Exploring the Professional Learning Experiences of Adjunct Faculty in an Educational Leadership Preparation Program

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EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF ADJUNCT FACULTY

IN AN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAM

by

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF ADJUNCT FACULTY IN AN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PREPARATION PROGRAM

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The aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of adjunct faculty to understand their roles and means for professional collaboration. The study examined how adjuncts engage and collaborate, professionally and informally, and what vehicles influence their growth. Finally, the study addressed how educational leadership preparation programs might be enhanced for relevant, continuous learning in order to improve instructional practices and the experiences of aspiring school leaders.

Using a phenomenological methodology, 27 adjuncts were interviewed from a university-based educational leadership preparation program in the southeast region of the United States. These in-depth interviews were transcribed and analyzed, using coding, bracketing, and memoing methods to glean concepts and their relationships. From this, three overarching categories emerged—culture, systems, and empowerment.

The findings from this study revealed that adjuncts engaged in collaborative learning activities through multiple modes to interact with one another, and with full-time faculty, resulting in networked learning communities, or, communities of practice, that expand beyond the university's instructional personnel, the preparation program, and the educational leadership department. Serving in part-time capacities created challenges related to availability due to time constraints, university proximity, personal priorities, and other factors. The department examined in this study acknowledged these potential pitfalls, focusing on ways to invest in the adjuncts that would foster collaborative practices. The adjuncts felt connected, resulting in

engagement. They grew professionally and integrated the learned skills into their instructional practices and practitioner roles.

The study concludes that professional collaboration can be established in complex contexts. Findings revealed the need for university-based leadership preparation programs to enhance their methods for delivering knowledge and passing information. The graduate program director was credited and revered for leading, prioritizing, and addressing stakeholders' needs, purposefully and effectively. Community developed, allowing the instructional personnel to regularly interact and establish trust in order to discuss and resolve problems of practice. Lastly, leadership preparation programs must ensure that adjuncts are adequately equipped to teach courses by providing them with appropriate supports to grow. In an era of high-stakes accountability and demands for quality candidates entering the workforce, the need is critical to invest in adjunct faculty.

For those who came before me

Especially Aunt Dí,

Dr. L. V. Richardson,

Mrs. E. A. Chambers…

and

For those who follow

Especially my godchildren,

nieces and nephew,

and every learner

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You are just like who you are. –J. Linwood Swann

To say that I have arrived would counter the entire premise for conducting this study because learning is a lifelong occurrence. This dissertation represents the very essence of what strong, healthy communities, networks, and social structures are. It's taken a village to get to where I am today; there are countless relatives, friends, colleagues, and teachers who have contributed, come and gone, helping me become a better me daily. These systems will continue sustaining me in the days ahead and years to come.

I've come to terms with the fact that I have an obsession with leadership and learning, its many facets and complexities. *Why else would I have taken on this endeavor?* It all stems from the number of educational rock stars I have encountered on this journey, beginning as early as grade school. I am enamored. I am forever indebted to the institution of knowledge because of all of its investments in me. Its best people are passionate, caring, and thinkers. It is a privilege to be a part of this arena. I am kept thirsty and curious, always striving for a better me for them, and with good reasoning. People deserve our best and I am an agent of change.

And, leadership is just that—influence. The foundation was laid and every encounter developed its form with conferences, classroom observations, courageous conversations, coaching experiences, partnerships, mentoring, social networks, and late evening chats with colleagues in the office—these moments have shaped a topic that I love so much and live daily. I've grown because of the excellence, wisdom, and leadership that surround me. It's synergy. It has embraced me, giving these concepts investigated throughout the pages that follow a reason to be captured. Leadership matters.

I am grateful for a district and awesome school family that support learning endeavors such as this one. My affiliation with Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools began in my early days as an undergraduate. It seems a bit surreal that almost 20 years of my employment have been with WJCCPS, yet the division began investing in me before I was ever employed with them and was simply a student in a college town enjoying the volunteer and mentorship opportunities that their local schools had to offer. Little did I know then that what I thought was merely a network would eventually become my community. There have been very few days when I did not look forward to work, and that could not occur without strong leadership, fantastic educators, and thoughtful organizational structures in place. To name people individually would surely result in overlooking someone, but a huge thank you to my current work family, Laurel Lane Elementary; you have been nothing short of patient and understanding throughout this journey. You matter and are so very valued. This is OUR degree!

My church families (past and present), sorority sisters, "night crew," dearest friends, godchildren, and family have been on the sidelines cheering for me relentlessly. The prayers, notes, text messages, phone calls, check-ins, meal drop-offs—the patience and understanding during my periods of silence and physical absence—have gotten me through these past four years. I'm looking forward to returning to some of the routines I set aside during this season. I can only hope that I can return the favor of being a support to each of you in ways you have been doing it for me.

As the proverb goes, "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." I've got one of those. Veronda, you have witnessed this process more than anyone. You have seen the (awkward) tears, times of overwhelm, and sleepless nights. You never skipped a beat and have been the joyride of relief and giver of sage

advice, championing words of encouragement—with the exception of the moments when you'd ask, "Who would want to do this?!" You are the little sister I begged and prayed for while growing up; God could not have paired me with a better best friend. You are one of the wisest, most intelligent, and genuinely beautiful people I know. Your poise and confidence have taught me so much about appreciating and loving myself more wholly. Thanks for staying in the game throughout this really long journey—I've got your back always and remain thankful for how you have always had mine.

We all have lanterns. Mine shine the brightest, and here is the short, but impressive list: Stacia Barreau, Leasa Anderson, Valeka Gatling, Shylan Scott, Lynda Byrd-Poller, Denelle Wallace, Brenda Williams, Jacquelyn McLendon, Cynthia Rhone, Donna Rhaney, Heather Peterson, Patricia Tilghman, Olwen Herron, and Fanchon Glover – having each of these women as a part of my network is like a present that is always being unwrapped—the gifts just keep coming! Leadership is easy to study, yet incredibly difficult to live out. Each of you has had an enormous role in sharpening my saw. I strive to lead and serve in the ways you all have modeled for me. We all expect hard days, yet you each understand the challenges we face. Your counsel, friendship, and leadership I cherish. I am grateful for check-ins, taking time to read for me, let me bounce ideas, and the willingness to be available.

The second cohort of Old Dominion University's Educational Leadership Program (Ph.D. in Education) will forever hold a special place in my heart. Our group became tight quickly, and the cohesiveness made all the difference. The state of education is in great hands because of the care, optimism, and commitment you all possess when it comes to teaching and learning. I cannot thank you enough for being there throughout this process. It is my hope that we will maintain this unique connection in the years to come, as we all attain our degrees and reminisce

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about surviving. Comfort and destiny cannot coexist—keep walking, keep maturing, keep becoming…We are changing the world, y'all!

Thank you to Dr. Patricia W. Leary for asking me if I was coachable back in 2015 and for remaining a friend and someone I can go to when needed. Your mentorship, care, and guidance I feel so blessed to have in my life. You and Calvin have a special place in my heart. Essentially, you are stuck with me for life. I would not have come to know and love ODU the way I do had it not been for you, Pat, serving in your faithful assignment of Life-Change Instigator (LCI). Because of you, I appreciate and accept the "power of yet." I echo some words of yours given to me almost daily: "Get wisdom at any cost—pay attention and gain understanding." I value and love you.

Apart from the gift of knowing the beauty of a faith walk, being affirmed about the value of my life and living in (and on) purpose is the greatest of gifts my mother has given me. She is my biggest fan, and her faith in me remains a constant source of inspiration on the toughest days. Thank you, Mother, for your unconditional love and for modeling the beauty of serving others. You are and have always been the teacher and woman I have longed to be. Being one of three of your greatest creations is an honor, and I relish in that fact that I am yours and Dad's.

My amazing brothers, Lin and Eric, who are the foremost men in my life. You both have taught me so much about life—its challenges and joys. As the baby of our family, you both have always taken your role of being big brothers seriously. From equipping me with wisdom about dating and boys, to deep, hard discussions about life, work, and the world. No one can make me laugh out at the most inappropriate times without ever saying a word like the two of you. We are bonded, and I am blessed to have you as my protectors, motivators, and confidants, and that is the short list! I see the pride you both have for me. I love you beyond measure.

And, finally, to my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Karen L. Sanzo…*Some people read the chapters in your book while others help you discover and write them.* I am so very thankful for every investment, Dr. Sanzo. I admire you for your work and accomplishments, and I appreciate how you have extended an invite to the table time and time again—and, not just to me, but several educational leaders. Further, though, I am thankful to have another incredible mentor for life. You have never been bothered by the questions and concerns I have brought to you, and your support has kept me going throughout this journey, remembering to enjoy the scholarship.

I am also very thankful for my dissertation committee—the guidance and direction given to see to my study being thorough and sound. And, to all of my professors through this program—I remain in awe of your brilliance, experiences, and unwavering support. You all are truly one impressive community. Never grow weary in well-doing; this work matters. Further, this study could not have become what it is without the participation of the adjuncts who accepted the invitation to be a part of this research endeavor. These gifts of scholarship have perhaps been the highlight of this process. I am a fan and follower of the work you are all doing. Thank you for allowing me to enter your worlds. As I embark on a new chapter and life after the degree, I hold closely the knowledge poured into me through these encounters. I am better because of each of you. I did not know I was me until I un-became to better know you!

I could not accomplish the goal of earning a doctoral degree without my heavenly Father. With every assignment, it has been under the operations of Him—*God, if you don't speak then I'll have nothing to say. You've given me a thirst and hunger for wisdom. Trust me to write what you want me to convey. I don't ever want to miss a moment of fulfilling my purpose—let my words and actions come alive to those who need it.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement in student achievement."
(Fullan, 2002, p.16)

The role of principal has increasingly evolved over a short length of time with evidence to support that those who are effective establish conditions for high-performing learning environments. The preparation grounds for educational school leaders become an important factor when considering the readiness and success rates of graduates from educational leadership programming; thus, quality faculty are necessary in order for leadership preparation programs to be effective (Hackmann & Malin, 2019; LaMagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, & Reed, 2009). Consequently, adjunct faculty, who are part-time instructional members, teach a large number of classes to support full-time faculty members, and the field of educational leadership is no exception. Despite knowing the need and importance of having highly qualified educators, including higher education institutions, it is a rarity for part-time faculty to receive adequate training and onboarding. The latter is understood given current literature that posits how nonexistent supports, resources, and mentorship are for those occupying full-time faculty positions in academia (Hackmann & Malin, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Staffing patterns among academic faculty have drastically changed in recent decades. As of 2014, findings highlighted an increase in the number of non-tenure-track faculty making up the academic workforce, which was approximately 70 percent of the faculty positions in U.S. higher education institutions (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). Hackmann and McCarthy (2011), in their comprehensive research, identified contingent faculty as having a variety of uses and

roles across institutions, such as clinical faculty members, directors, adjunct faculty/instructors, professors of practice, and collateral faculty. One of the main reasons for the increase of contingent faculty members is to address budget decreases after the loss of higher education funding previously received from state and federal governments (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). The literature posits, "The fields of health science and education have the highest proportions of full-time individuals in non-tenure-track positions, because they employ clinical faculty with responsibilities to train students for professional practice (Chronister, 1999)" (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016, p. 12). There are benefits in having practitioners, who hold expertise and knowledge in these fields, serve in instructional capacities. For educational leadership programs, they have taken advantage of this recommended staffing solution, bringing part-time adjunct members into their departments to deliver instruction. Griffiths, Stout, and Forsyth (1988), who have studied the field of educational leadership, address the limited amount of evidence regarding the ways leadership preparation programs are developing and integrating these faculty members into their roles. The implications of this nuance is if preparation programs are heavily relying on adjuncts for instructional delivery (Robey & Bauer, 2013), then there must be measures and processes in place to ensure program quality (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). Investigating the ways in which educational leadership departments acclimate and engage contingent faculty such as adjunct members could support the field's work in addressing national criticisms and mandates about the effectiveness of university-based leadership preparation programs.

Recognizing the importance of effective school leaders and the lasting impacts had in cultivating environments conducive for meaningful teaching and learning, there is an emergence of literature aimed at exploring and improving leadership preparation programs (Cosner, 2018;

Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007; Orr & Barber, 2007; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). A scant amount of empirical literature exists regarding the ways in which instructional faculty are prepared for the role. Austin and Wulff (2004), who study faculty development, identified existing challenges—specifically for new faculty—for creating professional development programming; those factors are: a) the contextual changes affecting the traditional nature of work; and, b) the increase of hires that come to the professoriate with no previous experience. These factors have produced an onset of alternative educational leadership preparation providers, which means university preparation programs need to have more systemic force as not to sight of how critically important leadership development is to school environments (Sanzo, 2012; 2016a). In sum, "leaders of professional associations and foundations must think practically and critically about the paths to the professoriate and strategies for enriching the preparation of future faculty" (Austin & Wulff, 2004, p. 12).

Sanzo (2016b) also discussed how important it is to plan for leadership development and create a cohesive system, writing,

> The results of the effective system not only impact the adults that participate in the development initiatives, but also have lasting impacts on the staff they work with and, ultimately, the students in schools. Remember, the impact of leaders is tremendous—and therefore creating and implementing an effective professional Leadership Development System that includes all leaders and aspiring leaders is critical and should not be approached lightly. (p. 10)

In a study conducted by Cosner (2018), she explored an approach for universities and colleges to use in developing reform initiatives when planning for leadership development and programming. The study examined the effectiveness of networked improvement communities to

facilitate changes in educational leadership programming (Anderson, Winn, Young, Groth, Korach, Pounder, & Roerrer, 2018; Wang, Gates, Herman, Mean, Perera, Tsai, Whipkey, & Andrew, 2018). Sanzo (2014) has discussed the strategy of developing and organizing partnerships and networks to address problems of practice within organizations for continuous improvement. Networked improvement communities are driven by prioritized topics, and their success is dependent upon "consideration to structures of the system and the needs—both technical and adaptive—of the system being addressed" (Sanzo, 2016b, p. 13).

Cosner (2018) described how the networked communities were formed to have a greater understanding about what quality educational leadership preparation programs were doing differently. The group was comprised of experts in the field of educational leadership, sharing their ideas and coming together to brainstorm in order to "support the infusion of knowledge resources into these various communities from other expert programs" (Cosner, 2018, p. 5). Sanzo (2014; 2016b) addressed bridging the gap between universities and school districts in her research, allowing the shared knowledge from both entities to enrich the experiences of those aspiring to become school leaders, as well as those in positions, forming partnerships and utilizing mentorship, for the betterment of all levels in the field of educational leadership (Browne-Ferrigno & Sanzo, 2011; Clayton, Sanzo, and Myran, 2013; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016). The research from both scholars illuminated strategies and practices that the individuals involved could then take to their institutions and organizations to address specific needs for improvement and change. These insights are motivators for this research study, recognizing the need for progressive professional development and learning opportunities that can be sustaining, purposeful, and responsive to reform measures within the field of educational leadership.

Using the premise that fostering networks and innovative practices create opportunities for improved growth and facilitating change, one could hypothesize that networks have the capacity to provide authentic professional learning experiences that engage its members and enhance their productivity, meeting the needs of stakeholders across levels of the organization. A gap in the literature exists about the impact of professional development and learning activities that foster socio-constructivist concepts for adults, like means for communication about perspectives and enriched learning experiences.

Rationale and Purpose

This study explores aspects of professional development related to learning communities, continuous improvement, and collaborative interactions in order to build capacity within educational leadership preparation programs. By studying this topic through the perspectives of adjunct faculty, the information gathered from this population's lived experiences may better inform, as well as improve, leadership, teaching, and learning—specifically, when it comes to bridging the existing gap between research and practice. Because there is a need for educational leadership preparation programs to rethink and redesign their methods for instructional delivery, there is relevance in examining the roles of adjuncts who currently make up at least half of the faculty positions in postsecondary institutions (Betancur & Livingstone, 2018). The current state of education and the increasing demands and scrutiny do not make the reform process an easy one for those in higher education. Adjuncts have benefited institutions because they are a cost effective resource; however, the reductions in funding also leave institutions depleted in resources to effectively address matters such as meaningful professional development (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). Adjunct faculty address a number of challenges faced by institutions, such as growing course sections and students with full-time professions (Caruth & Caruth, 2013). These

part-time employees are expected to possess the required skills to prepare those enrolled in the courses they are assigned to teach. Often, however, they are unavailable to connect with the institution due to serving in full-time roles, as practitioners, that demand their time. Much remains known about their instructional effectiveness, the success rate of those they teach, and even how they come to know the general expectations an institution has in place for the instructional faculty, which would seem to be important knowledge to possess in order to be engaged and productive in the work. The literature is quite clear that little to no preparation or ongoing professional development occurs for individuals who occupy the position (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Shoho, 2012), and this is concerning.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between adjuncts' professional learning within an educational leadership preparation program and the complexities that exist when integrating them into the college/university environment. Their views are analyzed to understand what interactions and processes they attribute to learning about the adjunct role and its functions, as well as the value there is in undertaking this type of work and its necessity in school leadership programming.

Research Questions

For this study, I aim to understand the relationship between adjuncts' professional learning and the collaborative structures established to enhance working experiences. I examined these concepts using a university-based educational leadership preparation program where adjunct faculty work. The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What role does professional collaboration play amongst adjuncts in learning from each other?

2. To the extent that professional collaboration is a vehicle to informal learning, how is knowledge acquired, what knowledge is transferred, and under what circumstances or conditions?

3. How and to what extent do adjuncts use professional collaboration as a vehicle to informal learning?

4. What other mechanisms do adjuncts use to learn about teaching, content, and pedagogy?

I address the questions in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study, providing discussion about the findings, their implications, future research, and concluding thoughts.

Conceptual Framework

Leadership development is the core of this research study. The span of literature on the topic of leadership development is vast and even messy, ranging in a variety of types of preparation for readiness, as well as the contextual lens—who, what, and where. As the role of school leadership evolves, the teaching and learning of it must, too. Leading a school is complex and the process of leading must be explored comprehensively to ensure school leaders' preparedness to assume the responsibilities and the resulting implications for continuous school improvement and student achievement. Smylie and Denny (1990) offer the following about leadership preparation:

> The literature on leadership suggests that leadership development is an organizational phenomenon. It is influenced not only by organizational structure but also by the interactions and negotiations among leaders and other organizational participants that take place in a political and normative framework. (p. 256)

The above captures the developmental power and complexity of leadership. Leadership involves networking, communicating, and growing relationships. Simply stated, leadership is influence (Maxwell, 1998), and more evidence is needed about the preparation approaches that most effectively shape leadership practices, beliefs, and career outcomes (Orr, 2011).

The Need for Quality Educational Leaders

The field experiences of future school leaders are increasingly regarded as one of the most critical aspects of principal preparation, which has been lacking for numerous reasons (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr, 2010; Orr, 2011; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016). Since becoming a target under the education reform movement, there is widespread agreement that university-based school leadership preparation programs are outdated and not effectively meeting the needs of the school districts who select and hire these aspiring school administrators (Levine, 2005). Postsecondary institutions are under a great deal of pressure to restructure their programming to meet the needs of learners, providing them with authentic learning designed to better prepare them for the roles they are working to attain. One complicating factor to this dilemma is the growing number of course offerings due to higher enrollments often of full-time professionals. Universities are pleased to generate more students into their programs; however, this creates a demand for highly-qualified available faculty. A complicating factor to consider is that full-time faculty have additional requirements beyond teaching, making it impossible for them to be assigned additional course offerings. To reduce the workloads of full-time faculty, colleges and universities are heavily relying on adjunct faculty to support the teaching load.

School Leadership Matters. To reiterate, the collection of empirical research has substantially grown on the topic of quality school leadership and student achievement (Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The literature states that

principals "provide the necessary guidance over time to sustain a coherent program of schoolwide development" (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010, p. 46). However, the role of the principal has been a slowly evolving one. Over the past century, principals have become more integral to the teaching profession for the assurance of ongoing school improvement and the organization's functionality. Leithwood and colleagues (2010) note characteristics of effective school leaders such as fostering positive relationships with all stakeholders, nurturing student-centered learning practices, and serving as the instructional leader to shape and positively affect learning outcomes. While there is now significant evidence supporting the influence that quality leadership has on student achievement, only recently has attention shifted away from methodology—primarily descriptive—to truly understanding how principals are prepared and what quality preparation entails (Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Orr & Pounder, 2011; Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009).

In 1972, Piele and Culbertson wrote a foreword for a series published by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) focused on preparing school leaders:

> [P]rograms to prepare educational administrators have undergone considerable change. Growing specialization in the field of educational administration resulting from new knowledge production (for example, operations research) is one reason for the program change. Another is the continuing research for more effective patterns of field experience, instructional method, and content in preparatory programs. (Wynn, 1972, p. vii)

Three decades later, Levine (2005) published a report about the preparation and development of school leaders by education schools (colleges and universities), and his findings strongly

suggested that school leadership programs "are the weakest of all the programs at the nation's education schools" (p. 13). There is now more literature that exists on the topic of leadership preparation and its impact—or effectiveness—on school leaders, as well as on student achievement (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2012; Kottkamp & Rusch, 2009; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2006; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Sanzo, 2012, 2017). Still, the body of literature surrounding this topic remains unexplored in ways that could bring about significant and necessary evidence on such a critical area in education reform (Orr & Barber, 2009; Sanzo, 2016b).

Faculty Development and Systems

For almost four decades, adjunct faculty have accounted for about half of the total professoriate with the primary responsibility of teaching classes. The job status has regularly omitted them from critical supports, adequate orientation to the work, and other benefits that full-time faculty may receive. While an attraction to serving as an adjunct is the flexibility and exemptions that come with the position, there are clear disadvantages that jeopardize experiencing success and/or satisfaction with this type of work. When a disconnection exists with the work environment, such as large organizations like campuses/universities, the lack of accountability grows, which compromises knowing whether these individuals are adequately teaching and preparing a program's candidates to be successful beyond their schooling. Essentially, the role cannot solely be in place to address cost reductions and minimizing workloads for full-time faculty; yet, it has been according to the limited extant research on this topic.

Literature suggests that one reason university-based school leadership preparation programs are ineffective is due to the lack of professional development experiences that exist for

all faculty (Hackmann & Malin, 2019). Webster-Wright (2009) expounded on this notion of

professional growth experiences after students graduate and enter the workforce, asserting that

> Although the need for lifelong learning of professionals is stressed through university
>
> education, the patent differences between learning as a student, within a controlled
>
> framework focusing on accessible outcomes, and learning as a professional have not been
>
> clarified. Despite many innovative PD [professional development] practices, there
>
> remains a persistent didactic influence in a considerable proportion of PD practices
>
> following graduation that echo an undergraduate framework. (p. 708)

Because university preparation programs are the primary path for school-based and district-level

leadership preparation, the need for responsiveness to scholastic reform is critical for political,

societal, and organizational purposes. Therefore, preparation and continuous development are

key variables to the functionality of professional roles, which has especially held true for those in

the field of education.

      Need for Professional Learning and Continuous Improvement. Learning experiences

are key (Marzano, 2009), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)

has been instrumental and responsive in researching best practices for leadership preparation

programs. As Cunningham, Van Gronigen, Tucker, and Young (2019) posit,

> Realistically, no program can prepare leaders for myriad-specific challenges they will
>
> face; however, programs can prepare leaders to analyze the situations they face to
>
> understand *how* to approach various situations and decisions and to articulate the *why* that
>
> undergirds their actions and decision making." (p. 75)

With greater demands and accountability for school leaders, addressing learning needs will

require intentional reconstruction of leadership program practices. Literature about preparing

school leaders has focused on methods, pedagogy, as well as learning theory. This study differs from present literature in that it seeks to take a closer look at the educational environment and the benefits of investing in human capital—specifically, the value of a role such as an adjunct professor. The literature is limited in the exploration of professional learning that adjunct faculty have available (or need) to support them in providing quality instruction.

Goldring, Preston, and Huff (2012), who acknowledge the absence of research on the key components for high-quality professional development needed to support the field of educational leadership, completed a review of literature, identifying five elements or themes from their research

- job-embedded instruction that allows participants to apply what they learn;

- content that addresses leaders' unique needs for their individual stages in their careers;

- long-term instruction with multiple learning opportunities;

- coherent curriculum that targets conditions leaders face every day; and

- collegial networks and/or support to discuss and exchange ideas (p. 226).

This study will pull from theories on professional learning and development literature, along with understanding configurations such as networked learning communities to address work contexts, to gain insight into effective activities and experiences for adjunct faculty.

Key Terms

To support the focus and scope of this study, the following terms have been defined with the aim of providing consistent understanding throughout the reading of this study:

- *Adjunct faculty* refers to a type of part-time employee of universities and colleges who can be classified as non-tenured and maintain their employment to the institution by course assignments or annual appointments; their primary role is teaching (Caruth &

Caruth, 2013). Literature uses the terms "adjunct" and "part-time" interchangeably.
Wallin (2007) posited that "adjunct" is most often associated with activity, whereas
"part-time" may carry a negative connotation.

- *Communities of Practice (COP)* is defined as "groups of people who share a concern or
  passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"
  (Wenger, circa 2007). The three essential elements of COP are the domain, community,
  and practice, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

- *Networked learning* may be (and is most often) associated with technological
  advancements such as online applications that facilitate social interactions among people.
  For the purposes of this study, the phrase is used more broadly to examine "person-to-
  person interaction," which could include technology (Haythornthwaite & de Laat, 2010,
  p. 183). Networks are "formed between people [to] create structures on which learning
  opportunities arise" (p. 183).

- *Practitioners* are individuals who work full-time (or maybe recently retired) in an applied
  or specialized field, who bring a great deal of experience, real-world knowledge, and
  practical examples to a classroom of learners. In addition to their expertise in the
  practice, they also bring contacts with people, allowing for networking and potential
  referrals for work opportunities. Practitioners who serve as adjunct faculty need training
  in pedagogical methods to effectively transfer knowledge and experiences to learners.

- *Principal pipeline* is a channel—framework or model—strategically in place to develop
  school leaders. The processes support school districts with the recruitment and hiring of
  high-quality principals and assists with supporting the demands of the role. The pipeline

aims to positively affect school outcomes in climate, accountability, and achievement (Mendels, 2012).

- *Professional development* is ongoing training—or formal learning activities—specifically geared to one's profession for growth, addressing learning needs and work experiences (Woulfin & Kruse, 2018); "ongoing and embedded learning opportunities" (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999).

- *Professional Learning Communities* (PLC): Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) assert that there is not a single definition for professional learning communities (PLC). Interchangeable terms include *learning community* and *professional community* (Stoll et al., 2006). A PLC, or learning community, serves as a collaborative structure for educators to discuss problems of practice and exchange ideas for the betterment of teaching and learning (Seashore, Anderson, & Riedel, 2003).

Contribution to the Field

The research questions presented for this study will help me explore the nature of work done by adjunct faculty and how they learn and grow professionally. Concepts and models surrounding leaning communities and networks for professional learning are studied to have a better understanding of faculty development and the lived experiences of adjuncts. Higher education institutions are in a position of greater accountability at state and federal levels of government. School organizations across levels have received an abundance of social criticism about the quality of programming and student achievement. Every school leadership preparation program is unique, having distinct needs and available resources for achieving quality educational experiences for its students. There is no one model or process that will work for every university-based leadership preparation program. However, by examining experiences and

practices, and the ways leadership programs are redesigning their approaches to the work of becoming authentic learning communities, other education preparation programs may see similar barriers and challenges addressed that offer insight into the thoughtful and needed work towards continuous improvement. This study highlights the need for collaboration and social learning to maximize resources and time.

Chapter Summary

Leadership is integral for school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008); therefore, understanding the work of adjunct faculty, who are being hired more often to instruct aspiring school leaders, matters to ensure quality preparation occurs for those who wish to effectively lead school communities. In this study, I will explore adjunct faculty members' perspectives about their roles, experiences, and preparation to understand the significance of their work from the lens of school leadership preparation programs. I also examine the program features designed by a university that resembles a framework (or model) known as communities of practice (COP) to understand how leadership preparation programs may build capacity through the use of innovative, unconventional, yet very practical, collaborative methods. Literature surrounding student achievement and the need for quality school leaders suggest that preparation and development have an impact on quality leadership. I aim to provide additional research in the area of professional development and preparation—i.e., using the tenets of COP—for those instructing and considering a redesign of structures and methodologies in school leadership preparation programs for the betterment of all its stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 2, I present a review of literature and research related to my study on adjunct faculty, serving as part-time instructional personnel for university-based educational leadership preparation programs, and the forms of professional learning and development within that context. The chapter begins with a discussion about leadership preparation, providing background about educational leadership preparation such as its need, purpose, and current state. There is discussion presented on effective program features for educational leadership preparation, highlighting the organizational complexity of redesign and staffing approaches, to include adjunct faculty members. Next, I expand on discussion about adjunct faculty, using the empirical evidence available on what is known and unknown about their roles and integration into college/university settings. The section gives attention to how adjuncts are prepared, including in this discussion the oversights of these individuals by departments such as educational leadership preparation programs as it relates to instructional practices and preparation to perform responsibilities. I summarize empirical research pertaining to organizational agency and professional development. Communities of practice (COP) is a concept introduced with a description about how the model cultivates community, connection, and collaboration resulting in organizational productivity. I include discussion about networks, their formation, and ways they can be beneficial to organizations such as educational leadership preparation programs.

The Supply of Qualified School Leaders

Attention given to school leader quality is not new. Early in the 21st century, literature spotlighted waves of concern for principal shortages predicated on retirement projections

(McAdams, 1998; Olson, 1999; Steinberg, 2000). The predicted retirements never came to fruition to support the heighted anticipated shortages; in fact, the trends for securing licensed principal candidates has matched overall trends for college enrollment and degree attainment, indicating a steady increase of individuals into higher education programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Literature also indicates that the retirement and turnover rates for principals are relatively small, as well as consistent (Perrone & Tucker, 2018); yet, location and school conditions—i.e., context—are factors that have trended results in higher percentages of principals leaving positions (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012). In a study by Perrone and Tucker (2018), they found that the number of graduates receiving educational administration degrees has doubled over the timeframe of 2000 to 2014, with all levels granting degrees in this field increasing. They inform, "The supply of principal candidates far exceeds the number of annual principal openings offering school systems greater choice among candidates" (Perrone & Tucker, 2018, p. 1). The latter would suggest that the number of available principal candidates for hiring is not the critical factor unless those attaining the degree are choosing not to become school administrators, and these elements remain areas in the literature requiring further exploration and evidence (Perrone & Tucker, 2018).

According to Perrone and Tucker (2018), factors of relevance include candidates' preparedness and their ability to lead school communities successfully, as well as their career intentions, which may not include aspirations of becoming a building-based administrator. Further, school leader effectiveness and inexperience are associated. Data suggest that achievement outcomes are adversely impacted under the leadership of novice leaders (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012; Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Ikemoto, 2012; Dhuey & Smith, 2013; Miller, 2013). To combat these challenges, Kelley and Peterson (2000) offer research to

advocate that school leadership preparation is "ongoing evaluation and supervision and coaching" and "continuous career-long professional development" (p. 20). Sanzo (2016) contends, "Strong leaders are not born—they are continually developed through iterative professional learning opportunities" (p. 1). The findings support the notion that preparing aspiring school leaders for the unique and pressing needs of schools and school districts is of critical importance.

<div align="center">**University-Based School Leadership Preparation Programs**</div>

The emergence of literature surrounding school leadership effectiveness and its linkage to student achievement has facilitated education reform initiatives focusing on quality leadership preparation programming (Orr, 2011). Pounder (2012) examined school leadership programs and departmental practices, surmising that "quality preparation has influence because it shapes the knowledge, skills, and practices of leadership graduates" (Mullen & Eadens, 2018, p. 163). Understanding the critical need for quality leadership systems and the long-term effects that the developmental processes have on school leaders and the communities they lead, preparation programs have redesigned how they deliver instruction and revised subject matter in order to align with national standards to sustain relevancy and value by those entering and graduating from educational leadership programs.

Reform and Redesign of Leadership Preparation

Literature highlights five key studies on school leadership preparation programs that evidence the positive impact quality preparation experiences have on successful school leadership (see, Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996; Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Anderson and Reynolds (2015) note that,

Each of these studies supports the conclusion that quality preparation is critical in

developing effective principals. For this reason, states may mandate certain aspects of

preparation programs, as well as requirements for principal certification. (p. 195)

Federal policies have been instrumental (via funding and guidelines) at providing support and

giving greater attention to school leader effectiveness to improve school outcomes (U.S.

Department of Education, 2009, 2010). For example, during the Obama administration, the

development of the Race to the Top (RttT) grant program facilitated opportunities for states to

invest in high-quality development specifically for school leaders. Also, prior to that, No Child

Left Behind (NCLB) implemented and strengthened accountability measures and systems linking

student outcomes to school leader practices. Presently, the Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA)—or the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act—highlights evidence-based

initiatives with funding available to support school leadership. The involvement of federal and

state governments for securing resources and funding is vital. The effectiveness, however, of

government intervention depends on how informed and engaged school districts' leaders are in

the decision-making at these levels, as increased accountability has had both positive and

negative effects (Finnigan, 2010; Fowler, 2013; Shoup & Studer, 2010).

The emphasis placed on principal and school leader pipelines at the federal level has

given state leaders greater authority, granting them more flexibility to be able to address and

improve the quality of principal performance. One of several advantages states now have with

regard to policy and change rests on higher accountability from school leader preparation

programs (Grossman & Loeb, 2010). Grossman and Loeb's (2010) recommendation for

enhancing preparation programming is the utilization of partnerships with school districts to

understand and adequately address the needs of schools, making the development of school

leaders practical, relevant, and the demands less stressful, since many of these students are also working full-time. The focus within educational leadership literature has been slow to explore how school leaders are prepared and whether university-based programs are effective (Finnigan, 2010; Mintrop, 2012; Grossman & Loeb, 2010). We understand that school leaders significantly and indirectly influence student achievement (Sanzo, 2016); therefore, the preparation of school leaders is a contributing factor and there is a need for more research on the topic.

The increased pressures and societal scrutiny postsecondary institutions with preparation programs currently face stem from the century-old education reform movement. The professional expectations of school leaders have evolved as evidence has strengthened to support the notion that school leadership can have a positive or negative influence on student achievement dependent upon the quality of preparation (Cotton, 2003; Davis et al., 2005; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The barrier and remaining element is what Levine (2005) and others suggest is unresponsiveness by university-based preparation programs for school leaders to alter and update their methods and practices. Levine (2005), which I will discuss in the next section, maintained that the lack of investment to change university-based preparation programming produced considerable societal reproach as it relates to the state of education, student learning, and educational leadership. Those faulted for ill-prepared school leaders are those responsible for school leader training and development programming, i.e., university graduate programs (Levine, 2005). The response has been the charge to those leading educational leadership preparation programs to ensure a ready supply of school leaders who understand how to produce high levels of learning for all children in order to close the achievement gap and function in complex organizational conditions. Programs are

placing greater attention on instructional leadership practices and decision-making that promotes children performing at high levels, yet changes to pedagogy and program design have had to be addressed, which has not been easy (Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000). Preparation programs have been required to re-conceptualize and redesign traditional methods that align with societal needs and changes, which takes time to plan for and effectively implement.

A contributing factor as to why it has been a challenge for change to occur is due to the debate about the best ways to prepare school leaders. As the conversations persist, there is a need for ongoing research in this space that will provide strong, compelling evidence to bring about uniformity and consistency as changes occur across university-based preparation programs. Recent research studies and technical reports generally focus on specific program features as means to better prepare leaders, such as the use of cohorts, the establishment of district-university partnerships, and the development of a curriculum sequence, to name a few (Whitaker, King, & Vogel, 2004). An element omitted from majority of these arguments found in literature is on the role of the adjunct faculty member, who often have a great deal of interactions with the students, in their instructional roles. Given the fact that a number of adjunct faculty who instruct for school leadership preparation programs come with PK-12 leadership experience, there are opportunities to explore ways to capitalize on their skills and understanding of practice in the field. Additionally, there is a need to understand how adjunct faculty are prepared to teach within leadership preparation programs, how they perceive their role, and the ways they function in a part-time capacity. The information in turn can help university faculty, organizations, and foundations that support the development and preparation of aspiring school leaders consider and rethink the ways in which adjunct faculty are contributing to leadership preparation programming.

The Significance of Leadership Preparation

The precursor to leadership impact is preparation; and, for the past two decades, a body of evidence has grown, linking educational leadership with development programming and practices. Because leadership preparation is one of a few nascent concepts explored to determine school leader effectiveness, more research is necessary to inform universities and school district personnel about quality school leader preparatory activities and learning. Even those who are proponents of preparation programming have expressed concerns about the current state of higher education institutions and the capacity of their program structures to provide quality and practical experiences for students (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Harris, 2008; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Mohn & Machell, 2005; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2002). Much of what has facilitated this pathway of exploration and greater attention on graduate school programming comes from societal, as well as internal, criticisms about the institution's pedagogy, instructional delivery, and recruitment and selection processes (Goldring & Sims, 2005; Jacobson, 1998; Lashway, 2006; Stein, 2006). Levine (2005), a scholar in the field of educational leadership, asserted that leadership preparation programs were conventional and outdated in their structures and lacked necessary stature in the aforementioned areas to effectively develop and prepare students for the workforce. He added that "the body of research in educational administration cannot answer questions as basic as whether school leadership programs have any impact on student achievement in the schools that graduates of these programs lead" (Levine, 2005, p. 44). With the latter claim having merit based on the lack of existing evidence on the topic, an outcome has been the emergence of alternative leadership preparation programs led by school divisions, not-for-profit and for-profit programs (Grogan, Bredeson, Sherman, Preis, & Beaty, 2009).

According to Vanderhaar, Munoz, and Rodosky (2006), principals who are prepared in university training programs are no more effective than the aspiring leaders prepared in leadership programming managed by school district personnel. A study by the Southern Regional Education Board (2005) substantiated the latter, asserting,

> While a few universities have excelled at redesign, the majority fall short of implementing the conditions necessary to create high quality programs centered on preparing principals who can lead improvement in student achievement. (p. 8)

Proponents of university-based preparation programs counter the arguments and contend:

> Without a connection to the academy and a more global view of leadership, the result of stand-alone efforts is often a poorly designed program that tends to support only district views of leadership. (Sherman, 2005, p. 711)

The research suggests a positive influence exists between successful (or effective) school leaders and their learning (preparation) experiences (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Orr & Orphanos (2011) write, "Policy makers and educational experts are increasingly turning to educational leadership preparation and development as a strategy for improving schools and student achievement" (p. 19). Hess and Kelly (2007) state, "Meaningful reform of principal-preparation programs must ensure that the content of these programs is well suited for the challenges confronting principals in a new era of schooling" (p. 269). At the root of these beliefs is a shared concern that not enough data exist to support whether preparation programs are effective and prepare its graduates to feel confident enough to take on the administrative opportunities in school districts (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Thus, a gap in the literature exists concerning university-based preparation programs, their usefulness, and to what extent they provide ample practical learning experiences for aspiring school leaders. The criticisms and

unanswered questions by critics have resulted in the implementation of professional state and

national standards to address program quality, as noted in the previous section, and to establish

commonality of expectations among preparation programs for stronger alignment of the

employed methods and learning outcomes (Mullen & Eadens 2018; Peters-Hawkins, 2017;

Young, 2015).

Program and Preparation Effectiveness

A compilation of compelling findings about the effectiveness of school leadership

preparation programs and what quality university-based programming and development for

school leaders looks like continue to develop, strengthening the premise that additional research

on the topic needs to occur. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) have a

frequently cited study that posits leadership being second only to classroom instruction among

all school-related factors and influences that contribute to student achievement. The current

university-based principal preparation program initiative efforts acknowledge changes must

occur because leadership is an important catalyst for improving student learning and experiences,

which is a shared belief by district leaders that hire principals (Mendels, 2016).

Sanzo, Myran, and Clayton (2011) conducted a study on university-school district

leadership preparation program partnerships, which is one of the ways universities have worked

to be responsive to providing better preparation to aspiring leaders. This approach lacks

literature on its effectiveness being stronger than that of university-based preparation

programming and requires more investigating; yet, it remedies the concerns for districts

excluding the university level of knowledge and support that scholars like Sanzo, Myran, and

Clayton (2011) would contend is an essential element in leadership preparation. Borthwick,

Stirling, Nauman, and Cook (2003), as well as Muñoz, Winter, and Ricciardi (2006), (as cited in

Sanzo, Myran, & Clayton, 2011) have highlighted in their research that "aspiring leadership students who do not engage in meaningful and contextually relevant activities will not be able to bridge the theory to practice gap when working in the actual leadership field" (p. 308). The findings and results of the study suggested, "Context and authenticity are the keys to building bridges between theory and practice" (Sanzo, Myran, & Clayton, 2011, p. 308). Other scholars who have studied this area on ways to bring experiences that are more authentic into leadership preparation programs have suggested it provides "application of new knowledge to authentic problems of practice," thus broadening the lens for aspiring leaders (Sherman and Crum, 2009, p. 63).

The additional finding of relevance supporting the above conclusions from Sanzo, Myran and Clayton's (2011) research is the need for stronger collaboration among universities and school districts. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) explain the benefit and importance of such connections:

> Although professors can design leadership preparation programs that focus on the theoretical underpinnings of educational administration, active engagement by practicing principals who serve as mentors to prospective candidates and novice school leaders provides authenticity. (p. 471)

The involvement of these stakeholders from both entities has a critical part in the actions taken by university educational leadership preparation programs seeking to make changes that will be sustaining and result in improvement.

With the goal and purpose of "true collaborative effort," Sanzo, Myran, and Clayton's study (2011) remains one of a small number of researched cases that can speak to the successes of structures like partnerships. They state, "This lack of models for successful partnerships is

due, in part, to the number of individuals involved in partnerships, as well as the clash of beliefs, ideologies, and reason for involvement in the partnership by each of these individuals involved (Borthwick, Stirling, Nauman, & Cook, 2003; Munoz et al., 2006)" (Sanzo, Myran, & Clayton, 2011, p. 294). Recognizing that the concept of partnership and the literature that exists about how these models can lead to frustration and end in failure (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996), Sanzo et al. (2011) address these pitfalls throughout their study in an effort to lessen the dismissal of using design-based methods and principles for the development of necessary intervention and improvement.

Improving University Principal Preparation Programs: Five Themes from the Field (Mendels, 2016), a publication out of the Wallace Foundation, synthesized the findings from four relevant reports. The themes from Mendels' (2016) report echo Levine (2005), Hess & Kelly (2005), and other scholars, suggesting principal preparation programs are not organized or structured in productive ways that deliver in-depth instruction in order for students to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to lead schools confidently and successfully. Commissioned from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), the School Superintendents Association (AASA), the American Institute for Research (AIR), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) (Mendels, 2016), the five themes that surfaced from the Wallace Foundation report included:

- District leaders are largely dissatisfied with the quality of principal preparation programs, and many universities believe that their programs have room for improvement.
- Strong university-district partnerships are essential to high-quality preparation but are far from universal.

- The course of study at preparation programs does not always reflect principals' real jobs.

- Some university policies and practices can hinder change.

- States have authority to play a role in improving principal preparation, but many are not using this power as effectively as possible. (Mendels, 2016, p. 5)

With the understanding that "leader impact" (Young & Crow, 2017) matters, it becomes important for those in the field to gain understanding about what components from principal preparation programs yield positive school leadership outcomes. The five signature studies mentioned earlier on the importance of school leader preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Leithwood, Jantzi, Coffin, & Wilson, 1996; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr & Orphanos, 2011) have common features among their research that have been called "innovative" based on how they have impacted program development of effective school leaders (Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Orr, 2011). The identified features include: "targeted selection; coherent, standards-aligned curriculum; integrated theory and practice through problem-based learning; field-based experience and internships; knowledgeable faculty; standards-based assessments" (Anderson & Reynolds, 2015).

Editions of the *Handbook of Research on the Education of School Leaders* (Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009; Young & Crow, 2017) are noted as "two comprehensive overviews of the research on leadership preparation…critical to the field because of their breadth and depth" (Perrone & Tucker, 2018, p. 3). The handbooks provide a descriptive scope of school leadership preparation programming with recommendations and implications for the field and future work. The researchers state that "current research [about leadership preparation] is beginning to move beyond descriptive studies of program implementation to focus on outcomes"

(Young & Crow, 2017, p. 314). Limitations in this area include the samples used, as well as the

design methods and types of studies conducted (Perrone & Tucker, 2018; Young & Crow, 2017).

In a study by Davis et al. (2005), the program features most associated with school leaders'

readiness and ability to lead included: research-based content, curricular coherence, field-based

internships, problem-based learning strategies, cohort structures, mentoring, and university-

district partnerships. And, of these program elements, the more connections made and attention

given to the work of school improvement, the greater the learning outcomes (for graduates) as it

relates to effective school leadership behaviors (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Darling-Hammond,

Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr, 2011).

Qualities of Exemplary Preparation

Cosner (2018) extended and supports the limited research on important features of

exemplary preparation programs (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond,

Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Korach, 2011; Orr, 2011;

Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Perberton & Akkary, 2010). Cosner's (2018) work addresses the

research question: *What 'makes' a leadership preparation program exemplary* and she writes,

> The scant scholarly attention given to this process-oriented perspective is particularly
>
> troubling given that one of the most notable commonalities across the three most recently
>
> identified programs featured in this special issue relates to the processes and approaches
>
> used for program transformation. (p. 3)

Her findings highlight the purposefulness of organizational processes, as well as redesign efforts

(Fry, Collins, & Iwanicki, 2012; Lahera & Normore, 2012; Sanzo & Myran, 2012; Woodrum,

Borden, Bower, Olguin, & Paul, 2014), indicating that what exemplary programs do differently

consists of providing "strong learning orientations" and fostering engagement among the faculty

for "more continuous and sustained improvement work" (p. 3). And, using empirical research,

Cosner (2018) offers that the term *exemplary* applies to leadership preparation that is

"nontraditional and highly innovative" and has "also received an assortment of positive impacts

on outcomes valued from the preparation experience" (p. 2). To that end, Young and Crow

(2017) state that quality school leaders are those who "understand teaching and learning; who are

able to support their school staff, student bodies, and school communities; and who are willing to

question structures and norms in their efforts to meet the needs of those they lead" (p.1). In

order for this to come to fruition, the instructors (university faculty) must align and work with

districts to understand and be responsive to the needs of future school and district leaders.

Limited Professional Learning

Given the understanding that learning is essential for success—and, in all contexts, to

include teaching in higher education—the premise that teacher quality is one of the most

significant factors in student learning (Stronge & Tucker, 2000) applies at any level, suggesting

it is equally germane to school leader preparation programming (Healy, 2000). The literature

highlights differing perspectives about how school and district leaders are (and should be)

prepared for the workforce (LaMagdeleine, Maxcy, Pounder, & Reed, 2009). Because the act of

learning is complex, the research is filled with debate and discussion about what approaches and

strategies have value, as well as leaving its stakeholders with questions or skepticisms. For the

professoriate, there is unanimity that educational leadership preparation and development are

principal to the operations of establishing and sustaining high-performing educational systems

(Beck & Murphy, 1993; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012;

Shelton, 2009; Wallace Foundation, 2006). There is only limited research, however, resulting in

improved teaching methods—particularly for those in academia—and, namely because there is a

general emphasis, acceptance—even regard—that those holding faculty positions at higher education institutions are experts (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

For the experts, or qualified professionals, who are accountable for these learning experiences, the literature refrains that:

> [E]ffective professional learning—whether in formal or informal settings—requires the replacement of traditional powers (e.g., teacher-student, superior-subordinate) with collegial-peer relationships that rely on 'conditions of trust, openness, risk-taking, problem identification, problem solving, and goal setting' (Hansen & Matthews, 2002, p. 31).' (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004, p. 470)

Healy (2000), a scholar who worked at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, was a strong advocate of broadening the concept of scholarship to include teaching. Crediting the work of Boyer (1990), Healy (2000) surmised that "there is a need to give scholarship a broader meaning so as to define the work of university teachers in ways that enrich, rather than restrict, the quality of…education" (p. 169). University faculty are responsible for delivering knowledge to students. With this in mind, it would also be important for university administrators (e.g., deans, department chairs, etc.) to regularly evaluate institutional processes and organizational structures to build the capacity of all instructional faculty and ensure the delivery of high quality instruction to students. The next sections continues the narrative that will further frame understanding professional learning and development as it relates to organizational practices and ongoing improvement.

Adjunct Faculty and Academia

An organizational challenge to the educational leadership field is the expansion of part-time faculty membership. Adjuncts are a part of the contingent faculty classified within this

group. Their primary function within the educational leadership field is instructing aspiring school leaders of university-based graduate programs. It is my aim to highlight the gaps in the literature to strengthen the premise that there is a need for research on university-based school leadership preparation programs and the particular phenomenon under investigation, adjunct faculty, who have great responsibility in preparing future school leaders for work in complex environments with high demands for impact and producing results.

Existing Literature on Adjunct Faulty

Most studies about adjunct faculty exist in the context of community colleges; and, despite the rise in the number of adjunct faculty instructing at postsecondary institutions over almost three decades, existent literature is relatively weak in empirical knowledge and research about this population of phenomenon (American Academic: A national survey of part-time/adjunct faculty, 2010; Caruth & Caruth, 2014; Schneider, 1999). A key reason for hiring adjunct faculty is linked to cost savings and state and federal higher education funding reductions (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). These individuals do not hold permanent positions with colleges and universities because their employment depends on student enrollment and how programs decide to allocate funding for needs such as this (Halcrow & Olson, 2008; Kamps, 1996; Wegner, MacGregor & Watson, 2003), yet the diminishment of institutional resources creates uncertainty and inconsistency for programs in their efforts to prioritize needs (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). With the willingness to teach introductory courses that often fluctuate in the days and times when scheduling, as well as substandard compensation, these part-time professors are considered an economic advantage and attractive alternative to higher education institutions based on the necessity to have staffing flexibility (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001; Caruth & Caruth, 2014).

According to the literature, those who take on adjunct positions like the minimum responsibilities that come with performing the role. Unlike full-time faculty, they have minimum teaching loads and are not required to conduct research or carry out administrative responsibilities (Wegner, MacGregor & Watson, 2003). In programs like educational leadership, which will be discussed more in a subsequent section, another advantage of adjunct faculty is that their full-time work is usually aligns with what they teach at the university level, allowing the perspective of real world experience to enter the classroom (Wegner, MacGregor, & Watson, 2003). The literature is limited as to where part-time instructors like adjuncts are located within higher education (i.e., by program, department, region), yet Caruth and Caruth (2014) surmise from their research that "three-quarters of the instructors hired to teach undergraduate courses today are part-time" (p. 43). "Between 1969-70 and 2001, the number of part-timers increased by 376%, or roughly at a rate more than five times as fast as the full-time faculty increase" (Schuster & Finlelstein, 2006, p. 40). Kezar and Gehrke (2014) reported that given this rise it was likely that faculty in non-tenure-track positions now hold 70% of the composition of the academic workforce in U.S. colleges and universities.

Research conducted by Landrum (2009), as well as Ronco and Cahill (2004), have indicated that differences do not exist among faculty type (e.g., full-, part-time, graduate teaching assistants) as it pertains to responsibilities and expectations for grading or instructional quality and rigor. Opponents have contradicted such claims, concluding instructional quality matters, and students prefer being instructed by full-time faculty at four-year institutions, and the graduates instructed by full-time faculty have greater success rates—i.e., course completion and post-course and post-graduate experiences—than when with adjuncts or part-time instructors (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009). Other studies such as one conducted by Styron, Maulding, and Hull

(2006) offer countering perspectives from their research analysis, revealing that the students who took courses with adjunct faculty who were practitioners appreciated the authentic experiences shared. It is important to note that it is unlikely that the present collection of research about adjunct faculty effectiveness would convince proponents or critics (more or less) until more definitive connections can be made to validate the importance of the role and quality of an adjunct's work beyond financial conveniences that largely benefit colleges and universities (Morton, 2012). Further, the literature that does exist lacks the in-depth richness of evidence to in any particular area, which will be highlighted when reviewing research on educational leadership adjunct faculty. Another contributing factor to the above claim for consideration is the spike in enrollment graduate enrollment due to education reform, creating an increasing reliance on adjunct faculty. And, while an ideal remedy for addressing the complexities faced by those in education, securing quality and engaged adjuncts has proven to be challenging due to factors such as low pay, work demands, job security and lack of support of the role (Caruth & Caruth, 2013).

Another area of limited research about adjunct faculty is on professional identity (Crow, Whiteman, 2016). Part-time faculty such as adjuncts lack a consistent, detailed, formal job description, leaving those in these positions frustrated, disconnected, and undervalued (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; 2014)—that is, they are not acknowledged or viewed as professional (respected) members in the career field. While some literature as noted earlier speaks to how adjuncts find the minimal workload to be beneficial, there is literature to support that part-time faculty feeling disconnected, isolated, and unsupported in the role, which Eliason and Holmes (2012) found in their study could negatively affect student-learning outcomes. A plethora of research exists about contingent faculty and reasons why they have felt unwelcomed by experienced members

of the profession. Kezer and Sam (2013) surmise two reasons about the challenges in fully understanding the work of part-time faculty, as well as why the research about it has often been negative: (a) the work of part-time faculty is "exploitation" (p. 8); and, (b) the work of part-time faculty threatens the positions of tenured faculty and present staffing configurations. They further state that, "These deeply ingrained perspectives affect peoples' interpretation of the data and the way they write about [part-time] faculty" (p. 8). Kezer and Sam's research focuses on non-tenure-track faculty (2013); however, the noted ideologies spread to the broader group of those under the umbrella of part-time faculty, which has often contributed to inhibiting climate change to better the working relationships between full- and part-time university staff.

As colleges and universities work through the shift in staffing and the increased number of part-time staff, some investment is required in the areas of program design and faculty staffing approaches (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). Because there are variations of program designs with various modes for accessing the curriculum, clearly defining adjunct faculty positions is an integral step towards organizational coherence and creating program capacity—especially since some of these individuals have aspirations of becoming full-time. The adjunct faculty position does not appear to be soon going away given the critical demands they meet for colleges and universities (Forbes, Hickey, & White, 2010), and the consensus from Crow and associates (2017) is that adjunct faculty roles are underutilized, often unsupported, and those in the position are provided little to no feedback for strengthening their practice. Their assimilation and onboarding into college and university communities to foster a sense of connectedness and to procure, and sustain, quality faculty, there must be recognition that "part-time adjuncts can similarly strengthen ties [between the universities and the communities they serve] if they are considered part of the preparation programs rather than merely temporary visitors" (McCarthy &

Hackmann, 2016, p. 14). Thus, there is opportunity to examine and consider existing educational constructs in order to create organizational settings that may best serve individuals in ways that facilitate and enact agency among stakeholders.

Adjunct Faculty in Educational Leadership Programs

Adjunct faculty play a key role in higher education, including educational leadership preparation programs. As previously shared, a lack of training exists among the professoriate, yet there is collective agreement that ongoing professional development to elevate learning and practice is necessary in order for professionals to remain responsive to the needs of learners and the communities they serve. The limited number of resources made available to colleges and universities is one key factor challenging consistent and quality professional development programming from occurring. Recognizing the shift in the composition of the academic workforce creates a critical need for attention to this particular population. Not limited to educational leadership programs, there are many university programs working to meet state and national standards, further justifying the timeliness for a study about adjunct learning.

The Importance of Teaching. Those who attend higher education (graduate) programs have experiences in scholarship and research, yet programming is often lacking—or even non-existent—in the area of teaching preparation (Scott & Scott, 2016). Tight (2002) is one of a few researchers to study about what it means to be a "professor," that is, the role's function and its purpose. It would seem there is a relationship between academic leadership and preparation and/or development for professors; yet, Mroz (2011) reports the rather ironic gap that exists:

What it means to be a professor—and more importantly what others think it means—is magnificently opaque. There's plenty of advice on how to get there, but little once

you've reached your destination. There's no global job description, no template, no

handbook, only the example of those who have gone before.

Because academic leadership is most commonly associated with roles in higher education, like a

dean or department head, it is important to delineate that the term for this study captures Evans'

(2017) research. Evans (2017) defined *academic leadership* as "informal—often ad hoc—

supportive development—or even empowering-focused leadership, such as mentoring or role

modelling, which may occur independently or formal, designated leadership or management (p.

126). Bolden, Gosling, O'Brien, Peters, Ryan, and Haslam (2012) posited that academic

leadership often does not come from those in formal (managerial) roles; rather, these learned

experiences occur through associations and "engagement with influential colleagues within one's

own academic discipline, especially those who play a pivotal role in one's transition and

acculturation into academic life" (p. 6). They went on to name examples of those who may

model and help acquire skills to be successful such as (former) doctoral advisors, colleagues

(past and present), and even studied scholars; it is also suggested that these individuals are highly

influential in shaping the role and work for novice professors. The literature reviewed suggests

that there is inadequate preparation for professorship. Individuals are prepared as experts in their

disciplines, yet not in the area of pedagogy. In sum, it would be worth better understanding the

perspectives of those in the role, to what extent a negative impact on teaching exists, and what

bearing (if any) does this have on student achievement.

Adjunct Integration and Orientation

Regardless of status—i.e., full- or part-time—those instructing at higher education

institutions are expected to be effective teachers, but what means are in place—particularly for

adjuncts—to meet that expectation, as well as measure or monitor for evidence? Stenerson,

Blanchard, Fassiotto, Hernandez, and Muth (2010) speak to the benefits of adjunct faculty, noting they are a key component of professional education because adjuncts can share field experiences and expertise in applied and specialized careers:

> In this role, too, [adjuncts] can be effective mentors and models to students. In addition, as members of the larger 'community' that the community college serves, adjuncts can and do provide connections to the economic and political entities that fiscally support the community college. (para. 9)

According to Caruth and Caruth (2013), "Adjuncts tend to rely on traditional pedagogical methods of teaching and seldom incorporate new teaching methods because they receive little or no professional development opportunities as compared to their colleagues" (p.1). Morton (2012), who highlights and expands upon Lyons' (2007) research about adjuncts, says, "Institutions of higher education desire quality adjuncts, yet fail to invest in their adjuncts to produce that quality" (p. 369).

Lyons' (2007) empirical studies about embracing adjunct faculty responds to what supports and features are needed for preparing and developing those who enter the role, and he determines five required actions (behaviors) on the part of institutions to create successful experiences for *all faculty* (Morton, 2012, p. 406):

1. A thorough orientation to the institution, its culture, and its practices;

2. Adequate training in fundamental teaching and classroom management skills;

3. A sense of belonging to the institution;

4. Both initial and ongoing professional development; and

5. Recognition for quality work that is perceived as appropriate and adequate. (Lyons, 2007, p. 6)

Additionally, Lyons (2007) adds, "Because part-time faculty play such an influential role in instruction, the quality of their teaching and the opportunities they have for professional development should be key concerns for academic leaders" (p. 5). With this, Morton (2012) synthesizes and concludes that an investment in growing the work of adjunct faculty in turns "produces growth for the institution" (Morton, 2012, p. 402) because "that investment…will empower the adjunct instructors to create the best environments possible for their students" (p. 402).

Morton (2012) shares another well-thought-out position regarding the necessity to prepare and support adjuncts and that is the need to incorporate hared development activities for full- and part-time faculty. He quotes Baron-Nixon (2007) on the advantages of collaborative development:

- Opportunity for individuals to learn from each other, regardless of their status.

- Help to foster informal connections between part-time and full-time faculty in their own departments.

- Promote collegiality and a sense of 'we are all in this together.'

- Financially sound in that they avoid unnecessary duplication of development. (Morton, 2012, p. 402)

These core findings aim to cultivate community and connectivity for adjunct faculty and suggest a "pipeline" is needed for the assurance and availability of well-prepared and well-supported faculty to benefit the learning environments of postsecondary institutions.

Adjunct Faculty Bridge Gaps

Education leadership faculty members are faced with pressures to implement improved instructional practices and accountability measures, which (as previously mentioned) will require

an abandonment of conventional methods (Young & Eddy-Spicer, 2019). In acquiring knew knowledge and skills, preparation programs need to rethink and restructure the way they are supporting and developing their candidates' learning to ensure effectiveness in leadership practices, which means giving attention to technical skills. This can be difficult given the fact that many students coming into leadership preparation programs are already in full-time professions and require flexibility and creativity in course offerings and practical learning experiences. The research connects a few key ideas to accomplish this. First, the utilization of adjunct faculty lends itself to the opportunity for bridging theory, research, and practice in meaningful ways. Through instructional reform, professional development becomes a means for doing so, using a community of learners approach.

To enhance the body of extant literature on school leadership preparation, two critical factors provide evidence that further research and attention are vital for growing and improving the work of adjunct faculty. First, the steady increase of enrollment numbers into higher education programs has resulted in a spike in the number of courses taught by adjunct faculty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Presently, almost 50 percent of instructional faculty in degree-granting institutions in the United States are adjunct faculty (National Center for Education Statistic, 2018). Husbands (1998) and Lazerson (2010) point out the irony on the nonexistence of data about student learning outcomes of those taught by adjunct faculty; and, while there is some literature containing student-reporting on satisfaction (Mueller, Mandernach, & Sanderson, 2013), more attention devoted to the topic could offer insight to guide decision-makers about how to strengthen and improve school leadership. Second, literature has indicated the need for more training and professional development for instructional faculty—both full- and part-time, as university-based preparation programs respond to demands for redesign of

pedagogy and its delivery (Coleman, Copeland, & Adams, 2001; Crow, Arnold, Reed, & Shoho, 2012; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Milstein & Krueger, 1997; Murphy & Forsyth, 1999). Crow et al. (2012) state, "Program reform can benefit from authentic and intensive involvement of [adjunct] faculty. Instead of seeing [them] as only responsible for course instruction in the educational leadership program, we recommend that creative ways be developed to increase their involvement in program development" (p. 187).

Therefore, given the prevalence of adjunct faculty and the need for school leader preparation reform/redesign, greater empirical evidence is needed with studies exploring the role of adjunct faculty and the ways in which they can bring value to university-based preparation programs. The role of adjuncts in school leadership preparation programming is a fundamental and innovative way to develop an environment for educators with a variety of strengths—novices and veterans—to co-learn from one another. This type of collaboration develops a platform of partnerships among multiple learning networks and leverages the field of school leadership preparation and development because of improved methods and bolstered learning.

Professional Learning and Development

This section is informed by literature related to school effectiveness, school reform, leadership, professional learning communities, and systems improvement. In order for adjunct faculty to learn and better understand their roles, more interaction with their colleagues who are full-time is one of a few necessities (Lyons, 2007; Morton, 2012). Dedicating intentional time for sharing work experiences will foster "opportunities to gain new insights, discuss issues, and identify problems and solutions to develop [programming]" (Kochan & Reams, 2013, p. 154). The purposeful work of socially constructing knowledge, as well as role identity, may best be aligned with constructivism, which stems from social learning theory (Wenger, McDermott, &

Snyder, 2002; Wenger, 2010). Dewey and Vygotsky assert that people learn through experiences, and those social interactions generate learning—or contextual understanding. To cultivate community, connectivity, and on-the-job (collective) learning experiences, university-based faculty have the potential to leverage their work by fostering collaborative routines.

The Impetus for Continuous Improvement and Development

Continuous improvement is not a new concept and there is a good amount of literature that speaks to it. The concept had a critical role during the 1980's when business managers were seeking techniques to increase the productivity of its employees (Lolidis, 2006; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Emphasis was placed on developing strategies that would foster greater involvement, collaboration, and communication among those in the company. Globally, the Japanese market achieved faster results than others, crediting the impetus for their productivity to having "a greater commitment to the philosophy of continuous improvement" (Lolidis, 2006, p. 2).

Wegner, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), among others, use the example above to evidence the power of collaboration. They posit that communities of practice (COP) was the "knowledge system" implemented that led to the successes of the Japanese market. They define CoP as "groups of people who share a concern about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). To date this concept back farther, theorists recognize the seminal works of Frederick Winslow Taylor, an American engineer, for influencing the modern theories that have evolved and are used today when seeking improved outcomes that will be sustaining and large-scale in its impact (Bolman & Deal, 2008). During the industrial era, Taylor saw the need to increase his laborers' productivity. Bolman and

Deal (2008) assert that Taylor's ideas are the tenets shaping organizational theory and the way a system regulates itself.

There are myriad lenses, frames, metaphors, and concepts in the body of literature that managers and leaders can apply from this well-researched topic when addressing organizational complexities that necessitate changes in how a working system functions (i.e., producing), and giving great attention to the networks of interactions and the dynamics within them. In Bolman and Deal's (2008) research, they emphasize the leader (or manager) as the defining element and catalyst for response to change and organizational development. Their definition of leadership is that it is an activity, not a position: "[It is] a process of mutual influence fusing thought, feeling, and action to produce cooperative effort in the service of purposes and values of both the leader and the led" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 196). Each of the four frames (structural, human resources, politics, and symbolic) highlight how strategies, tools, and habits must be examined and consistently monitored to build capacity and optimize it for production (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Another researcher, Morgan (2006) conceptualizes the aspects of organizations through eight metaphors: machine, organism, brain, culture, political system, psychic prison, flux and transformation, and instrument of domination. He expounds, that metaphors are "a means of illustrating how whys of thinking about the world are mediated by social milieu, and how the acquisition of new ways of thinking depends upon a departure from the old world view" (Morgan, 1980, p. 605).

Bolman and Deal (2008) refer to the competition and change and pressures organizations regularly face and must be responsive to for survival and development. The pressures can occur internally or externally, and leaders have to determine how they will respond based on what variables or values are at odds. When matters like reform occur, the response may produce

needs like downsizing and outsourcing. However, the response by leaders can also be making investments in the organization, which can build skills and loyalty among its members (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This literature sheds light on the importance of high-performance behaviors and the relationship that exists between people and organizations. It develops a premise for this study that in order for organizations to consistently provide quality production, they must continuously monitor its growth and the system's culture—its people and values—will drive the success of its development in leveraging chaos and change.

Professionals and Performance. The transition from student to professional across disciplines is challenging for new graduates and the workforces that employ them. There are requirements and expectations for these individuals to go into their new roles demonstrating professional competence—i.e., "having the relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes to perform the job while meeting [a myriad of other responsibilities with] efficiency" (Fitzgerald, Moores, Coleman, and Fleming, 2015, p. 62). New graduates come into careers that are complex in nature, such as healthcare, education, and business, and these environments have increasing demands that further the need for employers to have graduates who are prepared and can bring about positive impact and productivity.

There is literature that makes a distinction between individuals who are in a profession versus those is a standard job. Some have researched and highlighted the characteristics that set those in a profession apart from those that are not. For instance, Troman (1996) conceptualized profession using a sociological approach and described it as "a group which is constantly interacting with the society that forms its matrix, which performs its social functions through a network of formal and informal relationships, and which creates its own subculture requiring adjustments to it as a prerequisite for career success" (Greenwood, 2010, p.65). Greenwood

(1957; 2010) highlighted five distinctive features in his research on professionals: "(1) systematic theory, (2) authority, (3) community sanction, (4) ethical codes, and (5) a culture" (Greenwood, 2010, p.65). By using a systemic lens, Greenwood (1957) synthesized that "the skills that characterize a profession flow from and are supported by a fund of knowledge that has been organized into an internally consistent system, call a *body of theory*….Preparation for a profession must be an intellectual as well as a practical experience" (p. 66). Capturing the hallmarks that establish professionalism, Welie (2004) noted the service component of professionals as a distinctive element. He defined profession as "a collective of expert service providers who have jointly and publicly committed to always give a priority to the existential needs and interests of the public they serve above their own and who in turn are trusted by the public to do so" (Welie, 2004, p. 531). In short, the literature suggests that those in a profession are responsible for understanding and responding to the existential needs of those they serve. The development of professional activities and experiences provide a context for the relationship between knowledge (learning) and quality performance.

Webster-Wright (2009) has asserted that professionals accept the importance of growth and continued learning, yet a content/enhanced learning dichotomy challenges the usefulness and quality of engaging in development activities. To truly bring about improved outcomes and practices in professional life, the learning experiences and activities must be aligned and relevant to the nature of work (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Penz & Bassendowski, 2006). A great amount of literature exists on professional learning, which can inform professional development practices to yield desired outcomes in work performance.

Empirical research on professional learning evidences that it is most effective when: a) it is delivered over the long term—i.e., ongoing; and b) it is in the context of a community that

support learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Garet et al., 2001; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009; Wenger, 1998). Webster-Wright (2009) states that professional development (for learning) is "continuing, active, social, and related to practice" (p. 703).

Professional Learning Experiences and the Field of Education

The topic of professional development when discussed in existing literature has often been linked to teachers, education reform, and how to improve teacher practice (Leadership Survey; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001). Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008) report, "professional development, though well intentioned, is often perceived by teachers as fragmented, disconnected, and irrelevant to the real problems of classroom practice" (p. 226). The literature contends that the current state of professional learning for educators needs attention and must be reconfigured to yield results that facilitate change (Liberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). The offerings are described as a "one size fits all" model where everyone receives the same information due to federal and state accountability measures such as high-stakes testing (Liberman & Pointer Mace, 2008; Rodman, 2019). In 2014,

> Only 29 percent of teachers are highly satisfied with their current professional development offerings (Gates Foundation, 2014), and only about 40 percent of teachers reported that the professional development they received was a good use of their time (TNTP, 2015). (Rodman, 2019, p. 3)

The structures in place for educators once they graduate and move into professional roles has often taken a traditional, unilateral approach of one-size-fits-all professional development (Rodman, 2019). Even with the realization that differentiated structures produce the best learning outcomes among students, "most [professional development] plans [for adult learners]

consist of one-time workshops and top-down mandates that don't integrate the components of personalization teachers are working to incorporate into their own classrooms" (Rodman, 2019, p. 14). Rodman (2019) observed that even professional learning communities can produce ineffective experiences for educators when used for "planning and grading sessions rather than true thought partnerships and peer-to-peer collaboration in which teachers push one another's practice" (p. 14).

To counter these ill forms of professional learning, educators have sought out professional learning networks (PLNs). These networks have grown in form through online mediums like webinars, Twitter, blogs, vlogs, online courses, and edcamps (Rodman 2019). The challenge in this method is that it only impacts those educators who are self-driven to continue to build the capacity of their knowledge and skills. "[T]hey do little to foster a community of professional learning" for organizational growth, change, or improvement (Rodman, 2019, p. 14). Literature that exists about professional learning and development, while slow in its emergence, address the fact that adult learning is most effective when it is personalized (Rodman, 2019).

Adult Learning and Social Structures

Much of the dissatisfaction about professional development rests in the fact that the delivery models and conditions counter what the research touts concerning the concept of andragogy (adult learning). First, there is a great deal of literature to support the importance of learning through experience—i.e., learning by practicing and doing it (Liberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). Rosenstock-Huessy (1992) stated, "Adult education, in particular, is oriented toward solving community problems as a step toward a better future. This requires a curriculum that prepares the student to see, understand and deal with problems at hand" (Trans. 1992).

Next, learning is argued to occur best under social conditions that meet us where we are on the topic, personalizing and growing our knowledge through interactions. This concept is one evolved around the idea of job-embedded learning, which coins the term "professional learning." Finally, literature about adult learning emphasizes the need to see the process of acquiring knowledge as an ongoing occurrence. Knowles (1980) asserts:

> The problem is that education is not yet perceived as a lifelong process so that we are still taught in our youth only what we ought to know then and not how to keep finding out. One mission of the adult educator, then, can be stated positively as helping individuals to develop the attitude that learning is a lifelong process and to acquire skills of self-directed learning. (p. 28)

The literature draws relationships between communities of practice and adult learning, suggesting that when adults are a part of social, collaborative environments they are better able to transfer the knowledge attained and apply it to their work and experiences (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Unique to communities of practice, learners/participants have the concurrence of skills development alongside role identity, and it is continuous as those in the community embrace the process of focusing on and addressing relevant issues for the betterment of self and the organization as a whole (Barab & Duffy, 2000). Brown (1997) also surmises that participants in a community of practice have expectations of learning and growing in purposeful ways.

For full- and part-time faculty, the collaboration removes the constant barrier of teaching as a solo endeavor. There is value in the exchange of ideas and introspection for renewed and strengthened teaching that communities of practices establish. "A supportive community of practice can help to sustain the slow, stepwise process that eventually leads to a fundamental transformation in teaching philosophy and practice" (Spitzer, Wedding & DiMauro, 1994, p. 1).

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (COP) are most commonly known as a group (or community) of professionals from the same career field who assemble regularly with the goal of continuous improvement. COP are designed to support organizations by providing ongoing professional development to (a) solve problems, and (b) brainstorm and share ideas and knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991), who helped coin the term and develop the concept, noted that successful COP are characterized by three elements, which function together to support innovation and learning. The three components of COP are:

- *Community*, which refers to the people who willingly come together to build relationships, exchange knowledge and learn from one another in an environment of trust and shared sense of purpose or accountability.

- *Domain* consists of the common interests or challenges on which the COP members focus and which provide the commitment or need for them to come together, interact, and share ideas, knowledge, and stories.

- *Practice* is the shared gamut of common knowledge, tools, frameworks, and resources that the members share and build related to their profession. (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2006; Wenger, 1998)

Derived from a constructivist paradigm, Lave and Wenger (1991) explained that COP is a social system. A key aspect of the COP model is its ability to foster organizational learning in natural (or practical) ways. People are learning from their peers and are solutions-driven to improve performance, processes, and procedures, as well as build capacity (Wenger, 1998). To reiterate some foundational and historical aspects of COP, which were mentioned earlier in this chapter, Traditionally, work structures have operated in ways mirroring the era; so, during the age of the

Industrial Revolution, where manufacturing gave rise to and favored mechanization and the factory system, the work environment was systematic, top-down, and product driven—i.e., bureaucratic. With time and technological advancements, poor working conditions were negatively affecting society, which led to government interventions and labor reforms. This shifted the thinking of managers from a less rationalistic approach to more sense-making to better engage with the environment and demonstrate the improvement of the work environment.

Brown and Duguid (1991) examined work conditions of employees and the factors contributing to supportive, collaborative professional environments. In their findings, which highlighted the concept of community, informal groups served as catalysts for change and productivity. Blankenship and Ruona (2007) posited:

> Brown and Duguid see COP as being counter-culture to the organization. Because COPs are not usually a part of the formal organizational structure, the authors caution against the ability of an organization to ignore the knowledge and innovation that is produced within these communities. (para 6)

Richlin and Cox (2004) echoed the sentiments above. In their study, they use the term Faculty Learning Communities (FLC), and the structure closely resembles COP. Their findings showed that by building community among its members, they were then able to foster and promote the scholarship of teaching and ongoing learning. This finding is a key element in the success of knowledge structures and models—i.e., engagement.

Sanzo (2016b) addresses ineffective professional development, the design of it, and pitfalls in her research on systems development for school leaders. She explains that well-designed systems for professional growth and learning must be implemented with fidelity to function well; it requires appropriate training and careful considerations for implementation. She

posits, "Often the case is that teachers were not given adequate training around working with adults in a team setting, the effective use of protocols, norm setting, and other factors contributing to effective communities of practice" (p. 25). To leverage engagement, people need to feel connected or attracted to the profession to become involved (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). Hargreaves and Fullan discuss this, saying, "The best way you can support and motivate teachers is to create the conditions where they can be effective day after day, together. It's about interschool and interdistrict collaboration. It's about the whole profession" (p. 37). Thus, integration into the social learning experiences with others has implications for repeated use, engagement, and learning.

Lave and Wenger (1991) discuss the process of legitimate peripheral participation in COP. Learning is described as a process within their description, not a single occurrence. When learners first participate in COP they are initially observers of interactions occurring amongst those in the community with experience. Lave and Wenger (1991) formulate that the newcomers who identify with topics of discussion will be inclined to interact, engage, and commit to the COP. Sanzo (2016b) states,

> Novice and experienced leaders should engage in socializing experiences that will bring new leaders into the field with specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and revitalize current principals with refreshed and new knowledge and experiences. Further, through school improvement practices, leaders will at once learn the skills of school improvement while also leading, teaching, and forming new COPs within their schools. Practicing principals can deepen their knowledge and further develop skills related to coaching, culture and community building, group facilitation of data-based discussion, and related topics. (p. 63)

To conclude, "Design matters in professional learning and should be taken into account" (Sanzo, 2016b, p. 2). Because a great deal of reform requires systemic change, learning experiences need to be intentional to transform and improve practices. COP structures focus on productivity and effectiveness in ways that integrate individuals with a common mission, yet are engaged in growing their skills as they exchange knowledge. The next section expounds upon literature pertaining to professional learning communities (PLCs); the term is often used interchangeably with COP within the educational field.

Professional Learning Communities

The field of education has endured decades of reform with a great deal of literature about ways to improve, change, and sustain successful outcomes. For well over two decades, the focus has been on teacher effectiveness and professional development. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) write, "The vision of practice that underlies the nation's reform agenda requires most teachers to rethink their own practice, to construct new classroom roles and expectations about student outcomes, and to teach in ways they have never taught before" (para 1). To achieve this, professional learning communities (PLC) are a research-based process designed and implemented across levels of the education system to maximize professional development experiences of educators (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Harris & Jones, 2010; Louis & Marks, 1998; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Scribner, Hager, and Warne (2002) state, "Strong professional communities can facilitate changes in teacher practices that lead to improved learning experiences" (p. 45). The claim is substantiated "by the literature about effective organizations which shows how they access, circulate and distribute knowledge as a way to achieve continuous improvement (Leithwood et al., 1997; Sergiovanni, 1994)" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 173).

Within the literature, two concepts are highlighted that guide this study as it relates to PLC, continuous learning, and change. First, the role of leadership in improvement is an important component for reform processes. Scribner et al. (2002), who conducted a study on PLC within high schools, state, "Principals have become viewed as leaders who work at the center of organizations to strengthen the web of social and professional relations" (p. 46). While their study focuses on K-12 education, additional literature support the argument that the processes, in fact, are effective across levels of an organization and even within other disciplines and fields. Harris and Jones (2010) write,

> The idea of professional learning communities is underpinned by the concept of distributed leadership (Harris, 2008). Distributed leadership is primarily concerned with the reciprocal interdependencies that shape leadership practice. A distributed perspective on leadership recognizes that leadership involves multiple individuals and crosses boundaries. Distributed leadership encompasses both formal and informal forms of leadership practice. (p. 173-174)

Thus, those leading organizations play an important role in establishing a vision and creating a mindset "that underlines the importance of people learning from each other and being collectively committed to improvement" (Harris & Jones, 2010, p. 174). Fullan (2009) discusses this concept as well, noting that educational leaders influence culture. The ability to establish a learning culture is also the power to facilitate second-order change (Rait, 1995), which is the second noteworthy idea.

In a study on rural middle schools that explored how professional community was used to facilitate collective learning and improvement, Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999) discussed the relationship that exists between double-loop learning and professional

community in their findings. They defined double-loop learning, or organizational learning, "as a process that examines the underlying assumptions and leads, not only to the acquisition and integration of new knowledge, but to the effective use and dissemination of professional knowledge" (Scribner et al., 1999, p. 155). DuFour and Eaker (1998), who developed one of the foundational frameworks for PLC within the education field, focus on learning organizations. They discuss the distinction between "organization" and "community," relating the former to formalities associated with efficiency and structure and the latter with shared interests and connectivity. According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), a PLC is "educators [creating] an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone" (p. xii). While DuFour and Eaker (1998) illuminated six characteristics of PLC, in 2004 DuFour narrowed those characteristics to three core principles, or "big ideas":

- Ensure that students learn

- Develop a culture of collaboration

- Focus on results

Ultimately, a distinguishing characteristic of PLC is the practice of using results (or data) as a catalyst for change and continuous improvement (DuFour, 2004). Products and outcomes drive the courses of action determined and planned and are the roadmap for attaining intentional goals that all members share and strive to achieve.

Additional frameworks and models exist (e.g., Hord, 2004; Murphy & Lick, 2004) for implementing PLC. The concepts and research draw from Senge's (1990) research on learning organization theory with nuances and considerations for effectively driving change within schools. The literature evidences how these conditions are effective at the K-12 level for school

environments; there is little empirical research to support whether professional communities

could impact organizational culture and productivity at the university level. Because learning is

the defining element of professional communities (Smylie & Hart, 2000; Scribner, Hager, &

Warne, 2002; Scribner, 1999), there is cause to explore the ways in which such processes may be

utilized within higher education settings to enhance learning, collaboration, and outcomes.

Networks and Systems for Learning

As academics move toward a mindset that sees the need for ongoing, continued

improvement, the considerations for collaborative structures provides opportunities for those in

the field of educational leadership to ensure their work with learners is effective, intentional, and

done with fidelity. In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2009, research was

conducted on developing cohesive leadership systems in order to improve school leadership.

There were eight key findings—or strategies—that emerged from their analysis. One of the

defining approaches used within systems that were effective was formal and informal networks.

Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto, Russell, & Zellman (2009) wrote that networks have been used

"as mechanisms for engaging stakeholders, building agreement among them, and developing

policies and initiatives to improve school leadership. Networks also served as vehicles for

dispersing information throughout the state as members communicated with others in their own

local communities" (p. 59). Networks are seen as a change strategy for systems improvement

(Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016). Networks have emerged in the field of education for the

purposes of supporting opportunities for "innovation and improvement in educational systems"

(Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016, p. 6).

Rincon-Gallard and Fullan (2016) defined networks as "a set of people or organizations

and the direct and indirect connections that exist among them, whereas collaboration is the act of

working together with a common purpose" (p. 6). In their research on effective networks, Ricon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) identified eight qualities of well-functioning networks:

- Focusing on ambitious student learning outcomes linked to effective pedagogy

- Developing strong relationships of trust and internal accountability

- Continuously improving practice and systems through cycles of collaborative inquiry

- Using deliberate leadership and skilled facilitation within flat power structures

- Frequently interacting and learning inwards

- Connecting outwards to learn from others

- Forming new partnerships among students, teachers, and families, and communities

- Securing adequate resources to sustain the work. (p. 5)

Sanzo (2016b) highlighted how the development of professional networks provide "informal opportunities to gather" (p. 119), which is shown below in Figure 1. These gatherings within established learning communities offer educational leaders opportunities for discussions about practice, which the literature about networks in educational systems evidences has two domains:

First is the large reservoir of resources, expertise, and knowledge that remain dormant, untapped, or underused in classrooms, schools, educational systems, and society at large (Ainscow, 2014). Second, good ideas that do exist are not tested and further developed as they remain in isolated pockets, while groundbreaking inventions and innovations come from people who work together to solve complex problems (Isaacson, 2015; Nielsen, 2012). (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016, pp. 7-8)

Sanzo (2016b) also shares that informal experience for socializing "can help form strong professional bonds between colleagues" (p. 120). In the work of creating university-district partnerships, as well as cohorts, Sanzo (2016b) introduces a holistic design concept model used for the purposes of establishing strong, collaborative relationships between the organizations.

Figure 1

Holistic Leadership Development Design Model
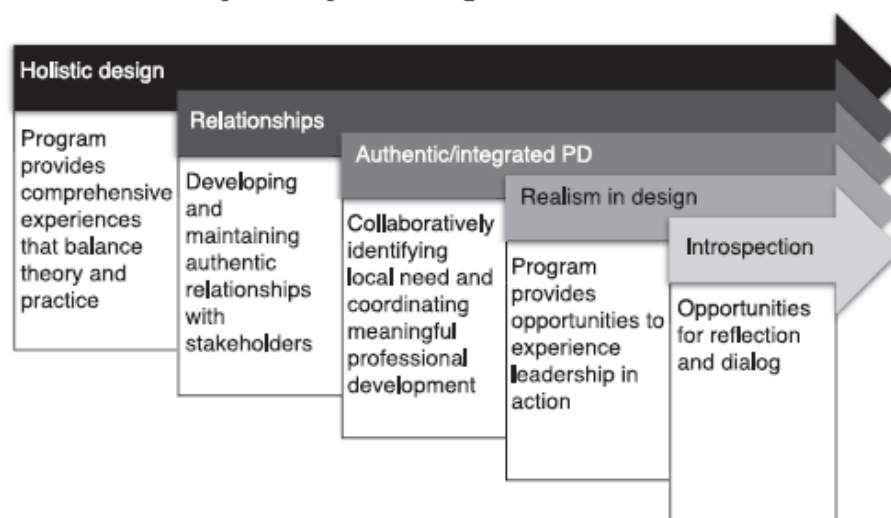
Note. Reprinted from *Strategies for Developing and Supporting School Leaders*, by Sanzo, K. L., 2016, p. 119, New York, NY: Routledge.

The five principles of the holistic leadership development model support what Hargraves and Fullan (2013) posit are investments in developing professional, social, and human capital. To leverage social cohesion, they contend:

> To enact change faster and more effectively, to reduce variation in effective teaching in a school or between and among schools in terms of networks, our advice is to use social capital. The group to change the group. This means developing how teachers as a team or group can best identify and respond to the needs of individual students. Back this up

with the human capital that comes with being able to attract the best people in the

profession, develop them as they come in, and build on that to be effective. (Hargreaves

& Fullan, 2013, p. 37)

There is power in numbers, and existing literature evidences the effectiveness of collaboration by

way of the working conditions (i.e., culture established), mindset of those within the

organization, and the systems in place for sustainability and continuous improvement

(Lieberman & Mace, 2010; Little, 1982; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006).

Chapter Summary

Extensive literature exists on the topics of educational leadership and professional

development; however, there is less research surrounding how educational leaders are prepared

and what aspects of the university's programming impact student learning. Existing literature,

while slow to emerge, supports the need for high quality teachers and educational leaders, whose

practices impact student achievement; the same holds true for higher education institutions and

their instructional faculty and administrators. Consequently, shifting patterns in academia have

dramatically changed in a short span of time, and adjunct instructors make up almost half of the

professoriate. Their presence has several benefits, including the authentic experiences they bring

to coursework and the support given to full-time faculty who are faced with demanding

workloads and fewer resources. Adjuncts are cost effective given the loss of funding and

supports by federal and state governments.

Literature posits that these individuals seldom receive appropriate integration into the

adjunct role, which presents a number of challenges for the field of educational leadership given

the reform movement and social criticisms about program ineffectiveness. Research supports

that adjuncts are not being used to their fullest capacity and more could be done by higher

education institutions to increase their knowledge, monitor performance, and sustain quality individuals. Job-embedded opportunities are an effective means for professional learning, which can be found in literature on professional development, adult learning, and organizational theory. Communities of practice (COP) is a knowledge model (or structure) that has been effective and used in other sectors such as business and healthcare fields when addressing ongoing learning, productivity, and changes in practice. The COP literature frames this research with an understanding that productive work environments need supportive cultures and systems in place that engage its members through collaborative means to create successful outputs. Collaboration facilitates opportunities for networking, which allows for informal, continuous learning when the conditions are appropriately established.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter will provide rationale for the research methodology and processes taken when conducting this study. I begin the chapter, introducing the research methodology. In the sections that follow, I describe the research design, participant and site selections, data collection, and data analysis. To conclude the chapter, I offer discussion on trustworthiness and validation of the method and study. For this study, I followed the recommended protocols for conducting phenomenological research. The methodology used explored the lived experiences of adjunct faculty serving in an educational leadership preparation program at a university located in an eastern state near the Mid-Atlantic coast. This methodology was selected based on my interest in capturing the perspectives of a unit of individuals and the ways in which they experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The sections that follow will detail the logic of the selected research approach.

Research Methodology

A number of methodologies exist, which can be daunting and overwhelming when selecting a research paradigm. Qualitative design provides an effective approach to studying phenomena that has not previously been described, yet Creswell and Poth (2017) caution that researchers pay close attention to "the procedures of qualitative research and of the differences in approaches of qualitative inquiry" (p. 223). "Qualitative researchers….found *writing as a method of inquiry* to be a viable way in which to learn about themselves and their research topic" (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2005, p. 959, italics in original). The power of a good qualitative study is its attention to the processes and approaches developed for rigor in inquiry

(Creswell & Poth, 2017). In choosing how best to conduct a qualitative study, Creswell and Poth (2017) advise researchers to take three factors into account, and they are, "the approach to inquiry, research design procedures, and philosophical and theoretical frameworks and assumptions" (p. 223). They further explain that the three elements are "interconnected," representing the essence of a thoughtfully considered qualitative study.

The idea of qualitative researchers qualifying her/his epistemology, ontology, or methodology approach is a key feature that distinguishes it from quantitative research—i.e., qualitative research is "value-laden and biased" (Groenewald, 2003, p. 51). The mission or aim of phenomenology is to "describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 44). Converse (2012) states that phenomenology "helps researchers to explore and understand everyday experiences" (p. 28). In phenomenology studies, multiple individuals, who share some commonality that is often what is under investigation, are examined with a psychological concept also considered and explored (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, the objective is to examine the role of adjunct faculty, the need for community, and the informal networks of learners conceived by methods of continuous professional learning. By using this qualitative research approach, my goal was to "gain entry into the conceptual world of my participants in order to understand how and what meaning they construct" (Merriam, 2002, p. 37). The rest of this chapter will support how I conducted the study using phenomenological research to guide the process.

Within phenomenological studies, there are two approaches researchers may consider. The first is hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), which is a descriptive technique for interpreting the data. This process of interpreting the data consists of the researcher reflecting

"on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience" and writing "a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 59). The second approach for interpreting data in phenomenology is Moustakas' (1994) psychological and transcendental method. The approach "is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 59). I utilized the latter of the two methods when conducting this study and followed Moustakas' procedures (1994) for data analysis, which involved "identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 59). Researchers are given a two-pronged approach to building evidence and reporting the results. First, the results should be textural, giving readers a clear understanding about what the participant(s) experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Next, the description of findings need to be structural, capturing how the participants experienced the phenomenon (i.e., "the conditions, situation, or context") (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 59). Phenomenologists "convey an overall essence of the experience" when taking into account how to comprehensively report the findings (p. 59).

Research Design

The purpose of this section is to share my epistemological position, explaining how I decided on and identified a phenomenological methodology as the best means for guiding this study (Creswell, 2007). When undertaking this study and determining how to study the social phenomena, I considered the following: a) The data collected are of the shared lived experiences of people working as adjunct faculty in an educational leadership preparation program; and b) Based on the data I desired to capture, I had to engage with the participants to acquire those

perspectives (Davidson, 2000; Groenewald, 2004; Jones, 2001). The specific phenomena under investigation were adjunct faculty and I explored the ways they learn and develop in the role. By identifying the types of learning and development occurring among adjunct faculty, these perspectives helped me to inform the body of research about professional development practices that are collaborative in nature and applicable for enhancing skills and performance, and overall organizational productivity.

The pursuit to understand the essence of several individuals and their lived experiences describes phenomenology. "Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 23). To achieve this, the participants shared some common experience, and it is the goal of the researcher "to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a 'grasp of the very nature of the thing,' van Manen, 1990, p. 177)" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 58). Bogdan and Biklen (2016) state that the phenomenological approach relies on "a set of assumptions that are different from those used when human behavior is with the purpose of finding 'facts' and 'causes'" (p. 23). The phenomenon identified is an "object" of human experience (van Manen, 1990, p. 163). Moustakas (1994) shares that the interpreted data will speak to *what* was experienced, as well as *how* it was experienced by all of the participants. Deliberately, this method of design was selected based on its alignment with my research as previously stated. Key to its selection was the understanding that data collection called for in-depth interviews with the research participants (Creswell, 2007; 2009) and the next section will describe the process.

In Chapter 2, the review of literature revealed there is limited research regarding the roles and work of adjunct faculty (Caruth & Caruth, 2014; McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). A review

of literature was completed to aid in the proposed design of this study about adjunct faculty's perceptions of and experiences with professional learning. In Chapter 2, it was highlighted that there is not an extensive amount of research concerning adjunct faculty in the field of educational leadership (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). McCarthy and Hackmann (2016) state, "Despite this increase in numbers and influence, little scholarship has focused on the backgrounds, activities, and attitudes of this group. Especially meager is the research on part-time adjunct faculty members" (p. 13-14). Using the limited research on the topic, I determined a phenomenological approach best supported the aims for this study. Choosing to ignore studying adjuncts' roles and perceptions would potentially add to the existing gap there is in understanding the phenomenon related to improving educational leadership preparation programs. The knowledge gained with such a study provides an opportunity to reflect on organizational complexities. Being aware of the staffing patterns that have abounded for this particular unit, broadens the scope of understanding about why decisions are made, how processes are planned and implemented, and what potential outcomes will surface as a result of these actions.

Participant Sample and Site Selection

The participants selected for this study were determined primarily based on the purpose of the research—that is, "the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants" (Hycner, 1999, p. 156). I used purposive sampling, identifying participants who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). Qualitative approaches applied to studies on practitioners is not uncommon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). These types of studies develop a frame for awareness of the behaviors of others and of self. It is reflective and metacognitive in nature, building the capacity for

change (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). Bogdan and Biklen (2016) state that "the usefulness of the qualitative perspective to practitioners is related to seeing all people as having the potential to change themselves and the immediate environment, as well as becoming agents of change in organizations in which they work" (p. 233).

In selecting a purposive sample, I also elected to have the sample come from one site. The benefit of using a qualitative approach is its distinctive quality to champion understanding that "people in different positions in an organization tend to have different views, but also there is great diversity among those occupying similar positions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 232). Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest the following being taken into consideration when conducting a phenomenologically informed study and selecting a site:

> [T]he participants may be located at a single site, although they need not be. Most importantly, they must be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their lived experiences. The more diverse the characteristics of the individuals, the more difficult it will be for the researcher to find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experience for all participants. (p. 119, 122)

 Adjuncts were the unit of analysis, and I wanted a site that had been responsive to reform and undergone some aspect of redesign to improve its school leadership preparation programming and structures. Keeping in mind the increase in contingent faculty—particularly, adjuncts (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016), a unique implication from the literature noted that "Part-time adjuncts can similarly strengthen school district ties if they are considered part of the preparation program rather than merely temporary visitors" (p. 14). Therefore, I focused data collection on a group of adjuncts teaching at a single site for a university educational leadership preparation

program to identify what efforts were being employed that may be addressing program

improvement efforts and the productivity of adjuncts' work. To that end, I considered the

importance of having a quality number of participants to accumulate enough data until the topic

was exhausted, or saturated. I interviewed 27 adjuncts from the department, which at the time

had just over 30 serving in that capacity. There was confidence of each theme developed

through these interviews and the analysis conducted for interpretation of these constructs.

Data Collection

My research proposal received Internal Review Board (IRB) approval and followed the

required IRB procedures. Qualitative approaches were used in data collection. More

specifically I used Moustakas's (1994) approach because it provided a formulaic process,

framing the way I analyzed and reported the data. I developed interview questions based on a

review of literature on adjunct faculty serving in educational leadership preparation programs

and methods of professional learning and development. There were seven open-ended interview

questions, along with five potential follow-up questions, that helped gather information from the

twenty-seven participants (see Appendix A). Next, I began securing the names and contact

information of the adjuncts within the department. I emailed the participants, introducing

myself, explaining the purpose of the correspondence, and inviting them to participate. I

scheduled interviews with the individuals at times, as well as modes, convenient to them. The

interviews conducted were by phone, through online interfacing, and in person. I sent follow-up

emails to those I did not hear from initially, which was successful. The interviews were recorded

and transcribed verbatim using a professional service. During the interviews, I took notes related

to the answers shared by the participants to support my development of ideas for categories and

themes (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 1996). I created memos to capture immediate thoughts about

the ideas and issues shared by the adjuncts, helping me create categories (Miles & Huberman,

1984). The process also helped me remember important pieces about the ways adjuncts may

have described things, been apprehensive, or were quite candid, noting what important factors

that may have contributed to the way information was relayed. Interviews ranged in length from

30 to 90 minutes. In addition to other criteria and protocols taken into account that I have

discussed in this chapter, one way I accounted for consistency was by using the same interview

questions. Also, the participants were given as much time as needed to respond. Data were used

only for the purpose shared with the participants, and confidentiality was maintained.

Phenomenological studies call for the allowance of data emergence (Bentz & Shapiro,

1998; Kensit, 2000), and the primary method for data collection involves conducting in-depth

interviews with the research participants (Creswell, 2007). Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 9)

describe the analysis process as the "systematic procedures to identify essential features and

relationships." Therefore, the development of the interview questions was important in order to

have data that could speak to the research questions proposed for this study

Data Analysis

Phenomenology is heavily influenced by the works of Husserl and Heidegger, who

utilized a philosophical basis to explore and describe experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016).

Bogdan and Biklen (2016) explain the Greek concept called *epoche*, which is "the suspension of

all judgments" and a primary characterization of those conducting phenomenological analysis (p.

175). The researcher's goal is not to assume understanding of things, but to truly "gain entry

into the conceptual world of their informants (Geertz, 1973)" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016, p. 23).

Referred to as bracketing, or the act of the researcher being silent to take in the essence of what

is being studied and capture meaning, phenomenologists are cognizant of their personal biases

and others' and "believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others" (p. 23). In research, these types of iterative encounters allow for the construction of reality according to the encounter experienced, which is based on the participant's perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Bogdan & Biklen, 2016).

The above techniques were used during my content analysis, identifying patterns, challenges, and themes from each participant's interview (Berg, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). After each interview, I listened to the recordings as soon as possible, making notes. Key words, phrases and statement were transcribed for sense-making and reflected the initial coding processes from Creswell's data analysis approach (2009). Transcripts were read over, reviewed, and edited as needed. I began pulling units of information, such as words, phrases, and concepts that would support and contribute to the meaning of each of the research questions. I utilized a few methods of coding with the use of Microsoft Office 365 and OneNote to create labels from the categories and themes. The groups of subcategories and categories helped shape thematic connections and recurring patterns became identifiable.

Interpreting the Data

A subset of qualitative research, phenomenology is set apart by the way reflection and rigorous analysis of lived experiences are engaged in by the researcher to identify the existence of a universal structure of the phenomenon being investigated (Vagle, 2014). The phenomenological process and the development of themes remove the notion of generalizing, because the concepts noted above during analysis allow for the removal of biases and preconceptions (Vagle, 2014). The findings are the essential themes that account for all of the participants, resulting in captured and described phenomenon that could be relatable and

recognized by anyone experiencing the same phenomenon (Vagle, 2014; Wojnar, Swanson, & Schonwald, 1998).

I used field notes and developed memos, in addition to recordings of the participants' interviews, as techniques to aid in sustaining memories and descriptions of each of the lived experiences. The compilation of the twenty-seven interviews reported in this chapter represent unique perspective shaped by participants' cultures, background experiences, worldviews, to name a few. During the study and analysis of the participants' interviews, essential themes evolved. These themes have been identified as constructs in my reporting, and they reflect findings from the literature review.

Because I have never been an adjunct, this exploration of the participants' lived experiences through phenomenologically informed research methods was critical. I aimed to establish relationships with the adjuncts on more personal levels, using my understanding of the work as an educator and student. I came to understand their lived experiences and meaning beyond any preconceptions about adjuncts, networks, and professional learning. This process involved the bracketing technique (Vagle, 2014), which is a concept in descriptive phenomenology that facilitates reflection to identify (or "bracket out") preconceptions and subjectivity (Vagle, 2014).

Trustworthiness of Data Presented

This section provides an explanation about the accuracy of the evidence shared in relation to the development of categories and themes that emerged through data analysis. The discussion of credibility and validation with respect to qualitative research is vast with a wide range of perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Eisner, 1991; Lather, 1991; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Wolcott, 1990). What establishes trustworthiness is the way in which the researcher ensures

processes are followed over the course of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1959) note field engagement and triangulation as techniques for establishing trustworthiness, or credibility. Eisner (1991) supported the latter, developing standards to build credibility in qualitative methods. He posited, "We seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions" (p. 110).

In this chapter, I have detailed the steps taken for this study to support my logic of decision-making. Trustworthiness is accomplished in a few ways when using qualitative research (Schurink, Schurink, & Poggenpoel, 1998). First, phenomenologically informed research design addresses truthfulness of the study—i.e, it is assumed by the researcher that "human experience makes sense to those who live it and that human experience can be consciously expressed (Dukes, 1984)" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 227). By bracketing, part of the phenomenological approach, I consciously aimed to suspended judgments and preconceived ideas throughout the analysis in order to interpret the results based on the perspectives of the participants and their accounts shared about the phenomenon. Next, my engagement in in-depth interviews with 27 adjuncts, along with field notes, recordings, and transcripts afforded me the opportunity to follow Moustakas' (1994) processes for *epoche*, and I acknowledged and silenced my thinking in order to be removed from interfering with the interpretations of the data. By doing so, the emergence of categories and themes were formed. Finally, trustworthiness can be reconciled given the fact that I have never been an adjunct, resulting in greater ability to collect and analyze data without imparting judgment on these lived experiences. Further, the responses shared by the adjuncts were critical to addressing the research questions. To conclude, I built trustworthiness by employing the methods of the research design. While not to the same level of validity as those just offered, I also spoke about my findings and results with practitioners—

some of whom serve as adjuncts—and these discussions created a level of accountability, as these individuals engaged in inquiries and shared helpful insights about the findings and my interpretations.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I provide the outcomes of my analytical process, revealing the answers to the research questions presented in Chapter 1, and reflecting the literature and concepts outlined in Chapter 2. By sharing what has been discovered through this study, the reader will understand the relationships offered initially as to why this study was purposeful and necessary to conduct. The findings connect to the literature and support the conceptual framework presented. Further, the topics and themes presented fully represent the experiences of the participants, as I suspended preconceived understandings and engaged in the research processes. The chapter that follows presents a discussion of the findings and concluding thoughts to bring coherence to the study's entirety.

There are four research questions I proposed in the first chapter:

1. What role does professional collaboration play amongst adjuncts in learning from each other?

2. To the extent that professional collaboration is a vehicle to informal learning, how is knowledge acquired, what knowledge is transferred, and under what circumstances or conditions?

3. How and to what extent do adjuncts use professional collaboration as a vehicle to informal learning?

4. What other mechanisms do adjuncts use to learn about teaching, content, and pedagogy?

I sought to capture the *essence* of 27 adjuncts' lived experiences and determined a phenomenologically informed study would best achieve this. Qualitative protocols were closely adhered to throughout the study in order to reliably interpret important variables about the participants. Data analyzed included transcripts from the interviews conducted, memos developed of the field notes, and university documents from the educational leadership department. I conducted open-ended, semi-structured interviews with adjuncts all serving part-time as instructional personnel at the same university's educational leadership department. Their primary work was to help prepare the students in the program for the field of educational leadership, and the research highlights how the work is accomplished. The interviews were comprehensive, offering sufficient data to illuminate emerging concepts about professional learning, development, and knowledge as it pertains to adjuncts and their preparation for the work, as well as an understanding of their instructional practices.

The analysis process was iterative and rigorous, and I used qualitative techniques that consisted of coding, retrieval, and sorting, coming across nuances and insights when comparing the adjuncts' responses, to the point of saturation. The strongest method of analyzation for this in-depth process was pattern seeking to detect commonalities in behaviors and consistencies among those interviewed. Every interview with the adjuncts offered new considerations, as well as revisions, to the development of the findings presented (Merriam, 2009). The processes of reformulating, reclassifying, and modifying the ideas that emerged eventually formed the descriptive frame of evidence shared, explaining what to consider when integrating this growing population of individuals.

I have organized the findings in terms of themes. Prior to sharing the results, I describe the sample and site used in the study to give readers a contextual understanding about the

educational leadership department and the ways its stakeholders had been affected by mandated reform. I describe the department's initiatives and approaches to integrating part-time adjunct faculty into the university environment to facilitate better understanding what discoveries emerged and how the data developed into the themes and concepts reported. The results suggest that attention must be given to determining ways to optimize the use of adjuncts in order to attain favorable output—i.e., producing graduates of the preparation program who can effectively transition into leadership roles to skillfully perform the required functions under challenging and varied conditions.

Case Selection and Setting

Contextual information is described for the purposes of understanding what led to conducting this study. The details in this section introduce readers to aspects and experiences as they relate to how human capital was established within the program and among its instructional faculty—specifically, part-time adjuncts—due to the investments made in them by way of the educational leadership department. I framed this section using current literature and with the data gathered. Thus, the section resounds the need for additional research surrounding the topic of professional learning and the instructional personnel responsible for providing quality instruction to students in educational leadership preparation programs.

University Educational Leadership Preparation Program

The sample of participants in this study was comprised of 27 adjunct professors teaching for a master's level educational leadership preparation program for aspiring leaders seeking administrative credentialing at a university located in the southeast region of the United States. For candidates already possessing a master's degree in the field of education, the program also offers programming to earn an Educational Specialist (Ed. S.) degree in educational leadership,

which part-time adjuncts also serve as instructors. Another degree offering in the area of educational leadership is for those earning a Doctorate in Education (Ph. D.). While adjuncts do not teach the doctorate-level courses, the design of the program extends itself to opportunities for collaboration with and connections to these individuals for learning about their work in the field and utilizing their terminal degrees in the field of educational leadership for practice. All three programs use a cohort model with the intention of developing community among its programs' candidates; these individuals share classes with the same peers over the course of the program, giving candidates a strong network of peers in the field for systems of support even after attaining their degrees.

The educational leadership department in the study actively engaged in program redesign. Their full-time faculty led the improvement efforts, and they were responsive to the national reform movement occurring. One of the priorities was ensuring greater alignment with federal and state accountability measures. Members of the department collaborated with other educational leadership program faculty, brainstorming and discovering ways to improve the program. There is a lack of robust research regarding exemplary university program models for aspiring educational leaders. Yet, new methods and strategies from journals and reported research aided in the development of learning networks designed for meaningful interactions about the field and its principles and practices. These connections occurred at conferences, workshops, and arranged planning sessions, using various modes for interfacing. The interactions resulted in a variety of evolving teams where the educational leaders shared discoveries about implementation initiatives and the how the changes impacted their work. An important revelation of these efforts was the success experienced and the effectiveness of the

time spent. Professional learning was occurring through the collegial supports and opportunities for consultation among the educational leaders, key elements of networks.

Participants for the Study

All of the participants for this study on part-time adjunct faculty held terminal degrees in educational leadership. There were eleven female participants and sixteen males. Ten of the participants were African American and seventeen were Caucasian. Two of the participants were retired from the field of education, but still actively consulting and serving PK-12 districts through mentorship, coaching, and professional development. The remaining twenty-five participants were fulfilling educational leadership roles at the school and district levels such as principal, assistant principal, superintendent, and central office administrators, representing approximately eleven school districts at the time of the study.

Further, all had levels of teaching experience prior to becoming school and district level leaders. Less than a third of them were career switchers, and just under half of them had attained one or more degrees from the institution selected for this study. At least four of the represented school districts engaged in university-district level partnerships with the university where they also served in capacities like district liaisons with the university, program and course design developers, and course instructors. Majority of the participants taught one course per semester with a few teaching two courses depending on the need and the adjunct's availability and a desire to do so. While many expressed their openness to teaching any of the course offerings in the program, several adjuncts shared that they appreciated being asked about where their areas of interest were and what strengths they possessed in content. When assigned courses where there was discomfort and unfamiliarity, the participants shared about the existing supports, which is discussed later in this chapter.

The program draws emphasis on teaching its candidates about educational leadership, the organizational behaviors of schools and districts, and how to apply the theories from their coursework to leadership practice in complex and demanding school environments (Brazer, Kruse, & Conley, 2014; Shoup & Studer, 2010). Adjuncts who are practitioners in instructional roles for educational leadership courses reinforce the literature from Chapter 2 that describes key elements of school leadership development. Their authentic experiences give students the opportunity to discuss and learn about the ways leadership principles and frameworks exist, and knowledge is acquired as the adjuncts share and give multiple lenses about their own practices and roles in the field. The courses occur weekly using an online platform—its primary method for meeting—that permits live meetings and presentations using the internet. This method of delivery was unchartered territory for majority of the adjuncts, who expressed initially having reservations, but eventually came to appreciate its convenience. Adjuncts widely noted their appreciation for how the live-streaming mechanism fostered a classroom-like environment for interfacing with all of the students—and the students with one another—in real time.

The reality for the adjuncts and candidates is they would be unable to fulfill the roles of teacher and student without the online platform in place due to their schedules and full-time responsibilities with work, family, and proximity to the university. A clinical experience, or internship, was incorporated into the preparation program experience and was one of the final components to be fulfilled by candidates in securing licensure for administration. The internship occurs over two semesters (or 6 semester credit hours) and is comprised of field-based experiences with 200 clocked hours occurring in the field with an assigned mentor/practitioner, and another 120 hours of leadership experiences that become embedded into the coursework

over the duration of the program, which is detailed by the educational leadership program's internship handbook.

During the time of my pilot study, the educational leadership department had incorporated an annual Instructional Personnel Meeting with the goal of onboarding adjunct faculty into the role and becoming familiar with the university's structure. The approximately 4-hour meeting was a half-day session at the university, requiring majority of the adjuncts to take time from their full-time work. A portion of the session was devoted to technicalities such as setting up faculty accounts, creating syllabi, attending trainings, using the online platform, grading practices and entering grades, and reviewing the academic calendar and important dates. Also, time was dedicated to calibrating and discussing instructional practices, including how to approach grading assignments, what to focus on with synthesis papers, and ways to help students conceptualize ideas and theories. Student engagement was at the forefront of these discussions and activities during these sessions.

Time during this particular meeting was also devoted to connecting adjuncts who were teaching the same cohort or course sections to collaborate and plan. While the environment fostered opportunities for sharing, there were activities integrated into these meetings that encouraged and solicited feedback from the adjuncts, who could use a "parking lot" method of posting an idea or posing a question (sometimes through a digital means). Forums were used to generate discussions on topics of interest like admissions or K-12 hiring needs. Graduate students were invited to participate in the instructional meetings, and they served as process observers, taking notes and reflecting on the experience. This became one way of exposing their aspiring school leaders to the day-to-day work of educational leaders engaged in learning and improving the field. Much like the model used through UCEA and their established

improvement networks, the time was devoted to addressing problems of practice, making it relevant and meaningful to all of its stakeholders, as it aligned to the priorities and mission of the department and their commitment to transforming the educators they were serving into 21st Century School Leaders.

A significant development surfaced just prior to the start of this study. The Graduate Program Director (GPD), who served in the role for seven years and coordinated much of the educational leadership programming, stepped down from the position. Given the amount of time put into conceptualizing and guiding the efforts of the department's redesign efforts, the adjuncts openly expressed their concerns. They overwhelmingly credited the GPD for why they were serving in this capacity at this particular institution for the educational leadership preparation program. What became apparent from the interviews was their concerns about the obstacles being faced without the GPD, but mainly, as one adjunct inferred, "In the absence of communication, people make stuff up…panic sets in…" Because of what the program was undergoing, it raised expressions from the participants making distinctions about past experiences versus the current state and future expectations.

The change that seemed to have the greatest impact on adjuncts' feeling effective was the loss of regular communication. Without knowing about courses they would be teaching, nights the course may be taught, or even information about posting grades and knowing who else was teaching the same course, adjuncts felt disconnected. Some reached out to full-time faculty, including the former GPD, for asking questions. A number adjuncts utilized the established network to collect information and receive help. Changes in organizations happen; however, "Like flowers that grow in the direction of the sun, systems grow (or emerge) in the direction of their feedback" (Shoup & Studer, 2016, p. 14). It was evident that the change was still fresh and

several individuals were grappling with what that meant for the program and its stakeholders; yet, even in the disappointment expressed about the matter, their shares were still mostly positive and hopeful. At times, the interviews would surface inquiry or occasional indifference by the adjuncts, indicating, perhaps, the benefit they had of removing themselves from university business and politics given it not being their primary source of employment and sustainability.

There were other developments that occurred prior to the study to fulfill the department's vision and goals for reforming and strengthening the program. In 2017, the institution opened a new site for its education department. The new academic building provided faculty and students with an updated learning environment and was described as a "visual landmark" intended for attracting candidates and growing the college. Also, during the 2017-2018 academic year, the leadership department conducted hiring searches and interviews to secure more staff. One position filled was tenure tracked, and the other position filled was that of lecturer. The additional full-time membership to the educational leadership department brought diversity by demographics and skillsets. Broadening membership also allowed for opportunities to reconsider responsibilities and programming to optimize resources.

Section Summary

Participation in this research study included adjunct instructors from a single university's educational leadership graduate preparation program. I piloted the study in 2018 to evaluate the most appropriate design and needs, including how I selected participants, when conducting the larger scale study. An overview of the participants and the educational leadership program described in the section above indicated two things. First, the reform initiative for educational leadership had great influence in the way the full-time faculty of the department went about planning for learning and fostering enrichment experiences for those who would be directly

working with the candidates receiving content knowledge, pedagogy, and experiential learning for becoming quality educational leaders prepared for complex, demanding work. Next, the educational leadership department in this study first took time to explore and understand the synoptic problem(s) of practice they faced—i.e., professional learning and development as it relates to adjunct faculty's experiences and the ways in which parallels exist at every level for establishing (learning) communities. The affiliations and collaborative work with other universities propelled their efforts. The rest of this chapter will highlight the themes and categories that emerged during data analysis.

Discussion of Findings

This section provides a discussion of the main findings from the study; it also links the literature to the findings where applicable. Three major categories of data emerged within the study, becoming themes to support answering the research questions. The themes spotlight the patterns and concepts shared by the adjuncts and are they are: culture, systems, and empowerment. My interpretation of the analysis manifested ideas that consistently reflected the ways adjuncts perform their work as part-time instructors, and the themes are of significance to this study. Investigating this topic revealed what factors and important dimensions contribute to the participants' productivity and continued growth as educational leaders and in their roles as adjuncts.

Theme 1: Culture

The results showed that adjuncts utilize learning networks for formal and informal purposes. I begin this section with a discussion about why the respondents were serving as adjuncts for this particular institution. Their responses shaped the first theme and there was a recurrent belief that culture affects performance. According to adjuncts, the development of a

learning community facilitated networking; it engaged them, fueling their commitment given the investments made to ensure their readiness. Subthemes emerged during data analysis and included: commitment, motivation, relationships, and connectedness.

Commitment

Each participant during the time of the study was employed in school district administrative roles such as superintendent, district-level leader (e.g., administrators for instructional and operational management and support), building-based leader (e.g., principals and assistant principals), or educational consultant and/or coach for educational leaders. One question asked of participants during the interviews was what advice they would give to anyone new to adjunct work or considering it. There was a great deal of consistency among the respondents, and one of the respondents offered, "So, I think it's important to talk to some folks who have a little experience under their belts as well as people who are pretty new to the role. You want to get an idea of the time commitment."

Frequently during the interviews, participants would use the term "commitment." Their use of the word could best be characterized as an investment of time and effort and the alignment of values that enabled work performance. I further detailed this concept, identifying subthemes: motivators, relationship, and connectedness. Data indicated that desired work performance was fostered by offering a certain kind of environment to the adjuncts. Conclusively, developing a strong work culture facilitated commitment by adjuncts, positively impacting their performance.

Time. An obstacle to delivering consistent quality performance was time, which was a pitfall often seen in literature. Adjuncts did not want to commit to the work if they could not invest time for the number of responsibilities required when teaching graduate level courses. A respondent advised:

You're of value to the students you're going to be teaching. It can't be, 'I'll spend 30 minutes on this a week,' or 'I'll do this…I'll do that…' There's gotta be some thought given to whether there is room in [your] career to be an adjunct professor given the other [responsibilities]…That's the question that needs to be researched and thought about.

The participants were aware of how the time given modeled academic and workplace behaviors, which literature posits are relational, especially for adults and organizational learning (Akgun, Lynn, & Byrne, 2003). They were practitioners teaching students how to be educational leaders, meaning they wanted to demonstrate ways to deliver exemplary performance in any organizational environment.

Work performance mattered to the adjuncts. They wanted to fulfill the instructional role because they recognized the value of exposing graduate students to authentic experiences, yet many of them shared the internal struggle of whether to have this added task to their demanding schedules. An adjunct disclosed,

You think about the time you're in class, but then you also think about the time with planning and time with grading. And it's significant. I think about that time and my wife and I talk about it frequently. I really value what I do and if I'm going to do something I want to do it well. And, so is it worth it? Is it worth the time it takes away from my family when I'm already pulled a lot away from mine with my job, you know?

Participants were realistic about how time and performance correlated and depended upon their involvement—commitment—to the role. A few of the adjuncts subtly suggested that additional pay would nice considering how devoted they were to the work and how taxing it was, all were straightforward that money did not determine the quality of teaching. Organizational structures

and the routines and expectations established created positive experiences, which compelled the practitioners to commit to an institution focused on meaningful work.

One adjunct gave these insights about the role and work:

Build more time into your schedule. I think we underestimate how long it takes to provide feedback to students on assignments they submit. The papers you read, along with the amount of support that some students need, varies from semester to semester. Some need a lot of in-between-class support to work on assignments, to talk things through and think. To really intentionally plan for that as an adjunct and not just assume it's just going to squeeze in with everything else you've got to do—I think you really have to think about [it]…really intentionally think about your schedule and where you can carve out some time that you protect and then if you don't need it for class, then you've got it. It's yours.

Several adjuncts expressed that the class sizes had initially been small, creating an ideal teaching an environment for providing strong feedback and guidance to the students. Workloads and course assignments were personal concerns for the participants, but they also understood several of the students were full-time employees and parents also having to invest time. The outcome of this was an intentional focus by adjunct instructors to develop engaging lessons and discussions that related to theory and research, yet captured relevant situational encounters that stimulated critical thinking, processing, and cognition for future application.

From the interviews, it was clear that adjuncts, who are also full-time practitioners, maintain busy schedules and juggle many tasks. A convenience of the educational leadership preparation program was that its primary means for delivering instruction was through an online platform. Adjuncts reported that this structure met the needs of its students and part-time

faculty, bringing some balance to the lives of these stakeholders. The approach secured the program with quality instructional staff (i.e., the adjuncts and full-time professors) to support the growing course loads and enrollment numbers. Offering courses in the evenings and online were considerations that removed barriers such as time and proximity, which the literature indicated as hindrances to programming. Accordingly, there seemed to be increased involvement and engagement based on respondents' shared experiences. This resulted in attention being given to collaboration among the department's instructional members in order to focus on student learning and sustain quality teaching and learning experiences.

A Focus on Learning. It was clear through the participants' shares that the establishment of learning priorities drove the preparation program's culture, which became a vehicle for networking among members, addressing the first research question—what role does networking play amongst adjuncts in learning from each other. Adjuncts demonstrated a shared understanding about the work they were doing:

> [M]y responsibility, in the way I see it, is to share the theory and practice of the particular course I'm teaching so that we prepare administrators and other future leaders in education for their next roles or for the current roles that maybe they're working on an endorsement in.

An alignment of values between the department and its adjuncts was established by the facilitation of learning communities. A community of learners, with respect to enhancing practice in order to enrich student learning, gave a context for understanding course structures and routines, and it guided how knowledge was exchanged, received, and even transferred. The focus on learning outcomes and instructional practices also made it easier to address change and be innovative as needed for performance management.

I gathered through interviews that the department devoted its attention to the instructional needs of all its faculty, creating clear structures. Their aim was to enhance employee engagement and reduce common causes that the literature cautions can lead to noncommittal, unproductive work behaviors. One of the adjuncts provided these thoughts when asked about understanding the role and work:

What I like about my current role as adjunct is it's in the field that I'm in—that's what kind of draws me to it. I have a lot of practical knowledge. I have a practical lens and a current lens for students. But, basically [what the role] entails, meaning the day to day pieces, is [from] the syllabus. And, the nice part is, as an adjunct professor, a lot of the standards have been set in the syllabus. The syllabi are created collaboratively and they're updated, and the assignments are created…So, everyone teaching [names course section, for example] at the same time have the same assignments—so, the same expectation. Now, I can bring my own supporting activities and things as I teach the course, so there's a little bit of freedom.

The desire to teach was not an issue, and many of the adjuncts expressed how the opportunity to become an adjunct was an "outlet" and fulfilled a void. Acclimating them into the university environment meant scaffolding and sharing in ways that eliminated technicalities prohibiting the usefulness they understood their abilities to bring to the preparation program.

Attempts to cleanly and intentionally develop a supportive community was noticed and valued by the adjuncts. A respondent spoke to how a sense of common purpose brought the instructional faculty together:

> You build relationships with people. That's first and foremost….I think we're all in it for the same reason and that is to better prepare those that are coming through the program to be strong instructional leaders…We [adjuncts] all have the same focus.

Adjuncts understood their roles to be critical to enhancing the learning experiences of the students. They framed the course materials and offered a practitioner's lens for understanding leadership in the field. One adjunct explained,

> You're there to help [the program]. That's why you're in this role. And [others] were looking at [the role] as more of a punitive thing….I try to bend over backwards to help people because that's our job….It's a privilege that I have students that want to learn and if they want to learn, I have a moral and fiduciary responsibility to help them.

The move from traditional methods of program delivery had to be embraced by the full-time faculty members and seen as instrumental having the practitioners' perspectives integrated into course content. Yet, the department recognized the need to provide anchors (such as course syllabi) in order to maintain the overarching requirements for programming. The participants shared that did not feel confined; they felt they had academic freedom and flexibility when planning lessons with clear expectations for learning intentions.

All the above examples generate evidence as to why the respondents chose to teach for this particular institution and department. There were program initiatives and a focus guiding the way business was conducting, including their handling of stakeholders. An adjunct surmised the following during one of the interviews:

> It seems to me what matters to the program is putting administrators in jobs where they can be really effective…so that takes a little different focus…and having practitioners who can relate and understand and share scenarios, real life situations, that they may

experience, so that we can help them, navigate them, within the content that we're charged to teach.

The commitment to serve as adjuncts established an opportunity to share practical knowledge that would enhance what students were reading and learning in their coursework. The adjuncts were willing to invest time because the educational leadership department had taken into account how to respect the adjuncts' schedules and time. The department did this by developing working conditions and a sense of purpose. Community was established with a clear sense of focus, fostering strong levels commitment—or engagement, which I discuss more under the next subtheme, motivations.

Motivations

Adjuncts did not enter into these positions as blank slates, and some were quick to delineate their roles as part-time instructors who enhanced learning by sharing their expertise with students and providing a practical lens to understand the technicalities of the work. "I'm not a professor…I'm a teacher," one of the respondents contended. Every respondent expressed a love and passion for teaching, which was a prime motivation for becoming an adjunct instructor. They found their work to be purposeful and wanted to teach in an environment that enveloped this aspect into the program experience. An adjunct described how the practitioner's lens bridged aspects of learning:

Adjuncts are maybe closer to the field, to the day-to-day routine of leadership, if you will, which gives a really accurate portrayal of what life is like in a school and in a school division. And, I think that comes out in anecdotes and remarks and stories that go along with theories. Theories come to life, if you will. And, I think that's a great positive piece for adjuncts, to really rely on their experience.

Exposure to clinical work and preparation activities were described in the literature as "high impact experiences" (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2011, p. 21) for increasing student engagement. Participants conveyed that they felt the department welcomed them for their expertise and what they could bring to shaping the learning of the aspiring school leaders. Feelings of being needed further fueled the practitioners' motivations for instructing; they were relevant.

Additionally, adjuncts relayed that the selection for becoming instructors was a privilege. The preparation program had developed a reputation for its quality experiences, which meant those facilitating courses must possess strong skills and qualities that embodied what the department was lauded for based on the readiness and quality performance of their graduates. One of the adjuncts said,

> Our purpose, as I see it, is to prepare future leaders to join us in the challenging and ever-changing field of educators. We get to share both theory and practice. We have the benefits of living what we teach, daily. I am hopeful I have had a positive impact on my students. I am also hopeful that they have walked away from my class feeling as if their time was respected and they gained a better understanding of administration.

The respondents were learners by default, having a passion and love for teaching; they understood the importance of teaching. Their selections for working as adjuncts were linked to their expertise in the field of education and knowing how to effectively lead. All held terminal degrees and had successfully provided leadership, coaching, and mentorship to teachers and/or PK-12 administrators. Also, some had served as adjuncts for other higher education institutions.

The interviews revealed how they felt about leading, teaching, and learning within schools and districts, both professionally and personally. It was not uncommon for a respondent

to refer to another adjunct or full-time faculty member in a manner of respect and admiration for past and current work in leadership. The opportunity to bring their experiences into a classroom setting to help others was a motivator and the reward for working hard:

> I've tried to rely on best practice. Because, what is good for kids is what is good for adults. So listening to [adult learners'] strengths and weaknesses, differentiating, being open to differentiating…Let's not reinvent the wheel. 'Show me what you got, let's see how we can capitalize on what you have in order to meet the expectations of this class. So let's take what you've already done and go a little bit further,' rather than making them reinvent the wheel.' And that's what we're supposed to do with kids. It's no different. So, I'm hoping that I can model that practice for them so that they can model that for their teachers, or whomever they end up coaching…You know, I'm imparting knowledge, too.

Counter to some of the literature about adjuncts feeling disconnected and isolated, the analysis provided evidence of continual attention given to adjuncts, communicating value and assuring them that the work they were doing enhanced the learning environment. A clear message of appreciation was routinely heard and felt by the adjuncts, which was a motivator for associating with the institution.

Another motivation for becoming an adjunct as one respondent shared was it extended the opportunity to "scoop up [future leaders] before others do" and "[shape] future educational leaders," which the adjunct added "is one of the most important things current leaders can do." Others also found this to be one of the advantages of their work with the preparation program. They knew the quality of programming and also assessed the work of the students, knowing the potential of individuals for positions. They also had access to one another to inquire about academic performance and a student's understanding of leadership.

Along with the examples given, respondents saw value in lifelong learning and self-improvement—i.e., "sharpening the saw," which they expressed made serving at this particular institution unique when compared with other experiences. . One of the adjuncts stated, "I just need to stay fresh. I mean, I don't think we should be doing this if we're not." Similarly, another adjunct provided this response:

It's the people for me. You know, the people that I work with, the other professors. It's the students…The other part of it is just the content and [what] I've picked up. I learn as I'm preparing for class each week, you know, reading up on the new stuff that's released. So it's growing—it's growing by knowledge as well.

Germane to the research questions, the description above represented a mindset held by members of the instructional faculty. It evidenced the importance of community development to create a learning culture. Not only were the adjuncts bringing something to the institution, they were gaining knowledge in their skills for teaching and their roles as educational leaders, which characterize what the literature described as communities of practice. Vehicles for learning were developing because of the expectations in place for the work they were doing. Adjuncts were motivated to continue the work because they were gaining knowledge that was useful to their practice.

One adjunct had the following to say:

You have to be willing to be a continuous learner, so you've got to be able to bring something to the table. Don't just come to the table and expect that [the full-time faculty] would be who's going to give you all of this information. What are you going to bring to the table that's going to be helpful, and what skillset do you have that's going to be helpful—that's going to help elevate other[s]?

It was evident as the interviews were being conducted that the individuals felt the adjunct role was significant. A respondent expressed this, saying, "I feel supported in every way. Just to say that you're working with folks at [institution] who are the next generation of leaders in our schools—there's a lot of personal fulfillment in knowing that's actually happening." What is true about culture is it informs its stakeholders, as well as onlookers, about beliefs. Further, it can influence the interactions among its members, which is critical when learning is a desired (and intended) outcome.

Relationships Matter

I begin this section with a story shared by one of the adjuncts when asked what advice he could offer to anyone who may be considering an adjunct role—or why they should consider it. Like several of the respondents, he initially advised that those aspiring "should only enter the field if they want to help people" and could devote the time. Then he surfaced an experience about running into a family friend, with 35 years of experience in academia, while on vacation after his first year in the role of adjunct for the educational leadership department examined in this study:

> I told him about my adjunct experiences and how much I enjoyed the position. About the same time, a student called who needed help with her PAE (policy analysis exercise) and I walked her through the problem over the phone. The reason I mention these conversations is because they took place over spring break. The student was appreciative, but asked: 'Why would you help me or even answer the phone over vacation?' My response was: 'Why wouldn't I?' After hearing this, [my friend] told me it was refreshing to see and hear an instructor actually helping students. He also stated that unfortunately, most of his meetings involved professors that complained about their

students. Again, those that enter the field should want to help develop students and never

lose sight of their mission.

Despite reforms, tensions, and politics that could dishearten and curtail the efforts of educational

leaders, the respondent's shared experience equated to what majority of the adjuncts valued in

their work as educators—i.e., developing relationships that proved impactful because of their

belief in educational systems and those they were preparing. Participants discussed the value in

establishing rapports with students, which in turn created a supportive culture conducive for

learning and transforming into educational leaders.

The impetus for conducting this study was based on understanding the ways educational

leaders are prepared and the conditions that create impactful experiences. An insight during the

analysis was the department's understanding of quality control. They recognized that through

reform and feelings of disengagement and unpreparedness aspiring school leaders were seeking

alternative routes to attaining licensure credentials. Involvement and voice were necessary, and

the leadership preparation program worked to bridge the gap by engaging effective practitioners

to support the department's redesign initiatives. A confluence of positive outcomes rooted from

higher education faculty and school district leaders working together. Collaboration was a

vehicle for connections to be drawn and alignment made between content and practice, as well as

needs being monitored and addressed. The educational leadership department moved beyond the

institution's internal knowledge, inviting school districts to become partner with them and

engage in overcoming problems of practice. The relationships were genuine and there was a

dedicated effort to strengthen these ties using a solutions-based environment to drive the

initiative.

Strong relationships were an indicator for healthy working conditions, characterized by evidence of communication, trust, and care from the community that had formed among all the instructional faculty. The collection of data evidencing the significance of relationship was linked to stronger work performance. One adjunct said, "Once you're invested, you're there," which could adequately be catalogued within the first theme, culture. The investment was the willingness to engage with others and learning networks materialized from the developed bonds. Relationships were the glue for this study because it suggested that the culture and community were healthy and working. Participants held the perception that the efforts taken to create well-structured and cohesive working relationships with the university's stakeholders was unique to the preparation program's success. The adjunct who relayed the story also stated,

> [T]he thing is, that I could make some extra money for a semester given some of these places—you know, they'll pay you a little bit more—but I don't know if you're ever going to get the experiences that you get here.

By first using the social learning skills in formal situations (i.e., professional development, meetings, discussions), collaborative learning took on value, giving a broader scope of understanding about the importance of social interactions and ways to apply it strategically in the work environment, as well as beyond the workplace for personal use. While students were certainly their purpose, a great deal of attention was given to adjuncts:

> Everyone wants to be paid for their time and paid well. Other universities offer more money but I would not leave [institution] because of the way [the GPD] treats and runs our department. I would choose culture and climate over pay any day, most educators would do the same.

The adjuncts were at the institution and they were committed to the work because of the attention given to fostering a culture committed to accommodating the needs of its most valuable resources—aspiring leaders and practitioners in the field. The adjunct quoted above also stated the following about what set this university's educational leadership department apart from others: "The amount of resources and support provided [is unique]. I have taught at two other universities and by far [this institution] has a better program and support system."

Connectedness

Respondents spoke of feeling like they were a part of the department and university's community, which could be challenging due to their serving in a part-time capacity that did not necessarily require them to physically be at the institution on a frequent basis. The adjuncts overwhelmingly shared examples in which they had been made to feel like members of the university and environment and department's community. They gave descriptions like as having office space at the School of Education building on campus, receiving welcome messages and news from the school, and frequently being asking to serve on committees or participate in events and workshops. There was an overall feeling of warmth and inclusivity according to the adjuncts. A participant gave an illustration using an analogy to explain how adjuncts were made to feel like members of the university's community and its significance:

> Our department is just one piece of the university and just like in any school division, just like with custodians—if you don't make them feel a part of the family then the morale decreases. If you don't make the bus drivers feel like they're apart, you know, they don't get anything, they don't know anything, they don't think they're invited to anything— they just drive the school bus, you know? I think when everyone knows what the left and

the right foot is doing, then they feel a sense of belonging. It goes a long way for the output that you get. What you put in is what you get out.

The implication drawn from what the adjunct shared, along with other examples, was that to have an effective organization its employees—even those who were part-time—needed to be connected and aware of responsibilities, resources, and updates or changes within the program. Again, there was willingness to commit to the work because a culture was established with the department emphasizing the importance of connecting.

One of the adjuncts shared,

I am a graduate of [institution]. I actually got my master's in the educational leadership program [here]. I participated in a conference that [the GPD] initiated several years ago with one of my friends and colleagues…We presented there and it went really well, and [the GPD] reached out to me to see if I was interested…You know, as you become an administrator and teaching is your craft, this gave me an opportunity to continue with something I love, but also knowing how much I appreciated when I was [a student].

Those who had attained one or more degrees from the university discussed the pre-established connection. Their experiences as students left lasting impressions, impacting the way they went about leading and teaching.

The adjunct continued and shared,

I felt like my professors were not just theorists. They were people that had experience in the field—that they were dealing with day to day practical things that were happening…I think it is really important that you know the research. You have access to the data, you know, current trends, best practices, but you are also living it. So I think the adjunct role…only enhances what you're doing…because you have the people that tend to be 'in

the weeds' as we say. We can give a lot of practical examples and provide scenarios and

case studies [we've] lived through.

It was not uncommon for those with degrees from the university to share that their choosing to

serve as adjuncts at the institution had a lot to do with fostered relationships that continued

beyond graduating from the educational leadership program once they were in leadership

positions. These check-ins from time to time translated into an authentic care for their graduates,

wanting to learn about the experiences they were having and having a willingness to serve as

resources when needed.

Even for those who had not been affiliated with the institution as graduates, the

participants noticed the outreach and collaborative work occurring with the community by full-

time faculty of the educational leadership department. One of the adjuncts was impressed by

what he observed of the institution and the department's engagement with local school districts.

He said,

The thing that I loved about [this institution] is they've got their clinical faculty, they've

got their research faculty on campus, but they always show a great value for field

practitioners, people who are actually out in the field making this thing work every day.

So they lean on us for that expertise. And I began to see that that's a strength of this

particular program. Um, that's really what drew me to it. My affiliation with the

university was very loose prior to that. But now after five years, I think I enjoy the very

strong partnership with [them] and look forward to continuing that.

Those knowing the backgrounds of the full-time faculty credited them for having field

experiences. In other words, they were viewed as credible having taught and/or led in K-12

settings and in various capacities. This was valued by the participants who made mention of it

during interviews; they had a great deal of respect for the full-time instructional staff, expressing that although these individuals were now in higher education positions they had not forgotten what it was like in the trenches; the full-time faculty seemed vested in wanting to what challenges were being faced in order to address it within their roles. It was implied that the full-time faculty modeled and shared their personal field experiences with students when applying knowledge from research and specific courses of study.

Becoming an adjunct instructor seemed "the natural course of action," according to one respondent. He then added, "[M]y first three degrees came from [this institution] so I felt connected." The relationship between having a degree from the institution and then accepting an adjunct position was a finding within this study that was previously mentioned in this section. The adjunct being interviewed continued sharing and thoughtfully explained what he felt was the greatest attraction for becoming instructional faculty for this program:

> Reinforcement came from what I witnessed about the Educational Leadership Program indirectly…One afternoon [two full-time faculty members from the department] came out to my school to check-in with the cohort students employed under my supervision. This was powerful to me and I was genuinely impressed with how much they cared about the success of students. At that point, I knew I wanted to teach for [institution's] Educational Leadership Program.

It was hard to determine whether the visibility of full-time university was preempted. The actions seemed to be taken seriously and what the full-time faculty deemed a priority in the work they were doing to prepare students in their programs.

During another interview, an adjunct shared feelings of connectedness with a direct experience when selected the department's "Adjunct of the Year." The adjunct explained,

[The award is] important because, number one, it symbolically represents that while we

are adjuncts we're still valued faculty members. A lot of times, the perceptions would be

'Well, you guys come over here and you teach these courses, but you're really not part of

the organization or unit.' I think [institution and department] go above and beyond to

make their adjuncts feel empowered—to make us feel as if we've got voice and not only

that we have voice in terms of being able to give feedback but in many, many, many

cases seeing some of the feedback that we give be reflected in our programs.

Overwhelmingly, the adjuncts of the educational leadership department expressed feelings of

respect and value that made them feel a part of the professional community. These revelations

countered the existing literature and perspectives on the topic, which will be discussed more in

Chapter 5. The examples spoke to the department's culture—i.e., a way of doing things. Their

actions were inclusive and intentional. Structurally, the behaviors conditioned, bolstered, and

transformed learning, producing a work environment that people want to serve and be a part.

Theme 2: Systems

Relative to culture and its facilitation of drawing in committed faculty, the establishment

of community gave structure and scope to the instructional faculty. The second theme, systems,

is discussed in this section and was identified as a significant aspect of improving the program's

processes. Adjuncts attained skills, first, through instructional meetings at the university.

Collaboration became a focus, promoting interactions among the instructional faculty.

Information delivered during the meetings was informative and knowledge was transferred in a

variety of ways, fostering connections among these individuals as they began sharing and

learning with one another through these annual gatherings. Opportunities were made available to

the adjuncts to embrace a collaborative, supportive learning culture. These conditions led to

further types of engagement, or networking. The participants began to network with one another for becoming for effective as leaders and instructors, which is where informal learning opportunities manifested.

Establishing Professional Community

Techniques were in place to help practitioners be successful in their adjunct roles. Adjuncts, during interviews, described the experiences as "unique" and "special." They believed these opportunities were benefits that others in similar roles did not have. A concerted effort was being made to support personnel and develop a consistent and an effective program experience for students. Initially, not all of the respondents understood why the meetings and systems were put in place. One adjunct, who during the study was serving as a superintendent, disclosed:

> When I first started with [the university], and [the GPD] was requesting these meetings, I
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> was like, 'Does she realize I have a full-time job?'…, but I kind of got it, you know, it
>
> kind of hit me and the worth of going to those meetings—it wasn't her just talking or the
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> leader talking, it was a matter of *us* talking…It's that fine line between not expecting
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> adjuncts to do more than they're capable of doing as far as meeting, but making certain
>
> that they realize that they are part of the team and that the work we do is very important.

The respondent shared how he learned personally and professionally through the activities, creating similar structures in his daily work and with his classes for greater learner outcomes. He acknowledged that the experiences in the role of an adjunct made him a better instructional leader, and several other respondents found this to be true.

> A participant, who had served as an adjunct for other colleges/universities, conveyed:
>
> Up front they do a lot to get you set up for success. There's so much more to do, and
>
> you're on an online platform so you have to get tutorials. [They do] a good job of getting

these set up. They're very responsive. The department does a good job of making sure that everything from your textbooks are ordered to your availability of [software named] and getting to know how that works.

The concept of focusing on technicalities was an attribute of the educational leadership department that the adjuncts felt set it apart. Such insights were important, and the adjuncts often referred to this as "the little things." Many respondents considered themselves to be lifelong learners, and acquiring strategies and ideas for becoming more effective in their work was in important aspect for why they enjoyed being adjuncts.

Attention to details eliminated complexities and apprehensions that had the potential to create pitfalls to adjuncts engaging in meaningful instructional practices and processes. Having the adjuncts feel prepared, meant acclimating them to the university environment, and the adjunct who shared above about being "set up for success" described how they were provided experiences to serve effectively as instructional faculty:

If I have any questions, I've never had an issue with getting an answer immediately. It's always been a phone call or an email. You've got a department assistant or a grad assistant that's usually competent and helpful and that makes a big difference. So, it's just that you're never really kind of given anything other than support and you feel great about it…That's really, I think, the biggest plus to working [there]. I've worked at a couple of other places but it's never been like this and it's just really nice to know that you have that support.

These organizational processes were viewed as smart investments, and all adjuncts shared that this is how they came to learn the work, connect with others, and eventually establish learning networks with one another.

One of the adjuncts provided the following:

The [GPD] did a wonderful job in preparing us. She often has us meet collaboratively, where adjunct professors who are teaching the same courses get together. We discuss the path we're going to go on, but also to work collaborative with one another. For example, sometimes we would marry our classes together and join classes. We were given literature to read for our own growth. We facilitated meetings with individuals who were looking to become administrators. We meet collaboratively to try to provide input on the structure of [courses]. I thought that those things were so very important, and [the GPD] was sort of the backbone that helped us to continue to grow as professors, but also, just like we do with our own school buildings, is to have those types of opportunities for professional learning communities where we would sit and share resources and activities, and those types of things.

Understanding that these individuals had full-time jobs, being oriented to the campus community communicated a desire to see the adjuncts be successful in performing the responsibilities and tasks that were attached to the role.

The findings suggested that this was atypical organizational behavior for those in roles like adjuncts, which aligns with existing literature. Systems in place created efficient and effective (i.e., practical) means for preparation. The educational leadership program modeled the qualities they wished to see developed and/or possessed by their stakeholders. A former adjunct interviewed during the pilot study recognized and credited the structures in place to the GPD:

[She] is really good. She's a good sounding board with ideas. She's very genuine. So, it's important that you have someone who is ready to lead by example. And, even though we know that she's very busy, you can [count on her].

The need for leadership is an aspect identified and discussed in the section that follows. What precipitated from the establishment of a professional community is explained by same adjunct quoted above. She continued on about the opportunities that existed in the adjunct role: "[They've] created systems of support where we can share ideas so we're not reinventing the wheel. [They] keep us in the loop [and] make sure that we are connected." The instructional meetings were annual and not necessarily a required activity to maintain the role. Some adjuncts felt these could occur more frequently as a means for greater consistency and to discover more about what instructional strategies, assignments, and techniques were being used in courses. Ultimately, though, there was a general understanding that time was still a barrier; the adjuncts were pleased with what structures and systems of support were in place, knowing they could reach out for help and would receive it.

The Role of Leadership

The GPD was the primary point of contact, and the data suggest that the adjuncts credited her for giving special attention to the details, or as a few stated it was her attention to "the little things." As one adjunct shared,

> I can text her or call her anytime. I know she's not in that role now, but that was really important to me—that I can pick up the phone and say, 'Hey, can we talk about this?' or 'This is what I'm looking at…' I've always had her support.

Many adjuncts identified the GPD as their primary resource for coming understand their responsibilities in the instructional role. They utilized her for troubleshooting and addressing student matters.

Echoing the previous adjunct, another respondent provided the following:

[The GPD] is the one who, before the beginning of every semester, we would get an

email, and it was directed to the people who are all teaching the same course for that

semester. And, the syllabus, [the GPD] got us all organized…And all of our documents

are in a Dropbox folder that all the professors who teach that class have access to. And

as we are coming up with resources, not only do we just automatically email them to each

other, but we're also putting them into this Dropbox so you can go in at any time and

check to see what's in there that might be helpful.

There was an established "standard," or vision for the work the adjuncts were doing. One

adjunct described the way all of the instructional faculty came together to discuss their protocols

[The GPD] was also the one who every semester unit[ed] each of us by what we were

teaching and then asked that we hold a planning meeting either face to face or online

prior to the start of the semester to ensure that we were all on the same page, and to reach

out…if we had questions. [The GPD] would plan the annual faculty get together as well.

And [the GPD] created it, structured it in such a way that it forced us to bring ideas and to

share with each other what we were using, strategies, questions that we had.

What I concluded from the interviews with the respondents was culture and systems were

indispensable and interconnected. The planned for systems created a structured environment and

fostered a culture with working conditions where adjuncts wanted to serve and were proud to be

a part.

Conducive Learning Environment. It was remarked by one the adjuncts that the

educational leadership preparation program "fostered connection." Previously described, there

were facilitated activities that initially "forced," or "[brought] together the players." Gradually,

adjuncts adopted these practices, as a "way of doing things," recognizing the priority for, and

accountability of, doing right by the students in the leadership preparation program. Adjuncts reported that the practices developed ways to help them navigate in these part-time roles that traditionally had been seen as too great a challenge to onboard. The traditional view of adjuncts, as outlined in the literature, is that adjunct roles are not valued or necessarily considered to be legitimate members of the university's faculty, resulting in them not receiving information, attention, or any forms of training to support or prepare them.

This was not the case for the adjuncts in this study. They recognized the importance of the work they were doing and did not present or perceive it as contrived, manipulation, or meaningless. There was a focus on learning and collaborating, and one adjunct offered,

There were these meetings that were usually held, like in December, and there's another one, usually in June. It's like a conference that they put on, but there's time for us to network with other professors. I think that helped a lot. In addition to that, whenever it's time (again, and I think I alluded to this before,) but whenever it's time to teach a class, you know, [the GPD] would send out a list and say, 'Okay, this person, this person and this person are teaching these classes. So you might want to connect.' And, we've made that connection, which really started [to allow us] to form bonds and build relationships. I don't feel like there's one person that I—if I needed to go to and say, 'Listen, if you get anything pertaining to this, can you help me out?,'—that I don't think I would be rejected by…not one…

The spirit of collaboration for learning and growing was prioritized and encouraged by the department with the graduate program director (GPD) being the one to coordinate much of this according to the adjuncts. In asking about collaboration, the discussion of accountability and consistency was also inquired about to further explore and gather how adjuncts were receiving

information and under what conditions: "The [GPD] does a good job of bringing us all together, especially at the beginning of the year, having us come in…inviting us to speak with undergraduates and those pursuing positions, [helping them with] knowing what questions to ask."

Adjuncts talked about establishing an environment conductive to learning by developing community among the practitioners and full-time faculty. It entailed giving attention to structures in place to facilitate cooperation, create communal behaviors, and make the experiences positive and meaningful ones where the individuals would want to engage and serve. This is what the respondents described in their experiences, making the site for this study unique. It suggested that what the department was doing was impactful and working.

Attention to Details. The department's attention to details—and, in particular, the GPD's efforts—included accounts shared by adjuncts about receiving shirts with the institution's name and emblem, phone calls, regular check-ins, and even face-to-face and one-on-one meetings to discuss needs, brainstorm ideas, and collect feedback. One adjunct, describing examples about being made to feel connected, laughed and said, "Well, this is really silly, but [is an example]…[The GPD] at one point bought all the adjuncts polo shirts and that helps put a label on your identification." This particular gesture surfaced as an example in quite a few of the interviews. In some of the adjuncts' accounts these actions were likened to good leadership being modeled. An adjunct stated, "…little things like [the shirts], as you know as a leader, go a long way as far as feeling like you're a part of the team. When you feel like you're a part of a team, you in turn put forth your best effort, I think."

To draw more on this concept, the participants expressed how much they appreciated having a voice:

At least twice a year [the GPD] and I will meet one on one and that is helpful…She's

soliciting feedback, input, based on a course someone's teaching, or a possible direction

that the department may be taking. So, that's another opportunity that, basically like

anything else, is communication.

Being asked to be a part of initiatives within the educational leadership department, such as the

accreditation processes/meetings, program redesign, as well as access to activities, panels,

conferences, and workshops were viewed by adjuncts as important and valued members of the

team, and it was well-received. The involvement, too, allowed for a collaborative platform that

took into account expertise from the field (practitioners) and within academia (full-time faculty):

We also went through an accreditation process that really forced all of the documents to

be similarly constructed. [The GPD] was primarily responsible for that. I think [there

was] a team working with [the GPD] but we heard from [the GPD] most frequently. And

so a couple of us worked with [the GPD] to get each of the courses to be formatted the

same and the assessments to be assessed using a similar kind of rubric so that the

feedback was aligned.

One adjunct noted that the involvement with such projects was appreciated because, "it makes

me feel I am a positive agent of change."

These types of experiences seemed to develop confidence for adjuncts, which became a

key indicator that the process of learning is a skill, as well as a mindset, needing development

and practice in order to be adaptive and used to it fullest capacity:

Just like all teachers, I think when I first started it was more about me and my comfort

level. So from a lesson design standpoint, I was planning things I was comfortable with.

I think a big change for me over the years is I'm really taking time at the front of the

course to say, you know, walk through the syllabus…I've differentiated instruction…I've been more reflective in trying to do a better job of meeting students' needs…Obviously, when we teach anything for a little while, you get a little more comfortable with the content.

Often, the adjuncts expressed how much they appreciated the amount of trust there was for their decision-making, whether for a lesson or class project, or seeking their voice to continue constructing and creating ideal learning opportunities that would increase understanding for how to lead effectively in the educational field. It suggested that adjuncts could play a vital role in students' learning, and the department seemed to recognize how this could be for good or bad, necessitating the need for collective ownership by all its stakeholders. The developments of an optimal climate (i.e., systems and structures) and culture would positively influence adjuncts in ways that were empowering, which becomes the final theme and a major finding from this study that I discuss in the next section.

Theme 3: Empowerment

The third theme, empowerment, emerged as the participants described the benefits of serving as adjuncts. Three subthemes generated from data analysis: ensuring quality, social learning and engagement, and leadership of/for learning. Ensuring quality described how the adjuncts were brought together as a community of influencers, developing and shaping others within the preparation program. Social learning and engagement highlighted the ways network was established and the connection strategies in place to impact adjuncts' personal growth. Leadership of and for learning demonstrated how networks were effective and moved beyond the preparation program. The outcome was they were becoming better practitioners—i.e., leaders and teachers. A respondent stated,

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

From data analysis, empowerment was described by the adjuncts in a few ways and appeared to take on a holistic approach. First, the educational leadership department created a work environment free of challenging conditions.

One of the adjuncts remarked,

I'm not trying to shoot you any bull. I don't think I had any challenges because people were so accessible and they were ready to help…They have truly served in the role of removing obstacles. They got stuff out of your way so you could do what you needed to do.

Recognizing how critical a role faculty are in students' successes, the educational leadership department provided orientation to the adjuncts to increase their knowledge of university resources for themselves, as well as for students.

Some of the adjuncts noted that not until the recent change with the GPD stepping down had they encountered challenges in their work with the preparation program other than technical difficulties with the online platform, which was anticipated. The more recent challenges they were experiencing included a lack of communication, resulting in feeling disconnected. Class sizes had increased, which was a concern for work performance. Also, there were times when being notified about a course assignment came late, and some felt fewer opportunities were being extended to them. "I think the biggest barrier right now would be isolation—feeling isolated, on your own, not connected, as much as of late," a respondent shared. The adjunct

explained that the department had been strong with communications and the full-time faculty members were approachable and willing to share resources and course materials.

Regardless of present matters, the adjuncts, including those who discussed current changes, agreed that the department provided them with opportunities for professional growth and voice. An adjunct relayed this, "Community and collaboration really helped me grow as an adjunct. In turn, it's one of the things I'd like to [establish in my new position]." A few of the adjuncts had moved into new leadership positions demonstrating their continued growth and work in the field. There were examples for the ways the work impacted their work as instructors and leaders. Empowerment is subjective and difficult to measure; for the analysis, empowerment was identified by means of the professional networks discussed by the respondents. To that end, the use of a supportive program structure and organizational induction fostered networks that were means for informal learning, indicating that such contexts support the literature on the delivery of effective professional development.

Ensuring Quality

The leadership department understood the gains in having practitioners serve as adjunct instructors for their courses. They had selected and brought together individuals who were influential in their communities and possessed a wealth of knowledge. There was a goal of cultivating a program experience that brought you into an inner circle that was developing and expanding the students' spheres of influence as they connected to the network. Adjuncts, then, enhanced the curriculum and programming by way of their expertise and the access they had to additional networks to better aspiring leaders.

A respondent discussed the value of her work and understanding of influence she had in the adjunct role:

I think to the training that I've had on coaching, cognitive coaching, instructional

coaching—all of that comes into play. Being able to listen. I listen twice as much as I

talk and try to get a sense of why people are making the decisions that they're making or

why they're telling me the information that they're telling me. And, having them to be

reflective, that's a huge part—to have situational awareness of situational leadership is

being reflective. And so, that has been really huge for me because after everything that

we do, we have to reflect on what went well in this situation: *What am I going to do to*

make it better?

Networking needed to be purposeful to maintain a quality pool of adjuncts. Connection

strategies were employed to facilitate involvement and opportunities. Adjuncts were asked to sit

on panel, facilitate mock job interviews, and to plan conferences and program events. By

seeking the expertise of the adjuncts, these individuals were empowered and growing in

professional knowledge and skills with each experience.

Counter to literature, the adjuncts from this study were engaged because they felt the

department and its GPD recognized the full potential and value of their knowledge and skills as

practitioners and educators. This was an important finding in this research. The adjuncts knew

they were supporting the full-time faculty, yet the full-time faculty acknowledged they needed to

support the adjuncts to ensure they were not under-utilized and could also benefit. The

practitioners had joined a professional network, and one of the adjuncts gave the most

comprehensive and in-depth responses:

It's hard for me to talk about what's going to be [in the future due to the GPD stepping

down]. I will tell you that I've enjoyed what has been… [I have benefited by]

contributing to the field, by preparing the next wave of leadership and getting

opportunities to network and talk on a professional level with folks across the region. I mean, I think those are two tremendous benefits. Not to mention, the partnerships that are fostered between local school divisions and the university. You know, sometimes the university or the college can attach to one or two school divisions. [There are divisions] that pretty much give the crust of their attention and resources to [certain school divisions]. That's just the way it's been and that's likely going to be the way it's going to be and okay, right? But, the thing I love about [institution] is that it really fosters partnerships throughout [the region]. We've got a good crew of folks, you know…It's just a meeting place for good, smart practitioners to come and share ideas and I think the entire region benefits. I really do. I can tell you if it wasn't intentionally planned, it's one of the most beautiful accidents…Prior to that, [school divisions were] sort of out there vulnerable, ready for the benefit of partnership. I think they had the foresight at [institution] to see that that was a well-untapped resource and then [they were] smart enough to get rolling and make it happen.

Adjuncts felt invested in the process of preparing students because the structures in place included them. "[They] care enough to get our input," one of the respondents evidenced. They were not hired to be managed, but encouraged to share their knowledge.

They were a community of learners by way of the "on demand" learning culture established within the educational leadership department. Restorative methods for learning, like collaboration and collegiality, prepared them, which had been established through intentional connections. The professional network was a venture that in many ways surfaced unforeseen outputs. An adjunct reflected on the experiences and what was unique to the role and department, positing,

I think it is kind of brilliant, because when you get all these practitioners working with

students, number one. The other smart thing is that the other professors are also my

colleagues in the real work world. So I see these people in other workshops and

conferences and we have that connection that we all work [together as adjuncts]. All of

us [are] like power players in the community. It is really smart because there is

somebody and this [region] in [an adjunct] role to employ [the institution's] graduates. In

almost every local area, there's an adjunct. That is just absolutely brilliant.

Professional and learning networks were cultivated to address challenges faced in leadership

work, as well as provide collegial support, in order to become better educational leaders. The

facilitation of support systems, or networks, were leveraged by the leadership program's

members, producing a variety of groups across the department and levels. Collaboration was

ongoing and made up of stakeholders who could be resources for addressing challenges and

brainstorming solutions. These efforts created channels and networks for adjuncts, and the

interactions served the purposes of improving performance through efficient and trustworthy

means.

Support Fuels Success. Adjuncts used their professional relationships as a way to learn,

seek advice, and even reflect. A support network existed because of the department's efforts in

making connections. A respondent, who had done adjunct work with another university,

commented on the need for networks,

There's a lot of networking that goes on because…we've met each other. For instance,

this summer [I'm teaching a course and] this week [names another adjunct] was a part of

the week and so was [names adjunct]. They came and spent a day with the group. So,

you meet people in that way and the other adjuncts are so wonderful to help mentor new

adjuncts. [Names adjunct] would work with me a lot at the beginning. [Names another adjunct] is a tremendous mentor. So, we've kind of been left to our own devices to make connections, and we've done that.

There were pairings made between novice and experienced adjuncts for the purposes of having a mentor and a colleague to be a support. The interactions were ongoing and often led to conversations and decision-making beyond adjunct work. A few had even grown in connections that led to regular outings and they grew to know each other. Further, some school districts had a few individuals in adjunct roles, and the respondents reported they could depend on these colleagues to be of assistance.

Adjuncts were transparent during the interviews, acknowledging when they were not fully taking advantage of all the opportunities and offerings of the university and leadership department:

More often, but many times my schedule does not permit [me to be fully engaged]. In my opinion, the most valuable resource thus far is the network of adjuncts and full-time professors in the department. They have assembled a great group of professionals and all that I have interacted with have been extremely helpful.

The respondents' perceptions were that the educational leadership department aimed to equip stakeholders by applying the principles of job-embedded professional learning. Because of the societal pressures about inadequately preparing educational leaders for the field work, the redesign initiative became a turning point with a focus on learning and supporting rather than teaching.

Adjuncts understood that developing and understanding the power of knowledge plays a pivotal role in growing leaders to become skillful and responsive when faced with disruptive,

complex environments (i.e., school communities). All adjuncts spoke to how much they appreciated the model, its relevancy, and the opportunity to connect with one another. Despite some of them underutilizing the resources, they had a great deal of trust in and confidence about the quality of their network to provide them with information as needs surfaced. Support systems allayed worries:

> When [the GPD] first approached me about it I was a little bit apprehensive because I'd always wanted to teach on the college level but had not done it before. I was like, 'Well, how do I know if I'm delivering the correct material that [the institution] wants me to deliver?' Some of the talks with [the GPD] relaxed me. She [said], '…You're doing it every day. You're a practitioner, you're on the ground. I've seen the way you mentor some of your teachers'…Once she reframed it, I was like, 'Yeah, I've got a lot of professional knowledge.'

The respondent had three degrees from the institution and one from a different university/college. Additionally, this adjunct spoke about the care and support witnessed and experience as a student, which had not been the case at the one institution: "I was like, 'Wow! These people really care about the students and they're really working hard to develop them. I started paying attention." Data analysis revealed that these types of encounters and supports were aspects that boosted adjuncts' confidence. Further, it reinforced their understandings of effective leadership practices.

Social Learning and Engagement

Social interactions were organized for adjuncts and full-time faculty, which facilitated a natural distribution of knowledge and sharing of skillsets as connections and bonds were forged. Instructional meeting and events were well-configured and planned to deliver professional

development in meaningful ways. The adjuncts felt prepared for their work, and an adjunct stated,

> [The GPD] did a wonderful job in preparing us. She often has us meet collaboratively, where adjunct professors who are teaching the same courses get together and discuss the path that we're going to go on, but also to work collaboratively with one another. For example, sometimes we would marry our classes together and join the classes. We were given literature to read for our own growth. We facilitated meetings with individuals who were looking to become administrators. We meet collaboratively to try to provide input on the structure of the program. I thought that those things were so very important that she was sort of our backbone that helped us to continue to grow as professors. But also, to always (just like we do within our own school buildings is to) have opportunity for professional learning communities where we would sit and share resources and activities and, and those types of things.

They looked forward to these meetings and described the time as investments that aligned with their values, both personally and professionally, for preparing future school leaders. Opportunities for interacting with one another were learning experiences.

Communication. The interview data revealed that communication created strong feelings of connectedness, as well as an understanding of the needs and responsibilities among the part-time instructional faculty. Most participants noted that by having information shared with them consistently and in a timely manner they felt that their work was valued: "I get everything that the professors on campus get—the emails and so forth—and I'm invited to things that occur on the campus. It makes me feel a part…[E]ven though I'm not actually on the campus…I feel a sense of belonging." There was genuine respect and understanding for how

busy adjuncts' schedules were, according to the participants, yet their expertise was needed to improve the learning experiences of the candidates in the educational leadership program.

To provide the practitioners with what they would need, community was established. As one adjunct described it:

As far as adjuncting, I just think it's always been a great group that [the department] threw together—they assembled a great group. I can call any one of them—and, there're some I'm very, very close to, some I've done collaboration with, some that I've spoken to at different events, but I feel confident that I can call any one of them and just say 'Hey, what do you think about this,' or 'Hey, I need help with this,' or 'How do you do this,' and they're there in a heartbeat. I was kind of amazed. Teachers are territorial from experience over my life. When I became an adjunct at [institution], even though [the GPD] said, 'Hey, I want you to teach it how you perceived it because, you know, you're a practitioner,' even though that took place, every course I took it—the first time I [taught] it—the other adjuncts were saying, '…let's look at the syllabus…,' 'I've got all these materials,' 'Hey, I'm going to make you all of my Blackboard tapes.' So, I was like, 'Wow! Everybody put all this hard work into it and they're willing to just give it away or share it with the other adjuncts.' I thought it was pretty incredible.

Time was a precious commodity that no one, including adjuncts, wanted wasted. The care and attention exhibited by way of the established support systems was germane to why individuals chose to engage, serve, learn, and return. Adjuncts perceived the program's redesign initiatives as meaningful. Stakeholder engagement and productivity appeared to be in great shape, and a respondent posited,

The program is…very accommodating and flexible to the needs of teachers who aspire to be an administrator. Teaching in K-12 carries an enormous amount of responsibilities and it is no longer a job that can be done during contract hours. Successful teachers spend evenings and weekends to provide the best experiences for their students. This program allows teachers to maximize their time as a classroom teacher while pursuing a degree in administration. If you ask most educators what their number one challenge is, I think they would say *they need more time.* This program offers them time.

The observation described by the adjunct above was one of several portrayals that shed light on the relationship between the university and its stakeholders, helping readers understand how the adjuncts perceived their roles. Adjunct position with this institution were attractive and valued based on the intentional ways the individuals were integrated and made to feel like members of the university.

Access to Learning and Resources. The expectation for learning had been established and communicated. They accomplished this by facilitating opportunities for its members to connect, making it easier to communicate needs, share ideas, and understand the goals and expectations for the role of university instructional faculty. One of the adjuncts described it as "developing the qualities of others." When adjuncts were asked to share about how they came to understand the role and functions of their work, all of them spoke to the intentional conventions in place that established a "standard" or "expectations" for teaching within the educational leadership department. A respondent explained,

I learned to adjunct primarily through discussions with other professors in the program. All have been extremely helpful. These hints, coupled with my own experience, provided

a basis to move forward. Additional resources were also made available (workshops,

instructional meetings, drop boxes, etc…) as well.

Learning, as discussed earlier, was reinforced; it was ongoing, encouraged, and discussed. These behaviors somewhat countered views from the literature, yet support what strong COP do. The full-time faculty would share how they processed and presented materials. They also found opportunities to highlight the work adjuncts were doing. An observation from this was the balance in making these moments organic, yet facilitating and structuring collaboration to drive learning and to support the connections and building of relationships across all levels.

Another adjunct shared,

[O]ne of the great things that I really like about being at [this institution] in particular is that while we have a common structure and format for everybody who teaches…, we're also provided some great latitude in trusting our professional judgment to make sure that we're using current research in adult learning.

The same adjunct quoted above described how the structure and integrating part-time adjuncts teaching was addressed,

I love [the institution's] focus on the theoretical as well as the practical part of preparing our students to be leaders, whether they're leaders of buildings or in central office or whatever they happen to be. [The institution], or at least in this department anyway, does a really nice job of knowing that leaders need to be prepared and so that means they have to really understand the theory behind the work, but then they also need to hear from practitioners who do the actual work. So, a lot of time goes into making sure that I am using the most current resources.

Organizational processes were in place to help adjuncts draw connections and feel prepared for the work they were doing. Most participants shared that the structures helped them to plan and find time for themselves. Supports and resources were at their fingertips and they did not have to spend additional time on trying to conceptualize or begin something on their own, unless they had an innovation or project, which was more so a motivator than stressor.

It was a norm to solicit feedback from the adjuncts and have them help with program design and other initiatives and activities. A respondent emphasized the importance of collaboration and being included in decision-making:

> [The institution] really promotes collaboration with other adjunct professors, which is something else that really appeals to me as a learner myself. I like having someone to collaborate with that I can bounce ideas off of and we can brainstorm strategies and [the institution] does a nice job of encouraging that. So the collaboration piece is also something that I feel responsible for…to make sure that providing the best possible learning for the students who are in my class. So it's the research, from preparing the syllabus. It's collaborating with other professors who teach the same class. It's also collaborating with other professors who don't teach the same class.

Mentioned previously in the data analysis, it was apparent that effective collaboration meant communicating must occur. The department worked to improve the leadership skills of all of its instructional faculty, and they learned ways to facilitate groups and understand group dynamics. Under the GPD's leadership, professional development was designed for the instructional faculty to go beyond student support. There was reflection and continuous learning taking place for the adjuncts to foster skills necessary for overall success as school leaders and course instructors.

Leadership of/for Learning

The leadership department not only facilitated the support systems for learning, they were modelers and doers of this practice according to the respondents. One of the adjuncts, provided these thoughts when describing the support received from the department in the role:

A couple of simple, but big concepts have influenced the way I deliver material. One is that I know what I did not appreciate when I was a student. Having multiple degrees, in multiple areas, has afforded exposure to a lot of instructors. I don't appreciate arrogant professors or those that appear condescending. Trust and relationships are vital to effective learning. I believe the more comfortable students are, the more open they are to learn, share ideas, and pose questions; therefore, I try to relax my students. I even try to bring humor into the equation. I also believe this relationship is conditional. [The institution] is paying me to grow leaders, so I firmly believe I need to be a very accessible resource to the students. In addition to being compensated, I take this approach because it is the right thing to do. One must always remember that most, if not all of these students are working full time, have families, and are enrolled in multiple classes. It is incumbent on me to help them grow.

Leadership development of others felt good. Adjuncts, as leaders and learners, were trying to be better at their work. Many participants explained that the content kept them abreast of important topics in educational leadership; they also agreed that they enjoyed learning from their students and hearing about problems of practice through multiple lenses. Parallels existed across levels in the ways each stakeholder could be learning, the one supporting others, or the facilitator. It was the evidence of an effective network and strong connectivity for learning and growing.

According to the participants in the study, the full-time faculty served in all roles, being facilitators, collaborators, and learners, too. One of the adjuncts spoke to this metaphorically:

So, the full-time faculty person is like the anchor there. [It is] the person who has

developed a lot of the materials and they're good materials. They share with you how

you can be artistic and creative and do some of the things on your own to make it your

own. But, in terms of the objectives and the goals and those kinds of things, that's

constant. And so, no matter who is teaching the course, those are constants. But I think

they do a really good job of helping you with that because I've taught…some other

courses for them…and every professor, full-time professor,…shared every lesson [with

me].

Often coined "unique," the professional networks established with full-time faculty

The adjuncts provided responses about the ways they collaborated and transferred knowledge

with one another:

[The full-time faculty] give you their whole—all of their Power-points, their notes, their

ancillary materials. They'll give you everything and share with you, and do anything…to

grow and help you…. So it shouldn't matter who, which professor, you get for the course.

It should be consistent with the grading practices around the objectives and the goals and

the standards. And so having those meetings twice a year, provided that venue so that

you could have that discussion. And I found the discussions were very rich, as part of

that professional development, all of the full-time faculty presented on something…It

could be making the courses engaging, it could be, grammar...

Some of the examples shared above evidence and capture that growth is a product of learning,

which was a priority for development, proficiency, and output (or delivery) of their product. The

transformation of educators into leaders, however, required consistent and clear communication

and structure. This was extremely important for the adjuncts. Not only did it keep them

informed, but *how* information was communicated, i.e., the language, demonstrated collegiality and appreciation for what they could contribute to the body of knowledge in growing future leaders. There was mutual respect for the various types of knowledge that could be shared with the graduate students to enhance their skills in and understanding of leadership.

Expansion of Learning. The instructional faculty's exposure to learning experiences and engagement in collaborative activities effectively promoted learning networks beyond the university's educational leadership preparation community. The educational leadership department abandoned conventional methods of course structures and program design, introducing its stakeholders to needed skills and concepts about learning. As a result, formal and informal learning coexisted (i.e., professional learning), which benefited the educational leadership community.

An adjunct surmised, regarding the work of adjuncts and the role's function, "It is all about what you bring to the table. Because [the educational leadership department] employs current practitioners, I believe the students are immersed in more meaningful experiences and hopefully, become better leaders." And, one of the most powerful insights in seeing that the inner workings of the department was making a difference, was by hearing that it was moving beyond the department. Asked to discuss the program's success, an adjunct offered,

> I think that it has advanced some collaboration between those of us on senior leadership
> teams across the region. I know a good deal of senior level leaders throughout our region
> based on affiliations with [institution]. In other words, that a was a networking
> mechanism that put us in the same space in time with some similar challenges, working
> on the focus of similar problems…I don't think there's a school division [names some]
> where I don't have a very good working relationship with at least one if not two or

three—a handful—of people. And, those relationships really had been fostered through

my role as an adjunct with [institution].

Another adjunct shared about the element of having voice and input:

And I have reached out to [the GPD] and said, you know, from a practitioner's lens,

'These are some suggestions for tweaking activities or [what are] your thoughts?' And so

I think I've taken more of a leadership, or active role, in trying to make the course the

best it can be versus approaching it more through a compliance lens, I guess.

The collection of data and review of literature suggest that because adjuncts experienced

connectedness by way of the access to the institution and communications, their levels of

engagement increased. The byproduct of this would be higher levels of engagement by students

because the adjuncts were receiving quality resources to be effective with the instructional

planning and lessons being delivered. Quality learning experiences would support graduates

successfully going into leadership positions in education.

Transformation Manifestation. There were no specific measures, criteria, or a

formalized framework in place for this study to determine the success of the university's

educational leadership department's processes in redesign to better equip the students studying in

their graduate program. This research aimed to better understand the experiences of adjunct

faculty members serving an educational leadership department. Because they were highly

satisfied and enjoyed the part-time work, I wanted to understand the essence of this, as well as

explore the existing literature challenging universities to better capitalize on this resource.

From analyzing the adjuncts' interviews, one of the reasons adjuncts serving at this

particular university and department were pleased in the role was that they felt connected to the

environment, despite it being part-time work. One adjunct shared,

> We came over and did a full weekend, like a forum, where [the students] would ask the questions and then we did mock interviews and things like that with them and gave them feedback, making us feel a part of the community.

In addition to feeling included within the university community, the support system that was described in the previous section developed strong working relationships among the instructional personnel, allowing for interdependence among the group to discuss, share and/or access needed information that was trustworthy—i.e., of quality—to help them effectively perform at their work. An adjunct commented,

> I have a good working relationship with pretty much most people [in the region]. I don't think there's a school division where I don't have a very good working relationship with at least one if not two or three, a handful, of people. And those relationships really had been fostered through my role as an adjunct with [institution].

Another adjunct explained that it was the working relationships that kept her coming back to teach and serve for this university:

> And so I think the part that keeps me doing this has to do with maybe something that lots of people say and that is it's the relationships that I've developed over the years that allow me to know that I, number one, have support if I need it. I know I can reach out to anybody, as a resource, and say, 'Hey, I'm struggling with x, Y, Z,' or 'I'm looking for information about this.' And, you know, within a couple of days I've got some stuff in my inbox that I can look at it and consider. I know I can pick up the phone and call, you know, Dr. So-and-so, who I know will help me. And a lot of major universities, you know, can't necessarily reach the person who's supposed to be your person you report to.

And so I think the people, the relationships, the communication—I appreciate all the communication.

What was notable in this study was the success achieved in knowledge transference. Strong learning communities, according to research, are characterized in their ability to adapt (and thrive) in other environments. To capture this metaphorically, the knowledge is like a seed that is transferred and planted into another location to bloom. Professional learning communities rely on social learning and collaborative structures to develop networks that result in high levels of learning. Throughout the course of this study, adjuncts gave accounts about networks formed, evidencing the strength of professional learning communities.

An adjunct provided a description about learning and achievement in relation to working with graduate students:

Really, the crux of all of this is really teaching and training our students to be good decision makers, which is a craft, you know, we practice every day that ends in "why" in the field—making decisions that are the best decisions for kids. Understanding that sometimes the best decision and right decision are separate decisions, if that makes sense. The importance of gathering information before making a decision and then being able to articulate it and most importantly stand behind and support a decision once it's been made.

During a different interview, the adjunct gave an example of knowledge transference and personalized professional learning, noting that these individuals she worked with through the university she could also rely on during her full-time work. She stated,

[My work as an adjunct] has advanced some collaboration between those of us on senior leadership teams across the…region. I know a good deal of senior level leaders

throughout the region based on our affiliation with [institution]. In other words, that was a networking mechanism that put us in the same space and time with some of the similar challenges working on the focus on similar problems.

Similarly, one adjunct recounted how she provided others in her full-time work with learning for how to use online platforms effectively:

[Professional learning] actually kept us in the know of what is actually going on in the class and kind of vice versa. Doing that kept us in the know and actually we were able to bring it back to our own divisions and utilize [the learning] in our professional development workshops and so forth. So, I think we were given the necessary tools to ensure that we were providing top notch information and preparing the students for what they were going to actually experience.

The same adjunct made a connection, sharing this about the power of collaboration and professional learning:

As a matter of fact, the cohort I had here…[several of them] were hired as administrators and I called them my babies. And, they will say, 'You know I am so glad we had this, this, and this…' You know, like 'Who do you…,' 'Who are you going to call when something goes wrong?' And so, they already knew a lot of the things that they were going to experience because they had adjunct professors who were in the division and shared with them. I like when you have the school system cohort and when you have professors who are in that school division. But, I also like having a mixture because you can see different perspectives, so they both have their benefits.

By first using these skills in formal situations (i.e., professional development), collaborative learning took on value, giving a broader scope of understanding about the importance of social

interactions and ways to apply it strategically in the work environment, as well as beyond the workplace for personal use.

Chapter Summary

This study explores the ways professional learning and networks are used for acclimating adjunct faculty into a university's educational leadership preparation program. Interviews with adjuncts revealed that they frequently used networking with one another for professional learning, answering the first two research questions posed in this study—i.e., "What role does networking play amongst adjuncts in learning from each other;" and, "To the extent that networking is a vehicle to informal learning, how is knowledge acquired, what knowledge is passed, and under what circumstances or conditions?" During the investigation, I learned that the adjuncts heavily credited the leadership department's program coordinator, or GPD, and members of the full-time instructional faculty for modeling collaboration, as well as providing formal professional development that fostered learning how to work together by means of knowledge exchange in addressing problems of practice. These shared accounts about their experiences as adjuncts also uncovered how learning was conceptualized, needing to be developed and explored, to see the value of knowledge and the various ways it can be attained both formally and informally.

The third research question—"how and to what extend do adjuncts use networking as a vehicle to informal learning"—and the fourth question—"what other mechanisms do adjuncts use to learn about teaching, content, and pedagogy"—were answered within the last finding and discussed in the second section (and second subcategory) of this chapter. The final finding was most critical because it demonstrated the respect and recognition all of the stakeholders of the educational leadership community shared, bridging the gap in sources of knowledge for use

when addressing problems of practice, such as decision-making—a critical one for school leaders and their effectiveness with school improvement. Networks were employed based on the trust and relationships formed within the professional community of the educational leadership department. Adjuncts use networks to access needed information for the full- and part-time work. They employed these learning strategies in other professional communities and learning networks they were a part of, demonstrating power of knowledge exchange through social (learning) contexts.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Overview

This study explored the lived experiences of adjuncts serving in an educational leadership preparation program. The focus of the study was to better understand the ways a university's department prepared and utilized adjuncts for instructional purposes. Four research questions guided the study: What role does networking play amongst adjuncts in learning from each other? To the extent that networking is a vehicle to informal learning, how is knowledge acquired, what knowledge is passed, and under what circumstances or conditions? How and to what extent do adjuncts use networking as a vehicle to informal learning? What other mechanisms do adjuncts use to learn about teaching, content, and pedagogy? To aid in this study, a review of literature was conducted about professional learning, professional development, and social learning structures such as communities of practice and professional learning communities that account for job-embedded learning development. This qualitative research study investigated the lived professional experiences of 27 adjuncts serving as part-time instructional personnel for a university's leadership preparation program. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the findings of the research and present implications for practice and future research. I conclude this chapter with closing thoughts about the study.

Summary of Methodology

In this qualitative study, the findings were informed by the phenomenological methodology discussed in Chapter 3. Using a single university's educational leadership department, I collected data from 27 participants, who all served as part-time adjuncts. These individuals possessed a wide range of experiences in the field of education. All except two of

the participants were actively employed in K-12 education; however, both were in positions as consultants and coaches, supporting school districts and educational leaders. Recognizing that phenomenologists seek to understand the essence of an experience, the selected method was appropriate for researching the topic. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with every participant. To ensure validity of the data, all interviews were recorded, transcribed, and memos were developed to capture the emotions and key details during these sessions for sharing experiences. In-depth, rigorous data analysis was conducted using an iterative process. The data were coded for comparisons among the interviews and to identify patterns and themes within the data. The information was organized in a variety of methods, using visual organizers, charts, and word documents, as well as spreadsheets, to allow for ease in organizing, sorting, categorizing, and manipulating the data. Themes and subthemes emerged to aid in the development of reporting the identified relationships.

Limitations of the Study

The strength of phenomenologically informed research is in its design. While one limitation may be that only one site was selected for investigation, phenomenologists would counter that one location sheds light on that specific environment's experiences with the phenomena studied. Because this is a qualitative study, another limitation argued among researchers is that there can be no generalizability due to purposeful sampling of the participants. The use of thematic selection is germane to qualitative research, showing diligence of the researcher's methodology taking into account the goal of the participants having commonalities around some phenomena to analyze, compare, and interpret the shared experience. That is to say, what is sought in qualitative studies is based on situation, not demographics necessarily. The ability to speak to the authentic experiences of individuals and interpret the accounts in ways

that provide contextual understanding remains the best approach for this study despite the limitations of this type of research. Furthermore, based on the limited existing research on the topic studied, this contribution of additional knowledge to the field is advantageous, as it aids in broadening the scope of understanding as it pertains to professional learning and development within complex organizational structures.

Summary of the Findings

Themes discovered from this study give insights about adjuncts' professional lived experiences and their work as part-time instructional faculty for university graduate programming. I explored the ways in which professional collaboration and interactions among members within an organization support (informal) learning and development for instructional faculty of an educational leadership preparation program—i.e., to what extent does collaboration factor into one's ability to effectively fulfill instructional responsibilities. The findings from this research validate research on professional collaboration and the importance of connections to garner common practices and understanding. Further, the findings revealed that culture, systems, and empowerment are integral to leveraging consistent, collaborative working conditions, especially in complex, dynamic organizational structures where connectivity is needed to continuously improve and facilitate change based on needs and feedback. The lens of COP became useful because COP literature captured how concepts surrounding professional learning and building capacity can support and improve organizations, as well as foster inclusion, collaboration, and innovation (Cosner, 2018; Sanzo, 2014). My goal as a researcher was to provide insight on why the adjuncts engaged in collaborative activities and how it transferred to their instructional practices. Educational leaders, practitioners, and those at the helm of

preparation programs may benefit from the experiences of the adjuncts, making theory become practice.

A limited number of studies exist about contingent faculty (clinical and adjuncts) to support their impact—negatively or positively. This study provided evidence for the field on this topic. The results suggest that professional learning is beneficial to organizations such as educational leadership preparation programs when systems and structures are in place that focus on practice. Knowledge management structures such as COP are characterized as effective because of their ability to integrate job-embedded skills and development into the culture of the community, which results in employee engagement and an increase in job performance (Botha et al., 2008). In this study, the adjuncts relayed that their participation in the professional learning opportunities enabled them to acquire knowledge, giving them greater understanding about the needs of their students. Thus, the adjuncts benefited from the establishment of COP, and the sections that follow discuss how the study conducted explored this.

Culture

Nationally, the trends regarding adjunct faculty reveal they occupy a greater number of the workforce within academia than full-time, tenure-tracked faculty. Existing literature also posits that adjuncts routinely experience feelings of frustrations regarding low pay and few benefits, as well as ill-preparation and accountability of their instructional practices, which has challenged universities and their departments with being able to sustain high-quality individuals for these critical teaching vacancies (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; 2014; Crow & Whiteman, 2016; McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). Not only are the perspectives of adjunct members usually negative, some studies have found that students' views about their experiences with part-time faculty are not as favorable as courses with full-time professors. Findings from the research

conducted countered the views about not being prepared and feeling unwelcomed (Caruth &

Caruth, 2013; 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013). There were concerted efforts made to support

adjuncts through the establishment of professional and learning networks. Based on interviews,

the structures and processes in place yielded positive outcomes.

In Chapter 4, the first theme discussed was culture. Adjuncts reported having a sense of

purpose that produced feelings of value, connection, and shared meaning about the work the

adjuncts were doing. The working conditions could be characterized as attributes of a healthy

culture. Further, the literature posits that organizational culture that is healthy produce networks

that also thrive.

Finding 1: Development of Community

Establishing and building the community—the second of the three elements essential for

a functional community of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002)—meant facilitating

connections and developing means of communication, helping the stakeholders establish trust as

they united and shared values in their pursuits:

> The community element is critical to an effective knowledge structure. A community of
>
> practice is not just a Web site, a database, or a collection of best practices. It is a group
>
> of people who interact, learn together, and build relationships, and in the process develop
>
> a sense of belonging and mutual commitment. (p. 34)

Commonalities were often shaped and revealed by those in the leadership department—for this

case study, the GPD played a critical role in leading these endeavors—orchestrating the

interactions among the adjuncts.

With the consistent and expected facilitated opportunities for interacting in place, the

condition became adopted by most adjuncts who trusted the entity to be there for them when

needs and challenges surfaced. As conveyed by the adjuncts, some pairings were stronger and individuals more willing to collaborate than others, but all adjuncts could attest to the availability of access when/if needed. The primary access available was the GPD; however, those adjuncts who engaged in the collaborative activities and social learning were quicker to reach out to other adjuncts and full-time faculty for support. Ultimately, all adjuncts recognized that their affiliation with the leadership department expanded their network for resources, supports, and growth.

During the semi-structured interviews, evidence collected concluded that there were clear expectations communicated mainly by way of the GPD, yet adjuncts felt that full-time personnel were modelers—even "anchors"—who were willing to collaborate, support, and ensure the success of the part-time instructional faculty. Individuals—especially those who served as adjuncts with other programs—described how unique an experience it was to be a part of this particular university's educational leadership department. When identifying how they came to understand their work and responsibilities, each participant identified the annual instructional faculty meeting, email communications providing information about course assignments being taught, the assigning/pairing of a seasoned instructor (when given a new course to teach), and regular check-ins. Each adjunct shared that they knew they could reach out to the GPD and receive an immediate response to their inquiry; several also spoke to the comfort of having access to at least one individual to reach out to for questions, bouncing ideas, and securing resources to enhance their teaching experiences with the preparation program.

Finding 2: Networks, Connectivity, and Relationships

Value and Commitment. The topic of value was present in the literature review in Chapter 2 of this study by way of understanding motivation and establishing culture (Bolman &

Deal, 2008). The importance of peoples' perceptions cannot be ignored, as it has the influence to improve one's performance and should be taken into consideration when establishing and cultivating a community of learners. "We know that motivation to learn increases when the learner feels a kinship with, interest in, or passion for the subject (Piaget, 1978; Wolfe, 2010)" (Tomlinson, 2017, p. 14). The accounts shared by the adjuncts from this study clearly conveyed their perceptions. There were intentional actions in place that fostered a sense of belonging for adjuncts. Such supportive dimensions—mainly the modes of communication and keeping these individuals informed—facilitated inclusivity, which was essentially a catalyst for engaging these critical stakeholders. Task behaviors increased because relationship behaviors (or norms) were established at the onset. Situational awareness was acknowledged and it was accounted for by the GPD. This resulted in the department establishing approaches and practices that lessened barriers, allowing part-time faculty members to function more effectively in their roles.

Systems

To establish and sustain a concept of network, a community structure must be framed and in place, giving the individuals identity. The community provides the foundational elements such as purpose, mission, goals, and objectives. A clear understanding of the shared aims then facilitates the initial level of connectedness, allowing relationships to develop. Individuals' areas of strength and expertise become known through collaboration and seeing productivity among its membership. Networks tend to be temporary and used to gain access to specific resources to acquire knowledge. They can become static or exist in isolation depending on whether their formation developed from an organized community and how well the individuals understand the tenets of social learning and sharing knowledge.

Conclusively, the data from this research surmised that adjuncts utilized one another and recognized the incredible privilege they had of accessing one another to achieve goals within and beyond the educational leadership preparation community. These individuals were establishing a variety of networks that were vehicles to improving their work productivity both internally and externally. Almost like their very own educational leadership inventory, it seemed that all instructional faculty, as well as students, took advantage of this communication system for the purposes of ongoing improvement and growth. A strong network has the ability to contribute to internal initiatives such as: interconnecting of individuals providing each other with information, improving collectively and individually, refueling and supporting one another (when a sounding board was needed), and generating ideas to enhance and grow work. The behaviors and interactions were beneficial to the field of education both within the leadership preparation program as well as (in this study) the school districts the adjuncts were serving.

Finding 3: Structures Build Capacity for Systemic Change

As discussed in the review of literature, communities of practice (COP) may be formal or informal (Wenger, 1998b; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). For organizations that are focused on change and continuous improvement, COP are intentional to leverage the complexity of the organization and yield quality results. Given the current state of education reform and the need to attract and retain effective educational leaders who are equipped to serve in the role once they have graduated, universities, districts, and policymakers must work to look at why this remains a critical area, providing greater evidence about what is (not) working, looking at all facets and data points. Specially, leadership preparation programs need opportunities to plan and design their programming in practical ways that give learners experiences that blend theory,

research, and application. Without intentionality in planning for program design, as well as staff and student selection, the cycle of failing schools, questioning, and criticisms will maintain.

Domain. As explained by the adjuncts, the concept of networking became the impetus for developing (growing) and learning, and the results from this particular research question strongly aligned with the literature reviewed and discussed in Chapter 2 about networked learning (Haythornthwaite & de Laat, 2010). The educational leadership department narrowed down their focus, which became the priority, supporting the literature about COP by Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002). The adjuncts were able to engage in learning and development because there was a common purpose. Further, though, the support systems developed were in place to limit challenges that could deter practitioners from wanting to teach at the university level. "The most successful communities of practice thrive where the goals and needs of an organization intersect with the passions and aspirations of participants" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 32). The primary agenda and focus came back to problems of practice related to leadership and learning, which aligned with the passions and principles of the adjuncts, allowing them to engage and feel a sense of ownership and belonging.

Finding 4: Knowledge Codified

The data support the assertion that informal learning is frequently occurring within the work environment in order for employees to approach tasks in ways that result in meaningful, successful outcomes (Livingstone, 1999). However, the act of informal learning is a skill, and there must be levels of trust, clear expectations, and connectedness established before there is a willingness to seek others for knowledge and support. Having intentionality and accountability, or focus, on the part of those managing and/or leading an organization are critical factors to sustaining productive work cultures. Informal learning requires interactions among people.

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) stated, "Practitioners need opportunities to engage with others who face similar situations" (p. 9). The attention and nurture given to facilitating these interactions—based on the accounts of the participants in this study—were essential to how engaged individuals were willing to be in acquiring, retaining, and transferring information shared by and/or received from one another. Thus, successful collaboration mirrors what the literature describes as exemplary COP, demonstrating the power collaborative structures have to drive change and ongoing improvement when social learning is planned for, valued, and put to practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

The first topical theme to be discussed that emerged from the interviews was the impact of informal learning of the participants' effectiveness as adjunct faculty within the educational leadership preparation program. Because it is widely known and accepted that learning is 80% informal (Livingstone, 1999), it was essential for the full-time instructional faculty to invest in strategies and techniques that would grow authentic connections among all the stakeholders of their department (i.e., full- and part-time instructional personnel and aspiring school leaders). This was not necessarily an easy task since adjunct faculty serve in part-time roles, creating a physical barrier for finding time and ways to engage in social contexts with one another at the university. In order to accomplish making connections, there was intentional time dedicated to developing skills in the area of social learning for all instructional faculty. These experiences leveled the field. Adjuncts acknowledge that a hierarchy existed and they revered being part of the department's professional network. Also, adjuncts felt respected by the full-time faculty who genuinely solicited their feedback, acknowledging the professional knowledge they possessed that enhanced the program's experiences for teaching and learning.

Finding 5: Leadership Matters

The analysis revealed overwhelmingly that strong leadership "is important to the life and productivity of programs and faculty therein" (Ingle, Marshall, & Hackmann, 2018, p. 23). The adjuncts credited the GPD for a number of management-oriented and leadership-oriented actions. Each participant was asked about how they came to understand their work as adjuncts and the resource(s) utilized for preparation and development. They all indicated that the GPD was a primary resource. Individuals relied on the GPD for direction, receiving timely information, answering questions, securing resources, and more. The GPD, per data analysis, reflected Kotter's (1990) description of a leader, which Ingle et al. (2018) summarized as follows, "Leadership, in contrast [to management], involves establishing direction, aligning people, motivating, inspiring, and producing change" (p. 23).

Successful change in organizations cannot typically occur without guidance or acknowledgement of its necessity, as discussed in the review of literature (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Morgan, 2006). Further, literature on systemic change reveals a variety of frameworks and methods based on the organizational needs to bring about transformation (Sanzo, 2016b). There was a clearly identified sense among the adjuncts of the GPD attending to and nurturing the various parts of the educational leadership department's system. The adjuncts reported a variety of benefits from her focus on the needs of the stakeholders. The evidence of these actions have been discussed, including the facilitation of the formal learning for understanding of the work, which then fostered the informal learning, or networks. The tone surrounding the GPD's resignation at the time of the study communicated confusion, disappointment, frustration, and even fear about the program's sustainability of the quality systems in the absence of a GPD. The emotions that surfaced echo the literature and reinforce the critical need for systems and

structures within organizations to be responsive and sustainable to change and its inevitability (Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto, Russell, & Zellman, 2009).

Empowerment

The third theme, empowerment, which I discussed in Chapter 4, is linked to culture, systems, and performance. The findings highlighted in this section are an indication of what can manifest with established (collaborative and communicative) practices and systems in place. In the interviews with the adjuncts, they were asked about benefits of serving in the part-time instructional role, as well as whether doing the work had brought about change. There was inclusivity expressed by the adjuncts, which fostered engagement. Adjuncts described having a voice, as they were asked to be a part of initiatives, panels, and conferences. Their feedback was solicited for developing changes to the program to enhance learning experiences. Further, adjuncts gave examples of flexibility extended to them and trust with their decision-making in their work. The literature deduces that such actions are predictors of higher performance, and employees who experience such positive working conditions will be committed and productive (Finnegan, 2010; Knowles, 1980; Shoup & Studer, 2010; Troman, 1996).

Finding 6: Bridging the Gap

In literature reviewed by McCarthy and Hackmann (2016) about educational leadership preparation programs and part-time faculty, they concluded, "A positive outcome of the increasing proportion of contingent faculty is that connections are being strengthened between leadership preparation programs and school districts" (p. 14). Sanzo and Wilson (2016), who studied district-university partnerships, posited, "Building bridges between school districts and universities does require from both organizations a commitment to creating connections and maximizing the opportunities provided by expanding former associations" (p. 14). Insights from

this study's data analysis and the generated theme of empowerment supported the literature about the connections between universities and school districts (Browne-Ferrigno & Sanzo, 2011; Sanzo, 2016b; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016).

The adjuncts' experiences from this study were inconsistent with what some of the literature reported about adjuncts' experiences regarding low wages, feelings of disconnectedness, worthlessness, isolation, and having little to no direction with the role and responsibilities of instructional faculty. Some of the adjuncts expressed that the pay was one of the benefits of the work; however, all were serving in part-time capacities and not necessarily seeking to become full-time or tenured faculty members—i.e., they were not dependent on or motivated by the salary. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 4, there were those who shared that they knew they could probably work in the same role at other neighboring institutions—and some had, yet they chose not to because they felt they would likely lose qualities and actions demonstrated to them by this educational leadership department that made serving for them a privilege. Their responses during the interviews suggested that the department's priorities, as well as their actions, were assets. There were alignments of values and the development of a collaborative culture that adjuncts felt were for the betterment of the profession, and not just for their work with the university, but for their personal development.

The connections and collaboration facilitated job-embedded skills that the adjuncts could use in their daily work as practitioners. They also appreciated having invitations to trainings where they could be learners, bring members from their school districts, or even serve as the facilitators and leaders of the workshops and trainings. Such conditions made these individuals feel as though they were making a difference in the field, and it was branding the program and its stakeholders as credible, knowledgeable members within the region and around the state. In the

interviews, the adjuncts expressed wanting to be affiliated with the university's department, seeing the department and its program have the "right focus," and feeling proud to share with others serving as instructional faculty for the leadership program. They were selective in making referrals to the GPD about potential adjuncts for hire and candidates for the department's graduate program. They also had the advantage of growing their hiring network with a pool of aspiring leaders and quality educators they were instructing. As district leaders and practitioners, they could speak to the quality of the experiences for students in the graduate program, and one positive result of this was aspiring school leaders receiving job offers and feeling prepared after they graduated. Key to this study, the leadership department was finding success in filling instructional positions with high-quality personnel.

Finding 7: Leadership and Learning

The third element of a COP is practice, and "a community's practice explores both the existing body of knowledge and the latest advances in the field" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 38). The educational leadership department in this study had success in collaborative learning experiences occurring among all of its faculty because of the types of learning opportunities and topics of discussion embedded into the interactions with the adjuncts. Various modes of connecting and communicating such as emails, text messages, online platforms, meetings, conferences, trainings, phone calls, and workshops solicited participation and engagement from the adjuncts. What was discovered from the adjuncts' accounts was what was noted in the previous section about internal operations being strategically planned to allow its members to focus on the important things for the educational leadership department. "Strong leaders are not born—they are continually developed through the iterative professional learning opportunities" (Sanzo, 2016, p. 1). The COP moved beyond their internal structure because of

the empowerment extended to them, naturally planting and harvesting itself in the form of networks throughout the districts represented by adjuncts and the students of the preparation program.

The results from Chapter 4 highlight empowerment and its relationship to leadership and learning, which are indispensable. Effective learning environments will take on a variety of forms—formally and informally—for the purposes of addressing problems of practices and ways to improve. The implications that this study present may benefit educational leadership preparation programs seeking to close the gap between universities/colleges and school districts. Adjunct faculty play an integral role in these programs. How leadership preparation departments plan for using them will ultimately result the program's achievement or its decease in productivity.

<div align="center">**Implications for Practice**</div>

Findings from this study have implications for part-time adjunct faculty, educational leadership preparation programs, and future researchers, as it pertains to preparing future educational leaders. The research explored how part-time instructional faculty (i.e., adjuncts) were prepared for instructing students in an educational leadership preparation program. As the university's department continues to improve its design and quality of experiences for all stakeholders, there were four major findings identified through the data analysis. In this section, I discuss implications to aid in reform practices for improving organizational processes and change for educational leadership preparation programs.

From the interviews conducted with the 27 adjuncts were implications for structures, processes, staffing, and leadership that contribute to professional learning, collaborative practices, and growing organizational capacity. The adjuncts viewed their work as valuable and

they were serving as full-time practitioners, putting theory to practice; these factors leveraged the work of the university's full-time faculty who were working with responsive individuals open to growing professionally in order to perform well as instructors within the higher education environment. The sections that follow capture how the implications align to research. The perceptions of the adjuncts about their experiences and the importance of the processes taken by the university's full-time faculty provide insight for strategically planning strengthening the practices of those serving in university-based school leadership preparation programs, specifically highlighting professional collaboration and development.

Social Learning and Collaboration

A good portion of learning is informal (Malcolm, Hodkinson, & Colley, 2003); however, in order for it to become a meaningful, consistent activity that people will engage in for practice—such as with networks—those engaging in it need to know its tenets (i.e., mindset and its elements). Educational leadership preparation programs that implement knowledge management systems like networks leverage their capacity to share, analyze, create, and implement (Cosner, 2018; Sanzo, 2016b; Sanzo, Myran, & Clayton, 2011). Such structures are frames that aim to increase productivity, providing opportunities for support and growth when problem-solving, and the strength is in its flexibility and conditions for collaboration (Wallace Foundation, 2009).

To leverage practices and knowledge, learning needs to be accessible with individuals possessing attitudes who see value in opportunities to do so (Rodman, 2019). Organizational culture requires formalities, expectations, and purpose in order to establish norms and its benefits. Additionally, there are levels of accountability among those who are a part—that they are contributive, communicative, knowledgeable, reflective (in practice), and evolving. For

educational organizations, the need for social learning and collaboration is necessary to bring together multiple individuals who share a common experience and work towards developed goals (Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). Across educational levels, diverse perspectives can be shared and knowledge transferred based on research, policy, and prior knowledge for ongoing improvement.

The advantage of establishing networks, to allow its members to interact effectively, is their ability to move knowledge beyond the immediate community (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). Those utilizing networks and collaborative structures recognize them as vehicles that connect stakeholders within and among complex educational environments. Strong networks are purposeful. While the same people may not belong or join networks as they form, its properties are sustained when there is a community in place to keep members focused on goals and shared purpose. Networks are similar to a directory, and the adjuncts could identify those specializing in areas where they needed information or collaboration. The organizational structure and formal learning that was established strengthened connections, provided a measure of accountability, and the means to communicate.

Communication and Community

According to the data, the development of learning community and structures contributed to adjuncts' abilities to do their work efficiently. Specifically, the adjuncts recognized that the means of communication kept them connected and informed, which in turn allowed them to be thoughtful and effective in fulfilling the responsibilities of the adjunct role. University educational leadership preparation programs who have increased their staffing with part-time faculty such as adjuncts can increase productivity (e.g., consistency and processes) with intentional methods in place (McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). Communication is an essential

element for keeping high-quality personnel within the organization (Lolidis, 2006; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). The effort to communicate was seen as an act of respect and value, not overlooking these individuals or thinking they would not want or need it for maximizing their performance. When adjuncts received regular and timely information about course assignments, needs for programming, and opportunities adjuncts felt supported in planning and managing their already busy schedules.

In addition to receiving regular communications, another benefit reported by adjuncts was having two-way communication available. The adjuncts had a point of contact, the GPD, who they knew they could reach out to and receive a response that was helpful and sound. Access to those serving in a full-time capacity with the university was another form of quality customer service and communicated a supportive environment to the adjuncts. They felt they were a priority and their needs could be addressed for them to support students' unique needs and fulfill instructional responsibilities such as grading, posting to their online portal, accessing resources, and utilizing the online platform for effective teaching.

Establishing a specific framework or processes for onboarding faculty that remains focused on establishing networks and the department's role of intentional inner workings will strengthen experiences that can extend beyond the university setting. By focusing on professional learning communities, the university's program demonstrated improved practices as it relates to literature about exemplary educational leadership programs. Full-time personnel, as well as part-time faculty, engaging in meaningful professional learning with other university educational leadership faculty will improve performance. Another strength of the program is having a voice and a specific point of contacts. Adjuncts overwhelmingly felt supported, valued, and (over time) knowledgeable (i.e., confident) about their work and affiliations with the

university. This was largely credited to the educational leadership department's focus and the

efforts of the GPD with recruitment, selection, and the establishment systems of support and

involvement.

Adjunct faculty remarked that they had an interest in learning more about the success of

the program and achievements of the graduates. While many shared that they had anecdotal

feedback from its students (through evaluations and/or continued interactions beyond the

classroom and coursework), that—along with being invited back to teach—was essentially the

only way of knowing whether their instruction and imparted knowledge was effective). Adjuncts

appreciated how offerings were available, yet optional, given their already busy schedules. A

number of them suggested that there be some guidelines in place formalizing the ways part-time

faculty become acclimated and affiliated with the institution. This notion was highly supported

given the fact that technological means exist for connecting and receiving information, such as

the online platform. A small number of individuals made suggestions for developing processes

to resemble the pipeline framework in place for securing effective school leaders. In addition to

this suggestion were ideas about stronger evaluative processes to measure their effectiveness.

At the time of this study, a formal framework for supporting and working with adjunct

professors had not been implemented. While there had been informal discussion and even an

understood vision for the selection of adjunct faculty, an understanding of how adjunct members

viewed their experiences was lacking. The amount of satisfaction in experiences countered the

literature about typical adjunct experiences; yet, support some of the cited literature responsive to

the need for purposeful social contexts. Some of the discussion on how to improve adjunct

experiences looked specifically at evaluation and feedback, as well as formal orientation for

newly hired part-time staff. The concept of developing a tiered pipeline for adjunct faculty may

be a viable concept for sustaining and retaining adjunct faculty—the first level being a track to remain part-time and the other level developing its adjunct members who potentially wish to become full-time at some point later in their careers.

Leadership for Learning and Practice

On a broader scale, this study has implications for full-time faculty and district leaders in the field of educational leadership. The study revealed an interrelationship between adjunct practice, purpose, and organizational culture. When universities utilize part-time faculty such as adjuncts, they might be mindful in their selection, finding practitioners whose beliefs align with the leadership practices they wish to develop in those entering the program. Furthermore, there is opportunity to develop the capacity of practitioners in these selections for course instructors. By engaging these individuals in leadership and learning opportunities, the study suggested that the university successfully created a robust pool of district leaders who they could collaborate with in developing future leaders and sustaining exemplary learning environments. As evidenced by this study, university-based preparation programs should take into account the needs of its stakeholders—i.e., adjuncts, students, surrounding districts—to enact COPs that truly transform learning, as well as transition theory to practice.

Future Research

Opportunities for further research on this phenomenon may occur and are numerous in nature, but would add to the findings in this study. I limited the number of studies to those that seemed most relevant to research outcomes shared, recognizing the continued study of educational leadership preparation and programming is essential for effective teaching and learning among those under administrators. There are a variety of ways future research might be developed. The more that is understood about educational leadership preparation and those

teaching within higher education programs, the more policymakers and university administrators can make informed decisions.

1. First, researchers could give more attention to demographics, developing a quantitative or mixed study to better understand the staffing patterns and allocation of funds to supply significant resources such as contingent faculty. This could be compared with other institutions and their systematic processes to understand the effectiveness of training and preparation programs.

2. Additionally, a mixed methods design could be developed with adjuncts answering survey questions to determine whether there are other factors that motivate adjuncts to serve in this capacity. There may be motivations that are driven by years of experience, personal or professional goals, and other identifiers.

3. A qualitative study on the relationship between enrollment growth of graduate programs and higher institution hiring processes could prove beneficial given the dramatic shifts in staffing patterns. Such exploration could look at the impact of federal and state mandates on university decision-making.

4. Investigate the number of graduates who go into administrative positions in the field of education. The awareness of how many who study educational leadership and then go into the roles they were prepared for finding success has the potential to inform institutions about the effectiveness of their programming.

5. Researchers should also give consideration to studying other members of faculty (e.g., deans, chairs, graduate program coordinators), as well as other sites and preparation programs to compare accounts and perspectives about processes in place for establishing exemplary experiences for learners. Insight into the experiences of other stakeholders

could help to inform those in the field of educational leadership about where barriers exist to better preparing leaders. Further, the study may reveal strategies to better support educational leaders for success once in the role.

6. Probe effective feedback for adjunct faculty. Continued work and attention remain necessary to the functions of educational leadership preparation. Methods for providing formative feedback, including evaluations and surveys, would be helpful for educational leadership departments to foster and ensure meaningful teaching experiences.

7. Site selections could also be studied (e.g., business, healthcare, military) and compared to better understand how professions are addressing similar problems of practice. There is potential in conducting a comparative study on graduate programming solely online versus face-to-face and the use of adjuncts, determining the similarities and differences that exist.

In summary, it is important for university leadership to recognize the benefits of having adjuncts serve in university-based school leadership preparation programs. These individuals can bring a wealth of knowledge to programming for leadership preparation, influencing future leaders' practices in authentic, meaningful ways. The partnership between universities and school districts provides a space for common understanding around hiring needs and challenges in full context, allowing opportunities for regularly examining program design, structures, and processes for preparing aspiring school leaders. Adjuncts can use the findings from this study to understand the need that exists for them to engage in professional learning to develop and enhance the career field. Having a voice, as the research has highlighted through collaborative practices, helps to unify and shape beliefs and actions, along with having a reliable network for implementing strategies that keep schools, including higher education settings, moving in the

direction of continuous improvement and growth. For district leaders, this study may shed light on the potential of and need for establishing accountability processes for supporting school-based district leaders—especially those new to the workforce. There are means and a clear need for coaching, mentorship, and evaluation of principals as university preparation programs strive to better specialize their work to the unique, complex needs of school leaders and the environments they serve.

<div align="center">**Concluding Thoughts**</div>

The role of non-tenured faculty, which is comprised of adjuncts, is now a critical component of educational leadership and its preparation programming (Hackmann & McCarthy, 2011; Kezar & Gehrke, 2014; Kezar & Sam, 2013; McCarthy & Hackmann, 2016). What is emphasized through a summary of limited research is that the field needs to give greater attention to this population given the increasing number of full-time clinical and part-time adjunct faculty members now employed with leadership preparation programs. With clinical and adjunct faculty having significant roles in these programs, systematic, consistent processes are needed to address this fast and unexpected change in composition of faculty membership. To leverage the impact of this change could prove beneficial if educational leadership programs make investments to integrating and engaging these new members in the work. The ability to support adjunct faculty grows their capacity for impacting the field of education beyond their work and teaching in university-based educational leadership programs (Crow & Whiteman, 2016; Sanzo & Myran, 2012; Sanzo, Myran, & Clayton, 2011; Sanzo & Wilson, 2016).

My study of adjunct faculty, professional learning, and educational leadership preparation programs aligns with the research on collaborative practices as they relate to the preparation and development of future school leaders. The data collection from interviews and the use of

university/department artifacts were analyzed and revealed themes regarding the actions and experiences of the adjuncts to engage in learning their responsibilities through professional collaborative learning activities and structures that eventually established healthy informal learning opportunities. In addition, this study further investigated what a leadership preparation program looks like when connections between the university and school districts are taken into account. The findings from this allow a broader scope of understanding about adjunct learning and environmental awareness—i.e., the learning configurations in place to foster learning and development. There were investments in the adjunct faculty by the educational leadership department that communicated a sense of value and respect for their expertise as practitioners of the field. The values and communicated investments were pathways to learning, and the adjuncts were made to (a) feel empowered to connect for learning; (b) engaged in collaborative learning experiences; and, (c) become agents of change, moving their learning beyond the program's community into other communities and networks of affiliation. By making professional learning growth the department's priority, a community of practice was established, and the connections then formed learning networks for ongoing, personalized learning.

This study gives insight into how professional development and means for intentional interactions among an organization's members can bring about improvement, but there are factors to consider in order for it to influence change (Scribner, 1999; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). It is difficult not to characterize professional collaboration as a process, yet it can be affected by culture with a contextual understanding of peoples' behaviors, needs, and values. When there is alignment of these, change abounds. Yet, there are often movements and calls for change that never manifest, which can often be due to factors such as time, complexity of the organization (i.e., numbers),

competing values, and resources. The integration of professional learning and development with an emphasis on collaboration established a work culture for learning, positively influencing practices and experiences among the adjuncts who were instructing for the preparation program (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013; 2010), which ultimately resulted in growth and improvement for the department and program. Their redesign efforts modeled an approach that fostered a myriad of learning opportunities benefiting several stakeholders. A primary result was the development of strong networks, which became a vehicle for ongoing improvement, both within and outside the immediate community of learners (Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015; Rincón-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016).

To conclude, this study explored the beliefs and practices of 27 adjuncts, who were full-time practitioners in K-12 school settings, to better understand their experiences in learning their roles and responsibilities for effectively serving a university-based school leadership preparation program. The research indicated the following: (1) program redesign and rethinking experiences (e.g., in areas such as communication and collaboration) influenced adjuncts' performance and practices as educational leaders; (2) learning communities and collaborative structures have the ability to create agency, build capacity, and ensure a level of accountability and engagement among its members; (3) job-embedded training and professional learning opportunities facilitated ownership among the adjuncts, allowing for continuous improvement and sustainability; and, (4) adjuncts experienced transformation in their personal practices through collaborative learning structures, growing their confidence and desires to be contributors for the continued development of the leadership preparation program.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ADJUNCTS

1. Please describe your role as an adjunct professor. What do you do—describe what it entails?)

    a. What attracted you to the opportunity to work at [institution] (as an adjunct)?

2. Could you share with me your educational journey—i.e., roles and positions you've held (including your present work) and the number of years?

3. What makes your experience as an adjunct at [institution] one that keeps you coming back to teach/serve?

    a. Would or could there be anything that would entice you to leave your role as an adjunct member?

4. What supports (and/or resources) have contributed to preparing you for the role?

    a. How often do you utilize the resources/supports that you've just mentioned?

5. To what extent does collaboration exist or play a role in your work as an adjunct?

    a. Please describe (or explain) these experiences.

    b. How is this similar or different to any other work you do?

6. Could you please describe if have experienced certain instances that have fostered a sense of connectedness to [institution] and the educational leadership department?

    a. What are the benefits of serving as an adjunct at [institution]?

    b. To that same end, what challenges or barriers exist?

7. Think back to when you first started as an adjunct at [institution]. Have you changed—or are you any different—than when you first began? If so, how?

Follow up questions:

- What would you like to share that perhaps I have not covered or you feel may be helpful to what we have discussed?

- How and to what extent do you learn from others? In what ways (if any), has [institution] fostered opportunities for collaboration with your colleagues?

- How has the role of adjunct professor contributed to your professional growth and learning? Or, has it? If not, why is that?

- How would you describe community and collaboration?

- How and in what ways have you experienced this at [institution]?