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FROM THE EDITORS

A unique article in this issue is on the timely issue of educators' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cash, Brinkmann and Price conducted a study to identify and analyze school administrators' responses to the coronavirus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery during the initial stages of school closings. The results of this study indicate that school leaders perceive that schools are more than places to learn, standardized tests are not essential, technology and access are necessary, and inequities are evident in this virus spreading time.

Other significant articles selected in this issue deal with concerns about teachers. Teacher retention and attrition have been problems with the education profession. Strategies to address these problems are recommended through the employment of teacher empowerment and teacher professional learning.

Kim, Johnson and Sutton-Brown studied the principals' perspectives to retain teachers and how their leadership impacted the retention of teachers in their schools. The results identified effective retention strategies that principals have used and suggested foundational checkpoints for researchers and practitioners to begin thinking strategically about ways to improve teacher retention rates.

Thompson and Samuels-Lee explored the perspective of Jamaican teachers and unearthed factors which they contend to be used for empowerment and motivation. The findings of the study indicated that teachers identified three main factors which served to empower them. These factors are "motivating", "demonstrating care", and "showing regard".

Brooksher, Mcbrayer and Fallon examined teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in relation to assessment practices. Findings revealed statistically significant differences between elementary school teachers' perceptions and middle school teachers' in relation to professional learning needs around assessment practices. Without doubt, all levels of teachers indicated the need for professional learning in the area of assessment.

Articles selected for publication in this issue have pointed to the fact that educational planning can be better facilitated by exploring the essence of the educational issues. Research effort is needed in disclosing the educational problems evolved in issues of concern. Based on the sustainable research findings, educational planners can formulate effective strategies to address current or potential educational problems.

Editor: Tak Cheung Chan
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October, 2020

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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CAPTURING THIS MOMENT IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PANDEMIC – CATACLYSM OR CRISIS?

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ABSTRACT

In March 2020, the United States took its first definitive actions to address the coronavirus pandemic and its potential impact on education. State governors began to either recommend or mandate PK-12 school closures, which prompted a call to action for school leaders. The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze administrators' responses to the coronavirus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery during the initial stages of school closings. The results of this study indicate school leaders perceive that schools are more than places to learn, standardized tests are not essential, technology and access are necessary, and inequities are evident.

INTRODUCTION

In this unique, if not completely unprecedented time, the educational world is faced with a multitude of decisions in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As educators make decisions regarding their responses and their actions moving forward, they are faced with a decision about what they want the outcome to be. Do educators want to use this opportunity to make fundamental change in their educational arena, or do they want to find ways to bring their world back into its prior state? Hence, educators must first determine or define what type of situation is being faced.

Is this pandemic a cataclysm or is this a crisis?

As defined in the Cambridge Dictionary, a cataclysm is "an event that causes a lot of destruction, or a sudden, violent change" (Cataclysm, 2020). A crisis, however, is a "time of great disagreement, confusion, or suffering and extremely difficult or dangerous point in a situation" (Crisis, 2020). During this uncertain time, leaders must define this event as it relates to PK-12 education. In determining the better option, it is important to consider educational leadership responses to the pandemic's presence and potential related changes.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In the initial phase of the pandemic, what were administrators' responses to the corona virus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery?"

BACKGROUND

In December 2019, China reported its first cases of what became known as the Coronavirus (COVID-19). By February 2020, the virus and accompanying illness had spread throughout Europe and was threatening the United States. In March 2020, the United States took its first definitive actions – at the state level – to address the potential educational impact from what was now called the coronavirus pandemic. State governors began to either recommend or mandate PK-12 school closures. By the end of March, all states had closed schools, and it was ultimately determined that they would remain closed for the remainder of the school year, with very few exceptions. (Map: Coronavirus and School Closures, 2020)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – THE THREE C'S

This research is grounded in crisis theory, crisis intervention, and chaos theory. According to Pam (2013), "Crisis theory is the group of ideas that encompasses the root of disasters, the way people behave when handling them, what causes them, how to prevent them, and how to impede one currently occurring in addition to how to resolve one" (n.p.). Tiong (2004), in Crisis Theory and SARS, identified Crisis intervention as "the process of helping the system to adapt and deal with specific crises" (p.8). It is recognized that the pandemic initiated a crisis that demanded intervention. However, the researchers propose that Chaos Theory should also be considered.

Vigoa (2020) addressed policing during the pandemic as an example of Chaos Theory. He explained, "In policing we traditionally look at chaos as disturbances and rule-breaking situations that are out of control. Unfortunately, not many supervisors or high-level administrators see it as an opportunity for change and betterment" (n.p.). In education, school leaders may have a similar perspective regarding the sense of being out of control and the desire to return to normal. As Vigoa continued and we also consider, "To move forward in these difficult and complex times, we must gather information, study it and deliver the best conclusions to instill best practices "(n.p.). As expressed by Tam and El-Azar of the World Economic Forum (2020), "In a matter of weeks, coronavirus (COVID-19) has changed how students are educated around the world. Those changes give us a glimpse at how education could change for the better – and the worse - in the long term" (p.2).

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The purpose of this study was to identify the initial thoughts and behaviors of educational leaders during the emerging pandemic. The researchers were interested in how school administrators were leading the school community in resolving chaos in response to the pandemic crisis.

Recognizing this event to be potentially pivotal to changes in school leadership responsibilities, the researchers deemed it important to capture leadership thoughts and reactions during those first few weeks of the pandemic. The initial responses of the school leaders could benefit school districts and university administrative programs as they provide professional growth opportunities for leaders who will face future potential crises and chaotic circumstances.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design

A qualitative design approach was selected to conduct this study. "Qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2016, p. 23). Further, the research design is phenomenological. Creswell (2014) explained that such a study "describes meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 57).

This qualitative study was based on the naturalistic inquiry design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) established on the premise that the researcher will best be able to identify and analyze administrator's responses to the corona virus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery approaches during the initial stages of school closings based on first-hand knowledge and experiences of administrators in the field. Naturalistic inquiry allows the study of a phenomenon in the real world in real-time documenting as events naturally unfold (Patton, 1990). The work from Carl Glickman (1997) documents the need to give participants a voice so when that notion is applied to research, one can better understand the perceptions of school administrators. When PK-12 administrators share their experiences about corona virus-related school closings and alternative

instructional delivery approaches during the initial stages of school closings, the researchers will interpret the data collected in context (Patton, 2002).

Research Instrument

This study involved a survey consisting of two multiple choice questions used to gather demographic data and eight open-ended questions. The survey questions were developed based on the research questions regarding administrators' responses to the corona virus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery approaches during the initial stages of school closings. Patton (2002) stressed the importance of question clarity, emphasizing the "importance of language that is understandable and part of the frame of reference of the person being interviewed" (p. 362). To validate the instrument, feedback on an initial draft of the questions was obtained from an expert panel of leadership professionals. The interview questions were edited and sent back to the panel for validation of the modified interview tool.

Data Collection

The survey instrument was completed on-line through Qualtrics, an on-line survey instrument. Approximately two weeks after the closing of most schools, the survey was distributed to PK-12 school leaders, using a nonprobability sampling technique of snowballing, including participants from Virginia, North Carolina, and other states. The survey was distributed to all PK-12 principals and assistant principals in Virginia based on the Virginia Department of Education's school email database (Spring 2020) as well as other PK-12 administrators and central office participants in Virginia Tech's database, including program alumni. The snowballing technique was utilized because participants were encouraged to share the survey with other PK-12 public school, private school, and central office administrators to capture a diverse sample population and increase the response rate. The survey was open for approximately six weeks and yielded 137 responses.

Data Analysis

Data from the open-ended survey questions were analyzed using qualitative methodology. The researcher utilized Erickson's (1986) interpretative method of data analysis to categorize themes or assertions from the respones. According to Erickson (1986), themes emerge from an in-depth analysis of survey question responses. By methodical analysis of themes, data are validated by continually confirming or disconfirming evidence from the data corpus (Erickson, 1986). A multitude of steps were employed to complete a systematic review of the data. As themes emerged, key links and assertions were documented from participants' responses. Final assertions from evidentiary data were used to confirm the findings. As stated by Erickson (1986), "analytic narrative vignettes and direct quotes make clear the particulars of the patterns of social organization and meaning-perspective that are contained in the assertions" (p. 149). Throughout the sharing of responses that follow, illustrative direct quotes are shared. The direct quotes were coded using the following codes: Central Office (CO), Elementary Assistant Principal (EAP), Elementary Principal (EP), Middle School Assistant Principal (MAP), Middle School Principal (MP), High School Assistant Principal (HAP), High School Principal (HP), and Other (O).

FINDINGS

Demographics

The participants varied in position (see Table 1). Of the respondents, 26% (n=36) were identified as leaders at the central office and 4% (n=6) identified as other. The remaining 70% of the

respondents were leaders, as either principals or assistant principals, at the school level. The school level leaders included 35% (n=48) at the elementary level, 15% (n=20) at the middle school level, and almost 20% (n=27) at the high school level.

Table 1: Participants by position, number, and percent

Position	Number	Percent Participants
Central Office (CO)	36	26.28%
Elementary Assistant Principal (EAP)	7	5.11%
Elementary Principal (EP)	41	29.93%
High School Assistant Principal (HAP)	12	8.76%
High School Principal (HP)	15	10.95%
Middle School Assistant Principal(MAP)	6	4.38%
Middle School Principal (MP)	14	10.22%
Other (O)	6	4.38%
Total	137	100.00%

First Thoughts

In response to the question, *What was your first thought when you heard about the coronavirus?* codes emerged and were organized into two major themes: little or no concern and initial concern, with 90 respondents (66%) indicating little to no concern and the remaining 47 respondents (34%) indicating initial concern.

The codes under the theme of little or no concern included "playing down concerns", "thinking this would not impact the United States", and "comparing it to the flu".

> *The coronavirus was like every other virus in terms of its spread, and would have minimum impact of the school. (EP)*
> *This too shall pass. (HP)*
> *Disbelief. I thought it would be isolated in China.(MAP)*
> *This is another cold/flu that the news is making bigger than it needs to be in the world. (HAP)*

The responses indicating concern included "school-related concern", "general worry or fear", "impact on education", "concern for the economy", "health and safety", and "sense that the consequences could be far reaching" (34%, n=47).

> *… how the economy would suffer if a mass amount of people got the virus. (CO)*
> *Attendance was my initial thought... (MP)*
> *… the potential loss of instructional time and student learning.(CO)*
> *My first thought was my students. I was worried about how this would turn their world upside down...They know that every day for 8 hours they are safe, fed, and pushing themselves to a higher standard...(MAP)*
> *fear… pure fear. (CO).*

As more coverage ran on the news about the spread and lethality, I suspected that this COVID-19 pandemic would have far-reaching effects within the Nation. (CO)

Even with those who initially considered it to be of "little concern" to "no concern," participants admitted that their first thoughts were replaced by more serious concerns as they learned more, as summed up below.

Once the closures happened it was an out of body experience. (EP)

…once I saw China's numbers skyrocketing and the virus spreading throughout the globe, I then wondered what steps our country has taken to be proactive about handling a possible pandemic (CO).

We have time to get a plan in place...but there was no time!! It all happened so quickly. (CO)

… as I learned more about it, I realized that it was going to be drastically different. (HP)

Regardless of the participants' initial reactions to the coronavirus, it became apparent in a short period of time that educational leaders were going to be responding to a variety of challenges.

First Priority

When asked, *What was your first priority when the closing of schools was announced,* participants' responses included more than one topic, resulting in more than one code. After coding, the top five themes that emerged were learning, including technology (44%, n=60), communication (28%, n=39), supporting students and faculty and staff (26%, n=36), providing food (20%, n=28), and safety (17%, n=23). Almost 10% (n=14) mentioned technology related to availability or access. Interestingly, only one mentioned standardized testing.

Under the theme of learning, technology topics included relief that students had one-to-one devices and issues related to computer and internet access. Members from all participant groups indicated that accessing the Internet and having equitable resources were concerns for their school and students. Likewise, participants expressed concerns about making sure that the needs of special education students and English Language Learners were being addressed.

The theme of learning and use of technology is expressed below, including examples of expressed concerns related to equitable access. Within this theme, fourteen participants mentioned the needs of students with special needs and English Language Learners.

…how was instruction going to continue for the students. (HAP)

… make sure all teachers had the resources necessary to continue engaging students in teaching and learning during the crisis. (MAP)

… have the teachers develop packets of activities they could send home with the children along with books and basic supplies like paper and crayons. (EP)

…I knew that my school division was one-to-one …. (CO)

… We have many rural areas in our district and we are known for poor internet access, so we did not have a learning home system in place for school closings….   (EP)

… Equitable access to instruction moving into the extended closure, and providing services along the continuum, including students with significant disabilities. (CO)

… and our EL parent resource coordinator was reaching out to the EL families. (CO)

Under the theme of communication, participants mentioned a system for communication for all stakeholders, the need for clear streamlined communication, accurate information, and communicating in a calm and reassuring manner. Responses below are indicative of this theme.

We are making sure our students are taken care of and creating avenues to make sure students can hear our voices, see our faces, and know we are still doing all that we can to

support them from a distance. (EP)

To assist our central office team in determining what issues needed to be addressed and determine how we could streamline communication between stakeholders as we sought to see how we could continue teaching and learning. (CO)

Getting accurate information to staff and parents. Developing a system of communication for the closure. (EP)

Making sure that the teachers and staff felt well informed about what we knew and what we are moving toward. (HP)

Reassuring students and staff… calm response. (MP)

Another theme, which focused on supporting students and personnel, encompassed the need for resources, digital access and online teaching tools, emotional support, and general needs of all stakeholders. Several responses are shared below:

During our two week break the Governor's announcement shifted us into 5th gear- non-stop work, around the clock to support teachers, principals, and students. (CO)

… to be there for students and teachers. Assisting in planning for instruction online as well as lending an ear in uncertain times was necessary. (HAP)

Checking in with my staff and taking some time to breathe. I needed to sort through my emotions before I could connect with the team of teachers I am responsible for leading. (MP)

… to make sure that my students and staff had what they needed in order to continue school assignments from home. (EP)

Under the theme of safety concerns, participants noted food, health, and safety concerns for students and faculty, social emotional wellness, and support systems. Specific statements regarding those concerns are display in the following:

… health and safety of students and community. I was primarily concerned with supporting the emotional health …. (MP)

I worried about the social and emotional aspect for many of our students. (EP)

Making sure our students were being taken care of in the following areas: 1.) nutrition, 2.) socially and emotionally, 3.) academically. (EP)

Safety, for our students, staff and community members… food and shelter for our students, staff, and community members. (MP)

Making sure students' needs were met, including food, social & emotional needs, offering support. (HP)

Since they live in a high poverty area, feeding of students was a priority, and meals started to be delivered within two days of school closing. (CO)

Making sure we had a division plan for feeding our students and families. We are an 80% Free and Reduced Lunch school, our students and families depend on us for breakfast, lunch, and weekend bags of food to make it. (EP)

Once first priorities were identified, there was a need to effectively communicate to school division stakeholders.

Communication

Respondents were asked, *What has been your communication, formal and informal, with your stakeholders?* All respondents provided multiple means of communication for multiple stakeholder groups. The wide variety of communication methods are illustrated by the following responses:

*E-connect, mass emails *Website, including a built website for COVID-19 *Robocall phone messages *Social Media *Press releases *Video messages *Text message alerts. (CO)*

Call outs by phone, mass emails, teachers making weekly contact with students and parents, using virtual meeting formats for Special Education meetings with families. (MP)

Auto dials, social media, phone conversation, email, in person discussions. (HP)

Email, text, Zoom, Google Meets, school website, phone calls, marquee, [school] flyers, division website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Google Classroom, Remind, Sign up Genius, Class Dojo. (EP)

One principal shared the efforts made to connect with parents and students, explaining

I also take one day each week to pass out meals and deliver meals to neighborhoods to stay connected with students and parents. (EP)

Finally, a participant put it succinctly, indicating

Everything and often. (CO)

Message to Students

When asked, *What would you want to tell the students who are in the final grade at your level – should they end the year without returning?* participants' responses included more than one topic resulting in more than one code. After coding, the top seven themes that emerged were future celebration for students (27%, n=37), empathy and sorrow (21%, n=29), resilience (12%, n=16), continued learning (11%, n=15), hope and love (7%, n=10), and defining moment in history (4%, n=6).

Under the theme of future celebrations for their students, participants indicated that they would like to plan a future celebration for either promotion or graduation for their students. Their responses are summed up below:

I know this year did not end the way you envisioned but we will find a more creative way to celebrate your prom and graduation. (CO)

I think they need some type of closure to their senior year, and I committed to recognizing them for their accomplishments in a safe manner. (HP)

There is a need to have an ending. (MP)

…If things are better this summer we will have a "graduation" at school. If not we will do something virtually. (EP)

In addition to focusing on future celebrations, another theme that arose from the data was empathy and sorrow. Participants' responses included indicating that they "were devastated", "shared feelings of grief", "understood feelings of loss", and "were truly sorry". Statements below expound on these feelings of empathy and sorrow:

We are devastated that there will not be a formal conclusion to their time in our school system (CO)

We love you, we miss you, and we are sorry we didn't get to end the school year the way we wanted. (EP)

I am so sorry they had to end their K-12 career this way. You're stronger than you think and this will only make you stronger. (HAP)

We are sorry that we will not see them and offer the promotions ceremony they deserve, and that we wish them well in their future triumphs. (MP)

Participants also reported statements of resilience, character building, perseverance, defining moments, and that greatness is still ahead. See examples of evidence below to corroborate these statements:

This unique and surreal experience will produce some outstanding character and purpose in each of you. (CO)

… we all (society) face unprecedented events and tragedies (assassinations, war, 911, economic downfall). In the face of it all, we persevere! We never forget the lives lost, but we fight. It seems like they lost so much (prom, graduation, memories) but they gained so much (renewed humanity, restoration of family, and a fresh, prioritized perspective on life). (HP)

Don't let this define you. Class of 2020 is very resilient! After all, they were the first set of babies born post 911 in 2002. They were born to rise above adversity. (CO)

This is a test of patience and resilience, one that if you pass now, you will be better suited to handle tough situations in the future. Greatness is still ahead of you. (MP)

… always make good choices that lead to their ability to be the best "you" they can be. (EP)

…They've learned adaptability, flexibility, new communication skills, to be self-reliant, to have empathy for others, respect for the role of government and therefore hopefully the importance of civic responsibility. (CO)

The responses under the theme of continuing learning included the ideas that online learning can be beneficial, learning continues, and learning can be life-long. Examples of these types of statements are listed below.

A pandemic does not diminish your productivity or potential. (CO)

Online learning is beneficial for students who plan to enroll in college and have not experienced online classes. (HP)

… learning all they can about themselves, the value of relationships, and the privilege of freedom. (EAP)

… make every effort to engage with the learning and instruction that is available to them through distance learning. (EP)

… remember all that they've learned from us and to continue to strive to reach their goals. (MP)

Learning continues!… (CO)

In addition to the stated themes above, participants specifically mentioned the message of hope, love, and encouragement as indicated below:

This time is not about grades, not about merit scholars, but about kindness and caring. (EP)

I would want them to know that they are cared about and that they can accomplish their goals. (HP)

We are a better place because you were here, and you are prepared for the next steps in your education because we not only built academics, but your ability to adapt and succeed. (MP)

A pandemic does not diminish your productivity or potential. (CO)

They have the power to go on and do wonderful things; that they should be kind to others; that they are only beginning to discover what they are capable of and that we love them. (EP)

The last theme that emerged from the data described this as a defining moment in history as evidenced by the following statements:

> *This strange time is likely to become a defining part of their generation ... (CO)*
> *You are living history... (CO)*
> *... This is an historical event...(MP)*
> *...history has been made...(HP)*

Cancelled State Standardized Tests

State standardized tests are a part of the United States federal accountability system. However, when *asked their reaction to the canceling of state testing for the current school year*, no respondents indicated disagreement with the decision to cancel state testing.

Of the respondents, 93% (n=127) were supportive of the decision to cancel state testing, with a range of responses from those who were not upset or understood (n=3) to those who agreed it was the right decision (n=79), were relieved (n=19) or those who were very excited (n=26). The remaining respondents provided general statements and did not address testing specifically, with one respondent *heartbroken (EP)* because of the need to maintain consistency for students.

While almost all respondents were supportive of the decision, many (28%) went further to suggest that this was the appropriate time to revisit either the existence or the nature of testing. Suggestions included cancelling state testing forever, using it formatively or for tracking growth, and rethinking other measures for accountability. Some did not address the future of testing, but emphasized the stressful nature of testing – both for students and the school personnel. Equity was mentioned as supportive of the need to revise or revisit the testing issue. Examples illustrative of the participants' responses follow:

> *Testing is over analyzed and over-valued. (CO)*
> *The mention of a formative SOL in the fall is welcomed, as it will help us determine the impact of loss of learning and the measure of growth and impact we have next year. (EP)*
> *... It is my hope that educators start having the important conversations about what school can and should look like without mandatory state testing.... We need to bring our focus back to student learning and not bureaucratic testing. (EP)*
> *Excitement. I hope this shows that students are more than tests and that the demonstration of learning can take more forms than a test they essentially proved very little about a student's ability to learn and be successful. (MP)*
> *Fantastic! There are better ways of measuring student outcomes. (HP)*
> *Great decision! .... I truly believe we will look at testing differently moving forward. (CO)*
> *....I wish they would cancel high stakes testing every year. I am not sure it is a good thing for kids. It is not equitable and not an effective tool for measuring learning. (HP)*

Several respondents indicated that they are left with questions about how this omission of testing will affect future years for the students, especially at the high school level.

> *Thankful, though concerned what the long term ramifications for students and transcripts would be. (HP)*
> *I was relieved that testing was canceled for this school year. It does cause some anxiety regarding how that will affect accreditation and funding for the following school year. (EP)*

Finally, the responses indicated interest in reconsidering what we do and how we do it, as expressed by one educational leader in the following:

> *We have been looking at how we can restructure public education and this is an opportunity to take advantage of this unique climate. (CO)*

Future Impact

When asked *how they saw this interruption impacting future classes and students*, participants' responses included more than one topic resulting in more than one code. After coding, the top five themes that emerged were filling gaps in learning (45%, n=61), inequities in programming and resources (21%, n=29), future implications and impact from school closures (20%, n=28), time to "rethink" teaching (19%, n=24), and concern about social and emotional wellness of students (13%, n=18).

Under the theme of filling in learning gaps created from the missing of direct instruction due to the extended school closures, respondents expressed concern about bridging gaps, remediation, exacerbating gaps for students in poverty. Their responses are shared below:

> *There will be a gap instructionally, behaviorally, and emotionally for our students. (EP)*
> *Students will surely appreciate school more--the social and emotional support they get there. There will be learning gaps that will exacerbate the gaps that already existed along lines of race, ethnicity, and poverty. (HP)*

The next theme addressed inequities in programming and resources. Participants clearly stated concerns about gaps in achievement for students of lower socio-economic levels, students who lack internet access or resources, and limited parental involvement and support. Some of their statements follow:

> *A new way of delivering instruction and the need to address the equity concerns for all students and their families. (CO)*
> *The gap in achievement will grow and intensify. I think in terms of a lost generation of the children of poor, disenfranchised, under-resourced families. (EP)*
> *This will continue to impact underserved and marginalized groups.... This interruption also shines light on the growing educational (resources, technology, access) inequities between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. (HAP)*
> *Education will change a lot. Our delivery, assessment, level of innovation, all of it will change! We will focus on equity unlike before, because although we say we strive to provide equitable opportunities for all students, our closure is shining light on the inequities - they cannot be ignored. (CO)*

Another theme identified future implications and the impact from school closures. Participants stated concern about loss of instructional time and impact on future state testing, ripple effects for students, and impact on future course offerings. A few of the responses are listed below*:*

> *I feel the greatest impact will be felt next year.... The equitable access piece of all of this is undeniably an issue and of great concern. (EP)*
> *I can foresee this school closure will impact students for several years.... (HP)*
> *I honestly foresee a ripple effect that will impact us for decades, and I feel that the younger the student, the bigger that impact will be on their experience. (MP)*
> *I believe that this interruption will impact student learning for several years to come (CO)*
> *If the state doesn't adjust expectations for grade level benchmarks it will have long lasting impacts. (EP)*

A notable theme that was revealed during the synthesis of data was a concerted focus on the opportunity to *rethink teaching*. Participants voiced the opportunity for more digital learning, blended models of instruction, more open-ended instruction and assessment (PBL), and opportunities for less missed instruction on inclement weather days. Evidence of these statements are expressed below:

> *… I see this interruption positively impacting how we facilitate teaching and learning.*

Although, I do not believe technology will ever replace that human interaction between a teacher and a student - we will likely have a more blended model. (CO)

I think this has catapulted everyone into digital learning. (CO)

I see this interruption as an opportunity for those districts who are not 1:1 to develop a plan to vet alternative modes of instruction. (EAP)

This time has allowed me to challenge my teachers to be more performance based and standards based when creating lessons. ... we are seeing students becoming more successful as they complete these critical thinking and analysis based lessons... (HAP)

This has better prepared us for online instruction. I see the school system going in this direction in the future for snow days/hurricane days instead of cancelling school. (HP)

The last theme participant data revealed was about the social and emotional needs of their students. Participants discussed mental health issues, social and emotional supports, and impact on the needs of special education and English language learners. Participant statements are noted below:

The thing that worries me the most is the impact on mental health and behavior. Many of our students with autism need the structure they get at school and do not have at home.... (CO)

At this point, I worry more about the social emotional state of students .... (EP)

How will be address instances of trauma and neglect students have experienced while away? (HAP)

I worry about the SEL [Social Emotional Learning] impact and what this will look like when we finally get back.... (EP)

I think we will really need to invest in SEL and relationships once we come back to the building. (MP)

I am concerned about students with disabilities who are not getting all the services they need ... and individualized instruction from a qualified teacher. (EP)

I am concerned more about our students with severe needs that they may regress without targeted instruction. (MP)

Finalizing Grades

Respondents were asked *their opinion of how school year grades should be finalized if students don't return to school. Over 63% (*n=86) felt that grades stand as when schools closed, an additional 7% (n=13) indicated approval for Pass/Fail (P/F), and at least 12% (n=17) further indicated that grades could only go up or that students should have additional support. Two respondents even indicated that all students should pass. Several respondents (n=4) referenced following division or state guidelines, which were supportive of finalizing grades at closing, providing a P/F option, and providing the opportunity for students to improve their grades. Some of the representative responses are expressed in the following:

Given the circumstances, students should be able to enhance the grade they left with; cannot go below the average they maintained upon closure.(HP)

End on the last grades that you had and be flexible. Students and parents did not ask for this. (CO)

Students grades when the cancellation of school began should be the lowest possible grade they can receive. From there, we go back to "fill in the gaps" and offer a pass/fail option to all students. (MP)

Related to equity, 18 mentioned that term directly, with an additional 14 responses related

to Internet or technology access. References to rural limited Internet access and additional limited access due to poverty were provided as support for ending grades when schools closed.

> *Go with the last ones you've got and average it. Don't give any weight to anything that was left, as instructional delivery will not be equitable. (EP)*
> *… because we are unable to ensure that ALL students have access to technology or support at home, we cannot grade kids if we are not providing instruction to them. (CO)*
> *… awarding grades would truly only assess "poverty v privilege" and "access to micro-learning v no access to micro-learning." (CO)*
> *…. Grades cannot be collected during this distance learning experience given that it is inequitable and cannot make learning accessible to all at the same level. (EP)*

Conversely, only 3 (2%) respondents felt grades should continue, with one providing specific comments related to the need for *high standards*.

> *… If a student had an F when school stopped, the student should have to repeat the class. We have to have a high standard for education even in these times. (CO)*

Finally, one participant's response is an appropriate reflection of what many respondents expressed.

> *I would like to see students have every opportunity to receive a passing grade for this school year/semester. The closure of school and stay-at-home recommendations affect students in drastic ways, not to mention the stress associated with potential layoffs for their parents and caregivers. I do not believe students should be asked to do an excessive amount of work, but I do not want to see them fall behind in their learning any more than they already have. I think there should be very few students who are given failing grades for the semester. (HP)*

Overall Considerations

While each previous question was distinct, leading to separate coding and analysis, there were overarching themes that warrant exploration. Those themes include the following:

Schools are more than places to learn

Schools are families, with educational leaders as heads of those families. When school families meet challenges, the heads immediately consider the impact of those challenges on the students in their care. In this study, it was evident that learning, food, and social emotional needs were concerns that impacted each decision. This finding suggests that schools have never been just institutions of learning, but rather extensions of home that are vital to the well-being of the student. Those concerns are evidenced by the following:

> *…schooling is really the glue of society. We can talk about money all day long, but the educational institution is the foundation of this country. (EP)*

Standardized tests are not essential

School leaders indicated that when schools encountered a pandemic, standardized testing should be shelved. Beyond approval, many suggested that this is the time to rethink how we hold teachers accountable for student progress and how we measure student success. Several indicated that most new learning was completed for the year when schools closed as justification for giving final grades confidently. Without standardized testing, and without a pandemic, the students could continue acquiring knowledge for several additional weeks instead of spending the time in review.

> *… it was time for review and prepping for the [standardized tests] so there really was not much left to cover. (EP)*
> *… the teachers and administration go into remediating and test -taking skills mid- April to the rest of the year to prepare for the test. (CO)*

... Our children are learning differently now. It is time for us to redesign education and put it back into the hands of teachers, not policy makers, not bureaucrats, or corporate for profit businesses. It is past time for changes. Look at European and Scandinavian schools----perhaps Frank Smith said it best, "We backed the wrong horse (testing) over learning. (EP)

Technology and access are necessary

Technology and access are fundamental to learning in the 21st century. When the schools closed, rarely did anyone suggest that grades could continue as usual because of the limited access to technology and because of the range of competencies and training for teachers using instructional technology platforms. However, if technology were readily accessible, it could become a fundamental instructional tool, as expressed by one participant.

I think this interruption can be a positive in addressing instructional delivery to students who are home-bound, suspended, expelled or unable to be present in traditional school buildings. (O)

Inequities are evident

The school community understood that inequities exist because of the lack of technology, the location of the community, the resources of the family, or a combination of those and other factors.

... how leaders act after this to equitably differentiate work to address gaps, provide scaffolded instruction to bring all students forward, and change the nature of education so that your zip code and income level do not impact learning during a school closure (CO)
... if we are smart in this giant forced pause---it will allow us to see the deep inequities in our system and stop promulgating them... (EP)

NEXT STEPS

So where do schools go from here? We return to the question that introduced our research endeavor: Is this a cataclysm or a crisis? The answer is, *it depends*. When the pandemic passes, if schools return to what was here before – classroom face-to-face learning, traditional end-of-year testing, classroom use of technology, and uneven internet access, then this time was no more than a crisis from which the schools returned to business as usual. However, if schools and communities address the challenges schools faced and consider changes, then perhaps this was indeed a cataclysm from which we will venture into a real 21st century school community. Consider the following:

Teaching and learning would move beyond the classroom and the teacher. Students would be using technology as a fundamental learning tool, which suggests that the teacher would be fully competent in instructional technology and able to provide the foundation students need for learning beyond the teacher and the classroom. There would be no loss of instruction because of snow days; there would be opportunities to *extend learning* and to *fill gaps* or *remediate*; there would be real opportunity to provide instruction while students are absent; all could be addressed with remote learning.

This will not happen without intentional training for teachers that moves them forward, providing both access and resources that they can use to teach and coach their students forward. It also will not happen without equitable access to technology and technology tools for both teachers and students.

School divisions cannot expand Internet access to the entire school community, but they can consider one-to-one devices and portable Internet hot spots that give students the level one access that is often absent for those in poverty. Further, the fiscal agents for communities can make

broadband Internet access a priority. The pandemic has highlighted the inequities associated with lack of access, and those inequities should be addressed by the officials at the local, state, and federal government levels who can address them. Had broadband and one-to-one devices been available, school could have continued as usual – just not inside the building.

More than one respondent specifically indicated that the closing was near the time students began reviewing for standardized testing. If that is common, then up to one quarter of the school year is spent in review. Instead of spending up to 25% of the school year prepping for a standardized test, the results of which it has been suggested could often be guessed by the zip code of the student, the schools could continue to teach and the students could continue to learn new content. What other profession would test every *patient* annually to determine how well the professional is performing? There are other avenues that lead to accountability. Those avenues could be considered, and the funds currently used for testing could be directed toward increased learning. To borrow from The Free Dictionary, perhaps we are *weighing the pig (Weighing the pig, 2020),* which is identified as slang and defined as *the practice of spending so much time trying to measure results that one is distracted from producing results.*

As schools are the extended family of many youth, especially those who are the most vulnerable, perhaps community services could be more readily tied to the schools that serve the students, so that the needs of the whole child could better be addressed.

What have we learned from this experience? Which statement reflects our thoughts?

While this unprecedented occurrence has disrupted our normal "learning" environment, it offers an opportunity for a paradigm shift in how we engage our children and may force us to reconsider our antiquated public education system. (CO)

Pray to God ALMIGHTY that this thing passes really quickly with fewer casualties. (CO)

Will we learn from this experience, or will we, with a sigh of relief, return to our hallowed grounds and accountability measures to do what we have always done? We choose cataclysmic change.

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APPENDIX
Survey Instrument

Capturing this Moment in Educational Leadership

The following survey questions have been designed to analyze administrators' responses to the corona virus-related school closings and alternative instructional delivery.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and by starting the survey you are providing consent. There is minimum risk involved in participating in this research and it will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for this research. Your responses will be anonymous. There are 10 questions and the survey should take approximately 30 - 45 minutes.

Upon completion of the survey, I ask that you forward the intact recruitment email to other administrators, but please don't place pressure on others to participate. Thank you for your time and participation in this survey.

By continuing, you are providing consent and certifying that you are at least 18 years or older. If you do not wish to provide your consent, please close your browser window.

Directions: Please complete all answers based on your personal administrative experience. Questions 1-2 will be used for demographic information.

Who are you (what position do you hold in your school division/district)?
- ☐ Elementary Principal
- ☐ Elementary Assistant Principal
- ☐ Middle School Principal
- ☐ Middle School Assistant Principal
- ☐ High School Principal
- ☐ High School Assistant Principal
- ☐ Central Office Administrator
- ☐ Other

Please indicate in which state you work as an administrator
- ☐ Virginia
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Other

What was your first thought when you heard about the coronavirus?

_____

_____

What was your first priority when the closing of schools was announced?

_____

_____

What has been your communication, formal and informal, with your stakeholders?

_____

_____

What would you want to tell the students who are in the final grade at your level – should they end the year without returning?

_____

_____

What is your reaction to the canceling of State testing for this school year?

_____

_____

How do you see this interruption impacting future classes and students?

_____

_____

What is your opinion of how school year grades should be finalized if students don't return to school?

_____

_____

As we "capture this moment in time" what else should we record?

_____

_____

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES OF
TEACHER RETENTION AND ATTRITION

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ABSTRACT

U.S. public schools have had difficulty for decades retaining qualified teachers. The effectiveness of strategies used to recruit and retain teachers have been discussed among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Extensive studies have been conducted on the causes of teacher attritions, including low salaries, poor working conditions, unsafe school climate, and so on. Obstacles and strategies for retaining teachers effectively have focused on the teachers' perspectives. This study focused on the principals' perspectives to retain teachers and how their leadership impacts the retention of teachers in their schools. Principals play a crucial role in recruiting and retaining teachers. The results identified effective retention strategies that some principals have used. Overall, the current study suggested foundational checkpoints for researchers and practitioners to begin thinking strategically about ways to improve teacher retention rates and inform the collective knowledge base on teacher retention and attrition.

INTRODUCTION

The stability of qualified teachers at schools are the primary predictors of student achievement and learning (Louis et al., 2010; Subedi et al., 2011; Subedi et al., 2015). Instability in the teacher workforce exacerbates a multitude of problems faced by school administrators and contributes to a cycle of inequities faced by public schools in the U.S (Simon & Johnson, 2015). This, in turn, is linked to lower school performance.

The attrition issues and low retention rates of public school teachers have been discussed for a long time. Decades of research have suggested that 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years (Hammerness, 2008; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Lindqvist et al., 2014). A report from the Alliance for Excellent Education suggested that approximately 500,000 teachers leave the profession annually (as cited in Haynes, 2014). In addition, the annual attrition rates for beginning teachers has increased by more than 40% over the past 20 years (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The teacher attrition rate is even greater in high-need and high-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2004).

Research on the high turnover rate of teachers has identified several factors influencing teachers' decision to leave the profession: salaries; leadership; school climate; school location (rural, suburban, or urban); school poverty; school size; race/ethnicity, and so on (Omenn Strunk & Robinson, 2006). Teachers may leave the profession because of the lack of empowerment, poor administrative support, and dissatisfaction with the school climate (Ingersoll, 2001; Brown & Wynn, 2007). Watlington et al. (2004) contended that inadequate professional development, teacher preparation, and school culture are other reasons for beginning teachers to leave the profession. On the other hand, teachers are more likely to stay in the profession when the school environment is collaborative and when they receive support from school administration and colleagues (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

The literature has shown that school leadership is associated with teachers' attrition and students' positive learning outcomes (Dahlkamp et al., 2017) since recruiting and retaining qualified teachers are one of the principals' main roles (Podolsky et al., 2017; Simon & Johnson, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). This study focused on principals' perceptions and suggestions of their leadership regarding improving teachers' retention rates which is a continuous national concern (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Wynn et al., 2007). The conceptual framework of the study was based on the path-goal theory of leadership (House, 2010), which suggests that leaders are responsible for helping followers reach their potential and encouraging followers to achieve goals by developing action steps or plans for improvement. This study was supported empirically by a myriad of studies suggesting that teacher retention and attrition are of considerable concern to school leaders (Brown & Wynn, 2007; Lindqvist et al., 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Vagi et al., 2017). Teachers, via classroom instruction, are the primary predictors of student achievement, and school leadership impacts teacher retention and attrition rates (Leithwood et al., 2010). Under this framework, the research focused mainly on principals' points of view and explored the strategies employed by principals to retain teachers as well as how leadership behavior impacts attrition.

Two research questions guided the study:
1. Do principals perceive their leadership as an important influence on teacher retention and attrition?
2. What are the salient retention strategies for teachers in schools that principals suggest?
3. What conditions of school environment that principals perceive as impacting teacher retention and attrition?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on teacher attrition has impacted school leaders, district leaders, students, and other stakeholders (Adnot, Dee, Katz, & Wyckoff, 2017). In addition, teacher attrition has served as a framework to inform the knowledge base on teacher retention strategies (Grissom, Viano, & Selin, 2016). This review highlighted empirical research on the impact of teacher attrition and contextualized the breadth of perspectives of effective teacher retention strategies by presenting the perceptions of leaders and teachers.

Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition affects educators and legislators in several ways. In 2015 alone, more than 300 articles were written on teacher attrition (Sutcher et al., 2016). As already mentioned, approximately 50% of the new teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years (Lindqvist et al., 2014). Teacher attrition remain a significant problem for school leaders, so research on causality and retention strategies has been and continues to be warranted (Vagi et al., 2017). High rates of teacher attrition also affect other areas of education, including financial impact, teacher shortages, and school type. For instance, DeFeo et al (2017) studied the financial impact of teacher attrition in Alaska and determined that it cost an average $20,000 to replace one teacher. Clandinin et al. (2015) reported that more than $2 billion is spent annually on teacher attrition in the United States.

Teacher attrition has given rise to the need to replace teachers who have left and retain new teachers (Brown & Wynn, 2009; Ryan et al., 2017). Accordingly, teacher attrition has been identified as being primarily responsible for teacher deficits and the demand for new teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). Teacher shortages are a reality in many school districts in the United States (Holme et al., 2018; Schulte & Justeson, 2019; Swanson & Mason, 2018; Ward, 2019). School leaders and legislators have examined teacher shortages for several decades, but finding effective solutions

remains a challenge (Cowan et al., 2016). Seminal and current research on teacher attrition has suggested that it has had a negative impact on overall teacher shortages (Clandinin, et al., 2015; Flynt & Morton, 2009; Gray & Taie, 2015; Ingersoll, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Omenn Strunk & Robinson, 2006). The impact of teacher attrition has been significantly amplified in certain types of schools, such as those serving students from low-income families, students with disabilities, and minority students (Brownell et al., 2018; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Holme et al., 2018).

Why Are Teachers Leaving?

Several factors have been found to be associated with teachers' attrition rates, including collegiality, support, student engagement and behavior, working conditions/resources, professional learning, workload, isolation, and so on (Buchanan et al., 2013). Thibodeaux et al. (2015) examined teachers' perspectives to identify the factors contributing to their decision to remain in or leave the profession. Their results suggested that student success, subject matter, and the art of teaching were the most influential factors in their decision to stay in or leave the profession. However, teachers also identified a lack of administrative support and student discipline as the most influential factors in their decision to leave the profession. Torres (2014) found that teachers' perceptions of workload were associated with the decision to leave a school. School climate, defined as student discipline, was another primary forecaster of teacher attrition (Torres, 2014).

School leadership remains related to teachers' attrition and retention. Gu and Day (2013) conducted research to identify the variables related to resiliency and retention over time. The results identified school leadership as one of the variables that helped teachers to succeed and remain in the field, along with professional and personal support from the principal. These results underscored the impact that school leadership can have on teacher retention and has implications for school leaders who typically support these identified factors.

Teachers' stress also has been significantly associated with retention. Sass et al. (2011) examined teacher retention by observing the impact of teacher stress and support. Sources of teacher stress were through teacher efficacy and student behavior. Teacher support was assessed through relationships with school administrators and colleagues. Results showed that social support from administration and student stressors were the main predictors of job dissatisfaction.

These aforementioned studies supported the theme that school leadership influences teachers' job satisfaction and retention. These results also warranted the need for a more thorough examination of the leadership behaviors that may have a positive impact on teachers' job satisfaction and retention. The most common results were a lack of administrative support, dynamics of the work environment, and variables related to school climate, all of which were areas that school principals had direct or indirect influence (Torres, 2014).

The Impact of School Leadership on Teachers' Attrition and Retention

School leadership has an impact on teachers' attrition and retention (Simon & Johnson, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). School leadership may contribute to as much as 21% of teacher attrition rate (Podolsky et al., 2017). Castro et al. (2018) recommended improving leadership development programs in an effort to address teachers' attrition from a leadership standpoint. Brown and Wynn (2009) led research to discern the leadership styles of principals who led schools with low teacher turnover. To obtain these data, the researchers interviewed 12 principals using a semi-structured format. Brown and Wynn found that three principal leadership styles were associated with higher teacher retention rates: being aware of new teachers' experiences, taking an active

approach to assist new teachers, and being committed to professional learning for administrators, teachers, and students.

School leadership may have an indirect influence on teacher retention (Pogodzinski et al., 2013). School leadership pursues a school culture that supports collaboration between administrators and teachers. Boyd et al. (2011) examined the correlation between school-related factors and teacher retention. Using longitudinal survey data and administrative records, the researchers modeled the relationships between teacher retention and teachers' impact on policy, the effectiveness of leadership, staff relationships, student behavior, facilities, and safety. The results indicated that school-based leadership had a significant influence on teacher retention.

School climate and working conditions also have been related to teacher retention impacted by school leadership. Teacher retention has been highly correlated to school climate and principal leadership (Wynn et al., 2007). Grissom (2011) hypothesized that school climate, principal effectiveness in particular, can be attributed to teachers' job satisfaction and retention. Then he found a positive relationship between principal effectiveness and teacher retention. The most noticeable result was that the positive influence on teachers was higher in disadvantaged schools. Ladd (2011) examined the impact of teachers' perceptions of working conditions and retention. Results showed that perceived working conditions, school leadership in particular, were a major predictor of teachers' intentions to leave.

The review of relevant literature found several important implications for research on teacher retention. As suggested, teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates (Adnot et al., 2017), and they are leaving for reasons that school administrators have the potential to influence. Accordingly, school administrators can make leadership and organizational adjustments that may help to curb teachers' attrition rates.

METHODOLOGY

To examine the principals' perspectives of the effectiveness of the strategies in their schools to have higher retention rates and lower attrition rates of teachers, the researchers conducted survey research. The context of this study was two school districts within in one southeastern U.S. state. Although the data from the two school districts were for only one state, they provided a good estimate of public schools' teacher retention and attrition rates because the school districts housed high-poverty schools, competitive schools, and racially and ethnically diverse student populations.

Procedure and Participants

The researchers used convenience sampling to invite 200 principals from public and independent school districts to participate in the study. Specifically, 150 public school and 50 independent school principals were invited. Participants included principals, assistant principals, and heads of schools throughout the state. The online survey of 21 items took approximately 20 minutes to complete (see Appendix A). Completion of the survey was tracked, and reminder e-mails were sent to non-respondents 2 and 3 weeks after initial contact. A total of 107 of 200 participants completed the online survey, resulting in a response rate of 52%. Survey responses were deidentified by replacing the participants' names with anonymously generated pseudonyms.

Measures/Instrumentation

The survey instrument was adapted from the Teaching and Learning International cross-sectional Survey (TALIS; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2005). TALIS (Strizek et al., 2014) has two forms (i.e., teacher survey and principal survey) and

has been used by OECD since 2008 to survey teachers and their school principals in more than 20 countries to assess the conditions of teaching and learning at their schools; the leadership in their schools; their preparation and professional development; as well as feedback, appraisal, and so on. The validity of TALIS has been analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and multigroup CFA (MG-CFA). For instance, the root mean square error of approximation was .015. The aim of TALIS is to produce rich and reliable information on the whole population of teachers and principals in a given country. TALIS has been established with a wealth of information from a nationally representative group of teachers and principals in order to ensure the collection of high-quality data. It uses a minimum sample size of 4,000 teachers and 200 school principals per country. Detailed information about CFA and MG-CFA was provided by Rutkowski and Svetina (2014).

In this study, the principals' TALIS survey was selected because the researchers focused on principals' perceptions. The principals' TALIS survey holds 39 items with six constructs: school background information, school leadership, teacher formal appraisal, school climate, teacher induction and mentoring, and job satisfaction (Strizek et al., 2014). Of the 39 items, 21 items were selected and adapted to be relevant to the research questions (see Appendix A). Ten items asked for demographic information, current school setting, location, number of students enrolled, and where they received their formal leadership preparation. Eleven items were related to schools' culture, climate, safety, school leaders' daily activities, challenges, mentoring programs for new teachers, teacher retention strategies, and so on. In particular, the last question (Item 21) of the survey was related to the main research question of the current study (i.e., What is the likelihood that principal leadership impacts teacher retention and attrition?).

Analyses

To test if there was any significant difference in school leaders' backgrounds and demographics on the perceptions of their leadership impacting teachers' retention, multiple linear regression analysis was run. The independent variables were the school principal demographic information. The dependent variable was the principals' perceived likelihood of leadership impacting teacher retention).

Regarding the second research question asking about types of strategies, two items (Items 19 and 20) were used. Item 19 (i.e., Please rate how often you use the following teacher retention strategies: Financial incentives; Awards; Public Praise/recognition; Written notes/letters; Mentoring/ Coaching; Professional growth plans; Other) was asked to identify how often school leaders used certain types of strategies. Item 20 was an open-ended question meant to identify additional teacher retention strategies that principals suggested based on their experiences. Using the responses to the open-ended question, we conducted two qualitative analyses. The first qualitative analysis was a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the 235 qualitative responses on the open question. Two researchers read all of the responses to become more familiar with the data, then generated initial codes, which emerged as interesting features in frequent and systematic ways (e.g., leadership, interpersonal, recognition, coaching, support, praise, etc.). The initial codes were collated into potential themes to gather all data relevant to each potential theme. Two researchers went through these steps independently first, then compared the themes together. The discrepancies between two researchers' themes were resolved through discussion. Seven themes emerged from the analysis: support, mentoring, feedback; salary, benefit; appreciation, praise; professional development, professional growth; relationships; and others. In particular, the category of Others was clustered with coding that did not fit into any of the other six themes, including teacher input/voice, teacher autonomy/academic freedom, meet instructional needs, and collaborative meetings. The second

qualitative analysis was the use of Atlas.ti to ensure that our results of the thematic analysis were consistent and reliable.

For the third research question of how principals perceive their school conditions of environment that impact teacher retention and attrition, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted using five items (Items 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18) of the survey instrument.

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. Of 107 participants, 84.1% ($n = 90$) were principals, 6.5% ($n = 7$) were assistant principals, and 6.5% ($n = 7$) were head of school; 59.8% ($n = 64$) were women, and 37.4% ($n = 40$) were men. Most of the participants ($n = 79$; 73.8%) were White, and 20.6% ($n = 22$) were non-White. More than half ($n = 61$; 57.0%) of the respondents held administrative positions in elementary schools, 16.7% ($n = 18$) in middle schools, and 24.3% ($n = 26$) in high schools. A total of 57.0% ($n = 61$) of the respondents had served as school leaders for 5 years or less, 17.8% ($n = 19$) for 6 to 10 years, and 18.7% ($n = 20$) for more than 10 years. Most of the respondents ($n = 63$, 58.9%) had worked at their current schools for 5 years or less, and 36.5% ($n = 39$) had worked at their current schools more than 6 years. A high percentage of respondents ($n = 90$, 84.1%) had received their leadership preparation from university educational leadership programs.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Demographic variable	Categories	Frequency (%)
Current administrative position	Principal	90 (84.1%)
	Assistant principal	7 (6.5%)
	Head of school	7 (6.5%)
	Unknown	3 (2.8%)
Gender	Male	40 (37.4%)
	Female	64 (59.8%)
	Unknown	3 (2.8%)
Race	White	79 (73.8%)
	Black	22 (20.6%)
	Others	4 (3.7%)
	Unknown	2 (1.9%)
Current school level	Elementary	61 (57.0%)
	Middle	18 (16.8%)
	High	26 (24.3%)
	Unknown	2 (1.9%)
Years as principal	5 years or less	61 (57.0%)
	6-10 years	19 (17.8%)
	More than 10 years	20 (18.7%)
	Unknown	7 (6.5%)

Demographic variable	Categories	Frequency (%)
Years at current school	5 years or less	63 (58.9%)
	6-10 years	23 (21.5%)
	More than 10 years	16 (15.0%)
	Unknown	5 (4.6%)
Current school setting	Urban	23 (21.5%)
	Suburban	50 (46.7%)
	Rural	17 (15.9%)
	Independent/private/charter	15 (14.0%)
	Unknown	2 (1.9%)
Leadership preparation	District based	5 (4.7%)
	University educational leadership program	90 (84.1%)
	Both	8 (7.5%)
	Others	1 (0.9%)
	Unknown	3 (2.8%)
School SES	High SES (free/reduced rate	42 (39.3%)
	Low SES (free/reduced rate)	63 (58.9%)
	Unknown	2 (1.9%)

According to the survey responses, the principals reported that their daily activities centered around administrative meetings (96.9%, $n = 93$), classroom observations (95.8%, $n = 92$), interacting with students (97.9%, $n = 94$), interacting with parents (97.9%, $n = 94$), interacting with community members (92.7%, $n = 89$), and meeting with teachers to provide feedback and support (94.8%, $n = 91$). The principals also reported that they had school leadership teams that comprised the principal, vice/asst. principal, instructional coach, dean of students, teachers, guidance counselors, students, community members.

Multiple linear regression analysis indicated that the majority of principals (96%, $n = 93$) perceived that their leadership play an important role in teacher retention and attrition, regardless of demographic information, school background, and school location. The variable of gender showed only a significance, indicating that female school leaders weigh the leadership more heavily on teacher retention and attrition than male school leaders ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < .05$). Other independent variables were not found to be significant. This result indicated that the principals perceived that their leadership had a strong impact on teachers' retention and attrition rates, regardless of race, ethnicity, years of experience, school location, or school SES (see Table 2).

Principals also identified the specific strategies that they had used to retain teachers (Item 19, see Table 3). They frequently used public praise/recognition ($n = 65$, 68.4%) and mentoring/coaching ($n = 50$, 52.6%). Occasionally, they used such strategies as awards ($n = 50$, 52.6%), written notes/letters ($n = 48$, 50.5%), professional growth opportunities ($n = 54$, 57.4%), and so on.

Table 2: Principals' Perceptions of Teacher Retention by Demographic Information

| Variable	B	SE(B)	beta	t
Gender	0.28*	0.13	0.27	2.22
Race	-0.05	0.13	-0.04	-0.35
Current school level	-0.02	0.08	-0.03	-0.26
Years as principal	-0.01	0.01	-0.13	-1.06
School location	-0.07	0.09	-0.09	-0.83
School SES	0.07	0.13	0.06	0.52

$*p < .05, **p < .01$

Table 3: Strategies That Principals Used to Retain Teachers

Strategy	Used frequently	Used occasionally	Used rarely	n
Financial incentives (stipends, gift cards, etc.)	6 (6.32%)	30 (31.58%)	59 (62.11%)	95
Awards	22 (23.16%)	50 (52.63%)	23 (24.21%)	95
Public praise/recognition	65 (68.42%)	29 (30.53%)	1 (1.05%)	95
Written notes/letters	43 (45.26%)	48 (50.53%)	4 (4.21%)	95
Mentoring/coaching	50 (52.63%)	42 (44.21%)	3 (3.16%)	95
Professional growth plans	28 (29.79%)	54 (57.45%)	12 (12.77%)	94
Other strategies	6 (75.00%)	1 (12.50%)	1 (12.50%)	8

We also asked the participants for additional strategies that they used to retain teachers and reduce attrition rates (Item 20). By conducting a thematic analysis and using Atlas.ti software of 235 comments, seven common strategies emerged (see Figure 1): support, mentoring, and feedback (n = 66, 28.1% at thematic analysis; n = 71, 24.9% at Atlas ti.); salary, benefits (n = 12, 5.1% at thematic analysis; n = 24, 8.4% at Atlas ti.); appreciation, praise (n = 48, 20.4% at thematic analysis; n = 42, 14.7% at Atlas ti.); professional development, professional growth (n = 24, 10.2% at thematic analysis; n = 64, 22.5% at Atlas ti.) ; climate (n = 30, 12.8% at thematic analysis; n = 25, 8.8% at Atlas ti.); relationships (n = 13, 5.5% at thematic analysis; n = 17, 6.0% at Atlas ti.); and others (n = 42, 17.9% at thematic analysis; n = 42, 14.7% at Atlas ti.). Overall, the responses from the 235 qualitative comments on Item 20 were similar to Item 19 in that mentoring, public praise, and recognition were identified as effective strategies. These seven perceived strategies were consistent with previous research on what has been actually effective, particularly in regard to the positive impact on teacher retention resulting from a supportive environment and mentoring systems (Wynn et. al., 2007).

Note that few principals believe that salary, benefits was one of the most effective teacher retention strategies. This result was consistent with Richwine and Biggs's (2011) finding that teacher compensation had a minor influence on recruitment and retention. In comparison, Ingersoll (2009), who studied teacher turnover and retention, explained that the lack of classroom autonomy was one of the reasons for teacher attrition and a major source of teacher frustration. This is reflected in the "Others" category ranked the third highest in terms of percentage rankings (Figure 1). Comments within this category about effective retention strategies focused on teachers' voice, autonomy and freedom in classroom, flexibility and empowering teachers.
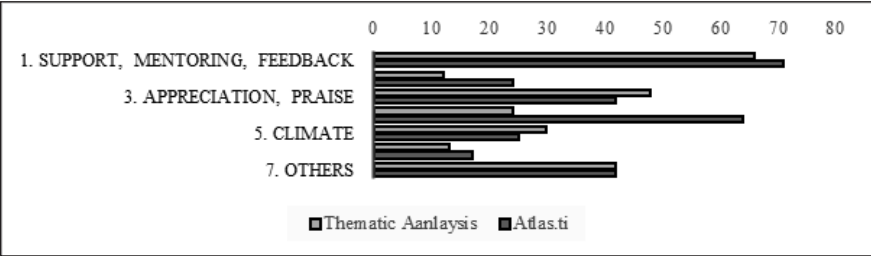
Retention strategy	Thematic analysis		Atlas ti. analysis	
1. Support, mentoring, feedback	66	28.1%	71	24.9%
2. Salary, benefits	12	5.1%	24	8.4%
3. Appreciation, praise	48	20.4%	42	14.7%
4. Professional development, professional growth	24	10.2%	64	22.5%
5. Climate	30	12.8%	25	8.8%
6. Relationships	13	5.5%	17	6.0%
7. Others	42	17.9%	42	14.7%

* First analysis is thematic analysis by two researchers; Second analysis is Atlas.ti analysis.

Atlas. ti word map

Figure 1. Summary of qualitative comments on effective teacher retention strategies.

Principals who perceived their leadership playing an important role in teacher retention and attrition responded positively to their schools' climate/culture (99%, *n*=95) and safety (95.8%, *n*=95). The majority (96%, *n*=93) responded that teachers in their schools were assigned mentors in either the same content background (59.4%, *n*=57) or other functions (39.6%, *n*=38). They had an induction program to teachers new to the profession (61.7%, *n*=66) or school (69.2%, *n*=74). Principals perceived that student discipline impeded instruction rarely/never (44.8%, *n*=43) or occasionally/ frequently (44.8%, *n*=53).

DISCUSSION

In this study, the majority of principals agreed that their leadership had an impact on retaining teachers. This perception was consistent, regardless of the principals' experience; school type (elementary, middle, high school); and school location. Principals were asked to identify the strategies that they believed were the most effective in retaining teachers. They identified several strategies that emerged as seven themes in the study: support, mentoring, and feedback; salary and benefits; appreciation and praise; professional learning; climate; relationships; and other. Each theme is discussed next.

Theme 1: Support, Mentoring, and Feedback

Conventional wisdom and tacit knowledge will not support excluding teacher support, mentoring, and feedback from the conversation about effective strategies to retain teachers. These strategies have been acknowledged by school leaders across the United States as beneficial to teachers and representative of best practices. This theme was identified more than any others as a teacher retention strategy used by current principals. In addition, empirical research has consistently yielded support for the strategies (Boggan et al., 2016; Burke et al., 2015; Hallam et al., 2012; Springer et al., 2015).

Theme 2: Salary and Benefits

Salary and benefits emerged as a theme, but the participants perceived it as the strategy having the lowest impact on teacher retention. This result might have been the result of the unique dilemmas in regard to the principal locus of control. Typically, principals do not set the salary and benefit guidelines for teachers. This lack of control diminishes, but does not eliminate, the ability of principals to leverage salary as a teacher retention strategy. In addition, several other factors may impact teachers' salaries, including degree obtainment, certification, and years of teaching experience. The principals identified this theme as impacting teachers, but it was not clear how they could make this category more effective as a retention strategy.

Theme 3: Appreciation and Praise

The principals identified appreciation and praise as an effective strategy commonly used to retain teachers. Appreciation and praise are strategies that would appeal to most principals because they are effective and easy to implement. Using appreciation and praise does not require the principals to purchase anything, does not place unreasonable demands on principals, and does not require a lot of time to implement. It is a strategy that can be used frequently and in diverse ways.

Theme 4 : Professional Learning

Professional learning was mentioned as another common teacher retention strategy. This theme represented activities associated with professional learning, and professional growth potential. The principals believed that by providing these activities, teachers would be more willing to remain at the schools. Empowering teachers and giving them opportunities to grow professionally in various capacities was an effective teacher retention strategy.

Theme 5: Climate

There was a statistically significant positive relationship between school climate and the impact of the principals' teacher retention strategies. The principals believed that school climate influenced teachers' decision to stay or leave their schools. Principals have a strong influence over the school climate, and they can use the school climate to alleviate stressors that could have a negative impact on retaining teachers.

Theme 6: Relationships

Relationships were identified as another theme that could have an impact on teacher retention. Of the seven themes that emerged, the theme of relationships was rated as having the second lowest impact on teacher retention. This result represented a departure from conventional wisdom on building relationships with teachers. Typically, building positive relationships is a common strategy used by principals and other leaders.

Theme 7: Other

Four subthemes emerged from this theme: teacher input/voice, teacher autonomy/academic freedom, meet instructional needs, and collaborative meetings. These subthemes were strongly correlated to job satisfaction and the retention of teachers. All these variables were positively related to the impact of leadership on teachers' retention rates.

CONCLUSIONS

Recruiting and retaining teachers can be challenging, especially considering the high attrition rates in the United States. Teacher retention and attrition are important concepts, and school leaders cannot overlook or delegate the responsibility of hiring and retaining teachers. Student achievement and school success are immersed in the learning experiences that teachers provide for students. School leadership play an important role in school success because they are charged with hiring and retaining effective teachers. An immediate sense of urgency among practitioners and researchers should exist for additional research on teacher retention because the role of principals is critical to student success.

This study investigated the effectiveness of the leadership and support provided by school principals to retain qualified teachers in their schools. The principals provided their perspectives on this issue and suggested strategies based on their experience. The following recommendations support an agenda of research that contributes to the knowledge base on teacher retention and attrition. These recommendations are not designed to be school specific; rather, they are meant to provide a platform on which to begin brainstorming and problem solving.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues of teacher attrition and retention have been an ongoing concern for educational stakeholders. School leaders have a tremendous influence on nearly every aspect of the school they lead (Fullan, 2018). School leaders are directly responsible for leading and developing all of the themes that emerged in this research. As a result, it is imperative that school leaders address issues related to teacher attrition and retention within their schools.

First, school leaders must assume ownership of teacher retention and attrition. Even though there are external factors that impact the number of teachers available, school leaders must be prepared to lead recruitment and retention efforts. The teacher attrition crisis warrants an in-depth examination of leadership practices at the school level, considering that most decisions to leave the teaching profession are the result of internal school issues. Attending to attrition requires effort from multiple stakeholders, but principals assume the most critical role because they provide leadership in the areas of hiring and retaining teachers within their schools.

Second, to maximize the retention of teachers, principals must be prepared to react in a timely manner to meet faculty needs and address their concerns. School leaders should periodically examine teachers' needs and implement policies and procedures that address these needs. Many teachers leave the field because of a perceived lack of administrative support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). It is important for school leaders to have specific skills to leverage available resources in

creative ways that can have a positive impact on teacher retention and attrition. School leaders will need some foundational skills to synthesize data from the school and community to develop effective retention strategies.

Third, a collaborative approach to improving teacher retention and attrition is recommended. Collaboration between university faculty and state and local educational stakeholders is critical to making informed and realistic decisions. For school leadership research to be effective, it has to be informed by the voices of the practitioners. Conversely, school leaders should ground their decision making not only in empirical research but also in anecdotal knowledge. This recommendation involves proactive efforts to create spaces for collaborative synergy among school leaders, researchers, state and federal legislators. These collaborative platforms can lead to informed best practices and improvements in teacher retention rates.

Teacher retention and attrition are ongoing issues that concern all educational stakeholders. As such, empirical research, theory, and practice must be triangulated to find and develop innovative and comprehensive solutions. Information and best practices must be shared among all stakeholders to ensure that foundational knowledge is available to local school leaders. This foundational knowledge will then allow local school leaders to develop school-specific strategy combinations that improve teacher retention rates and decrease attrition in their schools.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

The results of this study have several implications from the perspective of educational planning. School leaders and university leadership programs are primarily impacted by these findings. Planning to function successfully as school leaders typically starts at the university level. Accordingly, university faculty should ensure that their programs are inclusive of appropriate preparation in regard to human resources, including preparing leadership candidates so that they have the skills and knowledge to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. As a result, leadership curriculum, assessment, and clinical experiences must offer candidates meaningful opportunities to practice and explore effective teacher retention strategies.

Effective university principal preparation is a prerequisite for principal success (Johnson, 2016). However, school leaders must continually develop professionally to maintain their effectiveness. Results of the study indicated that school leaders must be equipped to use a variety of teacher retention strategies. For school leaders to plan to maximize their success, they should seek out professionally learning in the areas of teacher retention, human resource theory, and organizational management. These areas of study maybe embedded in university preparation programs, but retention strategies will vary based on location. As a result, school leaders should ensure that their professional learning is up to date and appropriate for their current settings.

LIMITATIONS

The study had several limitations. Principals from only one U.S. southeastern state were surveyed, thus limiting the generalizability of the results. Another limitation was that the principals' perceptions of their impact on teachers' retention and attrition rates may have been different from teachers' perceptions of such impact. Their perceptions also may have been different from actual retention effectiveness. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study provides a practitioner lens on this topic and adds to the knowledge base regarding the perceived ways in which principals' leadership can have major implications on teachers' retention rates.

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Appendix A
Principal Perceptions of Teacher Retention and Attrition

Section 1- Principal Demographics

Q1 Current Administrative Position: ( ) Principal (1)   ( ) Assistant Principal (2)   ( ) Head of School (3)

Q2 Sex   ( ) Male (1)   ( ) Female (2)

Q3 Race   ( ) Black (1)   ( ) White (2)   ( ) Hispanic (3)
                ( ) Asian (4)   ( ) Multi-Racial (5)   ( ) Other (6)

Q4 Current school level: ( ) Elementary (1)   ( ) Middle (2)   ( ) High (3)

Q5 Years as principal_____

Q6 Years at current school_____

Q7 Current school setting   ( ) urban (1)
                               ( ) suburban (2)
                               ( ) rural (3)
                               ( ) independent/private/charter (4)

Q8 Please select the Socio-Economic Status (SES) that best describes students in your school.
    ( ) Primarily low SES with 60% - 100% free and reduced meal eligibility (1)
    ( ) Primarily moderate SES with 26% - 59% free and reduced meal eligibility (2)
    ( ) Primarily high SES with 0% - 25% free and reduced meal eligibility (3)

Q9 Please provide the current number of students enrolled?_____

Q10 Where did you receive formal leadership preparation for your role as principal?
    ( ) District-based leadership preparation program (1)
    ( ) University educational leadership program (2)
    ( ) Other (3) _____

Q11 Do you have a school leadership team in your school?   ( ) Yes (1)
                                                           ( ) No, skip to question 13 (2)

Q12 Typically what percent of your daily activities represent the following ? Responses should add up to 100%.

0	9	18	27	36	45	55	64	73	82	91	100

Administrative meetings (   )

Classroom observations (   )

Interacting with students (   )

Interacting with parents (   )

Interacting with community members (   )

Meeting teachers to provide feedback/support ( )	

Q13 Rate how much the following areas decrease your effectiveness as a principal?

	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Significant (4)
School Budget/Resources (1)	○	○	○	○
Administrative Paperwork/Task (2)	○	○	○	○
Teacher absenteeism (3)	○	○	○	○
Lack of parental involvement (4)	○	○	○	○
Limited principal professional learning opportunities (5)	○	○	○	○
Limited assistance from leadership team (6)	○	○	○	○
Student discipline (7)	○	○	○	○
Other (8)	○	○	○	○

Q14 Please rate the overall climate/culture in my school among faculty and staff.
- ( ) Extremely positive (1)
- ( ) Somewhat positive (2)
- ( ) Somewhat negative (3)
- ( ) Extremely negative (4)

Q15 Please rate how much student discipline impedes instruction in your school.
- ( ) Student discipline frequently impedes instruction. (1)
- ( ) Student discipline occasionally impedes instruction. (2)
- ( ) Student discipline rarely impedes instruction. (3)
- ( ) Student discipline never impedes instruction. (4)

Q16 Please rate the safety of your school.
- ( ) Very safe (1)   ( ) Safe (2)
- ( ) Somewhat safe (3)   ( ) Unsafe, please explain (4) _____

Q17 Are (new) teachers assigned a mentor?
- YES ( ) Yes, all mentors have the same content background (1)
- ( ) Yes, but mentors may serve other functions and not have the same content background (2)
- ( ) If Yes, how long are teachers mentored? (3)
- NO ( ) No (4)

Q18 I have an induction program to support new teachers (new= new to the school or to teaching)
- ( ) A program for teachers new to the profession (1)
- ( ) A program for teachers new to the school (2)
- ( ) Other, please explain (3) _____
- ( ) We do not have a formal school-based program for new teachers (4)

Q19 Please rate how often you use the following teacher retention strategies:

	Frequently Use (1)	Use Occasionally (2)	Rarely Use (3)
Financial incentives (stipends, gift cards, etc.) (1)	○	○	○
Awards (2)	○	○	○
Public praise/recognition (3)	○	○	○
Written notes/letters (4)	○	○	○
Mentoring/coaching (5)	○	○	○
Professional growth plans (6)	○	○	○
Other strategies, please list (7)	○	○	○

Q20 Please identify the three teacher retention strategies that you believe to be effective:

_____

_____

_____

Q21 What is the likelihood that principal leadership impacts teacher retention and attrition?
( ) Extremely likely (1)
( ) Moderately likely (2)
( ) Slightly likely (3)
( ) Slightly unlikely (4)
( ) Extremely unlikely (5)

END OF SURVEY

PLANNING EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT: DRAWING LESSONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF JAMAICAN TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspective of Jamaican teachers and unearths factors which they contend to empower and motivate them. The study is set in the context of the global and local debate on the role of teachers in influencing policy and how these polices impact their performance and the performance of schools. A sample consisting of approximately 100 employees were involved in quantitative survey design in this study. The instrument was tested for reliability and generated a C-Alpha of .938. The findings of this study indicated that teachers identified three main factors which serve to empower them. These factors are "motivating", "demonstrating care", and "showing regard". A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to explore observed factors which emerged in correlational analyses. The study has implications for how policy makers undertake the planning and implementation of policy with reference to the roles and responsibilities of teachers. These implications become even more significant regarding the make-up of the future workforce which will be dominated by millennials.

INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore factors which empower teachers. The study has, in part, been inspired by one of the author's interactions with workers, and particularly teachers, who share deep levels of discontent, disempowerment, and dis-ease due to the kinds of organizational cultures, climates, and processes to which they are exposed.

The issue of what empowers employees is one of the most studied areas in the science of human behavior. Mayo (1949) found that contrary to the, then, existing assumptions, employees were not motivated solely by money. There have been several other seminal works treating with motivation. These include Herzberg (1968), Maslow (1943), Skinner (1953) and Vroom (1964). More recent works include Kehr (2004), Kiziltepe (2008), Murayama (2018) and Ryan and Deci (2000).

Part of the motivation for undertaking this work is the recognition that despite a seemingly crowded field of reputable research in the area of empowerment, reports out of many countries across several professional groupings continue to show that most employees feel under- or un-empowered. The body of literature suggests that demotivation among employees results in large part from disempowerment, as argued by Busche, Havlovic and Coetzer (1996), Chaudhary, Das, and Sahoo (2011), Drake, Wong and Salter (2007), and Kumar and Kumar (2017).

In addition to the historical issues related to employee empowerment, the changing environment of the workplaces has placed new demand on organizations related to the expectations of employees for levels of empowerment. This demand may be greater than what had been expected by employees in previous eras. Asghar (2014) reports on a study conducted by the Gutfreund Intelligence Group which estimates that by the year 2020, millennials will account for almost 50% of the United States workforce. A study by the same group found that 64% of millennials say it is a priority for them to make the world a better place, while 72% would like to be their own boss. The study further reveals that millennials say that if they do have to work for a boss, 79% of them would

want that boss to serve more as a coach or mentor, and 88% prefer a collaborative work-culture rather than a competitive one. These expectations not only signal the need for new organizational cultures, but they define the kinds of ingredients required to motivate employees. More directly, these expectations specify the empowerment needs and wishes of employees.

Thus, it is our contention that while some past approaches to employee empowerment may still be useful today, there is a need to examine whether leadership in the twenty-first century demands some new approaches. Alam and Farid (2011) found that every aspect of teachers' work environment was a source of demotivation. A demotivated teacher is often one who feels overwhelmed and powerless. The list produced in the research of Alam and Farid (2011) include classroom environment, socio-economic status, students' behavior, rewards, and incentives. Fortenbery (2015) found that there was a major crisis in policing across the United States of America and that actions were needed to improve morale and motivation.

THE PROBLEM

The global picture with respect to employee empowerment means either that the tools and techniques prescribed are inapplicable, or that even if the tools are applicable more skillful use needs to be made of these tools. This study assumes the latter and thus seeks to explore whether there are yet key elements of employee empowerment that leaders, managers, and employers need to know and use, if they are to succeed in advancing the agenda of their enterprise. It is inarguable that a disempowered employee is a liability to an organization and disempowerment is a major source of demotivation. Disempowerment results in what Marx defined as alienation (Cox & Joseph, 1998).

Hedges (2014) cites studies which show that employee motivation across several sectors is low, with eighty percent (80%) of US workers report feeling stressed and only thirty percent (30%) feeling engaged and inspired. Harjani (2013) found that nearly half at forty-eight percent (48%) of global employees are unhappy in their jobs. Hedges notes a particularly disturbing development for leaders and business owners, wherein only eighteen percent (18%) of employees are actively disengaged – that is, present at work but hating every minute of it. Hedges lists eight causes of workplace demotivation which include micromanagement, lack of confidence in the leadership of the organization, and lack of recourse for poor performance. Hedges' assessment is supported by Bradberry (2016) who found seven reasons for employee demotivation which include absence of recognition for excellent performance and tolerance of poor performance.

Hewitt (2012), who has been a school principal for several decades and also served twice as president of the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA), would no doubt share the current concerns of the JTA about lack of respect and regard for the teachers' competencies. In his seminal work on contributions of teachers' unions from the late 1800's to the early 2000's, Hewitt decries the treatment of teachers in the late 1800's to the early 1900's, noting that the government cared little about the education of the masses. Hewitt thus located one of the objectives of the JTA within the context of the need to address that issue, highlighting that one of the objectives for the formation of the JTA was "to secure adequate representation of the interest of the teaching profession…." (p. 9).

More recent Caribbean work on the issue of teacher empowerment has been documented by Thompson (2009, 2013, 2015, 2017 & 2019). Thompson (2009) deals extensively with the issue of respect, arguing that it is a most critical expression of empowerment and further argues that listening to workers is the starting point of that show of respect. Thompson (2013) posits what he calls leadership re-imagination and contends that one of the responsibilities of leadership in the organization is that of creating structures and opportunities for more inclusive decision-making.

Thompson (2015) deals directly with the issue of teacher empowerment more broadly

argued as distributive leadership and he promotes what he calls Proposition CJC (CJC refers to Care, Justice, and Capacity.). Thompson (2017) developed Paradigm RePaDO which refers to Recognition, Participation, Diversity and Openness. The findings indicate, among other things, that teachers expected to be given the space to participate in decision-making and that the organization would embrace the diverse competencies and skills they possess.

Thompson (2019a) examines organizational change strategies and again found that teachers are of the view that the success of attempts to reform the education sector will depend on the degree to which they are consulted, and their perspectives considered. Thompson (2019b) calls for a reimagination of educational leadership in the Caribbean which he argues, among other things, as involving more audacious approaches to power-sharing based on the view that radical improvements in the education system will depend on the degree to which leadership capacities are developed at all levels.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to ascertain whether there are peculiar characteristics that explain empowerment in the Jamaican education sector and whether there are relationships of significance among the characteristics. The study also aims to establish whether there are differences or similarities between the characteristics that constitute empowerment among Jamaican teachers and the characteristics that have been found to constitute empowerment in the scientific literature.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In keeping with these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:
(1) What are the factors which empower (Jamaican) teachers?
(2) Are there relationships of significance among the factors which empower (Jamaican) teachers?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant for at least two reasons. First, the inquiry into what leads to, and keeps, employees feeling empowered has implications for the personal health of employees as well as the profile, profitability, and potentials of the organization. Second, this study is significantly related to the question of the performance of schools. Schools in most countries of the Caribbean are underperforming and the education systems of the Caribbean region are failing to provide a sound foundation on which to build better systems (Jules, 2017). In Jamaica, the 2015 National Education Inspectorate report indicated that on all 953 schools, fifty-five percent (55%) of schools in Jamaica were deemed to be ineffective and thirty-eight percent (38%) found to be led unsatisfactorily. The 2017 report which was based on 130 schools, found that 69% of schools were deemed to be ineffective.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Defining Empowerment

Kumar and Kumar (2017) define empowerment as giving a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility to employees for making decision regarding organizational goals. Allport (1934) posited that human beings have a distinct need for participating in the making of decisions that affect them. Linder (1998) defines motivation as the inner force that drives individuals to accomplish personal and organizational goals, while Kreitner (1995) emphasizes that motivation is the psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction. Both definitions are aligned

to Maslow's claim (1943) that motivation is behavior designed to satisfy unmet needs. This basic construction is like the one advanced by Higgins (1994). Kumar and Kumar (2017) cite Blanchard, Carlos and Randolf (1996) who argue that empowerment is not only about having the freedom to act, but also having a higher degree of responsibility and accountability, such that they can be motivated, committed, satisfied and assist the organization in achieving its objectives.

Demotivation and Disempowerment

There is a synonymic relationship between demotivation and disempowerment and a similar relationship between empowerment and motivation, (Amaada, 2011). Indeed, Musslewhite (2007) and Drake et al., (2007) see motivation as producing or leading to empowerment and vice versa. Thus, it is arguable that when the issue of motivation is raised, there is an implicit reference to empowerment and vice versa.

Cherry (2017) suggests that motivation is a multi-layered force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. This goal-oriented behavior involves the engagement of the energies of an empowered self to produce desired results drawing on biological, social, and cognitive resources. According to Cherry it is the constellation of these forces that describe *why* a person does something and part of that 'why' can be attributed to the fact that the person feels empowered which implies permission, facilitation, or more critically, courage. Cherry's position builds on that of Ryan and Deci (2000) who explain that a person who feels no impetus to act may be characterized as unmotivated; thus, motivation involves the exercise of energy, agency, and power. The unmotivated state contrasts with that of someone who is energized toward an end or goal. Lai (2011) supports both positions, arguing that motivation is concerned with the driving and enabling forces that underlie behavior. Lai further posits that such behaviors are characterized by willingness, volition, a sense of agency and autonomy. This notion of impetus to act is ultimately an issue of commitment and so Chaudhary et al., (2011) describe employee empowerment as a strategy towards workplace commitment. They suggest that empowerment helps to create autonomy for employees and creates the conditions for the sharing of responsibility and power at all levels. This sharing of responsibility and power builds employee self-esteem and energizes the workforce for better performance. The underlying idea of energy is related to motivation. Chaudhary et al., (2011) rely on Busche et al., (1996) who discuss various facets of workplace empowerment which support commitment. These facets include choice opportunities which involve having a degree of choice in their day to day work life and self-efficacy which relates to being able to influence the outcomes of one's effort.

In this study, motivation is used as a synonym for empowerment, and is defined as the stimuli or energy which drives individuals to act in positive ways designed to advance their own interests or that of others, and/or the organization, community, or country. Thus, this study seeks to explore what are the stimuli that are required to drive employees to act in ways that advance their own interests as well as that of the customers, the organization, and the wider society. Within the narrow confines of the sample used for this study (teachers), customers would refer to students, but the principle of directing energy to satisfy needs relates broadly to all contexts of customer service.

Demotivating Factors

Kiziltepe (2008) conducted a study among three hundred university lecturers in Turkey with the purpose of determining the factors that motivated and demotivated them. She found that motivating factors could be characterized in four categories, namely, students, career, social status and ideals. Demotivating factors, on the other hand were classified into five categories: students,

economics, structural and physical characteristics, research, and working conditions. Kiziltepe takes stock of the curious finding that students are the main source of motivation and demotivation for university teachers. Alam and Farid (2011) make similar findings to those of Kiziltepe in a study conducted among teachers in secondary schools in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi. They found that among the factors that affected teacher motivation were classroom environment, socio-economic status, students' behavior and rewards/incentives. Devadass (2011) reviews over forty pieces of research on motivation and found that factors that lead to employee motivation include management practices and broader environmental factors. Hossein, Saleh, Iman, and Jaafar (2012) conducted a study of employees at a university and found that there is a meaningful and straight relationship between the empowerment level of employees and organizational factors such as having clear goals, reward system, availability of resources, performance evaluation system and professional development. The common thread of factors such as rewards, performance evaluation, and availability of resources (Alam & Farid, 2011; Devadass, 2011; Hossein et al., 2012; Kitiltepe, 2008), not only shows the synonymic relationship between motivation and empowerment, but also builds out the tapestry of factors that promote empowerment even though Hossein et al. (2012) contend that there was no unified model for employee empowerment that has been established in the scientific literature. This contention may well be correct, and thus this study seeks to add yet another model or components of a model to the debate on how to empower employees.

Hossein et al., (2012) posit that empowerment of employees as a management activity is divided into two main categories: direct and indirect. The direct model includes the delegation of more high-level duties to individuals or teams and the creation of more opportunities for participation in decision-making, while the indirect model entails the widespread presence of the participatory structures of groups from the quality circles to the management committees. These approaches to employee empowerment are rooted in the theory of McClelland (1967) who advanced the view that employees had three main needs: the need for power, achievement, and affiliation. This position is also supported by Kehr (2004) who argues that employees who operate in contexts of powerlessness, such as those in which they are unable to take decisions or are excluded from decision-making, are likely to develop withdrawal intentions. These employees tend to seek alternate employment engagements that give them space to exercise some level of autonomy and authority.

The positions of McClelland (1967), Kehr (2004) and Hossein et al., (2012) parallel that of Herzberg (1968) who created the distinction between what he calls motivators and dissatisfiers or maintenance/hygiene factors. Herzberg concludes that motivators include job characteristics such as challenging and complex tasks which when resolved give a sense of achievement as well as tasks which provide opportunities for recognition, advancement, and reward, including the opportunity to have or exercise increased power or influence. Dissatisfiers or maintenance factors, on the other hand, include regular salary, the physical environment, and basic working conditions. If employees are not satisfied with any of these there could be temporary decreases in productivity or production but when at their normal levels these factors by themselves are not likely to stimulate increases in production or productivity. Herzberg's notion of engagements that appeal to employee's higher order of motivation, are supported by Zenger and Folkman (2013), who suggest that employees are motivated (inspired) by goals that stretch them and by opportunities to collaborate and innovate. The argument that stretch-goals and opportunities to innovate motivation, as Zenger and Folkman (2013) suggest, represents an endorsement of Maslow's theory that employees (like all human being) aspire to realize self-actualization. The meeting of lower order needs such as the need for food is not a real motivator as Herzberg argues.

Employee Empowerment and Motivation

The foregoing positions are reinforced by Monarth (2014) who found that when employees are enabled to feel powerful the feeling boosts productivity and increases job satisfaction. The motivation to do more (increase output) and to produce more with less (increase productivity) which are the two most vital ingredients of organizational profitability and mission realization, are grounded in empowering employees. Monarth's views are supported by Kumar and Kumar (2017) who suggest that when employees are empowered, their degree of confidence and self-reliance will increase. It is this increased confidence which creates job satisfaction and high levels of productivity and leads to achievement and a greater sense of connectivity to the organization.

The variables of achievement and affiliation are self-evidently tied to an employee's willingness to 'stick around', if the person has a sense of personal decency and self-worth. The desire to accomplish and to feel wanted are part of the human DNA, as McClelland (1967) contends. Thus, work environments which facilitate the meeting of these needs are likely to nurture the drive and energy of employees. This position is supported by Cappelli (2000) who sees achievement as being linked to career advancement. He claims that opportunities for career advancement define an important component of the work environment and affect employee drive and commitment.

Lawrence and Nohria (2002) offer an intriguing explanation for employee motivation which they describe as the ABCD theory. Their argument is partially aligned to that of Maslow (1943), McClelland (1967), Kehr (2004), and Monarth (2014). Lawrence and Nohria (2002) argued that four drives explain employee motivation, namely, the drives to *acquire* (obtain scarce goods, including intangibles such as social status); to *bond* (form connections with individuals and groups); *comprehend* (satisfy curiosity and master the issues in one's world); and *defend* (protect against external threats and promote justice). These drives they contend underlie everything we do.

The notion of acquisition is aligned to Maslow's theory of satisfying lower order needs as well as Kehr's notion of desire for power. Bonding is another way of expressing McClelland's notion of desire for affiliation, but the other two drives are somewhat new constructions that validly describe human behaviors though but not so much employee behavior. The evidence from the scientific literature is that employee motivation is linked more to employees' desire for belonging/bonding, involvement in decision-making, recognition, opportunities for career advancement, achievement, and desires for power. While financial rewards also serve as motivators, it is the prospect of increased award related to achievement, as against standard remuneration, that serves as a reward. But are there additional factors which motivate employees? This study examines that question. Irshad (2012) conducts a review of the literature on employee retention and saw an obvious relationship between employee retention and employees' level of motivation. He concluded that that there is unanimity in the literature that organizations that are successful in retaining employees are those that have a fundamental philosophy of valuing and investing in employees. Kehr (2004) posits that the motivation of an employee to remain with an organization is driven by three variables, namely, power, achievement, and affiliation.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design is used in this study. According to Leedy and Omrod (2016), quantitative designs are used when a researcher is seeking to test relationships and describe and examine probable cause and effect relationships. A convenience sampling technique is used. According to Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016), convenience sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling where members of the target population that meet practical criteria of the researcher are included in the study. These practical criteria include variables such as accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, plus the willingness to participate.

Sample

The survey consisted of 97 teachers with seventy-five (75) females, or approximately seventy-seven percent (77 %) being females. Participants in this study were drawn from all levels of the education sector from the Early Childhood level of the education system to the post-secondary level (Community colleges). Forty-seven participants, or 48.5 percent were drawn from the tertiary sector; twenty-nine or roughly 30% from the primary level; ten from the secondary level, and ten from other post-secondary institutions. The Early Childhood sector contributed 1%. The sample was divided into five age cohorts and five categories of years of teaching experience as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Age and Years in Teaching Profession Cross-Tabulation

		5 years or less	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	0ver 20 years	Total
Age group	20–30 years	8	5	1	1	0	14
	31–40 years	12	15	12	5	0	45
	41–50 years	2	1	7	4	6	20
	51–60 years	0	0	0	2	12	14
	60+ years	0	0	0	2	2	4
	Blank	22	21	20	14	20	97

Instrument Validity and Reliability, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

The instrument that was used to collect the data is included at Appendix A. The items in the instrument were constructed based on the insights and information gleaned during official and unofficial encounters with teachers. The instrument is a forty-item questionnaire with thirty-five items falling on a 5 points Likert-scale. In order to establish validity, the instrument was pilot tested twice and benchmarked against a similar instrument developed by the lead author. That earlier instrument which served as the benchmark was examined by a panel of experts and found to be valid.

The instrument was tested for internal consistency using Chronbach's alpha. The test generated a result of .938. The reliability considerations were in keeping with the standards articulated standards of Nunnally (1978) who argued that reliability should be at least .90

The data collection process involved contacting teachers and lecturers at the various institutions via a network of researchers. Potential participants were asked whether they were interested in participating in the survey. This was not a study of a specific institution or set of institutions and all participants were adults so there was no need to seek the permission of the Ministry of Education, or the respective institutions or have consent forms signed. The completed questionnaires were returned via email and in hard form. The instrument was coded, and data entered in excel and later transported into SPSS, V. 21.0 and analyzed. Two types of data analysis were employed, a correlational analysis and subsequently a confirmatory factor analysis.

RESULTS

Question 1: Factors Which Empower Teachers

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to determine the grouping of items that reflect the perspectives of teachers concerning the factors which empower them. The initial generation of the EFA showed 9 factors having eigenvalues greater than 1 and accounting for 73.290% of the total variance in the data. However, a parallel analysis was conducted to determine the number of factors to keep in the EFA. Based on the observation using the Monte Carlo's technique four factors were considered which accounted for 54.537%, as shown in Table 2 (excluding the lesser factors).

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.687	36.522	36.522	11.687	36.522	36.522	4.836	15.113	15.113
2	2.462	7.694	44.217	2.462	7.694	44.217	4.615	14.422	29.535
3	1.813	5.665	49.882	1.813	5.665	49.882	4.324	13.514	43.049
4	1.490	4.655	54.537	1.490	4.655	54.537	3.676	11.488	54.537

A breakdown of the factors is shown in Table 3, the rotated component matrix. The four factors which were found to empower employees are: recognizing contributions of employees; motivating employees including actions such as using influence rather than use power to guide decision making and showing respect to employees; showing regard including promoting collective responsibility and deferring to employees' expertise; and demonstrating care including the willingness to admit error and welcoming diverse opinions.

Table 3: Factors Associated with Empowerment

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

Component	Recognize Contributions	Motivation	Show Regard	Demonstrate Care
Commend staff who demonstrate commitment	.712			
Encourage staff members to continue professional development	.711			
Promote modeling of successful practice	.680			
Encourage diversity of perspectives	.680			
Firm with repeated failures to meet standards of excellence	.629			
Makes effort to keep staff motivated	.578			
Trained in the fundamentals of strategic planning	.452			
Create conditions for staff members to participate in decision-making		.778		
Ensure low performing staff members receive support		.698		
Advocate for justice		.662		
Shows respect		.622		

Component	Recognize Contributions	Motivation	Show Regard	Demonstrate Care
Seek to influence rather than use power to enforce will		.543		
Create an exciting work environment		.537		
Regard for professional judgement of staff members		.493		
Allow leaders to develop at all levels in the organization		.431		
A good listener		.353		
Utilize diverse strengths of members of staff			.706	
Promote collective responsibility			.672	
Encourage camaraderie			.641	
Willing to debate issues in situations where opinions differ			.641	
Defer to others who may be more knowledge able on issues			.626	
Trust collective wisdom			.547	
Publicly recognize staff who produce spectacular results			.526	
Ensure performance evaluations are done			.487	
Model behaviours expected of others			.481	
Show willingness to accept criticism				.749
Conveys by actions that others' views and approaches can be correct				.730
Admit error when established				.696
Responds positively to staff members even when there is disagreement				.649
Demonstrate care				.467
Lead in the development of the strategic plan				.459
Welcomes Different Points of Views				.436

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Question 2: Relationship among Factors which Empower

Table 3 shows that there are four (4) factors which were deemed to reflect factors which empowered Jamaican teachers. These factors are recognizing contributions, motivating staff, showing regard, and demonstrating care. A confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted as shown in Figure 1 and three factors emerged which represent a model for empowerment. The three factors are motivation, demonstration of care, and showing regard.

The elements of each factor, as shown in Figure 1 are:
(a) Motivation - use of influence rather than power, commend staff who go beyond the call of duty, recognize outstanding performance, create an exciting work environment;
(b) Demonstrating care - showing respect, and listening to staffs' perspectives;
(c) Showing regard - showing interest in staffs' opinion, welcoming differences, showing deference to the expertise of staff, engaging in debate, trusting the collective wisdom of staff, embracing diversity, and involving staff in decision-making.

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis were then worked through a goodness of fit model using the various benchmarks stipulated in the scientific literature on goodness of fit of models. Using the benchmark established by Leach et al. (2008), most of the measures of goodness of fit of the data set performed excellently. The key measures use a benchmark of .93 and three of the five fit indices exceeded the benchmark with the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) coming out at .972, the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) at .974, and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) at .965. Of the remaining indices the Goodness of the Fit (GFI) index fell slightly below the benchmark at .876, while the Normed Fit Index (NFI) performed less well at .765. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) which uses a benchmark of less than .05 also showed good results at .047, which the Root Mean Square of Approximation (RMSEA) which is expected to be less than .08 performed spectacularly at .032. The overall model shows a good representation of the data regarding the three factors associated with empowerment as shown in Table 4.
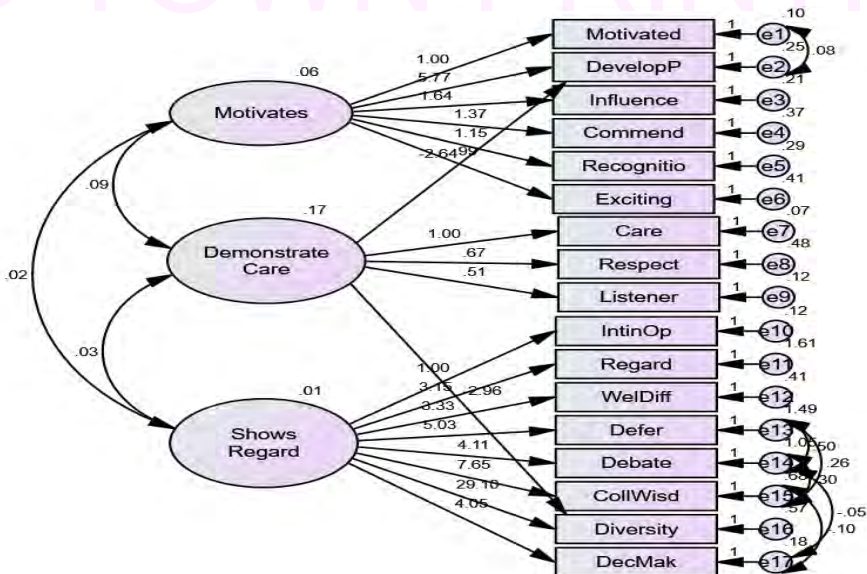

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis of empowerment factors and sub-factors.

Table 4: Showing the data Results of the Goodness of Fit for Model

Fit Index	Model	Cited Benchmark
CMIN	118.380	NA
DF	108	NA
CFI	.972	>.93
NFI	.765	>.93
GFI	.876	>.93
TLI	.965	>.93
IFI	.974	>.93
RMR	.047	<.05
RMSEA	.032	<.08
AIC	208.380	NA

Note: CMIN (Chi square); DF (Degree of Freedom), CFI (Comparative Fit Index); NFI (Normed Fit Index); GFI (Goodness of Fit Index); TLI (Tucker Lewis Index); IFI (the Incremental Fit Index); RMR (Root Mean Square Residual); RMSEA (Root Mean Square of Approximation); AIC (Akaike Information criterion).

It may thus be concluded from the findings of this study that the three factors which empower Jamaican teachers are motivation, demonstrating care, and showing regard. Since it has been argued that motivation and empowerment are synonyms it is the argument of the authors that that the other two factors represent the critical findings of this study. It is therefore the assertion of this study that Jamaican teachers hold the view that they experience empowerment when their leaders demonstrate care and show them regard. These constructs are to be interpreted within the framework of the sub-factors as outlined above.

DISCUSSION

The scientific literature on employee empowerment identifies several facilitating factors. Devadas (2011) and Irshad (2012), both of whom conducted reviews of the literature on motivation reviewing dozens of works, identified factors such as valuing and investing in employees, the behavior of management, and work environmental factors as being contributors to employee motivation. McClelland (1967), Herzberg (1987), Lawrence and Nohria (2002) and Zenger and Folkman (2013) highlight the importance of power, achievement, affiliation, challenging tasks stretch goals, and recognition as being key factors, giving sharpness and precision to the positions of Devadass (2011) and Irshad (2012).

Empowerment of teachers remains a major issue for members of the teaching profession in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, the complaints of the JTA focus heavily on disempowerment which they regard as having serious implications for the quality of the education sector. Hewitt (2012) found that one of the ongoing struggles for teachers is the issue of empowerment. Thompson (2009, 2015, 2017, and 2019b) examine the issue of empowerment and teachers' expectations of how they should be treated in the workplace and found, across various samples drawn from across all levels of the teaching community, that there is a deep concern about empowerment.

The broad positions of Hewitt and Thompson are consistent with that argued by Monarth (2014), Kehr (2004) and McClelland (1967) while Capelli (2000) and Herzberg (1968) address the issue of empowerment from the perspective of opportunities for advancement. The foregoing perspectives of these authorities concerning the factors which empower employees are aligned to

the two new factors found in this research to be facilitators of empowerment, namely demonstrating care and showing regard for the professional judgment of staff members. The deeper meaning and application of these factors include showing respect, taking employees' points of view into account, trusting the collective wisdom of staff members, welcoming different points of view, deferring to the expert knowledge of staff, and facilitating involvement in decision-making.

Demonstration of care means, in the context of this study, showing respect and taking account of others' view. Care assumes the behavior of listening and is aligned to the compelling case argued by Manley (1975), in his seminal work, *A Voice at the Workplace*. The empowerment factors identified in this study are strongly aligned to the expectations of employees in the 21st century, including millennials, who the Gutfreund Intelligence Group found had an interest in a different kind of relationship with their boss. According to the study by Gutfreund, 79% of millennials would want their boss to serve more as a coach or mentor. This finding suggests that employees feel emboldened and empowered when their supervisors relate to them in a mentoring and supportive manner rather than as a distant critical expert and evaluator. In relationships that are built on the premise of "coaching" and "coached", differences of perspective are welcome. Thus, it is constructive that this study has found that 'care' is perceived to be expressed when leaders show regard for the opposing or contrasting views.

Prima facie, the act of deferring to another's professional judgment gives to that other a sense of place by virtue of having a voice. The over-arching variables (sub-factors) with which this empowerment factor is aligned include involvement in decision-making and welcoming different points of view. The other related sub-factors as shown in Figure 1 and Table 4 are qualitatively connected to these two.

The issue of involvement in decision-making is closely related to the broader construct of participatory or collaborative leadership. It is constructive that the survey of the Gutfreund Intelligence Group found that 88% of millennials surveyed indicated that they prefer a collaborative work culture. This finding suggests that involvement in decision-making is not only a factor in employee empowerment but a highly critical 21st century workplace expectation. The establishment of task teams and solutions committees are some of the ways in which organizations can create ongoing or frequent opportunities for broad-based participation in decision making, thus allowing team members the space to bring their professional expertise to bear on the work of the organization.

The other over-arching sub-factor of 'regard for professional judgment' is the willingness of the leader to welcome different points of view. This behavior represents a strength of a courageous leader who is confident enough to expose his or her views to criticism from others and to place those views in contention with the views of others. This suggests that one of the ways through which the very important leadership responsibility of developing the next generation of leaders can be accomplished is by creating a climate in which different views contend. It is the propensity to freely express their views which is perhaps the most defining quality of millennials, for which a proxy measure is found in the fact that 72% of millennials in the Gutfreund study say that they would like to be their own boss which, on the surface means being free to do things one's preferred way. But we suggest that the presumed preference to do things one's own way (being one's boss) is not to be construed as merely the desire to do little or nothing or come and go as one pleases. Rather such a desire may be construed as a reflection of a need for space to innovate and to engage in activities which give one a sense of meaning. Thus, it is once again equally constructive that the Gutfreund study found that 64% of millennials say they want to be engaged in activities which make the world a better place.

We also admit that the idea of empowerment being related to collaborative working environments and involvement in decision-making is connected to the idea of justice as articulated by Rawls (1972), who defines justice in terms of distribution of based on needs, to include the granting of access to opportunities, as well as while Ryan (2006) who sees justice as meaningful inclusion. Both constructions provide insight into what is beneath the empowering behavior of welcoming different points of view, which is one of the sub-factors of 'regard for professional judgment'. In welcoming different points of view, a leader is meeting a need to be heard as well as widening the discussion and decision-making space to include others. Exclusion and forced silence result in the dis-empowerment of employees.

CONCLUSION

If it is accepted that it is essential for the effective operations of schools (like any other organization) that staff be empowered, it should also be accepted that this will not happen automatically. It must be planned.

This study has found three factors which facilitate the empowerment of employees. Two of these factors have not been discussed extensively in the scientific literature on employee empowerment. In addition, the study found six sub-factors which explicate the content and meaning of the factors. These factors are aligned to the needs and expectations of millennials and thus this study has contributed to the defining of the parameters of what empowerment of employees in the 21st looks like.

Organizational success is proportionate to the degree to which employees feel empowered. The issue of employee empowerment is a critical conversation given that global data on staff perceptions of their work and working environment suggest that a large majority of employees feel under-empowered or dis-empowered and report high levels of demotivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the foregoing, and having regard to the findings of this study, it is recommended that business organizations, as well as schools and the Ministries of Education across the Caribbean:

(1) Strengthen mechanisms for giving teachers greater involvement in decision-making through collaborative and participatory leadership;
(2) Create and promote organizational cultures and climates which nurture regard for the competencies and expertise of employees and resist tendencies of disallowing debate;
(3) Expose managers and supervisors at all levels in the processes and advantages of employee empowerment;
(4) Conduct sensitivity training on the expectations of millennials and the cultural expectations of the employee of the 21st century.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

Do you think that in order to be an effective leader a principal should:	SA	A	U	D	SD
(1) Take an interest in the opinions of staff members					
(2) Show high regard for the professional judgment of staff members					
(3) Welcome the points of view of staff members even when those views are different to his / her					
(4) Respond positively even when there are disagreements between his / her views and that of staff members					
(5) Resist any inclination on his or her part to dictate how staff members should think					
(6) Show respect to staff members					
(7) Make an effort to keep staff motivated					
(8) Encourage staff members to continue to develop their professional skills					
(9) Demonstrate care for the needs of members of staff					
(10) Seek to influence staff rather than use power to enforce his / her will					
(11) Commend staff who demonstrate commitment					
(12) Publicly recognize staff who produce spectacular results					
(13) Admit error on his / her part when this is established					
(14) Show a willingness to accept criticism					
(15) Convey by his / her actions that views and approaches other than his / her own can be correct					
(16) Show mastery of the job of school management					
(17) Defer to other members of staff on matters on which they are more knowledgeable					
(18) Model the behaviours he / she requires of staff members					
(19) Be willing to debate issues on which there are diverse opinions					
(20) Be willing to subject his / her positions to the collective wisdom of staff members					
(21) Be a good listener					

(22) Encourage diversity of perspectives					
(23) Encourage camaraderie among staff members					
(24) Promote collective responsibility					
(25) Ensure performance evaluations are done of every staff member					
(26) Ensure that low performing staff members receive support to improve					
(27) Create the conditions for members of staff to participate in decision-making					
(28) Lead in the development of a strategic plan					
(29) Be trained in the fundamentals of strategic planning					
(30) Be an advocate for justice					
(31) Promote the value of learning from the successful practices of other schools					
(32) Utilize the diverse strengths of members of staff in the operations of the school, in addition to their primary competencies					
(33) Allow leaders to develop at all levels in the organization					
(34) Be firm with repeated failures to meet standards of excellence					
(35) Create an environment that makes work exciting					

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

(36) Your age group is:
   (a) 20 – 30   [   ]
   (b) 31 – 40   [   ]
   (c) 41 – 50   [   ]
   (d) 51 – 60   [   ]
   (e) 60+   [   ]

(37) You have been a teacher for:
   (a) 5 years or less   [   ]
   (b) 6 – 10 years   [   ]
   (c) 11 – 15 years   [   ]
   (d) 16 – 20 years   [   ]
   (e) Over 20 years   [   ]

(38) You have been teaching at your current school for:
   (a) 5 years or less   [   ]
   (b) 6 – 10 years   [   ]
   (c) 11 – 15 years   [   ]
   (d) 16 – 20 years   [   ]
   (e) Over 20 years   [   ]
(39) Your highest professional qualification is:
   (a) Diploma   [   ]

(b) Bachelor's Degree   [   ]
(c) Master's Degree   [   ]
(d) Postgraduate Cert in Education   [   ]
(e) Doctorate   [   ]

(40) You are:
(a) Male   [   ]
(b) Female   [   ]

(41) You currently teacher at the:
(a) Early Childhood Level   [   ]
(b) Primary Level   [   ]
(c) Secondary Level   [   ]
(d) Tertiary Level   [   ]
(e) Other _____   [   ]

(42) You are currently based in the:
(a) Corporate area   [   ]
(b) Rural area   [   ]

(43) You are currently working in a:
(a) Public school   [   ]
(b) Private school   [   ]

(44) You are a principal:
(a) Yes   [   ]
(b) No   [   ]

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS IN RELATION TO GRADING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in relation to assessment practices. Assessment practices are critical in collecting evidence of student learning to inform data-driven instructional decisions. Professional learning is an essential piece in maintaining effective and equitable assessment practices. Thus, professional learning that is collaborative, purposeful, and sustainable is key to better understanding these evidence-based practices. To inform educational planning, this study examined differences between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs focused on assessment practices (n = 517). Findings revealed statistically significant differences between elementary school teachers' perceptions compared to middle and high school teachers as to what was of critical importance compared to what was of least importance in relation to professional learning needs around assessment practices. Additionally, all levels indicated need for professional learning in the area of assessment. Future research and implications for practice are centered around the need for educator preparation programs to work collectively with school leaders to make sure assessment practices are being actively represented in training at the school level as well as outside of schools in educator preparation programs.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers often do not fully understand or are not informed about their districts' current assessment procedures and policies. For the purposes of this study, assessment practices are described as the process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional decisions in ways that benefit students by enhancing both their desire to learn and their achievement (Stiggins, 2008). Because research often utilizes the terms assessment and grading interchangeably, we will focus on grading and assessment as one collective unit that is interdependent. This is supported by the notion that grading practices need to be based on quality assessment and must be validly prepared and interpreted (Brookhart & Nitko, 2015). Classroom assessment is the process of attaining information about students' performance and is one of the main responsibilities of teachers (Alkharushi, Aldhafri, Alnabhani, & Alkabain, 2014). Additionally, professional learning is an essential piece in understanding and maintaining fair and equitable assessment practices (Boothroyd & McMorris, 1992; Cizek & Fitgerald, 1996; Frisbie & Waltman, 1992; Gullickson & Hopkins, 1987; Guskey, 2004; Schafer & Lissitz, 1987; Stiggins, 2008).

Professional learning needs to be collaborative, purposeful, and sustainable to be effective (McBrayer, Chance, Pannell, & Wells, 2018). Furthermore, collaboration and sustainability need to be coupled with professional learning that is purposeful, with the latter being defined as "continuous, job-embedded professional learning that is designed to meet a specific need identified with an annual process of a systematic needs assessment" (McBrayer et al., 2018, p. 31). Planned and focused professional learning transforms teachers' knowledge, understanding, skills, and

commitments, in what they know, and what they are able to do in their individual practice as well as their shared responsibilities to improve student achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Often teachers give limited thought to the way in which grades impact student learning and this can be detrimental to classroom outcomes (DeBruyn, 2004). Grading and assessment are an excellent place to focus theory and refine practice (Brookhart, 1994). Teachers need extensive knowledge in the areas of grading and assessment (Guskey, 2004). Motivation and learning are crucial, and teachers need to learn more about the connection between motivation, assessment, and grading (O'Connor, 2002). Furthermore, teachers need training to support student motivation and encourage students to improve achievement while avoiding disappointment and building self-esteem (Bulterman-Bos, Verloop, Terwel, & Wardekker, 2003).

The reality, however, is preservice and induction teachers are graduating without adequate training in the areas of grading and assessment and thus professional learning in these areas to strengthen these skills is a critical need (Boothroyd et al., 1992; Gullickson & Hopkins, 1987; Schafer & Lissitz, 1987; Stiggins, 2008). Additionally, "…school systems continue to be challenged with the question of how to develop purposeful and sustainable professional learning plans that are meaningful, relevant, and collaborative in nature" (McBrayer et al., 2018). Therefore, a gap in the literature warrants further investigation into methods to aid school leaders in planning for professional learning that is collaborative, purposeful, and sustainable in the areas of grading and assessment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research question guided the study: Is there a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment practices?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Grading and Assessment Practices

Although grades can be highly consequential, the decision-making processes underlying how teachers assign grades remain an area in need of further research (Chen & Bonner, 2017). To ensure grading and assessments are done well, educators should gather accurate information and incorporate the results of assessments into classroom instruction that benefits students (Stiggins, 2008). For example, in a seminal study that investigated teachers' grading practices and professional learning needs, highlighted was a need to train teachers to develop and use norm-referenced assessments aligned with good measurement practices (McMillan & Workman, 1999). Teachers need training to develop teacher-made test items that assess higher-order thinking skills (Carter, 1984).

Teachers need specified training around grading and assessment practices within differing educational subjects. For example, mathematics teachers reported placing higher emphasis on cognitive abilities over student motivation (Duncan & Noonan, 2007). Furthermore, suggested was a reevaluation of preservice measurement courses, critique of professional learning to meet grading and assessment needs, and evaluation of testing activities at classroom and district levels. Teachers need to take into consideration the grading practices recommended by measurement specialists and, if teachers would utilize these recommended grading practices, then students' grades would be a more accurate picture of student performance and achievement (Cross & Frary, 1999).

Professional Learning Needs in the Areas of Grading and Assessment Practices

There is a need for professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment as preservice and induction teachers are graduating without the skills to make data-driven decisions. In a seminal study conducted to investigate elementary and secondary teachers' professional learning needs related to grading and assessment practices, teachers at every level indicated a need for professional learning (McMillan & Workman, 1999). These areas included using assessment during instruction, improving the quality of classroom tests, understanding state testing and using its results, and assessing reasoning on assessments. Additionally, elementary teachers specifically indicated a need for professional learning in the area of assessing reading and writing. Further study and evaluation of grading practices is needed at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to help create curricula for teacher training programs and professional learning for current teachers at all levels (Lyon,1993).

Teachers' knowledge of measurement is not adequate, and this is partially due to the fact that most teachers never had a measurement course. "Most teachers have not been adequately trained in how to develop and interpret a classroom test, even though these tests are the primary basis for assigning course grades and a major basis for a plethora of educational outcomes" (Boothroyd et al., 1992, p. 8). While most school systems have a grading policy, in a prior seminal study, only about half of the teachers were aware that one existed and very few of the teachers that knew of the grading policy were able to give any details of the grading policy (Cizek & Fitzgerald, 1995).

Classroom assessments provide a roadmap for teachers and parents of individual students to ascertain learning progression and determine appropriate achievement over time and across grade levels (Stiggins & DuFour, 2009). Teachers would benefit from training in the area of grading and in developing their own personal grading plans (Frisbie & Waltman, 1992). Teachers need to be supported and encouraged to become active learners to strengthen their knowledge and engage in experiences to create classrooms and schools where quality teaching, specifically in the areas of grading and assessment practices are the norm, and their professional learning needs to be fostered and continuous to meet this goal (McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006). Evidence-based practices exist in both the areas of grading and assessment; however, teachers may not be aware of that knowledge base. As a result, teachers utilize practices that they know, perpetuating some of the same, ineffective practices that continue to persist in schools (Guskey, 2004). Findings from a recent study revealed that middle and high school teachers favored behavior-focused grading practices, such as homework completion, over practices focused on academic mastery. These ineffective grading practices continue to find their way into more classrooms, potentially impacting students' ability to achieve academic success (Link, 2018). These results heighten the urgency to better understand teachers' perceptions of practices and to create training intended to help teachers develop more effective grading and assessment strategies. Thus, high quality, focused, and structured professional development opportunities for all teachers are necessary to address this critical educational planning need centered around sound assessment practices.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A recent study focused on a collaborative, statewide professional learning initiative that utilized distributive leadership noted that professional learning needs to be collaborative, purposeful, and sustainable to deepen teachers' understanding of their students (McBrayer et al., 2018). Thus, the focus of this study was to determine if there was a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment based on this notion of professional learning that is purposeful, collaborative, and

sustainable. This study is significant to aid school leaders in compiling sound professional learning plans to meet the specific needs of their teachers and in turn, positively impact the achievement of students. By examining the perceptions of teachers' professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment practices, school leaders can be better informed when developing and implementing their own professional learning plans tailored to the unique needs of their teachers. Additionally, school leaders need to work closely with educator preparation programs to voice the needs of districts to provide evidence-based strategies around effective and equitable grading and assessment practices.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels regarding professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment practices. This quantitative study utilized a nonexperimental survey research design, specifically, a cross-sectional survey to gather teacher perceptions from an entire population of teachers in the identified school system.

Participants

The participating school system is located in the southeastern part of the United States. It is the largest school system in its state with a projected student enrollment of 159,661 at the time of the study. The school system had 111 educational facilities including 66 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, and 16 high schools. The school system prides itself in holding its students to high academic standards, and the district's average SAT score was 1524 with 89% of its graduating class planning to attend college or a postsecondary school. This school system had a diverse ethnic makeup: African American 27.3%, American Indian 0.1%, Asian American 10.5%, Hispanic 21.6%, Multiracial 4%, and White 36.5%.

The school system is organizationally divided into clusters, and the teachers from one of these clusters were surveyed and included teachers at varied school levels (elementary, middle, high schools). The cluster identified for this study was comprised of six schools including one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools. The survey was administered at each school level and a total of 594 certified teachers worked at these six schools and were eligible for participation and of that, 517 teachers participated in the study resulting in an 87% response rate. In total participating, there were 277 teachers from the elementary school level, 124 teachers from the middle school level, and 116 teachers from the high school level equating to n=517.

Instrumentation

The purpose of the survey was to document the emphasis teachers placed on professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment practices. A study titled *Teachers' Classroom Assessment and Grading Practices: Phase I and II* was found to be closely aligned with this study and given the similarities between the purpose of both studies, permission was attained to utilize the same survey but only focus on the specified area of professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment practices (McMillan & Workman, 1999). Only this section was utilized as it aligned directly to the research question in this particular study. Additional demographic questions were added for the purposes of this study to better understand the participants.

The initial survey (McMillan & Workman, 1999) was based on the research of Frary, Cross, and Weber (1993), Stiggins and Conklin (1992), and Brookhart (1994) and items were drawn from surveys reported in the literature to effectively assess professional learning needs and grade distributions within teachers' classes. During the first pilot, content-related evidence of validity was increased by having 42 classroom teachers review the survey for clarity and for comprehensiveness of grading practices and assessments used in the classroom. Revisions were made to the survey before it underwent a second pilot. The intent of the second pilot was to obtain feedback from the teachers related to clarity of the items, relationships among the items, item response distribution, and the reliability of the items. The second pilot included 85 teachers, 23 elementary, 26 middle, and 36 high school teachers. After assessing the data, any item that proved to have high correlation or minimum variation was removed from the survey. Reliability of the instrument was assessed by having 28 of the teachers from the second pilot retake the survey four weeks after the first survey administration. Any items that showed weakness in reliability were removed from the survey. A stability estimate was established by eliminating or combining any items that had an exact match of less than 60%. After the second pilot the survey consisted of 34 items, and specifically 19/34 of the questions focused on the assessment of professional learning needs, which was needed to answer the intended research question in this study and thus, the researchers confirmed continuation of reliability and validity as all questions pertaining to professional learning needs were utilized and none were omitted within that specified section.

For the purposes of this study, the first section of this survey contained items that ascertained teachers' perceptions about the importance of potential professional learning needs. This section of the survey consisted of 19 Likert-scale items. The scale included the following criteria: *Not at all important (N)=1, Of Little Importance (L)=2, Somewhat important (S=3), Very important (V)=4, and Critical (C=5)*. The second section included demographic questions pertaining to the teachers about school level, gender, certificate level, years of teaching experience within the grade levels they currently taught, and subject/content taught.

Data Collection

Upon receiving institutional approval, the researchers administered the survey to the identified cluster (i.e., one high school, one middle school, and four elementary schools). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the local school administrators were not present when the survey was administered. Rather, as directed by the participating school district, each local school principal selected an on-site monitor that would be present during the administration of the survey. The on-site monitor's role was to ensure that the participants were adhering to the protocol and report any deviations to the local school principal; no anomalies were reported. During the administration of the survey, teachers used a bubble sheet to complete the survey and placed completed surveys in a collection box.

Data Analysis

Responses to the survey were scored and analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine teachers' perceptions of professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment. After all the surveys had been administered, the bubble sheets were scanned. Data were then exported into Microsoft Excel and analyzed to determine means and standard deviations (SD). Furthermore, statistical analysis of variance, a one-way ANOVA was used to compare the means of the teachers' responses to professional learning needs of these groups to include elementary, middle, and high school levels as well follow-up multiple comparisons were carried out using Tukey's HSD test. Data are presented using tables and one figure.

FINDINGS

The findings were examined to address the overarching research question to determine if there was a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in the areas of grading and assessment. Of the teachers, 517 teachers participated in the study, which included 277 teachers (53.57%) from the elementary school level, 124 teachers (23.98%) from the middle school level, and 116 teachers (22.43%) from the high school level. Given that 16 teachers (3.09%) did not respond to the question specific to gender, 86 teachers (16.63%) were identified as male while the majority, 415 teachers, (80.27%) were identified as female. The certificate level of each respondent was collected with 11 teachers (2.13%) not responding to this question. The question asked each respondent to identify their current certificate level to include bachelors, masters, specialist, or doctorate. Of these responses, 174 of the teachers (33.66%) identified themselves as having a bachelor's degree, 233 teachers (45.07%) held a master's degree, 92 teachers (17.79%) held a specialist degree, and the remaining seven teachers (1.35%) held a doctorate degree.

Years of teaching experience were analyzed and of the 517 teachers, 15 (2.90%) chose not to answer the years of teaching experience question. The question was broken down into five response categories to include less than one year, one to 10 years, 11 to 20 years, 21 to 30 years, and more than 30 years. Of the teachers 18 (3.48%) stated that they fell into the less than one year category, while 258 teachers (49.90%) indicated that they had one to 10 years of teaching experience, 153 teachers (29.59%) identified themselves as having 11 to 20 years of experience, 68 teachers (13.15%) stated they fell into the 21 to 30 years of experience category, and five teachers (.96%) indicated they had more than 30 years of teaching experience.

In the beginning of this section it was identified how many teachers were at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Within these three identified levels, teachers could select all of the grade levels, which they taught from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Since teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels may have taught more than one grade level, when the percentages were totaled for this section, it exceeded 100%. For example, a teacher that teaches Art at the elementary level may have indicated on the survey that he or she teaches kindergarten, first, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades. Examples similar to this one exists at the middle and high school levels as well. For example, a high school teacher that specializes in mathematics may teach both ninth and tenth grade students. Of the 517 teachers, 10 (1.93%) stated they taught at the pre-kindergarten level, 71 teachers (13.73%) taught at the kindergarten level, 83 teachers (16.05%) taught at the first grade level, 82 teachers (15.86%) taught at the second grade level, 88 teachers (17.02%) taught at the third grade level, 81 teachers (15.67%) taught at the fourth grade level, 79 teachers (15.28%) taught at the fifth grade level, 68 teachers (13.15%) taught at the sixth grade level, 72 teachers (13.95%) taught at the seventh grade level, 65 teachers (12.57%) taught at the eighth grade level, 77 teachers (14.89%) taught at the ninth grade level, 83 teachers (16.05%) taught at the tenth grade level, 71 teachers (13.73%) taught at the eleventh grade level, and 69 teachers (13.35%) taught at the twelfth grade level.

The 517 teachers were asked to identify what subject(s) and/or content that they taught. The categories given for a response were mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, gifted, special education, and other. Programmatic needs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels required some teachers to teach multiple subjects and/or content areas. For example, an elementary school teacher that teaches in a self-contained environment would be responsible for teaching mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science. Also, when considering the middle school concept of teaming, one teacher on a two-person team may be required to teach mathematics and

science while the other teacher may be required to teach social studies and language arts. Teachers that indicated that they taught in the area of gifted or special education could also be responsible for teaching in multiple subjects and/or content areas. Since teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels may teach more than one content, when the percentages were totaled for this section, it exceeded 100%.

Of the 517 teachers, 265 (51.26%) indicated that they taught mathematics, 262 (50.68%) taught language arts, 241 (46.62%) taught science, and 232 (44.87%) taught social studies. Of the responses, 22 teachers (4.26%) answered that they taught in the area of gifted education and 47 teachers (9.09%) taught in the area of special education. The category identified as other included 64 teachers (12.38%) and included English Language Learner (ELL), physical education, art, computer science, health, technology education, band, orchestra, chorus, drama, and elective-type classes. The findings will be presented as comparisons between elementary schools (ES), middle schools (MS), and high schools (HS).

Table 1 shows the findings from the descriptive statistics that were calculated to determine means and standard deviations. Elementary school teachers perceived higher importance in the need for professional learning than middle and high school teachers in various areas: 1. using assessment information for planning prior to instruction has higher importance than middle and high school teachers (ES= 3.91, MS=3.48, HS= 3.37), 2. using assessment information during instruction (ES= 4.14, MS= 3.70, HS=3.80), 3. using assessment results to evaluate instruction and curriculum (ES=4.03, MS= 3.67, HS= 3.58), 4. using assessment results to determine student grades (ES= 3.72, MS= 3.47, HS= 3.68), 5. communicating with parents concerning grades and test scores (ES=4.07, MS= 3.79, HS= 3.93), 6. understanding and using the state Criterion-Reference Competency Tests, End of Course Tests, or the state High School Graduation Test (ES= 3.36, MS= 3.35, HS=3.25), 7. understanding and using the state Performance Standards (ES= 4.08, MS= 3.64, HS= 3.62), 8. understanding technical assessment concepts such as reliability and validity (ES= 3.47, MS= 3.16, HS= 3.30), 9. improving the overall quality of classroom assessments (ES= 4.05, MS= 3.74, HS= 3.80), 10. assessing reasoning and other "higher order" thinking skills (ES= 3.95, MS= 3.73, HS= 3.74), 12. using portfolio assessments (ES= 3.18, MS= 2.92, HS= 2.61), 14. assessing writing skills (ES= 3.87, MS= 3.50, HS= 3.47), 15. assessing reading proficiency (ES= 4.04, MS= 3.51, HS= 3.39), 16. assessing mainstreamed students (ES= 3.54, MS= 3.39, HS= 3.38), 17. assessing affective traits, such as attitudes, value, and self-concept (ES= 3.13, MS= 2.96, HS= 2.82), and 18. understanding the link between assessment and instruction (ES= 3.92, MS= 3.56, HS= 3.70).

The exception is that three out of the 19 items were perceived as more important for high school teachers than elementary and middle. High school and middle school teachers perceived a need for professional development more than elementary school teachers in: 11. using performance-based assessments, such as presentations and projects (ES= 3.04, MS= 3.33, HS= 3.41), 13. designing paper and pencil tests (ES= 2.97, MS= 3.12, HS= 3.43), and 19. calculating final course, semester, or nine weeks grades (ES= 3.42, MS= 3.19, HS= 3.54).

More specifically, when comparing high school teachers' perspectives on importance of professional learning needs to middle school teachers, high school teachers reported 10 out of the 19 items as more important. These included 2. using assessment information during instruction (MS= 3.70 and HS= 3.80), 4. using assessment results to determine student grades (MS= 3.47 and HS= 3.68), 5. communicating with parents concerning grades and test scores (MS= 3.79 and HS= 3.93), 8. understanding technical assessment concepts such as reliability and validity (MS= 3.16 and HS= 3.30), 9. improving the overall quality of classroom assessments (MS= 3.74 and HS= 3.80), 10. assessing reasoning and other "higher order" thinking skills (MS= 3.73 and HS= 3.74), 11. using

performance-based assessments, such as presentations and projects (MS= 3.33 and HS= 3.41), 13. designing paper and pencil tests (MS= 3.12 and HS= 3.43), 18. understanding the link between assessment and instruction (MS= 3.56and HS= 3.70), and 19. calculating final course, semester, or nine weeks grades (MS= 3.19 and HS= 3.54). See Table 1.

Table 1: All Teachers, Elementary School Teachers, Middle School Teachers, and High School Teachers Means and Standard Deviations for Items Measuring the Importance of Professional Learning Needs in the Areas of Grading and Assessment Practices (n=517)

Survey Item	All Means	Elementary Means	Middle Means	High Means	All SD	Elementary SD	Middle SD	High SD
1. Using assessment information for planning prior to instruction	3.69	3.91	3.48	3.37	.95	.89	1.02	.88
2. Using assessment information during instruction (e.g. monitoring student progress, judging whether students understand, questioning students)	3.96	4.14	3.70	3.80	.91	.86	1.07	.74
3. Using assessment results to evaluate instruction and curriculum	3.84	4.03	3.67	3.58	.88	.85	.95	.75
4. Using assessment results to determine student grades	3.65	3.72	3.47	3.68	1.00	.94	1.05	1.06
5. Communicating with parents concerning grades and test scores	3.97	4.07	3.79	3.93	1.00	.94	1.10	1.00
6. Understanding and using the state Criterion - Reference Competency Tests (CRCT), End of Course Tests (EOCT's), High School Graduation Test (GHSGT)	3.33	3.36	3.35	3.25	1.21	1.31	1.08	1.12
7. Understanding and using the state Performance Standards	3.87	4.08	3.64	3.62	1.03	.98	1.08	1.01
8. Understanding technical assessment concepts such as reliability and validity	3.35	3.47	3.16	3.30	1.00	1.01	1.04	.92
9. Improving the overall quality of classroom assessments	3.92	4.05	3.74	3.80	.91	.89	.99	.81
10. Assessing reasoning and other "higher order" thinking skills	3.85	3.95	3.73	3.74	.89	.89	.93	.84
11. Using performance-based assessments, e.g. presentations & projects	3.19	3.04	3.33	3.41	1.01	1.06	.98	.88
12. Using portfolio assessments	2.99	3.18	2.92	2.61	1.03	1.00	1.10	.94
13. Designing paper pencil tests (multiple choice, short answer, essay)	3.11	2.97	3.12	3.43	.99	1.03	.95	.86
14. Assessing writing skills	3.69	3.87	3.50	3.47	1.04	.98	1.07	1.06
15. Assessing reading proficiency	3.77	4.04	3.51	3.39	1.10	.98	1.21	1.08
16. Assessing mainstream students	3.47	3.54	3.39	3.38	1.07	1.12	1.03	.97
17. Assessing affective traits, such as attitudes, value, and self-concept	3.02	3.13	2.96	2.82	1.12	1.09	1.17	1.10

18. Understanding the link between assessment and instruction	3.79	3.92	3.56	3.70	1.03	1.03	1.10	.92
19. Calculating final course, semester, or nine weeks grades	3.39	3.42	3.19	3.54	1.20	1.18	1.26	1.14

Table 2 illustrates the distinction between teachers' perceptions of importance for each individual item, displaying the significance between the school level who reported the highest perceived critical importance of professional learning needs as related to grading and assessment practices and the least perceived importance. As shown within this table there was clear variation between the levels with elementary school teachers reporting 16 out of the 19 professional learning items as being more important than middle and high school teachers, with assessing reading and reading proficiency representing the most variation compared to only three items being perceived as more important for middle or high school teachers than elementary. These included a need for professional development in utilizing performance-based assessments, such as presentations and projects. Additionally, middle school teachers and high school teachers reported higher importance in professional development for designing paper and pencil tests (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, essay) than elementary school teachers. See Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Variation Between Elementary, Middle, and High School Teacher Perceived Highest Importance and Second Highest Importance for the Individual Items of Professional Learning Needs (n=517)

Elementary	Middle	High
1. Assessment info for planning [b]	–	11. Using performance-based assessments
2. Assessment info during instruction [c]		13. Designing paper and pencil tests [c]
3. Assessment results for evaluation		19. Calculating grades
4. Assessment results for grades		
5. Communication with parents		
6. Using state Criterion-Reference		
7. Using state Performance Standards [b]		
8. Understanding technical assessments		
9. Improving quality of assessments		
10. Assess "high order" thinking		
12. Using portfolio assessments		
14. Assessing writing skills [c]		
15. Assessing reading proficiency [a]		
16. Assessing mainstreamed students		
17. Assessing effective traits		
18. Links of assessment and instruction		

a Indicates greater than .5 differences between highest and second highest perceived importance scores (5-point Likert scale)
b Indicates greater than .4 difference between highest and second highest perceived importance scores (5-point Likert scale)
c Indicates greater than .3 difference between highest and second highest perceived importance scores (5-point Likert scale)
– Indicates not applicable

Table 3 presents findings from a statistical analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed and the outcomes denoted a mean and standard deviation for each level. The ANOVA was conducted and indicated a statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs. The strength of the relationship between teachers' levels and their responses about professional learning for grading and assessment practices, as assessed was low to moderate, with type of response accounting for variance in the levels of the teachers. The findings from the ANOVA denote that elementary school teachers had higher perceptions of the importance of professional learning needs when compared to their middle and high school counterparts. See Table 3.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for the Importance of Professional Learning Needs in the Areas of Grading and Assessment Practices (n=517)

School Level	Mean	SD	n
Elementary	3.6614	.65	274
Middle	3.4270	.75	124
High	3.4188	.66	116

Table 4 and Figure 1 present findings from a multiple comparison using Tukey's HSD test. There was a statistically significant difference in the means between the elementary school teachers' perceptions of the importance of professional learning as related to grading and assessment practices and the middle school teachers' perceptions. Similarly, there was also a statistically significant difference in the means between the elementary school teachers' perceptions of the importance of professional learning needs and the high school teachers' perceptions. Although the differences between the middle school teachers and the high school teachers were not statistically significant, middle school teachers had a higher mean than high school teachers.

Table 4. Results of Multiple Comparisons Using Tukey's HSD Test for the Importance of Professional Learning Needs in the Areas of Grading and Assessment Practices (n=517)

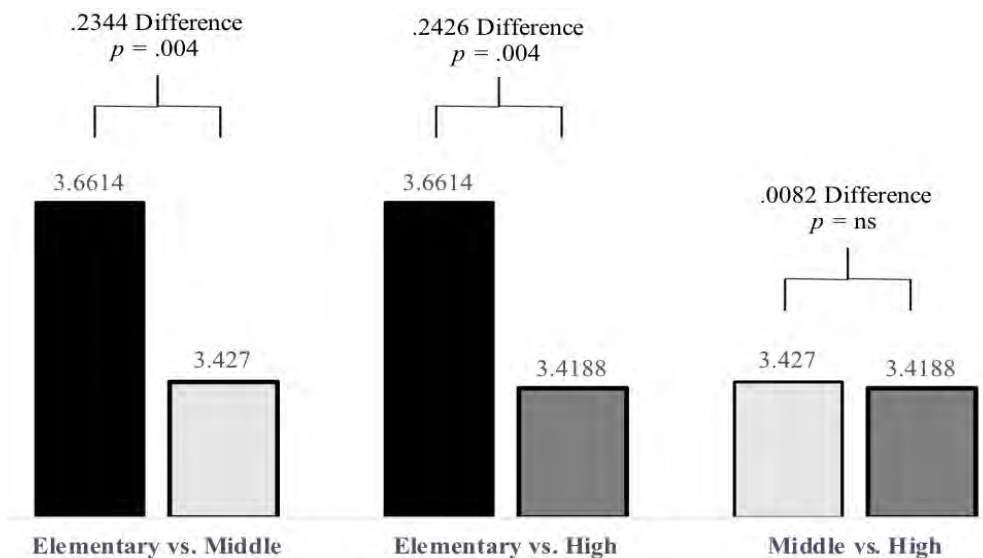| Comparison	Mean Difference	Standard Error	p
Elementary vs. Middle	.2344	.07	.004**
Elementary vs. High	.2426	.07	.004**
Middle vs. High	.0082	1.00	ns

*p < .05, **p < .01

Figure 1. Comparison of Means Between Elementary, Middle, and High School Teacher's Perceptions of Professional Learning of Grading and Assessment Practices

DISCUSSION

These findings are intended to inform school leaders about the need to implement more effective professional learning plans regarding the areas of grading and assessment practices. Additionally, this study and extended research may provide insight into developing professional and educational planning practices for elementary, middle, and high schools, collectively and for individual school-levels. In regard to the research question: Is there a difference between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' perceptions of professional learning needs in the area of grading and assessment practices, this study supports previous research confirming teachers need professional learning collectively as well as in specified areas (Lyon, 1993; McCormack et al., 2006; McMillan & Workman, 1999). Many teachers are unaware of best practices in grading and assessment and there is a strong need in educational planning for highly focused, structured professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment to address evidence-based strategies (Boothroyd et al., 1992; Gullickson & Hopkins, 1987; Guskey, 2004; Schafer & Lissitz, 1987; Stiggins, 2008). Furthermore, professional learning that is collaborative, purposeful, and sustainable is vital (McBrayer et al., 2018).

Some examples include elementary teachers collectively perceived varying aspects of grading and assessment within professional learning to be of higher importance than middle and high school teachers. Additionally, high school teachers responded that professional learning in designing pencil and paper tests and calculating final course, semester, or nine weeks grades were deemed more important than elementary and middle school teachers. Lastly, middle and high school teachers reported that professional learning in the area of using performance-based assessments, such as presentations and projects, were deemed more important than did the elementary school teachers. Thus, these practices need to be examined further to determine how they are addressed when designing educational and professional learning plans.

Our findings specifically relate to John Dewey's philosophy on educational reform in the phenomena of active participation by students within their classroom work and assessments are key (Kucey & Parsons, 2012). Additionally, Dewey emphasized that the foundational educational practices a student utilizes in early schooling correlates to later success. This idea reinforces the finding of elementary education teachers placing higher importance in building their professional development within grading and assessment practices than middle or high school teachers. Due to middle and high school teachers reporting these professional learning tactics as slightly less important than the elementary school teachers, school leaders within these levels could provide professional development workshops collectively as well as specifically by tailoring to the needs of each level. By providing further training that is focused in the areas of grading and assessment to ensure that the students are being graded effectively and equitably, professional learning at the varied school levels may aid school leaders in better attaining their educational goals. Potentially, the findings may suggest more indications in student motivation and performance, as opposed to teacher drive and perceptions, in variations within professional learning needs. With this mindset, planning of teacher professional learning should emphasize the continuation from elementary throughout high school to utilize practices that motivate students, such as student participation and ensuring student understanding prior to assessment (Duncan & Noonan, 2007).

This study was not without limitations. Participants engaged in this study were voluntarily selected, from one identified cluster of a school system instead of being randomly selected. Participants who have been in the field a shorter period of time may have responded differently to certain questions as compared to novice and veteran teachers based on their limited experience. Participants were only from one school system located in the southeastern United States, and thus, responses may not be generalizable across the nation. However, the results of this study present findings that support and expand on the body of knowledge about grading and assessment practices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. In turn, the findings further support the critical need for professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment and we arguably agree that this need calls for professional learning that is purposeful, collaborative, and sustainable.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The following first implication may be considered as a result of the study: Teachers at all levels indicated a need for professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment practices. Because teachers expressed a need for professional learning in these areas, a willingness to participate in professional learning is implied. Thus, school leaders need to actively include teachers' professional learning needs when compiling their schools' educational plans to meet the unique needs of the teachers within these varied school levels. Furthermore, these findings suggest a second implication highlighting a need for educator preparation programs to work collectively with school leaders and their staff to make sure grading and assessment are being actively represented in training and professional learning within schools as well as outside of schools in educator preparation programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researcher noted recommendations for future research within the realm of teachers' perceptions of professional learning in grading and assessment practices. The first being, further research should be done to investigate the assessment practices of teachers at

varied levels (elementary, middle, or high) to glean a better understanding of the differences in assessment practices among the teachers within each level. Additionally, accounting for individual teacher length of experiences, specifically comparing induction teachers to novice to veteran teachers could add more insight into the emphasis of professional learning practices being provided within initial teacher preparation and in ongoing professional learning in districts. This study was also limited geographically, thus collecting data from each region of the nation and providing a comparison between these teachers' perceptions could remove any biases related to emphasized regional policies in professional learning. Qualitative research in the area of assessment practices should be collected to strengthen and further understand teachers' assessment choices and the impact on students' final grades by capturing the voice of educators in the field. Lastly, further research is needed to examine the level at which grading and assessment practices are being implemented currently within schools as well as in educator preparation programs in an effort to collaborate and attain school improvement in the area of grading and assessment practices.

CONCLUSIONS

In addressing grading and assessment practices, this study showed that teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels indicated a need for professional learning in the areas of grading and assessment and this in turn, denotes an implied willingness to engage in said professional learning. Professional learning is the key to addressing and identifying need in the areas of grading and assessment to frame professional learning plans. As specific areas of need have been identified at each level, a vertical approach could be taken to develop teachers as they work on evidence-based practices in the areas of grading and assessment collectively as well as at their specified levels. School leaders need to address the needs of their teachers when considering professional learning plans to ensure that they are purposeful, collaborative, and sustainable to achieve their desired outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

Teachers' Classroom Assessment and Grading Practices Survey / Professional Learning Needs Section
(McMillan & Workman, 1999)

Directions: Answer the questions by circling the response that most closely corresponds to your grading and assessment practices for your class this first nine weeks, specifically in the area of professional learning. There is no right or wrong answers. All your responses will be kept confidential

Questions: Indicate the importance of each of the following potential PROFESSIONAL LEARNING topics for you by circling the appropriate response.

Use the following scale:

Not at all important	(N)=1	Of Little Importance	(L)=2
Somewhat important	(S)=3	Very important	(V)=4
Critical	(C)=5		

1. Using assessment information for planning prior to instruction — N L S V C
2. Using assessment information during instruction (e.g. monitoring student progress, judging whether students understand, questions students) — N L S V C
3. Using assessment results to evaluate instruction and curriculum — N L S V C
4. Using assessment results to determine student grades — N L S V C
5. Communicating with parent concerning grades and test score — N L S V C
6. Understanding and using the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT), End of Course Tests (EOCTs), or the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT) — N L S V C
7. Understanding and using the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) — N L S V C
8. Understanding technical assessment concepts such as reliability and validity — N L S V C
9. Improving the overall quality of classroom assessments — N L S V C
10. Assessing reasoning and other "higher order" thinking skills — N L S V C
11. Using performance-based assessments, such as presentations and projects — N L S V C
12. Using portfolio assessments — N L S V C
13. Designing paper and pencils tests (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, essay — N L S V C
14. Assessing writing skills — N L S V C
15. Assessing reading proficiency — N L S V C
16. Assessing mainstreamed students — N L S V C
17. Assessing affective traits, such as attitudes, value, and self-concept — N L S V C
18. Understanding the link between assessment and instruction — N L S V C
19. Calculating final course, semester, or nine weeks grades — N L S V C
20. What grade level(s) do you teach? Circle all that apply.

    Pre-K K 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th 6th 7th 8th 9th 10th 11th 12th

21. What subjects/content areas do you teach?
22. What is your gender? Please circle. Male Female Other
23. What is your certificate level? Please circle. Bachelor's Master's Specialist Doctorate
24. How many years of teaching experience do you have? Please circle.

    <1 1-10 11-20 21-30 >30

INVITATION TO SUBMIT MANUSCRIPTS

The editor of *Educational Planning*, a refereed journal of educational planning issues, invites the submission of original manuscripts for publication consideration. *Educational Planning* is the official journal of the International Society for Educational Planning. The audience of the journal includes national and provincial/state planners, university faculty, school district administrators and planners, and other practitioners associated with educational planning.

The purpose of the publication is to serve as a meeting place for scholar-researcher and the practitioner-educator through the presentation of articles that have practical relevance to current issues and that broaden the knowledge base of the discipline. *Educational Planning* disseminates the results of pertinent educational research, presents contemporary ideas for consideration, and provides general information to assist subscribers with their professional responsibilities.

Manuscripts preferred for inclusion are those from practitioners, reports of empirical research, expository writings including analyses of topical problems, or case studies. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed.

The following criteria have been established for the submission of manuscripts.

STYLE: All formatting should adhere strictly to the current guidelines set in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

LENGTH: The manuscript, including all references, figures or illustrations, charts, and/or graphs, should not exceed 20 pages. In addition, an Abstract (between 150-500 words on a separate sheet of paper) describing the focus of the manuscript should be included at the beginning of the manuscript.

WORD PROCESSING: SINGLE-SPACE all text using TIMES NEW ROMAN with a 10 point type. Headings and sub-headings should be in ARIAL with a 10 point type. Provide 1.0 inch margins top and bottom, and 1.5 inch left and right, with 1.0 inch header and 1.0 inch footer. The body of the manuscript must be no wider than 5 ½ inches to fit the paper. Lengthily tables, drawings, and charts or graphs should be scaled to the dimensions given and should preferably be camera-ready.

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Abstract

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Text of the manuscript not to exceed 20 pages, including references, tables, etc.

If the manuscript does not meet the guidelines exactly, it will NOT be reviewed and will be returned to the author.

Author(s) name or any other identifying information should not be included on the abstract or the manuscript. Authors are responsible for copyright clearance and accuracy of information presented and submission implies that the same manuscript has not been submitted t other publications.

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ORGANIZATION

The Society was founded December 10, 1970 in Washington, DC. Over 50 local, state, national, and international planners attended the first organizational meeting.

Since then its continued growth demonstrates the need for a professions organization with educational planning as its exclusive concern.

PURPOSE

The International Society for Educational Planning was established to foster the professional knowledge sand interests of educational planners. Through conferences and publications, the society promotes the interchange of ideas within the planning community. The membership includes persons from the ranks of governmental agencies, school-based practitioners, and higher education.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY

Membership in the society is open to any person active or interested in educational planning and the purposes of the Society. To join the Society or renew a membership please complete and submit the enclosed form.

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