated it with the research questions. The responses of each superintendent interviewed were coded, and notations were made identifying key words in each of their responses. These key words were then gathered under broader headings until overall themes began to emerge.

Practitioners as Instructors

The first research question asked the superintendents to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation programs. Seventy-eight percent of them responded that they believed the most effective courses were taught by either current or recently retired practitioners.

It is clear in the literature that the use of practitioners as instructors is a key element in having an effective preparation program. Levine (2005) called for the use of "high quality" (p. 66) academics and practitioners to teach preparation coursework. Lawrence (2008) identified

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the importance of experienced practitioners and professors to the relevance of the program. Fessler (2011) recommended that current superintendents should teach the courses because they are better able to relate theory to actual practice.

The responses from the superintendents supported the findings of the literature review. The importance of people – the use of practitioners, on-site supervisors in the internship, mentors, and cohorts was a recurring theme throughout the study. Having the right people teach the classes – those who could relate the theory of the coursework back to the actual, day-to-day realities of the superintendency – was a determining factor in the success of individual courses and the programs as a whole. This is evident from a few of the superintendents' comments:

S 1 cited "the fact that it was taught by active practitioners in the field, and not by professors who never had the job."

S 5 said, "[Professors] were former superintendents from large school districts with a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge. That was one of the key strengths."

S 8 stated, "Another aspect that was beneficial [in my program\ is that more of the professors were sitting superintendents. That just made it all that more practical. It wasn't just a college professor's theory; it was people doing the job or supervising people who were doing the job. That definitely made the program beneficial."

S 12 said that "I got more out of their [the superintendents'] courses than I did from the professors' courses. The professors' courses tended to be more theory and philosophical discussion. The superintendents, what they said – Well, you knew this is what is going on. So I found their input much more helpful."

S 16 that his coursework "wasn't taught by any practicing or past or present administrator. It was very much your philosophers [academics], if you will .… I don't

feel that the answers were the same as if the answer would have come from live

administrators who would have been in the [current school] administrative role ."

Practical Applications – Theory vs. Practice

Closely correlated to the first theme, the need for coursework to have practical

applications in the daily responsibilities of the superintendent was important.   This is separate

and distinct from the use of practitioners to teach the courses. The material, assignments, and

lectures that comprise the coursework must be relevant and grounded not only in theory but also

in its practical application. This is not so much who teaches the course but more how the course

is taught. The preferred methodology cited by the superintendents who were interviewed was the

use of case studies, scenarios, and practical discussions with their peers on how to solve the

problems that an administrator regularly faces.

The literature review supports these findings. Levine (2005) advocated administrator

preparation programs should being blend of practice and theory. The National Comprehensive

Center for Teacher Quality (2007) called for "real-world job competencies" (p. 22) in the

preparation of school superintendents. Quirk (2012) identified the need for more real-world

problem-solving activities as part of a superintendent's coursework. Antonucci's (2012)

research recommended more of a case-study approach. Tripses et al. (2013) indicated that

superintendents reported a need for "practical know-how" (p. 9). Kaufman (2013) identified the

need for more practical experiences in administrator preparation programs.

Many of the superintendents strongly agreed that it had to be theory and practice, not one

or the other. They understood the importance of their actions and responses being grounded in

proven, researched theory. However, they did question the teaching of theory without a

correlation with the practical, everyday responsibilities of the position. The practical application

of theory – theory put into practice – and its importance to the superintendents is evident from their interviews:

S 6 cited "the combination of grounded theoretical approach with very practical real-life applications by people either still in the field or recently retired …."

S 7 said, "I thought the scenarios that the different assignments we had were applicable to teach us about everything from budgeting to case studies for issues of the politics involved."

S 14 stated, "All of the assignments from entry plans to the experiences …. I can't tell you during my first couple of years as an administrator the number of times I went back to my portfolio saying, 'I know I did an assignment that would help me with this particular experience that I am currently going through.'"

S 17 indicated, "… [W]e would have the opportunity to do case studies and ask more hands-on, practical, everyday kind of questions that would take the coursework we were doing and essentially apply the theory but apply it to the daily work of a school administrator."

S 19 summed it up by saying, "You can work in theory as much as you want, but the real-world scenarios and discussion you had in class is what I find myself reflecting on even today."

Two secondary themes emerged from the first research question. The first was an overall perception of the superintendents that their programs better prepared them for their entry-level administrative positions than for the superintendency. The second was an issue with the amount of time that elapsed between the superintendents completing their preparation programs and their first appointments to the position.

During the course of the interviews, 39% of the superintendents felt that their programs adequately prepared them for an entry-level administrative position such as assistant principal, principal, or director. They did not feel that the programs necessarily prepared them specifically for the superintendency. Fifty-six percent of the superintendents indicated that their programs were dual certification in which the candidate worked on both the building-level and district-level certifications concurrently.

There was often little or no distinction between the certification requirements. Some institutions required an additional sic credits to obtain the district-level certification; others had no such requirement. Hofstra University required three separate internships, one being in the central office, to obtain the district-level certification. Other institutions recommended that part of the internship be completed in the central office but did not require it. The coursework completed met the credentialing requirements for both certifications. The research indicated that this was common at all of the colleges and universities that the superintendents attended. There was no stand-alone program for the building-level or district-level certification; all were dual programs.

Some of the comments from the superintendents were:

S 9 said that his program provided "a good foundation …. [T]here was a lot of focus on what a building should look like and how to be an instructional leader. The program helped me in my entry-level position."

S 16 felt that his program "very much prepared me for the building level but only provided a 30,000-foot view of the superintendency."

S 18 indicated that "I think it prepared me very well for the building level …. I was very well prepared anybody to make the mistakes you make in your first couple of months on the job."

The other secondary theme was the amount of time that elapsed between completing the administrator preparation program and the respondents' first superintendency. The gap ranged from as few as 7 years ago to as many as 19. The superintendents' interviewed for this study had been on the job from one to three years, so there was a significant time between completion and the first superintendency. Many of the respondents had a hard time connecting what they had learned in their preparation programs with what they did on a daily basis as superintendents. Many had trouble seeing the benefits of their preparation programs as opposed to knowledge achieved through the on-the-job learning that came with their prior administrative positions.

These two factors – dual certification programs and the time lag between the completion of the preparation program and the first superintendency – supports Levine's (2005) recommendation of the creation of what is tantamount to a MBA program specifically for school superintendents. This is corroborated by this study, which found that at least six of the superintendents had completed a separate program designed for superintendents. Three completed the Superintendent Development Program at SUNY Oswego, one the Future Superintendents Academy, and another the New Superintendents Institute through NYSCOSS.

Of the 18 superintendents interviewed, six had doctorates. All of them said that their doctoral programs better prepared them for the superintendency than their initial certification program. There is a need for more specific, graduate-level coursework to prepare an individual for the challenges that he or she will face as a school superintendent.

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Structure of the Internship

The second research question addressed the internship requirement of administrator preparation programs. NYSED Commissioner Regulations require an internship. The literature says that a well-structured internship is a vital component. Kowalski et al. (2005) discussed the need for more practical and clinical experiences. Fessler (2011) recommended more practical internship experiences. Antonucci (2012) said that there was a need for more field work. Tripses et al. (2013) identified the need for more rigorous, meaningful internships. The literature is fairly conclusive that an internship needs to be relevant and meaningful to be impactful.

This study shows that several contributing factors are necessary for such an internship. The first is the structure of the internship, specifically, where it is going to be done and when. The host school/school district must be supportive and willing to work with the intern and the college/university to develop an intern plan that addresses all of the required competencies. It comes down to what the host school is willing to let the intern do. The best internships are the most difficult to arrange: full-time, full-immersion experiences, actually working in the job while fulfilling the internship requirements. It is clear from the responses of the superintendents that a supportive, collaborative host school will provide a richer and more rewarding intern experience. Unfortunately, this is not always possible, and interns may be limited in what they can do and get involved in.

> S 1 stated, "I was in a building that was very progressive, and they were interested in building the capacities of the teacher, so they were willing to give me all of those jobs that they knew would need to be tackled for me to go on to a AP [Assistant Principalship] or a directorship…."

S 7 said, "We had a phenomenal superintendent at the time who is now retired. I did my internship my whole spring semester… and I got paid for it."

S 14 said, "I was able to apply for a certificate of internship….I was actually able to do my job and also the internship."

S 15 said, "… [T]he district does a lot, I think, in preparing future administrators. The principal redesigned our schedule so that... the rest of the afternoon we were scheduled in the office."

S 16 stated, "I dabbled in student discipline, the master schedule, proctor scheduling, student supervision, things like that – true assistant principal work … very hands-on, very assistant-principal oriented."

On-Site Supervision of Interns

CASE (2003), Levine (2005), Lawrence (2008), and Kaufman (2013) identify the importance of a strong mentoring experience for a new administrator. The person who assumes the responsibilities as the on-site supervisor for the intern can make or break the internship experience. If the individual treats it as a professional responsibility to help better prepare an individual to become a good administrator, then the experience can be meaningful. If the individual just takes on the responsibility as an added job – an assignment of no interest – then it can be a very negative experience for the intern. Another caveat is that even if the individual is supportive, if he or she performs an administrative function that is very narrow in scope – for example student discipline – the supervisor needs to be cognizant of this and work hard to assure that the internship experience itself is not limited by the job's limitations. Similarly, personality and ideological clashes sometimes arise. A bad match, even between good people, will not lead to a positive internship experience. The internship is complex and multi-faceted, and great care

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needs to be taken to assure that the experience is comprehensive and positive. The superintendents' comments concerning their internships support the literature review and the researcher's observations:

S 1 said, "My first principal said to me that their legacy to the district is the teachers they leave behind and to build the capacity of leaders."

S 5 stated, "Primarily, I was put in a situation where one of the principals had sort of checked out. So it left me without a lot of guidance."

S 6 said, "I didn't match good with the middle-school principal and her dean. It was more an ideological thing by the way. Great people, but it was just an approach. We didn't click. It was her building. I just would have approached things in a different manner or style. I am not saying I was better off or worse off; it was just different."

S 13 stated, "The building one [internship] was less effective than the central-office one. It is really because I ended up with the person that did discipline, and I mean it was OK, but I always felt that there was no real project that I could work on – just checking things off the list. I did that, and that, and that."

S 18 concluded that it was "[j]ust phenomenal, phenomenal administrators: good with children….They were just great role models. I thank them for all of the mentoring throughout my teaching career as well."

Role of the College/University

Another important aspect of the internship is the degree of involvement of the college/university. King (2010) contends that internships should reflect true collaboration between the college/university and the school district. The college/university should clearly define what the goals of the internship are and work with the intern and host school to create an

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intern plan that will achieve the stated goals. Once the plan has been agreed to by all parties, it should be the responsibility of the intern supervisor assigned by the college/university to monitor the intern and of the host school to assure that the intern experience defined in the plan is actually being achieved. If it is not being achieved, then the intern supervisor should work with the intern and the host school to address any identified deficiencies or modify the plan accordingly. Otherwise the internship becomes nothing more than "bosses just signing off on it" and it becomes ineffective (Quirk, 2012, p. 72). Most of the superintendents interviewed for the study said that their colleges/universities had nothing more than a cursory involvement in their internship:

S 2 said that "I made a presentation to them: What I was going to do. Who I was working with. What his role was. What his credentials were. And they said fine."

S 11 said, "I think the oversight of my internship, I think that was the one puzzle piece that I saw it as being too loose.…The check and connect in the outcomes really needs to rest on the hands of the person who was hired by the college and who is getting a paycheck. They need to make it as simple and outcome-based as possible…."

S 15 said, "Not a lot. We needed to fill out our logs and tell them what we were doing and have our meetings and stuff, but that was about it. He [intern supervisor] came once to visit, and then we got switched to another adviser, and she came down once just to walk around and see what we were doing."

S 19 said, "It may be different now, but there was not a lot of oversight from or even a presence of the college."

The study participants were asked to identify the courses that they found most and least effective and explain why. Forty-four percent identified a finance business class (this could

include budget, finance, personnel, negotiations, etc.) as the most beneficial and effective class that they took. Thirty-nine percent indicated that their law class was most relevant. Other classes mentioned were reflective practice (11%), community building (11%), the four frames (11%) and leadership and administration (11%). Others identified a data course, a course on teacher observation, and a curriculum course. The study's findings agreed with the research discussed in the literature review. The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality referred to this type of coursework as "real-world job competencies," (National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2007, p. 28) in that course content and instructional methodology (case studies, scenarios) were important, but the instructor being an active practitioner was more important.

The study showed that many of the superintendents could not remember a specific course that was not beneficial, but several indicated that though a course did not stand out, the reason did: the professor. S 7 summed his feelings up, saying, "He gave an eight to 10-page paper, and said, 'I'll see you in three weeks'.…Then we would sit down and talk about it.I It wasn't productive …. We were paying money for this…. We wanted to get as much out of it as we could."   Many agreed that their courses in business, budgeting, and finance could have been better. S 14 felt that his program lacked the "beef" in the area of preparation for fiscal operations. He stated that "I wanted to stand toe-to-toe with the school business administrator knowing that they were pulling the wool over my eyes and be able to fire back at them."

Skills Acquisition

The literature review emphasized the importance of superintendent preparation.   The Commissioners Regulations specify the competencies that must be demonstrated in order to be certified. Administrator preparation programs are required to teach these competencies.

Superintendents were asked to assess how well their preparation programs prepared them in the areas of problem analysis, organization, oral and written communication, and judgment and decision making.

Each superintendent had unique experiences in acquiring the skill sets identified above. Some of them felt very strongly that their programs prepared them in these areas, others felt strongly that they did not. Most felt that their programs prepared them to some degree in some of the areas. It is important to note that superintendents who attended the same program may not have shared the same experiences. What was positive for one may have been negative for another. It was an individual response.

Recommendations for Improvement

The superintendents were asked to make recommendations to improve their administrator preparation programs. The recommendations fall into three broad categories: 1) interpersonal skills; 2) relevant, practical, and relatable coursework; and 3) more in-depth courses in business and finance. Superintendents need be communicators with educators, parents, students, community members, and business and political leaders. The coursework must be grounded in theory, but there is also a need for learning the practical application of theory. In this era of shrinking revenues and property-tax caps, the superintendents agreed that there was a need for more in-depth courses in business, finance, and budgeting, not just cursory or survey courses.

Standards

Though not tied to a specific research question, the question of the influence of standards was posed to each superintendent. Specifically, they were asked whether the ISSLC standards, NYS standards, or Regents requirements were addressed as part of their preparation programs. Forty-four percent of the superintendents indicated that they were made aware of standards as

part of their coursework, primarily the ISSLC standards. The standards were either stated or correlated with the syllabus, or they were tied to specific assignments. Some programs stressed them more than others. Institutions going through re-accreditation stressed them the most. One reason for this may be that many of the superintendents interviewed completed their certification programs in the mid-2000s, just as the ISSLC standards were being revised and were more studied in the literature.

Conclusions

The literature review was mixed in its findings on overall satisfaction rates of superintendents with their preparation programs. Farkas et al. (2001) found an 80% dissatisfaction rate. Levine's (2005) research determined that superintendents were dissatisfied with the coursework and internship experiences of their preparation programs. On the other hand, the Colorado Association of School Executives 2003 study found that 69% of superintendents included in their survey were satisfied with their preparation programs. A majority of the respondents in Santiago-Marullo's (2010) study also indicated that they felt that they were well prepared by their programs.

This study found that, overall, the participants were satisfied rate with their administrator preparation programs. Of the 18 superintendents who participated, 68% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their preparation programs were beneficial. These findings are in agreement with the American Association of School Administrators 2010 decennial study which found that 78.7% of school superintendents rated their preparation programs as either good or excellent (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

Levine (2005), Lawrence (2008), Fessler (2011), Gober (2012), and Tripses et al. (2013) found that superintendents felt that courses taught by active practitioners were the most

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beneficial and effective because the instructors were able to relate the coursework to practical

applications by using "real-life examples, real-life problems, real-life situations" to show the

differences in "how one person handles a problem from somebody else" (S 5).

Closely tied to the first finding, the matter of theory versus practice was discussed by the

superintendents. They concluded that theory was important, but the ability to apply it through

the use of case studies and scenarios was equally important. This finding is directly connected to

the use of practitioners to teach in the programs. The superintendents felt that only an active or

recently retired practitioner would have the ability to apply theory to practice. S 6 cited, "The

combination of grounded theoretical approach with very practical real-life applications by people

either still in the field or recently retired …." Levine (2005, The National Comprehensive

Center for Teacher Quality (2007), and Lawrence (2008) all support this view.

The study also indicated that 39% of the superintendents felt that their certification

programs better prepared them for an entry-level administrative position than for the

superintendency. One reason for this seems to be that 56% indicated that their programs offered

for both building-level and district-level certification at the same time. There was often no

differentiation between the coursework for the two certifications. Only a few institutions

required any additional credits (6) for the district-level certification. Only Hofstra specifically

required an internship in the central office. One can conclude that a dual certification program

may not be the best way to prepare an individual for a demanding position such as schools

superintendent. Also, the superintendents were concerned about the amount of time that elapsed

between their finishing their programs and assuming their first superintendency. Considering

that 28% of the superintendents attended a superintendent development program and 33% had

their doctorates, it appears that some form of post-graduate work specifically designed for

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superintendent preparation would be appropriate. These findings corroborate Levine's (2005)

recommendations to create an educational leadership program similar to an MBA.

This study found that 42% of the superintendents felt that their internships were effective

and beneficial. These findings are contrary to those of Quirk (2012) and Tripses et al. (2013),

who found the internship component of preparation programs lacking. Most of the

superintendents felt that their internships were good experiences. The best internship

experiences were those in which the host school was supportive and actively involved in creating

a meaningful experience for the intern. The second component was the person assigned as the

on-site supervisor by the host school. An on-site supervisor who was committed to a broad-

based, well-rounded intern experience was crucial to its success. S 1 summed it up by saying

that "I know mine [internship] was very relevant," and when asked why, she said, "I was very

lucky that they [her school district] allowed me to do that, and I know that that was not true for

everyone that was in my program…." S 15 said, "We were in the advantageous position of

having a district that wanted us there and was willing to rearrange our schedule during the day to

make sure you had time to go through and do the different things you were doing." The

superintendents were concerned about the level of involvement that their colleges/universities

had in planning and supervising their internships. Many felt that the colleges' involvement was

perfunctory at best, consisting of signing off on a plan that the intern created, a few sight visits,

and perhaps requiring a portfolio.

Another finding of the study was that 44 % of the superintendents identified the need for

more coursework in business, budgeting, finance, personnel, and operations, while 39%

identified more coursework in law. These findings are corroborated by the research of

Brederson and Kose (2007), Lawrence (2008), Fessler (2011), Gober (2012), and Quirk (2012).

Regarding the acquisitions of specific skill sets, no clear theme emerged from the research. Each superintendent had a different experience, but all generally agreed that their preparation programs prepared them in some degree in the areas of problem analysis, organization, communication, judgment, and decision making. What is clear is that of the 14 colleges/universities represented in the sample, none was perceived as doing an exemplary job of preparing superintendents in all of the aforementioned skill sets.

The superintendents were asked to make recommendations to improve theirs and similar administrator preparation programs. Their recommendations fall into one of the following three categories: 1) interpersonal skills; 2) relevant, practical, and relatable coursework; and finally 3) more in-depth courses in business and finance. These recommendations, as previously stated, confirm the findings in the literature review.

Implications for Practice

The generalization of this study is limited by the sample size. Although efforts were made to have the sample balanced by gender, experience, district size, geographic region, and credentialing institution, the study is still limited to the perceptions of the 18 participants. However, there are a number of implications for practice in the findings which are clearly supported by the research presented in the literature review. These implications for practice are worth noting:

- Colleges and universities should examine the staffing of their administrator preparation programs to assure a balance of theoreticians and active practicing administrators as instructors. The study data clearly show that the more effective programs were those whose instructors were either recently retired or active school administrators.

- Colleges and universities should examine their course offerings and pedagogy. It is clear from the findings of this study that the superintendents felt that the most beneficial courses were those grounded in theory but whose instructors had the experience to put that theory in to practice. The superintendents found the use of case studies and scenarios, followed by the sharing of practical experiences in their class discussions to be very effective methodologies to put theory into practice.

- The New York State Department of Education should examine the practice of permitting dual-certification programs. The study clearly indicated that these types of programs were oriented more to preparing building-level rather than district-level leaders. The role of the Superintendent of Schools is too important to relegate it to a dual-certification program in which the focus is not on the superintendency. NYSED may wish to consider a separate certification program along the lines of those offered at SUNY Oswego or through NYSCOSS. Another consideration would be to require candidates for the position to have a doctorate in educational leadership or administration.

- Because of the identified concerns about the time lag between initial certification and an individual's first superintendency, the New York State Department of Education should require continuing professional-development clock hours for all individuals who hold a School District Leader license. Superintendents should also not be exempt from the new Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) requirements for ongoing professional development.

- The study clearly indicates that internships need to be multi-faceted and meaningful. Colleges and universities need to structure them so that the intern, host school, and college or university all play a role in the planning, execution, and supervision of the

internship to assure that it is a comprehensive, relevant, and meaningful experience for the intern.

- Colleges and universities must better align their coursework to assure that it directly correlates with the skill sets defined in the ISSLC standards and NYSED Commissioners regulations. The superintendents felt strongly that their programs prepared them to some degree in the identified skill sets, but there was certainly no uniformity to the preparation provided. NYSED should periodically audit these programs to ascertain whether they are fulfilling the requirements as outlined in the Commissioners Regulations.

- The study supported the findings outlined in the literature review. The superintendents indicated a need for more coursework in business, finance, and law. Superintendents are the Chief Executive Officers of multimillion-dollar organizations. As such, they require the business and financial skills. Similarly, we live in a litigious society, so a superintendent's understanding of education law and other relevant laws needs to go beyond s single survey course. Colleges and universities should review their coursework to assure that their courses in these areas are practical and comprehensive.

The findings of this study indicate that preparation programs need to be more uniform, student centered, and flexible to meet the changing demands of the superintendency. This requires colleges and universities collaborate more with their local school districts and more attentive to the individual needs of the students enrolled in the administrator preparation programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

Several areas emerged during the course of this study that require further research. This study is not generalizable to the entire state of New York because the sample size is so small.

That being said, the study did raise certain questions that should be followed up in subsequent research.

- Though the literature review and the study concur on the benefits of active practitioners as instructors and a methodology of theory put into practice, more research needs to be conducted on the practical applications of these recommendations. Specifically, the use of case studies and scenarios was recommended, but the effectiveness of this approach should be researched in greater detail, not just from the perspective of a small sample of superintendents.

- There was much discussion regarding the structuring of internships. More research needs to be conducted on the feasibility of the recommendations made in this study. Are the recommendations practical, and if so, how and if not why? The research should determine whether an internship is the ideal method to achieve the stated goal of preparing an individual for the position. Respondents often mentioned mentoring when discussing their internships, but mentoring implies a longer-term, peer relationship rather than a short-term internship.

- Research should be conducted on the effect of the gap between when an individual is initially certified and when he or she actually assumes the first superintendency and the effect that it has on an individual's readiness to be a superintendent.

- Additional research should also be conducted to determine whether district size is a factor that influences the course work and internships required in administrator preparation programs. The skill sets required of a superintendent of a larger school district (county-wide system) are significantly different from those of a

superintendent in a smaller school district (rural); therefore, consideration should be given to restructuring administrator preparation programs to take this into account.

- Several of the respondents identified specialized superintendent preparation programs such as those at SUNY Oswego and NYSCOSS or their doctorates as better preparing them for the superintendency. More research needs to be done on these specialized programs to determine whether they are effective and, if so, why. This study only touches the surface of the topic. Should a separate certification be required for superintendents? Similarly, a study needs to be conducted on the relevance and application of doctoral programs to superintendent preparation.

- This study determined that some of the institutions had correlated their programs with the ISSLC standards. It indicated that a few did it specifically during the re-accreditation process. The study did not focus on the ISSLC standards specifically and only touched on the role they play in administrator preparation programs. Further research is warranted in this area, correlating the standards and the administrator preparation programs from multiple perspectives.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented a summary of the study, the findings of the research, conclusions drawn from the research, the implications for professional practice of the study, and recommendations for further research.

The role of the Superintendent of Schools is too important to allow sub-standard administrator preparation programs. The study shows a high degree of satisfaction with existing administrator preparation programs overall, but it identified certain weaknesses that they need to address. The recommendations made in this study should be implemented to assure that the

administrator preparation programs in New York State are providing the quality of instruction

and real-life experiences to make them relatable and relevant to the duties and responsibilities a

future superintendent will be expected to perform and assume.

This study identified areas for further research in the content and pedagogy of the

programs, the use of active practitioners as instructors, the structuring of the internship, and the

possibility of requiring a separate certification for Superintendents of Schools.

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Appendix A

Pilot Study Letter

June 29, 2016

Dear,

My name is Robert M. Dufour and I am a doctoral student enrolled at Indiana University of Pennsylvania through East Stroudsburg University. I am working on my dissertation that focuses on investigating superintendent preparation in New York State.

At this point in my investigation I am looking to conduct a pilot study of my interview questions. I selected you because of your expertise based on experience as a Superintendent of Schools and on your academic credentials as either an Ed.D. or a Ph.D. To help me develop an effective survey, I value your input using your level of knowledge to help me validate my interview protocol.

Please take a few moments of your time to read the proposed interview and follow up questions and provide feedback. I am looking to establish the clarity, readability and understandability of the questions before I send them out to a larger sample. I want to make sure the interview questions are relevant to the identified research questions and allow me to gather information that will help understand superintendent preparation programs better. I appreciate any other comments that you have to improve the interview.

I would also like to schedule a convenient time to conduct the interview with you. The interview should take no more than 30 minutes.

Thank you for your kind time and attention. I look forward to a favorable response from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Dufour
105 Roundhill Court
Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328

Appendix B

Superintendent Letter

July 7, 2016

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student enrolled at Indiana University of Pennsylvania through East Stroudsburg University. I am working on my dissertation researching perceptions of new superintendents with regards to their administrative preparation program in New York State. This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subject telephone number (724) 357-7730. There are no perceived risks associated with participation in the study.

I am requesting that you take a few minutes of your valuable time to complete the linked demographic survey. The survey consists of 13 questions and should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. The purpose of the survey is to create a sample pool of willing participants based on gender, district size, geographic location and the institution where they received their administrative certification. https://iup.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5pqO80FpXCHl8wd

The second to last question of the survey asks whether or not you would be willing to consent to participate in a 30 minute telephone or in person interview to discuss your perceptions of your administrative preparation program. Interview responses will be confidential and numeric identifiers will be assigned to those being interviewed in the final research report. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without penalty.

If you elect to participate in the study a copy of the Informed Consent Form will be sent to you prior to the interview. The interview will only be conducted once the Informed Consent Form has been returned to me.

I thank you in advance for your time and anticipated cooperation. I look forward to the opportunity of speaking with you to discuss the research in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Dufour
105 Roundhill Court
Dingmans Ferry, PA 18328

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

I have read and understand the information on the form and consent to volunteer to be a

participant in this study. I understand that my response are completely confidential and that I

have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed

Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (Please Print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Phone Number or location where you can be reached: (   ) _____

Best days and times to reach you: _____

Appendix D

Demographic Survey Questions

Q1 Your Name

Q2 District Name

Q3 Gender

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

Q4 Enrollment

○ 1-250 (1)

○ 251-500 (2)

○ 501-750 (3)

○ 751-1000 (4)

○ 1001-2500 (5)

○ 2500+ (6)

Q5 What regional information center (RIC) is your district located in?

○ Central New York (1)

○ Eastern Suffolk (2)

○ Edu Tech (3)

○ Greater Southern Tier (4)

○ Lower Hudson (5)

○ Mid-Hudson (6)

○ Mohawk (7)

○ Monroe (8)

○ Nassau (9)

○ Northeastern (10)

○ South Central (11)

○ Western New York (12)

Q6 How long have you been a Superintendent of Schools?

❑ 1 year (1)

❑ 2 years (2)

❑ 3 years (3)

❑ 4 years (4)

❑ 5+ years (5)

Q7 At what college or university did you complete your administrator certification program?

Q8 In what year did you complete the program?

Q9 My administration preparation program adequately prepared me for my first superintendency.

○ Strongly agree (1)

○ Somewhat agree (2)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (3)

○ Somewhat disagree (4)

○ Strongly disagree (5)

Q10 My internship was relevant to the duties and responsibilities of my first superintendency.

○ Strongly agree (1)

○ Somewhat agree (2)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (3)

○ Somewhat disagree (4)

○ Strongly disagree (5)

Q12 Would you be willing to participate in a 30 minutes interview either by telephone or in person to discuss your administrator preparation program?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Q13 If so, please re-enter your e-mail address here.

Appendix E

Interview Questions

Name _____ Date _____

Telephone _____

1. Describe one or more strengths your NYS administrative preparation program?

    a. Describe the elements that were so effective for you.

    b. Describe one or more weakness, or areas that needed to be improved in your

        preparation program.

2. Describe one of the most effective features of your internship?

    a. And, tell me what made this activity so effective.

    b. Describe what you would do to improve the internship experience.

3. Think back to your campus courses. Describe the one course that was most effective and

    what made it most effective?

a. Describe the course that was the most ineffective and what made it the most ineffective.

4. Describe the impact that your administrative preparation program that promoted the

    acquisition of skills in:

    a. Problem analysis

    b. Organizing

    c. Written communication / oral communications?

    d. Decision and Judgement making?

5. Describe one change that you would make to strengthen university preparation programs.

6. Describe how the program standards in your administrative program impacted course content.