THE ROLE OF DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

OF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION SCALE

ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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and herby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the countless early childhood professionals who strive to create the best experiences possible for young children. As the foundation of all educational pursuits, their work in the greater scheme of educational enlightenment is immeasurable.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was two-fold: first, to explore the role of a program‟s use of distributive leadership practices in implementing substantive qualitative changes in an early childhood setting based on the Program Administration Scale (PAS) results. The second purpose was to provide an account of staff perceptions related to distributive leadership practices when applied to implementation of the PAS recommendations. Building an understanding of the role distributive leadership played in making substantive leadership changes significantly adds to the body of knowledge currently available on early childhood leadership practice.

A multi-case study approach was used to generate qualitative based data. As Yin (1989) denoted, a qualitative framework allows for the investigation of issues that arise. As such, the use of a qualitative approach, allowed the research to formally address the meaning early childhood educators associated with the PAS assessment and recommendation process. Data within the study were gathered from interviews, focus group sessions, and document review providing multiple varying supports of the beliefs held by study participants.

The results of the research study could impact early childhood practitioners within many differing program settings as issues such as implementation of assessment recommendations and shared leadership practices are addressed.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction of Study

In recent years there has been an increased momentum across the country to provide high quality early childhood programs (Espinosa, 2002). The importance of quality early childhood programming has been cited by many researchers who note early educational experiences often have lifelong impact on the social and educational pursuits of individuals (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Bowman, 1993; Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewit & Behrman, 1995). Quality early childhood education programs provide young children with the developmental framework needed for future educational and life experiences (Barnett & Yarosz; Ma, Shen, Kavanaugh, Lu, Brandi, Goodman, Till & Watson, 2011). Thus, issues such as impact and accountability are ever present and important to the early education setting (Essa, 2007; Powell & Cosgrove, 1992). As more early education programs become available options, program assessment tools used to distinguish quality from naught have been established (Arnett, 1989; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005; Talan & Bloom, 2004). "Program evaluation may vary from obtaining data that can be taken into account in high stakes decision making; such as determining program funding to measuring programs and or children's progress in them for reporting and program improvement purposes" (Riley-Ayers, Frede, Barnett & Brenneman, 2009, p. 16). With the advent of such evaluation comes the need for individual programs to modify or enhance their practices to be more clearly aligned with standards (Gomby, et al.).

This augmented focus on the impact of program quality effects accountability measures and causes two convergent issues to arise, the development of quality program

indicators, and the implementation of such indicators (The National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2003). To this end, specific program quality measures in the field of early education have been created that rely on programs to accept feedback and facilitate change within their environments (NAEYC, 2003). Typical of the type of quality measures used in early childhood education are rating scales. Rating scales represent an assessment tool used to measure the extent of a program's adherence to measures of quality (Cryer, 1999). Early education program rating scales represent a framework for establishing said standards of quality in both process and structure of programs (Espinosa, 2002). The Program Administration Rating Scale (PAS) is one such evaluation tool.

The impetus for the development of the PAS was an understanding of quality assessment being broader than the confines of the classroom environment, with a focus on multiple data collection methods (Talan & Bloom, 2004). The PAS differs from traditional measurement instruments in that it provides a valid and reliable tool specifically used to measure the administrative practices present within an early childhood program (Talan & Bloom).

Development of quality program standards, while seen as an invaluable aspect of improving and assessing a program, cannot be viewed as a segregated aspect of the accountability process (NAEYC, 2003). The leadership role of directors and other members of the educational environment assist in the development and implementation of change (Gronn, 2002; Talan, 2010).

Traditionally the role of implementing change based on program evaluations has been assigned to program directors or other established administrative figures

(Leithwood, 2005). Leadership in such an instance is seen as a singular role or one held only by a selected group of individuals (Leithwood, 2005). There is, however, current research that supports the idea that leadership, based on shared governance and collaboration, provides sustained results that impact multiple areas of the learning and school environment (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). Within this chapter the researcher addressed the importance of shared leadership practice while noting the lack of information available regarding such practices related to early childhood education quality matters (Talan, 2007). The objective of this research study was to gain a better understanding of how early childhood programs implement assessment results. The intent of the research was to establish whether or not distributive leadership played a role in this process. In doing so, the PAS was the assessment tool used to assist in addressing the proposed research questions.

<div align="center">Distributive Leadership as Conceptual Frame</div>

Leadership by definition is multifaceted and belies various meanings depending on the environment and the source (Burns, 1978). "Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to guide, structure, and facilitate activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl, 2006, p. 3). However, it can also be noted, "a critical aspect of leadership is helping a group to develop shared understandings about the organization and its activities and goals that can undergird a sense of purpose or vision" (Leithwood, 2005, p. 11). This idea of shared or distributed leadership has become a pertinent aspect of school development and systemic change. Subsequently, the purpose of the intended research was to understand the role of distributive leadership practices of

early childhood program directors in interpreting and implementing PAS rating scales results. To this end, the broad theoretical understanding of leadership theory was addressed and a narrowed focus and conceptualization on distributive leadership was provided.

Distributive leadership is the process of establishing a community based atmosphere for decision making that allows members within a certain organization or group to play a role in a democratic leadership process (Whitby, N.D). Proponents of distributive leadership believe lasting and sustained change can only happen if all members of the group are instrumental in the decision process (Drath & Palus, 1994; Spillane, 2005). This concept applies to schools due to the fact that the process of administration within this setting relies on a multitude of individuals beyond those in formal leadership positions (Spillane, 2005). School leadership, from both formal and informal sources, helps to shape the nature of such school conditions as goals, culture, structures, and classroom conditions" (Leithwood, 2005, p. 6). Subsequently, the belief of leadership within an instructional setting has expanded from the idea of a single administrator to a more substantial involvement from other individuals within the school setting (Lambert, 2002). To this end, "leadership involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning" a process in which a coordinated effort between the identified management structure and staff is needed (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, p. 24).

Some would argue when researching traits related to leadership within an organization, the conceptual frame most adept at describing practice would be

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transformational leadership. However, the focus of transformational leadership is based on the characteristics of a single recognized leader who assists in empowering followers to attain marked improvements within an organization (Marks & Printy, 2003). Culture, vision and an alignment to program goals are strongly emphasized within this leadership framework (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass, Waldman, Avolio & Bebb, 1987). In relation to the intended research transformational leadership contrasts with distributive leadership as an established charismatic leader is needed to ensure success (Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood, 2006). Therefore, distributive leadership is a more effective approach to understanding the change processes within a school setting; as effective school leadership stems from a collaborative process where all individuals contribute and share their expertise (Leithwood, 2005).

Statement of Problem

Early childhood education represents a diversified field that focuses on the learning and development of children from birth to eight years of age (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Essa, 2007; Fleer, 2003; NAEYC, 1995). The field of early childhood education is consistently on the rise mainly due to the fact that an extensive amount of research has been compiled toting the effectiveness of early education practices in improving child outcomes. Conversely, this effectiveness has been directly related to the quality of the early childhood program (Bredekamp, 2011).

Improvements in early learning and development produce… long term improvements in achievement, educational attainment, and social behavior. Specific impacts shown in longer- term studies of high-quality preschool programs include decreased rates of grade retention and special education

enrollment, increased school completion rates, and reductions in crime and delinquency rates (Hustedt & Barnett, 2010, p. 1).

High quality programs are developed mainly through the use of evaluation tools, which help to determine standards of quality (NAEYC, 1995). There has been a consistent move in recent years towards the establishment of systems of accountability that are able to accurately determine program effectiveness. When well established, such systems serve as individual reports and a data source for program improvement (Riley-Ayers, et al., 2009). Though largely important to the enhancement process, assessments of programs are rendered useless without the adoption of a plan of action to make needed changes based on evaluation results (NAEYC, 2003). An established link between overall administrative practices in early childhood and high-quality outcomes exists (Talan & Bloom, 2004). Consequently, improved outcomes within a program are often reached when an atmosphere of leadership is distributed within the program and a sense of empowerment is created amongst staff members (Whitby, n.d.).

Based on the limited research available on distributive leadership practices in early childhood, a focused research study on understanding the implementation of assessment ratings and the leadership role of program staff in that process significantly adds to the current body of knowledge. By concentrating on programs that have completed two PAS review cycles the researcher was able to provide an introductory focus on how early childhood programs are impacted by assessment results and to what end distributive leadership played in the process.

Purpose of Study

The rationale of this research study was to gain an understanding of what happens within a program after a formal program assessment process has been completed. Therefore, the purpose of this research was two-fold: first, to explore the role of a program"s use of distributive leadership practices in implementing substantive qualitative changes in an early childhood setting based on PAS results. The second purpose was to provide an account of staff perceptions related to distributive leadership practices when applied to implementation of the PAS recommendations. Building an understanding of the role distributive leadership played in making substantive leadership changes significantly adds to the body of knowledge currently available on early childhood leadership practice.

Research Questions

Five major questions emerged in the course of reviewing the available research:

1. How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?

2. What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the PAS rating recommendations?

3. How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

4. What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

5. What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

    This study relied on the insight of early childhood practitioners who had personally experienced the PAS review process at least twice. Programs selected

provided documentation and examples from both a pre and post PAS assessment process.

Limitations and Assumptions

Limitations to the study included three key aspects. First, all participants in the study were from the same geographical area. This restricted sample size was intentionally set as the researcher wished to better understand the particularities of the participant groups selected as opposed to generalities provided by a more substantial sampling (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Yin, 1989). As this was a multi-case study, the researcher intended to focus on the phenomena of individual program interpretations (Creswell, 2007). While limited in scope, the geographic area chosen was representative of the general early childhood education population as the majority of center based programs function with a general administrator and various teaching staff (Morrison, 2012). Thus, the small geographic area used did not impact the overall results of the study as Creswell (2007) believed "…no more than four or five cases" were needed for generalizations regarding a study.

Second, as part of the implementation of program review suggestions, some programs received additional support through coaching and mentoring which could have impacted implementation of new program policies related to PAS recommendations. As this was not an aspect of the current research study, there was no way to determine if coaching and mentoring directly influenced how change was adopted within a program. Further research is needed to determine if coaching and mentoring has an effect on PAS assessment implementation and leadership roles. However, the researcher had a familiarity with a number of programs participating in the MCEL PAS review, which

could be sited as having an impact on the responses to study questions. However, the researcher believed, knowledge of the participants allowed for a deeper understanding of the research and provided a filter for considering the impact of mentorship on the implementation of PAS assessment results.

Lastly, the researcher used a multi-case study approach as the foundation for the research design (Creswell, 2007). It can be argued that case studies provide an oversimplified situational account as well as limited foundation for scientific generalization, which can lead to erroneous conclusions related to the study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989). Subsequently, "…case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample", and the [researcher's] goal [wa]s to expand and generalize [emerging] theories" (Yin, p. 21).

Design Controls

The researcher addressed reliability and validity within the study by "…establishing indicators provid[ing] evidence that the information generated in the research [wa]s trustworthy and believable" (Mertens, 2005, p. 346) To ensure research quality within this study, transcriptions of interviews and focus groups were subjected to member checks for authenticity and factuality (Creswell, 2009). Cross checking information from the three major qualitative data sources with research participants assisted the researcher in triangulating the data (Mertens).

"Analysis [within the research] is the search for both elements and associations" (Stake, 2010). Within this qualitative research design, establishing reliability processes assisted in procuring significant elements found as a result of the research being

accurately recorded and transcribed (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2005). This required

sensitivity to the personal knowledge of the participants and allowed the researcher to

deduce and pull apart individuals" interpretations while making note of the trivial but

crucial cues provided (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010). By accurately collecting and coding

data the researcher was able to identify emergent themes within the study (Marshall &

Rossman, 2006).

<div align="center">Definition of Key Terms</div>

Language common to certain fields of study often cannot be generalized to a

broader population and therefore a description of common terms provides a framework

and consensus for understanding (Bruffee, 1999). The intent of this section was to clarify

the meaning and context associated to the following terms used throughout the study

adding clarity to the research.

Distributive Leadership: A leadership framework focused on shared practices

    incorporating a democratic approach to decisions made within an organization

    (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise,

    2004). An established leader exists within an organization, however, leadership

    roles shift based on situational assignments (Dinham, 2004). Multiple terms

    including shared, collaborative, and democratic are used to describe the

    distributive leadership process (Bolden, 2007; Spillane, 2005; Whitby, n.d.).

Early Childhood Education: Term used to describe the field of care and education for

    young children from birth to age eight (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Fleer, 2003;

    NAEYC, 1995).

Early Childhood Education Programs: Formally established operation for the

supervision and instruction of young children from birth to age eight (Morrison,

2012). Program types include both home and center based settings housed within

traditional homes, stand-alone childcare facilities and elementary school buildings

(Gomby, et al., 1995; Scarr, 1998).

Educational Leadership: Broad based term used to describe the effective operation of

schools often using both leadership and management strategies (Bush, 2003).

Leadership within the educational setting often relates to the establishment of

values and purpose while management refers to the technical duties required for

efficient school performance (Bush 1998).

Head Start: "All early childhood education programs result from the social, political,

economic, and scientific milieu from which they arise. Such was the case with

Project Head Start"…a comprehensive federally funded early childhood education

program intended for children age three to five (Essa, 2007; Head Start

Reauthorization Act, 2007; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). Programming for children

focuses on multiple educational, nutritional, health and social service aspects for

children and their families (Morrison, 2012).

Program Administration Scale: An assessment tool used to establish the level of program

quality within an early childhood setting; focusing on the administrative practices

employed (Talan & Bloom, 2004).

Program Quality: Standards of practice used to determine how well early childhood

programs meet the needs of the children and families served within an educational

setting (NAEYC, 2009; Ramey, Campbell, Burchinal, Skinner, Gardner &

Ramey, 2000). Quality is defined by two distinct groupings, structural and process (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Frede, 1995; Witte & Querait, 2005). Structural quality focuses on the necessary resources needed for successful transmission of services (Essa, 2007; Powell & Cosgrove, 1992). While process quality is indicative of the social and emotional interactions provided within the educational environment (Kagan, 1990; Scarr, 1998).

Transformational Leadership: A leadership framework, which relies on the charisma of an established leader to encourage followers to adhere to the vision of, and improve practices related to, enhancing the goals of a particular organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002).

Summary

Currently, the primary focus of early childhood leadership literature centers on management practices of program directors, as opposed to collaborative practices that include all staff members (Neugebauer, 2003; Sullivan, 2010). The intent of the research was to add to the current body of knowledge available and provide an account of the role distributive leadership played in the early childhood environment. This contribution to the literature also attempted to provide context to a framework for implementing distributive leadership practices within an early childhood setting. Overall, a focus on early childhood leadership expansion that relied more on group functioning than individual leader ability was provided. Furthermore, the research provided clarity to the assessment implementation process and assisted in discerning what happened within an early childhood program after an assessment process had been completed.

In understanding the progression of quality in the early childhood field and the role of assessments, a better understanding of how programs used leadership as a tool for implementing change based on program assessments was established. As part of the qualitative multi-case study process, an examination of the distributive leadership practices of early childhood programs implementing PAS recommendations was conducted.

Provided in this chapter is an overview of perspectives related to quality program assessments and current leadership practices in early childhood education. Also addressed are the statement of purpose, key research questions, design controls and key terms related to the research. Afforded in Chapter Two is a review of the current literature related to early childhood education and leadership. Key participants, as well as the design and methodology of the study are discussed in Chapter Three. A qualitative analysis of the research questions follows in Chapter Four. Lastly, provided in Chapter Five is a summary of research findings, conclusions, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

Within the field of early childhood education quality educational practices have been noted to impact the overall development of young children, assisting in preparing them for future school and life experiences (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Powell & Cosgrove, 1992). The determination of what quality represents in early school settings has been widely established by numerous researchers (Cryer, 1999; Frede, 1995; Katz, 1993; Witte & Querait, 2005). Multiple program assessment tools have been created to ascertain quality markers within programs (Arnett, 1989; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005; Talan & Bloom, 2004). Yet, it is not widely known what happens within a program after an assessment is conducted. Often seen as a function of leadership and administration, program assessments and their results are generally considered the domain of the established program administrator (Leithwood, 2005). This idea denotes the leadership practices of administrators as a central component of schools.

Two distinct categories of leadership, instructional and transformational are generally associated with school practice (Hallinger, 2003). Instructional leadership identifies the principal as central to the implementation of effective practice within school settings, providing a model of performance for teachers and other school staff (Blase & Blase, 1998; Southworth, 2002). Transformational leadership also relies heavily on the established school administrator (Bass, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003). However, the focus of this approach is to elevate staff members by enhancing their professional growth, with the intent of synergizing all efforts toward the established school goals (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Both instructional and transformational models limit the individual leadership

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roles of staff members. A more shared or distributive form of leadership allows for a democratic approach to decision making (Gronn, 2002; Spillane et al, 2004; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004). Distributive leadership takes into account the multiple qualifications of individuals and allows for a more collaborative approach to solving leadership problems (Gronn; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004; Talan, 2010). By engaging in a distributive practice of leadership schools can enhance the quality of decision making beyond that of a single administrator (Woods et al.).

In summation, the intent of this qualitative research study was to examine how early childhood education programs implement change based on assessment results. Central to this discussion is the role of distributive leadership and whether or not this leadership practice has an impact on the changes which programs make related to such assessments. Provided in this chapter are the accounts of both early childhood education and leadership practice. A review of the literature related to early childhood education focused on the historical underpinnings of the field citing major developments over the past century. From this point, an examination of the role of quality related to beneficial practices in early childhood programs ensued. Subsequently, the researcher provided an appraisal of the research related to program evaluations and assessment in early childhood education. As this research study focused on the interrelation of early childhood education and leadership, a review of leadership as conceptual frame was presented. Specific focus on the role of educational leadership and practice provided further delineation related to school settings. Lastly, comparison of both transformational and distributive leadership was presented and an attempt was made to determine best practice related to program assessments.

Historical Underpinnings of Early Childhood

The field of early childhood education in the United States has multiple diverging

histories, which converge into the current programs and practices implemented today

(Kagan, 1990; Lascarides & Hinitz, 2000). It can, however, be noted that the proliferation

of early childhood education programs, have been impacted by three significant

contributors: a rise in the number of women entering the workforce; the initiation of Head

Start which began its programming in 1965; and a growing understanding of the

importance of child development and early education (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Elkind,

1989a; Goffin, Wilson, Hill & McAninch, 1997; Scarr, 1998). Historically, Scarr (1998)

purported, the role of teaching children in their early years was seen as the job of the

mother or other female family member. As the number of mothers entering the workforce

dramatically increased so did the number of children in early care settings outside the

home (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Burchinal, 1999). In addition, a growing emphasis on

decreasing the poverty rate and the related negative impacts led to the creation of the

largest, government supported social service childcare program (Head Start

Reauthorization Act 2007; Osborn, 1980). This highlighted focus on programming

preceded a heightened understanding of the developmental needs of young children

(Barnett & Yarosz, 2007). Further analysis of the innate role of working mothers, social

reform and early childhood advocacy will therefore be elaborated upon in the following

sections.

Women at Work

The dawn of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th-19th century assisted in setting

„a domain of education‟ for young children (Elkind, 1989a). This period of time set the

precedent for focus on the needs of programming for young children as a growing number of mothers worked outside the home (Elkind, 1989a). Such programs provided indigent and working class families a social service support, which allowed them to work without the encumbrance of leaving their young children unsupervised and under stimulated (Boschee & Jacobs, 2006; Fuller, 2007; Kagan, 1990; Vinovskis, 2005). Subsequent changes within society intensified early education program needs as an ever-increasing number of women entered the workforce. The advent of World War II added to the proliferation of care programs for young children, as women replaced men in factories and the need for child-care services abounded (Barnett, 2004; Scarr, 1998; Vinovskis, 2005; Weikart, 2004). The war effort essentially created an economic boom for women as the demand for female workers increased substantially (Hernandez, 1995). Additional increases in child-care services were predicated in the 1970''s when dramatic shifts occurred in the number of women graduating from institutions of higher education (Fuller, 2007). Elevated degrees and the onset of the feminist movement created a generation of women interested in both motherhood and the advancement of a career (Fuller; Press & Hayes, 2000). Increased economic attainment also prevailed as the single salary of the traditional family breadwinner proved insufficient (Barnett, 2004). Moreover, this time period was also marked by a considerable increase in the divorce rate, furthering the need for extensive childcare services as single parent families became more commonplace (Hernandez, 1995; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal, & Ginsberg, 1986).

In years since, the need for educational programming continues to rise as more children of working mothers require out of home care and the demand for women in the labor force escalates (Hernandez, 1995; Scarr, 1998). Current statistics have established

63 percent of mothers with children under the age of six are presently in the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). While working mothers may have provided an extensive foundation for the expansion of education programs for young children, this was not the only historical marker for change within the field of early education (Elkind, 1989a; Hernandez). The creation of social reform programs provided an additional spotlight on early education and intensified the public"s interest in services for young children (Goffin, Wilson, Hill & McAninch, 1997).

Head Start

In the early 1960"s a progressive movement focused on social reform and the eradication of poverty, was led by President Lyndon B. Johnson (Andrews, 2001; Brauer, 1982; Gillette, 2010; Zarefsky, 1986; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). President Johnson"s poverty initiative built on that of the late President Kennedy who had begun establishing a framework to combat poverty across the nation (Gillette; Silver & Silver, 1991; Vinovskis, 2005). From this interest in the plight of the poor a "war on poverty" ensued (Gillette; Vinovskis; Zarefsky; Zigler & Styfco, 2010).

Established as a moral imperative considered essential to a democratic nation, the War on Poverty gained traction among the general public (Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Born from President Johnson"s War on Poverty, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 provided the basis for several social welfare programs intended to assist individuals from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Morrison, 2012; Richmond, 2004; Zigler, Styfco & Gilman, 1993). Sargent Shriver, chief strategist for President Johnson"s War on Poverty and head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, foresaw the creation of an early intervention program geared towards changing the general public"s perception of the

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poor, and elevating the developmental status of poor young children (Gillette, 2010; Harmon, 2004; Silver & Silver, 1991; Zigler & Styfco; Zigler, Styfco & Gilman). In early 1965 this increased focus on social programming led to the creation of Head Start "…a watershed event for early childhood education in the United States" (Spodek & Saracho, 2003, p.6). This type of programming represented the most extensive federally run and funded program for young children (Pennsylvania Head Start Association, n.d.). During a special address to Congress that same year, President Johnson referenced the importance of teaching young children in poverty and providing them with specific programming to meet their needs (Osborn, 1980; Johnson, 1965).

The impetus of Head Start was the provision of a national educational program geared towards children in poverty, which assisted in preparing children to be successful in elementary school (Anderson, Shinn, Fullilove, Scrimshaw, Fielding, Normand & Carande-Kulis; 2003; Essa, 2007; Feeney, 2012; Head Start Reauthorization Act, 2007; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Vinovskis, 2005). Currently, the United States spends a yearly average of 7.1 billion dollars on the provision of Head Start childcare services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start, 2010). Through Head Start the field of early childhood has benefitted from foundational research focused on curriculum and learning materials, evaluation, and the roles of teachers and families (Osborn, 1980; Phillips & White, 2004; Zigler, Styfco & Gilman, 1993). This plethora of research assisted in helping individuals understand the importance of early education practices.

Role of Early Care and Education

As the awareness for early childhood education grew so did the increased focus on the impact of such programming on the lives of young children (Goffin et al., 1997). "The importance of good-quality early education programs to success in school has been established, and there is little disagreement about the qualities that correlate well with good social and educational progress for children" (Bowman, 1993, p. 123). Educational achievements, job earnings rates of adults, crime and even delinquency rates have been noted to be impacted by early education (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Burchinal, 1999; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Witte & Querait, 2005). Moreover, research showed children who do not participate in early childhood programs are often unprepared for future school experiences as they lack necessary skills for success (Children's Defense Fund, 2008). Public interest in early childhood education denoted early academic success, reading and social readiness, a positive impact on the future workforce and a general promotion of national good will as integral aspects of such programming (Morrison, 2012).

This increased awareness of early childhood education has created a continual need for childcare programming. Consequently, "…over the past half century…[early childhood] participation has increased at the same pace for children whether or not their mothers are employed…The primary source of growth is increased demand for the education of young children by all parents" (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007, p. 3). Thus, programs providing access to comprehensive early childhood education which focus on social-emotional and cognitive abilities of young children abound (Anderson et al; 2003; Witte & Querait, 2005).

To this end, a preponderance of young children participate in formal care settings well before entering kindergarten (Barnett and Yarosz, 2007; Magnuson and Waldfogel, 2005). The benefits associated with early childhood services necessitated a focus on high-quality programming (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Gomby et al., 1995). In order to ascertain the impact of such programming, subsequent sections will provide a definition of the term early childhood education as well as a framework for understanding what quality programming entails.

Definition of Early Childhood

Early childhood education has broad implications referring not to a single constituent but multiple faceted programs intended for children from birth to age 8 (Bredekamp, Knuth, Kunesh & Shulma, 1992; Bowman, 1993; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Essa, 2007; Fleer, 2003; NAEYC, 1995). Consequently, due to the varying histories presented within early childhood "…early care and education services [have] evolved as little more than a polyglot array of disjointed programs" (Kagan, 1990, p.12). This patchwork of programs is not incorporated into a cohesive system and is therefore delivered through nonprofit, for-profit, religious, and public institutions (Feeney, 2012). Subsequently, with this expansive delivery of programming, came a proliferation of varying program models competing within "…the marketplace of educational ideas" (Spodek & Saracho, 2003, p. 6). Common terminology adopted under the banner of early childhood education, though by no means all encompassing, include: family childcare, preschool, daycare, after-school care and general childcare (Gomby et al., 1995; Morgan, 2007; NAEYC, 1995; Scarr, 1998). To distinguish between the numerous comparative

terms a differentiation can be made separating home-based and center-based settings (Essa).

Program Types

Home- based programs are descriptive of non-relative family childcare settings (Hofferth, 1996). Typically staffed by one or two individuals, this type of care takes place in the home of an early childhood education provider. Children in programs such as these vary in age from newborn to school age. Family childcare programs, as they are known by, often provide both curricular and social enhancement for young children and are frequented by families looking for a home-like atmosphere and a smaller teacher to child ratio (Click & Karkos, 2011; Elicker, Fortner- Wood, & Noppe, 1999, Morrison, 2012). These setting are typically for-profit; however, they may serve families receiving childcare subsidies from state agencies (Hofferth).

Center based settings are representative of a broader conglomeration of program types including preschools, child care centers, after school programs and Head Start (Hofferth, 1996). Preschool programs offer early childhood services to children age three to five. Such programs can either stand-alone or be incorporated into a larger child care center serving children along the entire early childhood spectrum (Jalongo & Isenberg, 2012). Afterschool care programs provide extended childcare services for school age children beyond the traditional school day. Typically housed in elementary school settings, these programs often focus on tutoring and helping children complete schoolwork assignments (Morrison, 2012). Additionally, federally funded Head Start programs often reside in either an elementary school setting or as stand-alone

components of the larger national organization (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start, 2010).

"The many names of programs young children attend reflect the diverse auspices and dual purposes of [early childhood] programs. The federal government provides Head Start to children in poverty. State and local education agencies offer preschool and prekindergarten programs. Private for-profit, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations operate programs under all of these names" (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007, p. 2).

Regardless of the titles attributed to early childhood education programs, it has nevertheless, been widely established, that the concentration of such programming is the initiation of social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language abilities (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Kagan, 1990; NAEYC, 1995). The development of the child is paramount in early childhood education with the intent being "…to help the child fully to realize the… [multiple] facets of his or her being" (Elkind, 1989a, p. 68). While these ideas represent an established focus for early care and education programs quality within educational settings varies considerably educational under every name (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Vandell & Corasaniti, 1990).

<center>Interrelation of Benefits and Quality</center>

In recent years, program quality within the field of early childhood education has garnered much attention by both the general public and policy makers; as mounting evidence supporting correlations between quality programming and long- term impacts on individuals has been established (Essa, 2007; Powell & Cosgrove, 1992.) However, no discussion of quality in the field of early childhood education is complete without

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foundational representation of the idea of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP)

(Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). DAP is representative of an intentionality of thought

characterized and informed by current research and theoretical frameworks, on the goals

of young children's development and learning (Burts & Buchanan, 1998; Copple &

Bredekamp; NAEYC, 2009). Programs rich in quality early learning experiences, based

upon the developmental and individual needs of young children, assist in preparing

children for future success in education and life (Elkind, 1989b; Frede, 1998; Gorey,

2001; NAEYC, 2009; Ramey et al., 2000; Scarr, 1998). Good quality care is integral to

the promotion of children's development and learning while at the same time it has been

established poor quality programming to be its antithesis, creating environments which

may put children at risk (Children's Defense Fund, 2005; NAEYC 1995).

When discussing early childhood quality two distinct categories emerge,

structural and process (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Cryer, 1999; Frede, 1995; Press

& Hayes, 2000; Witte & Querait, 2005). Katz (1993) referred to these processes as

indicative of "top down" and "bottom up" actions respectively. Structural quality refers

to program resources used in the dissemination of early childhood services. Group size,

training and education of staff members and ratios of child to teacher are representative

of this (Essa, 2007; Powell & Cosgrove, 1992; Scarr, 1998). These items are easily

observable and measurable providing a basis for regulation by program licensing

professionals (Witte & Querait, 2005). Whereas, process quality centers on the social and

emotional environment within settings, addressing the interrelations of children and

teachers, quality of educational activities and the emotional interactions which prevail

(Burchinal, 1999; Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Essa, 2007; Kagan, 1990; Scarr, 1998;

Talan, 2007). Whilst not as easily measurable as structural quality such indicators can be noted through direct observation (Witte & Querait, 2005). These mutually important categories assist in defining quality and predicting the role such early experiences will have on future learning and development (Barnett, 1995; Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009).

Buysse and Hollingsworth (2009) inferred, "the link between program quality and positive outcomes for children has spawned a number of initiatives focused on improving early childhood program quality" (p. 121). Raising the level of quality in early childhood settings is a predominant task of public policy makers requiring a focus on higher standards of practice and added resources (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007). Gallagher and Clifford (2000) also asserted high quality programming requires educators to engage in a process of reflection; this accountability process provides programs an opportunity to ascertain their individual level of performance. By sharing this reflective process among staff members "a systems-wide perspective that not only transcends organisational levels and roles but also organisational boundaries" is created (Bolden, 2007). "The dimensions of program quality are reflected in program standards and practice guidelines that have been promulgated by various professional organizations in early childhood and incorporated" into varying program systems (Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009, p121).

<center>Regulation and Program Evaluation</center>

Program Assessments

With "…greater demands for accountability… [come] additional pressures for quality assurance evaluation and performance management systems that monitor, document, and report on center efficiency and quality care" (Bloom, 2003, p. 9). NAEYC

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(2003) believed programs should be engaged in a process of continuous program evaluation focused on established program goals. The use of such evaluation being a process of measuring to what extent programs meet intended quality standards. Impetus is thus placed on improving overall program quality and enhancing services for children and families (Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewit & Behrman, 1995; NAEYC, 2003; Riley-Ayers, Frede, Barnett & Brenneman, 2009). Essentially, higher standards of quality should be adhered to through the use of regulations, which act as safeguards for the healthy development of children (NAEYC, 1995). Well-designed program evaluations often produce a framework for guided improvement of educational opportunities for young children (NAEYC, 2003).

Such program evaluation measures and regulatory systems take on many forms, from informal self- evaluations to statewide standards based evaluations gauging specific program initiatives (Gilliam & Zigler, 2001; Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewit & Behrman, 1995). To this end, several readily identifiable quality measurement tools exist; the majority of which encompass global standards of quality, which enlist a broad based approach adaptable to multiple types of early childhood education settings (Burchinal, 1999; Frede, 1995; Walsh & Gardner, 2005). " A generic tool for evaluating all types of environments is something of a holy grail in early [childhood] education, but a number of tailored approaches do exist" (Walsh & Gardner, 2005, p. 2). Early education program rating scales including the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), Caregiver Interaction Scale (CIS) and the Program Administration Scale (PAS), represent a framework for establishing standards of quality in both process and structure of programs (Arnett, 1989;

Espinosa, 2002; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2006; Talan & Bloom, 2004).

The ERS centers on environmental indicators within a program focused on structural quality indicators. The CIS, in contrast, provides an assessment of process quality indicators measuring the sensitivity of caregivers and their emotional responses to children (Burchinal, 1999). Lastly, the PAS combines both structural and process quality indicators to examine the administrative and leadership practices of early childhood program staff (Talan & Bloom, 2004). As the PAS provides an overall evaluation of program quality, it will be used as the solitary evaluation tool in this study.

Program Administration Scale

As the PAS is indicative of both process and structural quality indicators it is important to note the specificity of the tool makes it unique within the early childhood environment (Talan & Bloom, 2004).

The genesis of the Program Administration Scale (PAS) was the growing professional consensus that early childhood program quality should be viewed through a broader lens than only that of the classroom learning environment, and that it should incorporate multi-source data collection methods including interview, document review, and observation. While there are several instruments available to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions and the quality of the classroom instructional practices, there does not currently exist a valid and reliable instrument that solely measures the administrative practices of an early childhood program. The Program Administration Scale was designed to fill that void (Talan & Bloom, 2004, p. 1).

The PAS tool measures standards based on both leadership and management practices within a center based early childhood setting. Key indicators of practice related to the tool center on human resource and personnel functions, program technical operations and fiscal management, child and family relations, as well as program planning and technological expertise (Talan & Bloom, 2004). The PAS incorporates elements related to structural and process quality indicators as well as collaborative leadership providing a more holistic view of a program. As the PAS is a fairly new tool there is limited research adapting it to specific settings or professional outcomes.

Interpreting Assessment Results

"Program evaluation data are intended to improve program quality. In an open process, results are shared with stakeholders, who may include families, staff, community members, funders and others" (NAEYC, 2003, p. 16). How program assessments are interpreted and the roles of the program leader and staff are important when considering how programs make improvements based on assessment results. Understanding, reviewing and monitoring quality should be conducted as a participatory and democratic process that is inclusive of all staff (Bennett, 2003). Implementing change based on program assessments involves the use of multiple leadership techniques including objective discussions and decision making aligned with the program"s mission and goals (NAEYC, 2003). A further examination of the conceptualized role of leadership and specifically educational leadership will be addressed.

Leadership as a Theoretical Frame

There is no formally established universal definition of leadership. Of the many perspectives given, an emphasis has been placed on behaviors, relationships, interactions,

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established positions, and influence (Bennis, 1989; Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Bush, 2003; Yukl, 2006). Therefore, the concept of leadership is often about articulated visions, values, and establishing an environment where things can be accomplished (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Richards & Engle, 1986). Nevertheless, Blackmore (1989) contended, the empirical evidence supporting specific 'traits' as indicators of good leadership are scarce. Within the same context, Burns (1978) also asserted, this description cannot be depicted as wholly representative as leadership can also be seen as multilayered since numerous conceptualized forms exist; essentially, the demarcation of leadership definitions has not been established. Therefore "…leadership practice [cannot be see]…simply a[s] a function of individual leader's ability, skill, charisma and cognition. While individual leaders and their attributes do matter in constituting leadership practice, they are not all that matters" (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001, p. 27).

Just as the definitions of leadership are inconsistent, so are the beliefs attributed to leaders. Two defining characteristics, leaders as positional authorities and leaders as those who wield power and influence, have imbued the term leader (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Burns, 1978; Maxwell, 1998; Yukl, 2006). Viewing leadership as an action of individualistic measures represented by those in highly placed positions predicates the notion that leaders succeed or fail solely by their own accomplishments (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). Such positional assumptions fail to establish the reality "…that no one can accomplish anything of significance alone" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 4). Positional leaders use their associated power as a way of legitimizing their authority and asserting social control (Bolman & Deal, 2008; French & Raven, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005). Nevertheless, "…leadership is not the same as authority" (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002,p. 25).

Heifetz (1994) espoused, leadership, from a position of authority whether formal or informal requires the leader to be knowledgeable of how to cultivate and use their power. This process is often exemplified by the use of influence over attitudes and behaviors (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995).

By contrast, viewing leadership as a process of influence widens the concept to be encompassing of differing contexts and individuals, including those outside of formal roles (Blackmore, 1989; Bolman & Deal, 1994; Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership, 2003). Leadership and the subsequent role of the leader is to influence followers to address goals representative of values and expectations held by both leader and follower (Burns, 1978; van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer & Hogg, 2004). Thus through the research provided it can be reasonably established, leaders regardless of level or position possess skills which can be used to influence others toward the performance of tasks (Blackmore 1989; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Yukl, 2006). An inseparable connection forms within this leadership theory, creating reciprocity by intertwining the leader and followers needs and goals (Burns, 1978; Collinson, 2005). Leadership effectiveness is therefore exemplified by an underlying connectivity between leaders and followers (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This can be seen within school settings as "…effective leaders help…school[s] to become a professional learning community to support the performance of all key workers, including teachers and staff (Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership, 2003).

The attempt of the researcher is to establish a framework for understanding leadership as sustained influence as well as an integral aspect of successful program operation within educational environments (Espinosa, 1997). Effective leadership and

management of schools is paramount in meeting both the educational needs of students and objectives set by policy- makers and stakeholders (Bush, 2003; Dinham, 2004; Hallinger & Wimpelberg, 1992; Lambert, 1998; Sergiovanni, 2005; Simkins, 2005; Spillane, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). Thus, the implicit leadership needs of educational settings will be illustrated in the following section noting historical markers as well as varying definitions related to leadership within school settings.

Educational Leadership

Within the field of early childhood education limited empirical research exists addressing what leadership looks like in high-quality early childhood programs (Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Talan, 2007). There is some consensus however, that educational leaders in these settings should possess a consistent set of skills; including an extensive understanding of child development, an advocacy of good curricular and pedagogical practices, as well as an understanding of the needs and expanding expectations of all involved (Bloom, 2003; French & Pena, n.d.; Jalongo, Fennimore, Pattnaik, Laverick, Brewster & Mutuku, 2004). The intent of these skills is, the exertion of influence over staff to subsequently impact quality programming (Bloom & Rafanello, 1994; Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy & Hestenes, 2008). Regardless of this distinction, current early childhood leadership research (Bloom, 2003; Neugebauer, 2003; Sullivan, 2010) uses general conceptualizations of leadership to address practice. For the purpose of this research an examination of the larger context of educational leadership, from which early childhood draws its foundation will be examined.

Leadership Perspectives

The origins of educational leadership can be attributed to theoretical

underpinnings established within fields such as scientific management, organizational

development and human relations (Bush, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2005).

Implementation of such measures adopted from diverse fields, resulted in varying degrees

of success and an impetus for empirical research and practice focused on the specific

needs of educational settings (Bush, 2003). The inferences of research within educational

settings center on the effect of leadership in schools related to instructional,

organizational and social development (Bush, 2003; Heslep, 1997; Leithwood, 2005;

Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). An overarching theme presented within the literature posits

leadership as an important component of effectiveness in organizational performance

(Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; Taskforce on Developing Research in

Educational Leadership, 2003; Yukl, 2006). Heck and Hallinger (2005) proclaimed the

field of educational leadership to be in flux as agreement over the theoretical and

philosophical frameworks varies. Nevertheless, two models of leadership prevailed

providing a broad overview of practice with specific focuses on educational management

and instructional leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Bush, 2003; Cuthbert, 1984;

Hallinger, 2003). For the purpose of this study a distinction was made between the

models noting the role of instructional leadership in guiding cooperative and communal

practices within school settings.

Educational Management

The field of educational management shows clear alignment to the „scientific

management movement" (Taylor, 2005). Yet, not unlike the general field of leadership,

no single definition of educational management exists, as its basis can be found in several

differing fields (Bush, 2003). It can nevertheless, be noted, management within this setting consists of a focus on organizational processes (Bolman & Deal, 1994; Bush 2003). There is disagreement among authors however on whether or not educational management is a singular entity or an aspect of leadership practice. Several authors (Bolman & Deal, 1994; Bush, 1998; Cuban 1988) identified leadership as the development of purpose and values and management as a process of maintenance and the assertion of technical duties. Bush (2003), however, purported both the roles of leadership and management are essential and should be viewed as overlapping constructs of one another. The use of instructional leadership does not circumvent management but in fact incorporates the viewpoint as school leaders are required to be proficient in both areas (Duignan & Macpherson, 1993; Sopovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Through the evolution of instructional leadership a more encompassing approach to the capricious needs of educational environments has ensued (Hallinger, 2003).

Instructional Leadership

The first real model of leadership tailored to the needs of educational environments was that of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003). A dramatic shift in thinking came about during the 1980ʺs with the advent of the instructional schools movement, which provided a conceptualized viewpoint of the principal or lead administrator as the acknowledged school expert (Hallinger, 2003; Lashway, 1995; Marks & Printy, 2003) Researchers have provided multiple definitions of instructional leadership, however, the underlying tenets focused on the role of established administrators influencing teacher practice to positively impact student learning (Blase & Blase,1998; Bush, 2003; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck 1999; Southworth, 2002). This

"…hierarchical and procedural notion" of leadership was predicated by the perspective of leadership being the sole function of those in established roles (Blackmore, 1989; Lashway, 1995; Marks & Printy, 2003, p.371; Spillane, Camburn, Pustejovsky, Pareja & Lewis, 2008; Talan, 2010).

Original characterizations of instructional leadership led to a displacement of such thought in the 1990˙s as educational reformation focused on practices, exemplifying shared and distributive forms of leadership, which incorporated both managerial and instructional exercises (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger, 2005; Seashore, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Halliger (2003) provided the most comprehensive definition of this renewed model of instructional leadership; defining a mission, advancing positive learning climates and improving instructional management practices are key components. The salient reason for such change resided in an increasing lack of support for the bureaucratic models previously adopted (Hallinger, 2003). At this point, instructional leadership took on a capacity for broader, more inclusive implications of leadership (Hallinger, 2003).

The formation of communities of practice composed of multiple individuals within a school setting emerged (Hallinger, 2005; Lambert, 2002; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). The impetus being to synergize knowledge and skill sets among individuals to enhance program practice (Marks & Printy, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). "Instructional leadership must be a shared, community undertaking. Leadership is the professional work of everyone in the school" (Lambert, 2002, p. 37). Nevertheless, while viewed as an effective means of supporting change, meaningful community development often proves difficult (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). Varying levels of

participation and conflicts related to adapting traditional roles of administrators often

negate implementation of such a model (Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001). To this end

instructional leadership no longer appeared to be an ideal practice for meeting the

changing needs of school administration (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992). Subsequently, the

more powerful theoretical framework of transformational leadership emerged as an ideal

model within school settings (Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Ross & Gray, 2006).

Transformational leadership epitomizes the foremost model of practice alongside

instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Cite). Multiple authors (Bush, 2003; Hallinger,

2003; Leithwood, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002) cited the

implementation of transformational leadership in the effective administration of schools.

In the following section, the researcher will provide a description and analysis of the role

transformational leadership has in educational settings.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership can be described as a process of enhancing the

personal growth of followers through motivation for a more centralized group goal

attainment (Bass, 1999; Burns, 1978; Bush, 2003; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater &

Spangler, 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003; Ross & Gray, 2006; Yukl, 2006). Essential to this

model is the role of the leader in moving followers toward a higher level of achievement

(Leithwood, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002; Stone, Russell &

Patterson, 2003). Marked by a strong emphasis on the culture of an environment,

transformational leadership entails sustained focus on the ideals and values of individuals

(Bass, Waldman, Avolio & Bebb, 1987; Duke, 1998; Yukl, 2006). "Leaders who build

such cultures and articulate them to followers typically exhibit a sense of vision and

purpose. They align others around the vision and empower others to take greater responsibility for achieving the vision" (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 113). Thus, transformational leadership has been shown to provide the incentive needed for individuals to enact change as the „value added" component assists in improving practice and creating an environment which fosters autonomy (Bass, 1999; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992).

To be considered effective leaders must possess a prescribed set of four distinct traits, which include: idealized influence, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass, 1999; Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2003; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004). Several authors (Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003; Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004; Dvir, Eden, Avolio & Shamir, 2002) described such traits as follows: idealized influence refers to a leaders charismatic ability to instill respect and admiration in followers; individual consideration denotes a particular attention paid to each member within the organization, addressing achievement needs; intellectual stimulation provides the foreground for encouraging creativity among staff members by providing opportunities to question assumptions and evaluate problems; and lastly, inspirational motivation adds meaning and value to the work being done within an organization. While indicative of a comprehensive approach to effective leadership practice, several limitations have been found within research to undermine the success of such an approach (Pawar & Eastman, 1997).

Transformational leadership requires the leader to have an innate knowledge of the underlying beliefs, assumptions and values held by staff and how such beliefs connect

with the culture of the organization (Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993). Lack of attention to these characteristics could prove problematic especially if leaders try to craft their own vision by manipulating the vision of subordinates (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2003).

Another possible limitation of transformational leadership concerns the assimilation of new staff members. In order to maintain consistent practice new members must be motivated toward the organizational vision, and have values, which adhere to the already established environment (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Seamless agreement can happen, however, new staff members often challenge established assumptions in the process of understanding the environment (Bass & Avolio, 1993)

Additionally, transformational leadership has also been found to be limiting as the linchpin for success remains the charismatic effectiveness of the established leader in encouraging practice (Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison, & Sood, 2006). Thus, the role of staff is directly related to the leadership skills of the administrator (Hallinger, 2005; Reitzug, West & Angel, 2008). Such displacement of staff in leadership roles can be associated with an innate assumption of leadership as only a function of those in established administrative roles (Hallinger, 2003, 2004, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1998; Quinn, 2002). Whitebook (1997) contended, this marginalized viewpoint of teachers negates the reality of the capabilities possessed by such individuals, "…who rarely occupy positions of power and visibility in which they could act as spokespeople for decisions and policies (p. 78).

It must be noted, however, shared transformational leadership, a differing approach to transformational thought has been recently presented by Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood (2006). This leadership perspective enlists an ideology of

traditional transformational leadership contingents but goes further by embracing a vision of distributed leadership practice among individuals outside of traditional administrative roles. Some researchers believed this concept to be no more than a new definition for traditional distributive leadership practice in which change still emanates from the established leader (Hallinger, 2004; Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood, 2006). Nevertheless, distributive leadership presents an interesting approach to leadership in educational settings. The tenet of such an approach focuses on engaging and organizing qualified staff members into working groups to build a framework for change around certain key concepts (Harris, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2001). The impetus being a shared practice of leadership where change is implemented based on a consensus model (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Mayrowetz, 2008). "A distributed perspective presses individuals to consider organizational structure as more than a vessel for leadership activity and more than accessories that leaders use to execute a particular task using some predetermined strategy or practice" (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001, p. 26). The following account will highlight the varying components of distributive leadership and address the legitimacy of implementation within a school environment.

<div align="center">Distributive Leadership</div>

The traditional idea of leadership as a vertical process encouraging a decoupling of leader and follower connectivity has been supplanted by an increase in research focused on the role of leadership as a shared or distributive practice (Bolden, 2007; Harris, 2003; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry & van Meurs, 2009; Whitby, n.d.). Within educational settings "…the heroic view of leadership has only on occasion been found to be the factor that has led to organizational

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improvement, while distributed forms of leadership have been found to benefit

improvement efforts in a range of studies in the schools sector" (Muijs, Harris, Lumby,

Morrison & Sood, 2006, p. 90).

Distributive leadership is based on a theme of shared practice where a communal,

democratic process of decision making between members of an organization is adopted

(Gronn, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004; Woods,

Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry & van Meurs, 2009).

Subsequently, Talan (2010) likened distributive leadership to a tango where the role of

the leader is well established however the follower is essential. Both participants

engagement is characterized by a changing of roles and a willingness to adopt another

perspective. The role of leader and follower is entirely dependent on the situation.

"Leaders relationships with their ‚followers" have thus assumed greater importance than

the more technical aspects of administration, management and decision making"

(Dinham, 2004, p. 340). The role of the leader and follower are interchangeable.

Leadership, therefore, is enacted within a particular setting, precipitated by leaders

requesting followers to become fully engaged with tasks as collective members of a

group (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). Essentially, "…individuals play off one

another, creating a reciprocal interdependency between their actions" (Spillane, 2005, ¶

11).

Differing terms exist in relation to the concept of distributive leadership; popular

descriptions include shared, collaborative and democratic leadership (Bolden, 2007;

Bush, 2003; Spillane, 2005; Whitby, n.d.; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004). The

terminology, whilst seemingly consistent incorporates many divergent assumptions.

Shared leadership is typically described as a component of distributive leadership but is however wholly dependent on the situation and not always applied (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Spillane, 2005). Collaborative leadership is a course of action in which a team approach is instituted among leaders creating interdependency from one leaders practice to another (Raelin, 2006; Rawlings, 2000; Spillane, 2003). Democratic leadership, which institutes a process of self-governance with participation equally disseminated, belies the reality that a distributive process allows for both democratic and autocratic processes (Spillane, 2005).

"Besides the different terms employed, different authors diverge in their conceptualizations of distributed leadership on various grounds, including the scope of the network of participating agents in the leadership process" (van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry & van Meurs, 2009, p. 766). Heslep (1997) described the process as inclusive of two or more individuals directly interacting with one another. Whitby (n.d.) and van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) furthered this distinction with the assertion that leadership exists in the form of various groups and teams to which membership is shared and interrelated. Bennett, Wise, Woods and Harvey (2003) continued these elaborations by pointing to leadership being a fluid practice between ever changing groups. However, proponents of distributive leadership believed that lasting and sustained change can only happen if all members of a given organization are instrumental in the decision process (Bolden, 2007; Drath & Palus, 1994; Spillane, 2005). Therefore, it can be determined; participation within a distributed leadership setting has implications related to a small group or team of individuals as well as an entire organization with no specific boundaries being set (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry &

van Meurs, 2009). Expanding leadership opportunities to a broader more profound level assists in providing an environment that is more inclusive and representative of diverse thought and expertise (Sullivan, 2009; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004).

Successful implementation of distributive leadership practices requires key components such as trust, interdependence and openness to be present and utilized (Whitby, n.d.; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004). The dominant component of this particular perspective resides in the actions of individuals, focusing not on what people do, but how, and subsequently why, it is done (Duignan & Bezzina, 2006; Spillane, 2005). Therefore "…it is not the actions of individuals, but the interactions among them, that are critical in leadership practice" (Spillane, 2005, p. 2). The engagement of individuals on a voluntary basis is paramount as involuntary action may lead to a lack of imbued leadership and blind followership (Heslep, 1997). Voluntary interaction also allows for the interface of diverse individuals to share expertise related to projects or goals where extensive decision making and information processing is essential (van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry & van Meurs, 2009).

Within educational settings there is no longer the belief of a single administrator providing leadership for an entire organization without subsequent participation of other staff members (Lambert, 2002; Spillane, 2005). To this end, three key elements of practice are: a communal approach, encouraging shared leadership practice; a broad leadership arena, which encompasses those who do not hold formal leadership positions; a variety of expertise, where individuals are solicited for their specific abilities (Bennett, Wise, Woods, Philip, & Harvey, 2003). For the purpose of this study distributive leadership will be described as a system of practice in which interactions are based on the

connections between leaders, followers and a specific given situation (Spillane, 2005; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004; Talan, 2010).

<div align="center">Benefits and Limitations of Distributive Leadership</div>

Distributive leadership enhances opportunities for those with and without role authority to engage in leadership functions (Talan, 2010). Such opportunities to employ acts of initiative and responsibility can benefit an individual"s professional development (Mayrowetz, 2008; Whitby, n.d.). Programs also profit as staff members who participate in leadership opportunities often have a vested interest in seeing their decisions and input come to fruition (Bloom, 2000; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Yukl, 2006). Additionally, when involving all staff in the process of making decisions, the quality of those decisions is often better than what could be developed by an individual leader (Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004; Yukl, 2006).

There are however, negative impacts associated with the distributive leadership process. Even within programs, which believe distributive leadership to be the best example for instituting change, there are varying degrees of implementation and quality of practice (Kagan, 1993). Also, a lack of clarity related to the inherent responsibilities leadership roles encompass as well as a clear distinction of the level of authority possessed by leaders has been cited as issues (Supovitz, 2000). This can prove problematic as distributive leadership is more focused on the distribution of responsibilities not on the allocation of power (Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood, 2006). Additionally, the incorporation of various individuals in the decision making process provides for a variety of assumptions, values and viewpoints that may not be in sync (Duignan & Macpherson, 1993). Regardless of the limitations that exist, distributive

leadership allows for the most leadership interaction among staff members within a school setting (Lambert, 2002).

<div align="center">Summary</div>

The objective of this chapter was to provide an overview of the literature noting main themes related to early childhood program assessments and leadership practices in educational settings. The review of the literature showed a preponderance of information noting the impact and multiple connecting factors between what and how children learn and the type of settings they are exposed to in early childhood programs (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Bowman, 1993; Burchinal, 1999; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; NAEYC, 1995, 2009; Witte & Querait, 2005). Quality early childhood programs, regardless of the theoretical frameworks imposed, provide multiple benefits to young children, which demonstrate a continued impact later in life (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Burchinal, 1999; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Witte & Querait, 2005).

Currently, multiple program assessments determine whether or not quality exists (Arnett, 1989; Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 2005; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2006; Talan & Bloom, 2004). Program assessments with a defined focus provide a framework for understanding and implementing change (Cryer, 1999). The benefits of such programmatic tools are not truly adapted within an environment if review and monitoring practices are not inclusive of all staff members and rely only on the skills of a single administrator (Bennett, 2003).

The research presented, established a framework for understanding leadership, noting the traditional focus on program administrators as the established leader responsible for programmatic change (Blackmore, 1989; Blase & Blase, 1998; Bush,

2003; Hallinger, 2003, 2004, 2005; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbeck, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Southworth, 2002). This is mainly due to the fact that program development is often the focus of those in formally established leadership roles (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). However, a shift in thinking which incorporates a more distributed practice of leadership allows for the engagement of multiple qualified staff in the leadership process (Harris, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2001). Distributive leadership therefore allows for the incorporation of diverse thought and expertise providing a broader arena for successful change processes (Sullivan, 2009; Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004).

Presented in Chapter Three will be a detailed account of the research design and methodology presented within this multi-case study; providing information related specifically to the purpose of the study, the participants, data collection methods and analysis, strategies addressing quality and study limitations. Provided in Chapter Four is a qualitative analysis of the research questions presented in the study. Successively, included in Chapter Five is the summarization of the research findings as well as implications of the study and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Based on a review of the literature, a preponderance of information reflected a limited focus on how early childhood programs implemented new quality standards after receiving assessment reviews (Bloom, 2003; Carter & Curtis, 1998; Kagan & Bowman, 1997; Neugebauer & Neugebauer, 2003). Furthermore, the majority of literature provided on the topic of early childhood leadership tended to focus on the centralized role of the director as leader and manager of all essential programmatic functions (Bredekamp, 2011). This belied the realism that substantive change within an organization is accomplished through extensive collaboration of all individuals affected through the change process (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). The intent of this research study was to build an understanding of how programs moved beyond a given assessment to the point of implementing new standards of practice. In addition, the goal of the research was to explore whether or not programs utilized a distributive process of leadership to enhance these quality measures. In doing so, the researcher used a qualitative, multi-case study approach to provide an interpretive account of how programs took assessment information and implemented change (Creswell, 2007). Addressed in this chapter are the research design and methodology, study participants, data collection and analysis methods, quality controls and study limitations.

Research Questions

In considering the research available five major questions emerged:

1. How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?

2. What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the Program Administration Scale (PAS) rating recommendations?

3. How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

4. What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

5. What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

To effectively answer the questions presented, this study relied on the insight and practice of early childhood staff professionals and administrators who had personally experienced the PAS review process at least twice while employed within the same program. The programs selected were examples of those which had engaged in both a pre and post PAS assessments process.

<div align="center">Rationale of Qualitative Design</div>

By evaluating the purpose of the research study, the researcher identified the need to use a qualitative framework for investigation. Qualitative research provides an avenue for analyzing the meaning individuals associate to social or humanistic problems (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2005; Stake 2010). The use of a qualitative framework for investigation stems from the need to explore problems or issues that arise (Yin, 1989). In such a case, it is often beneficial to ascertain the meaning that individuals associate with certain situations by providing them an opportunity to provide their unique interpretation and allow their beliefs and experiences to hold precedence over those of the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2010).

The research was a problem of practice, exploring distributive leadership within early childhood programs through the use of a multi-case study approach. This problem of practice specifically centered on what happens after programs are evaluated using the PAS. Moreover, the researcher was interested in exploring whether or not distributive leadership played a role in the way programs determined how changes related to PAS assessment results would be implemented. Creswell (2007) believed qualitative research to be the most appropriate approach for addressing a problem of practice. The researcher was able to allow for the exploration of data related to the problem to develop naturally (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Mertens). In doing so, the results were directly attributed to the research study and the complex variables associated with the given population were identified (Creswell).

Qualitative research allows for the understanding of the context in which study participants address particular issues (Creswell, 2007; Mertens). In this research it was essential to ascertain the meaning that individuals associated with certain situations, by providing them an opportunity to share their stories this allowed their beliefs and experiences to hold precedence over those of the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, as the leadership practices of early childhood programs are limited, there was an effort made through the design and methodology of this study to answer the research questions posed.

Consequently, a qualitative multi-case approach was adopted for this research study. The use of a case study allowed for the examination of the particularity and complexity of the case and what was studied using in-depth descriptions (Creswell, 2007, Gillham, 2000; Mertens, 2005, Stake, 1995; Yin, 1989). When using a case study

approach the purpose is to build a better understanding of a particular phenomenon or decision and how it is interpreted by a specific group of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Gillham; Yin). Similar to a single case study approach, multiple case studies provide a deeper illustration on the issue being studied through multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Yin).

The use of cases was an effective approach for this particular study because the focus was on understanding how individual programs interpreted PAS assessment information and adopted it within their given environment. This was accomplished by effectively noting the experiences and beliefs of individuals directly involved in the process. By elucidating elements such as place, context and culture, the researcher was able to provide a "thick description" which assisted in providing detail to the phenomena being addressed (Creswell, 2007; Mertens). Additionally, the use of multiple cases within the research study "strengthen[ed] the external validity of the results" (Mertens, p. 256). To begin, the researcher gained pre-authorization from the University of Missouri Internal Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) to complete the study as a means of providing a safeguard for study participants.

<div align="center">Participants</div>

The objective of this qualitative research process was to understand the meaning individuals associate to a particular problem (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). A purposeful sampling of participants was conducted including those who were directly engaged in the PAS process and the implementation of assessment results. The intent of purposeful sampling was to provide a detailed account of the participants in the study and the important

characteristics that they possess (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Mertens). This process

of purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to set criterion for participants who would

best suit the research of the particular phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2007;

Merriam, 1988). Participants were selected based on their length of time within a

particular program and their knowledge of the PAS assessment process. The number of

participants within the study was determined in the process and associated to the point in

which saturation or lack of new information occurred (Creswell, 2007).

     The population sampled for this study were early childhood program staff within

Kansas and Missouri area who participated in the Metropolitan Council on Early

Learning (MCEL) PAS review. This limited geographical sample was intentionally set as

a main criterion of this case study (Yin, 1989). Three early childhood education programs

were selected who had completed two PAS evaluations and had at least forty percent staff

consistency between the two years of review, as well as a director who had been in the

position through both review cycles. Programs selected included those with substantial

and non-substantial increases in scores on the overall PAS assessment between year one

and two. The purpose of providing such criteria for the study was to ensure programs had

enough time to interpret and adjust to changes related to the PAS assessments. A

familiarity to the program and assessment process allowed the researcher to identify the

information gathered was accurate and consistent, as well as representative of the

particular phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2007).

     Negotiating access to both participants and their environment was established

through the formal gatekeepers (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher prepared for

the study by contacting program owners and other established program supervisors

seeking permission to contact possible participants. A gatekeeper introductory letter and letter of consent (Appendix B) were presented for verification and signature. To establish a sense of trust and an initial introduction, participants were invited to contribute to the study and were informed that their invitation was based on past involvement in the MCEL PAS pilot (Appendix B).

Along with the initial invitation, a preliminary questionnaire (Appendix B) was provided to gather programmatic information. By alerting participants to the connection with MCEL, the researcher hoped to establish credibility with programs and a willingness to engage in the research study. To remain in accordance with the University of Missouri"s IRB requirements and to ensure the protection of all participants in the study, informed consent forms (Appendix C) were created which participants signed prior to beginning the study. All consent forms included information concerning the confidentiality of the study, voluntary participation and the participant"s right to end their connection to the study at any time, as well as the process for gathering data.

<div align="center">Data Collection</div>

A constructivist approach, based on the qualitative theoretical paradigm of reality being socially constructed, was used as the basis for data collection (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2005; Stake, 2010). The belief that "…ontological assumptions associated with constructivism which infer that reality is not absolute, but is defined through community consensus" was addressed (Mertens, p. 231). The researcher also noted the existence of multiple realities dependent on time and context which supported the data collection and research (Mertens). Focus groups, as well as interviews, were conducted to gain

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information about PAS assessments and their relationship to early childhood leadership and the distributive process.

Program directors were individually interviewed and focus groups, consisting of early childhood program staff members, were conducted. The use of interviews allowed participants to provide their individual interpretations and inimitable perspectives (Stake, 2010). Program documentation related to PAS scoring and assessment implementation was also considered. Such documentation provided supplemental information used in addition to interview and focus group data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This gathering of data from focus groups, interviews, and program documents assisted in providing a more broad based interpretation of events as opposed to a single elucidation from one source (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989).

Interview Protocol

Interviews represented an integral aspect of the qualitative research and provided extensive information for the multiple case studies used (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006; Stake, 1995). "The primary way a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the „others" who make up the organization or carry out the process" (Seidman, p. 10). Within this research, one individual interview with the key program administrator at the director level was conducted at each site.

An interview protocol form (Appendix D) was created to track pertinent information concerning the interviewee, data and field notes gathered. This tracking of information helps to ensure the information gathered is well organized and accessible allowing for easier verification of data collected (Seidman, 2006). Questions were

specifically designed for research participants that were open-ended and objective, which allowed for triangulation of data between sources (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Interview questions (Appendix E) were created based on the overall research questions provided in the study, which ultimately stemmed from a review of the literature (Merriam, 1998). In addition, focus group questions were designed to relate to the interview questions for administrators so the researcher would be able to triangulate the data provided from various sources (Creswell, 2009).

With the permission of participants, interviews were audio taped with the intent of validating information gathered (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). Interview sessions were scheduled to be no longer than one hour in length. Gillham (2000), believed, a great deal can be gathered from interviews lasting no longer than thirty minutes. However, due to the use of open ended questions, the researcher allowed more time for the interview process.

Focus Group Protocol

Focus groups are a special type of group created for the purpose of listening and gathering information (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999; Krueger & Casey, 2009). The group size established by the researcher ranged between six to eight group members (Kitzinger & Barbour; Morgan, 1998). Within this research study, focus group sessions with staff members were used to ascertain whether or not there was evidence of distributive leadership practice within the organization. These types of group sessions provided a natural permissive environment where research participants felt comfortable sharing information (Krueger & Casey). Limiting the number of participants also allowed for

higher involvement as participants "ha[d] more time to tell personal stories [and] express heartfelt opinions" (Morgan, 1998, p. 73).

Questions designed specifically for the group session were used (Appendix F). Focus group questions were cross referenced and color coding using a question key (Appendix G) to note their orientation to the research questions. As this was a qualitative case study, which was led by the research participants, the researcher ensured that the questions are open-ended enough to provide participants an opportunity to respond expansively to questions (Creswell, 2007; Krueger, 1998; Kruger & Casey, 2009). Similar to the interview process, focus group sessions were also audio taped for accuracy. "By preserving the words of the participants, the researcher [had] their original data. If something [was] not clear in a transcript, the researcher [was able to] return to the source and check for accuracy" (Seidman, 2006, p. 114). The hope of the researcher was also that additional information would emerge related to the PAS assessments and distributive leadership practices.

Program Document Protocol

Additionally, program documents related to PAS evaluations and any information that depicted program implementation of PAS recommendations were reviewed. These documents include PAS program assessment results, staff memos, parent and staff handbooks and staff protocol forms. Program documents provided a non-intrusive ready-made data source that can be accessed to provide context related to a particular program (Merriam, 1988; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 1989). Pertinent information relating to the type of document and its use were noted with the document review form (Appendix D). As the documentation was already in written form, the researcher

eliminated the need to complete additional transcription of data (Creswell, 2009). The researcher provided a framework for usable documentation by determining "whether it contain[ed] information or insights relevant to the research questions" (Merriam, 1988, p. 105). The researcher ceased collection of data from all sources when saturation occurred (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process provided the necessary framework for analyzing the data.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Data analysis for qualitative research purposes is the process of organizing and synthesizing information from direct interactions with individuals and their stories (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995). This qualitative multi-case study began with a problem which provided definition for the research, however, it was unclear the direction that the research would take or what the analysis would be. The case study was molded by the data collected and the final analysis of collected information (Merriam, 1988). This process consisted of providing a descriptive detailed account of the case and setting (Creswell, 2007).

Data collected in this study were analyzed first by organizing information into common themes and creating a coding system to label established patterns. Coding allowed for the creation of a system of categorizing information into important component groups (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Stake, 2010). A careful review of all materials provided from interviews, focus group sessions, and general program documentation were then completed. This ensured the data included in the study were accurate (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2005). To begin, the researcher reviewed and transcribed audio information provided during focus group sessions and

interviews (Creswell, 2009). By creating a detailed transcription of participant‟s verbal

accounts, the researcher began to organize data for analysis (Gillham, 2000; Seidman,

2006). This process was beneficial in understanding how research participants interpreted

the research questions associated with PAS assessments and the distributive leadership

process.

Upon completion of data transcriptions, the researcher then began to organize the

data provided into meaningful categories. "Developing categories… or themes involve[d]

looking for recurring regularities in the data" and establishing which units of information

connect[ed] with others (Merriam, 1988, p. 133). In reviewing all of the data collected,

the researcher attempted to understand how multiple participant reflections converged

and diverged (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Stake, 2010). The intent of the researcher was

to better understand the role distributive leadership played in the interpretation and

implementation of PAS assessment results.

<div align="center">Design Controls</div>

The data sources for this research study included: focus groups with staff

members, interviews with program directors, and a review of related documents. To

ensure the research and the researcher adhered to multiple quality measures both

qualitative validity and reliability checks were adopted (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009;

Yin, 1989). Validity requires the researcher to "check… the accuracy of the findings"

while reliability aims to ensure consistency throughout the research (Creswell, 2009, p.

190). These terms are interchangeable with those of "credibility and dependability"

(Mertens, 2005 p. 253).

Reliability or dependability within the study was addressed through a process of ensuring the data collected by the researcher were well recorded and transcribed (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). "As the case study approach is often characterized as interpretive research"…it is important in the reliability process to note both significant and trivial aspects that arise during interactions with participants (Mertens, 2005 p. 237). To this end the researcher attempted to specifically note pauses or overlaps in participant conversations (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). Coding of data gathered from the research followed a distinct pattern of definitions and the researcher ensured that no shifting of meaning occurred during the process (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). These codes were then used to ascertain themes that emerged within the research (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 1989).

To address the issue of validity or credibility within the study the researcher confirmed "the way the respondents actually perceive social constructs [within their organization] and the way the researcher portrays their viewpoints" were exact (Mertens, 2005, p. 254). A process of member checking commenced whereby study participants reviewed and verified information (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). Upon the completion of the focus groups participants were given the opportunity to verbally verify data collected. Written summaries were provided to interviewees to do the same (Mertens, 2005). An attempt was also made to triangulate the data from focus groups, interviews and program documents. Themes which emerged from examining the convergence of information, added to the reliability process (Creswell, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). However, it must be noted that the researcher was fully aware the qualitative multi-case study approach may not always support the idea of triangulation of data as multiple realities

will arise that may not fully interconnect within the data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). The researcher made every effort to find connections between the multiple data sets provided.

Summary

There is a need for researchers to add to the body of knowledge on early childhood leadership and assessment practices. Limited emphasis has been placed on the expansion of early childhood leadership research that relies more on group functioning than individual leader ability. Information within this study focused on providing a comprehensive account of the research design and methodology implemented. As part of the qualitative case study process, an examination of the distributive leadership practices of early childhood programs implementing PAS recommendations was conducted.

Key participants of the study included both center directors and classroom staff members in early childhood programs who were involved in the MCEL PAS review process. Possible participants were initially established through representatives of MCEL who had prior permission to disclose the names of programs they interacted with during the PAS evaluations. Programs were then contacted via phone or email and invited to participate.

The following chapter provides a qualitative elaboration and analysis of the research questions presented within the study. Subsequently, included in Chapter Five is a summation of research findings, implications and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The focus of this investigation was to add to the body of knowledge related to how early childhood program staff internalize Program Administration Scale (PAS) assessment results; and the impact that distributive leadership had on affecting program changes made related to such results. In viewing this study through the lens of distributive leadership, the researcher hoped to better understand the intricacies of decision making that are adopted within a group setting noting elements of collaboration and interdependency in leadership practice (Raelin, 2006). Conversely, shared leadership practice in school settings has been noted to increase the quality of decision making beyond that of the individual leader (Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise, 2004). However, traditionally, early childhood programs tend to rely on the established leader to make integral decisions regarding program change (Mims, Scott-Little, Lower, Cassidy & Hestenes, 2008).

As a constituent of influence in program quality standards, the process of implementing new methods of practice is essential to the field of early childhood education. Program evaluation provides a framework for change. Such change is considered most impactful when leadership and decision making is a shared process increasing the level of buy-in among staff (Bolden, 2007).

Within this chapter, a review of the study design, data collection methods, conceptual framework, research questions and analysis of data will be presented. Supplementary information pertaining to the study participants and their individual

program settings will also be addressed. As a qualitative case study, the researcher identified components related to the research, such as individuals and their setting, evaluating which would provide good (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Study Design

A qualitative research study design provided the framework for investigating the meaning individuals parallel with social related problems of which they are a part (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). As it is beneficial to glean the beliefs and values that individuals may associate to their particular experience, it is essential to provide an environment where individualistic stories and accounts hold precedence (Creswell, 2007). To this end, an examination of the experiences, perceptions and beliefs held by early childhood professionals as they relate to the role of distributive leadership in determining PAS assessment results ensued. Three early childhood programs (one corporate, one non-profit and one faith based) were selected to participate in this study through purposeful sampling. Programs varied in location (one urban and two suburban) and provided an ideal context for gathering data. This multi-case approach offered an in-depth account of the issue presented through varying perspectives (Yin, 1989).

Data Collection Methods

Prior to collecting data from participants, permission was requested from program administrators in the form of a gatekeeper letter (Appendix B) which stated the purpose of the research and the needs of the researcher. Authorization from the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) was acquired as well, providing a precaution for study participants. Data for the study were collected from interviews, focus groups and program document review. The researcher conducted onsite visits to

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gain information from participants in their natural setting. All data collected from both interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed and returned to participants to verify accuracy of content and clarity of meaning. This process of member checking through the use of written summaries ensured the viewpoints of participants were clearly articulated (Mertens, 2005).

<center>Conceptual Framework</center>

This study focused on the utilization of distributive leadership as the conceptual lens. When implemented within educational settings, distributive leadership is represented as a process of shared practice in organizational improvement (Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison & Sood, 2006). This course of action is indicative in programs which have fluid leadership (Harvey, 2003) where varying individuals and groups within a particular program are instrumental in decision making (Drath & Palus, 1994; Spillane, 2005). One key component of the distributive leadership framework is the inclusion of individuals lacking positional power, who are able to provide their expertise regardless of their job status.

Through a distributive leadership framework, the researcher assessed the relationship, values, and beliefs which early childhood practitioners associated with program implementation of PAS assessment recommendations. Distributive leadership within an instructional setting assists in the coordination of effort between recognized program managers and general staff (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). This allowed the researcher to investigate how distributed leadership allowed those without traditional leadership capacity to engage in decision making functions (Talan, 2010). The incorporation of diverse points of view within an early childhood program provides an

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opportunity to engage staff, in the PAS process. In expanding the view of leadership to encompass all staff the opportunity for lasting change and individual buy-in can be created (Bolden, 2007; Spillane, 2005).

Research Questions

The following research questions emerged after an in-depth review of the research:

1. How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?

2. What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the PAS rating recommendations?

3. How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

4. What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

5. What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

    Interviews and focus group data were collected and analyzed through a process of defining common themes which emerged during the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Data related to the study were gathered from interviews, focus groups, and program documents. Three individual programs participated in the study. The researcher conducted one interview with the program director and one focus group consisting of three to eight participants per site. Participants were first informed about the study through an invitational letter explaining the intended research topic. Following the invitational letter, the researcher conferred an informed consent to programs interested in

participating, which provided a detailed account of participant rights. All interviews were audio taped and all focus group sessions were both audio and videotaped to ensure accuracy. Upon completion of both the interview and focus group sessions, the researcher transcribed all data and provided a written account for participants to review for accuracy purposes. Subsequently, a review of all transcriptions and an assessment of narrative themes were conducted.

Data collected from the study were coded both for setting and for context (Appendix H). The following codes were established for the program setting and participants: director participant 1 (D1), director participant 2 (D2), director participant 3 (D3), focus group 1 participant 1 (FG1/1), focus group 1 participant 2 (FG1/2), focus group 1 participant 3 (FG1/3), focus group two participant 1 (FG2/1), focus group 2 participant 2 (FG2/2), focus group 2 participant 3 (FG 2/3), focus group 2 participant 4 (FG2/4), focus group 3 participant 1 (FG 3/1), focus group 3 participant 2 (FG3/2), focus group 3 participant 4 (FG3/4). Codes related to research context included: Program Administration Scale leadership (PASLEAD), distributed leadership (DISLEAD), Values (VAL), Perceptions (PER), Barriers (BAR), documents (DOC).

<div align="center">Settings</div>

Program 1: The Learning Center (pseudonym). The first program selected for this qualitative case study was a corporate early childhood center located in the urban district of a Midwestern city. The program had been in operation for 18 years and served approximately 62 children ages six months to six years. Fifty percent of the staff within the program had been employed for two years or more at this facility. The center

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maintained a national accreditation and participated in several early childhood development projects offered throughout the city.

Program 2: Children's Play Place (pseudonym). The second program selected in the qualitative case study was a suburban based nonprofit early childhood center in a mid-sized Midwestern city. Program inception began five years prior and the center had the capability of providing childcare services to 93 children ages six weeks to six years. Fifty percent of the staff had been employed with the program for more than two years. The center maintained a national accreditation as well as participation in several state and locally funded early childhood development projects.

Program 3: Respect Academy (pseudonym). The third program selected for this qualitative case study was a faith-based early childhood center in a small Midwestern town. The program had been in operation for nine years and served 175 children ages six weeks to five years. Forty percent of the program staff had been employed with the center for more than two years. The center maintained a private religious school accreditation and participated in several state and local early childhood development projects.

Participants

To explore the perceptions and beliefs associated with the research topic, three programs, with a total of thirteen participants, were included within the study through a process of purposeful sampling. All participants were female with numerous years of experience in the field of early education. The program directors originated from each of the three contributing sites. Participants represented a diverse mix of individuals and experiences providing a varied viewpoint.

The first director participant, Vanessa Peters (pseudonym), was a veteran director who had been employed with The Learning Center for eleven years. Vanessa held an associate degree and showed a familiarity with both the PAS as well as the term and context associated with distributive leadership. Three of Vanessa's staff members were involved in the staff focus group session. The second director participant, Alicia Adams (pseudonym), had been employed with Children's Play Place for five years. Alicia held a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. While familiar with the PAS tool, Alicia did note that the term *distributive leadership* was not one she recognized. Four of the staff members of Children's Play Place participated in the focus group session. The third and final director participant, Sandra Carter, had been recently employed with Respect Academy; however, she had previous work experience in a number of differing child care settings. Sandra held a Master's degree and was familiar with both the PAS tool and the term distributive leadership. Four staff members from the center provided their input for the study through the staff focus group session. Individuals were chosen who had been with the center through both of the PAS review cycles.

Themes

Using the established coding system the researcher was able to garner the following themes: 1) the Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool with the identified subthemes consisting of: a) Staff Familiarity b) Coaching c) Involvement and 2) Shared Leadership as Task Oriented with the subthemes of: a) Task Delegation b) Buy-in and c) Decision Making. These themes provided a basis for understanding decision making in the early childhood setting related to PAS assessment results. *The*

Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool

Staff Familiarity. Centered upon the theme: the Emphasis of PAS as an

Administrative Centered Tool, the researcher was able to identify multiple connecting

elements based on staff beliefs. The overarching component which emerged was the level

of knowledge and familiarity the majority of program staff members had with the PAS

process. This spanned from individuals who had no understanding of the tool at all and

were not able to recognize any of the identifiable components to those who knew of its

existence and could provide a limited relational definition to their classroom based

quality-rating tools. One focus group member with The Learning Center noted, "Not

really familiar with exactly what it is. I know it"s something like we have QRS. I think

it"s more of administrative for the director and what they have to do as far as overall over

the center". Similarly, both Directors Vanessa and Sandra expressed similar beliefs about

staff and how they viewed the PAS. Both directors agreed staff had minimal to no

understanding of the PAS tool. As such, Vanessa spoke of the PAS as being a tool

fundamentally geared towards directors with little focus on staff leadership. Sandra

supported this but included the role of staff as a secondary element. By viewing the tool

as traditionally administrative in nature, staff members are removed from the decision

making process, as Sandra noted:

> It definitely is about what I do in my management team. It was definitely focused
> on that but I think it was, now that I"m really thinking through this. I think one big
> part of that PAS scale that was important and very valuable was the fact that
> helping my teachers understand the responsibilities of an administrative office and
> all the obligations, all the things that we do need to accomplish, that not only
> make us a better business but we also create a better place of work that benefits
> them from just how we operate to benefits, you name it, but the work primarily
> was right here in this office between the management team.

Alicia admitted to originally following the same thought process as the other

directors; however, upon contemplation she reflected on the importance of alerting staff

members to the PAS assessment process as a way of garnering information that may be

of assistance to her position as a program director by stating:

> I think it will have a huge impact because I"m going to get their feedback where I
> might think that things are all great, they might say to me, no it"s not, which will
> make me start to think about my role…am I providing them with the support that
> they need and probably them seeing where we"re going as far as the PAS they
> may say why didn"t we do this instead of that? So I can actually glean some
> information from them as opposed to just disseminating information.

Staff members within the differing programs, also supported the idea of more

sustained understanding of the PAS tool and processes. Many noted an increase in

understanding would provide a more empathetic viewpoint of administrative practice.

One focus group member from The Learning Tree expressed:

> I think, understanding a little bit more from what it is, what the assessment really
> is I think it would help that we have a better understanding, like we have our
> systems that we go through that we are all familiar with but we are not really
> familiar with exactly what it is that the administration has to go through. I mean if
> we all can understand it completely of what it is and how it helps all the way
> around I think it would help the center too.

Another focus group member noted the need for understanding and involvement

in the PAS as a necessary component of generating a synergistic approach to creating an

environment that most benefits children and families.

> Well it"s important for us to be involved in everything because we"re all here for
> the same reason, which is the children so any ideas that we have. I mean
> everybody sees everything differently so the way one person sees it might be a
> little bit different from another person so if we all share our ideas together and
> work together as a team then it would help the program and the Scale.

The abovementioned examples provided a framework for three distinct

components to emerge: lack of staff understanding of the PAS tool, the belief of staff that

they should play an integral role in the PAS process and the directors" views of the PAS tool as intended for those in direct administrative positions. As an element of the second subtheme, the administrative process was further reviewed.

Coaching. The second subtheme presented within: the Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool is that of coaching and mentoring. The role of the early childhood coaching mentor was presented as a significant aspect of all three director"s decision making processes related to the PAS. Therefore, coaching and mentoring from an external source are represented within the theme of the Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool. All three program directors noted that their initial reaction upon receiving their PAS recommendations was to meet with their identified program coach and brainstorm further action. The program coaches are assigned to each site participating in the PAS review. As an external consultant, the PAS coach assists the program director in establishing a plan of action to incorporate PAS recommendations within their program. Sandra spoke of the course of action as one in which both she and her assistant director engaged. Vanessa provided an elaboration of the process by stating the exact steps taken between the coach and herself:

> The process that we go through after the scoring is returned to the center is that I will, my coach and I will sit down and go over the scores. After we go over the scores we will discuss and see where we was high in, where we need improvement and where we was low in and then after that we will sit down and set goals for myself and the center.

When discussing the relationship between the coaching mentor and the center, none of the directors registered staff as playing a role in this initial review of PAS data. From this, one could contend, staff members play no legitimate role in the initial review

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and planning stage of PAS assessment recommendations. Further analysis of this concept are addressed in detail within Chapter Five.

Involvement. As it has already been noted within the previous subthemes, staff had little knowledge of the PAS tool itself. In addition, the discussion of staff involvement in the decision making process related to PAS was also limited. When reviewing the level of involvement directors assign to program staff; there was a disconnect noted by both the directors and the staff members as to the level of input garnered from staff in relation to the PAS recommendations. Alicia articulated this point when asked to provide further description as to whether she believed there was a direct connection to the PAS and staff participation when noting:

> Not directly, probably more indirectly if there is something that happens and they say, well you know this didn't work out so well, they would come back to me and say, Hey Alicia can we look at this? and then I would take it back to my supervisor and if it's something that I can change within our program itself that's specific to our program then I try to change it as well as much as I can letting my supervisor know that we have gone through some changes.
> .

Staff within the focus group at Respect Academy supported Alicia's viewpoint and presented an interesting addition to providing indirect feedback by noting input from staff members was an acceptable and encouraged practice. However, such input was not clearly associated with PAS recommendations. One staff member offered an elucidation of this point by stating:

> I would say as far as your assessment the PAS, I would say we didn't have any idea it was even there so we haven't been asked for any input on any changes. I can't say that I don't feel that I can speak up if I see something though.

While most of the research participants would agree with the aforementioned statement, Vanessa provided somewhat of a contrast by asserting that her staff members were given a broad generalization of the PAS process and the resulting recommendations:

Well before, when I was preparing for it I spoke with the staff to let them know what I was doing and what areas it was targeting and the staff was aware of that and when the scores came in I shared with them, you know, the highs, the lows and I share with the staff.

A theme of limited interaction in the PAS process and the resulting recommendations was apparent among the study participants. It can be noted when asked to elaborate on this concept both the directors and the staff members reflected an intention to include staff members in the process would most likely be considered in the future. In retrospect, Alicia noted her experiences at the time as more focused on internalizing the tool for her understanding:

When I did the PAS I did not probably involve staff as much as I could have, or should have, because I think at that time I was still trying to wrap my head around it as well. If I had to do it again I would probably bring a group in, a certain group mainly because I know where they are as far as being able to accept delegation work and that type of thing and I probably would have said, ok let"s take a look at what the budget looks like together this is why I say no we can"t do this or no we can"t do that. So I think I would have pulled them in so they would have more of a grasp of what my job actually is as opposed to saying, oh yeah, yeah she"s in the office and she"s just doing paperwork, that type of thing. I think they would be very positive in knowing it"s not just something I have to do but they had a part in it. Again it just builds that community, it builds that community, it builds that trust between them and me that I"m open enough to let them in to that part of my life. There are so many days that I would like to let them into more parts of my life but I can"t so I think it would benefit them and it would benefit me.

While not a behavior which was acted upon, both the staff members of The Learning Tree and Children"s Play Place supported the perspective Alicia presented on future staff involvement. As an element of practice, staff had a belief that if their input did not interfere with other assessments in which they were engaged, their suggestions would be solicited for input in decision making as one noted:

I think Alicia would have let us have more input but like she said we were doing our own for each of our rooms so we were so into that it was hard to add. So if we weren"t having to do that I think she would have easily, divided it up to everyone to have a section to help her with it or something.

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All of the director participants believed the use of the PAS had a positive impact on their individual programs. As a beneficial component of program practice, the directors were able to reflect on the benefit of staff input on their future practice. However, the extent of such staff input was not clearly expressed as none of the directors had a formalized plan in place. Ultimately, there was support for both the tool and future changes to increase staff involvement. Alicia espoused:

> It"s not just a piece of information you do and put on the shelf it"s something you do go back to so I think I might have dug a little deeper when I was looking for documentation and when I was going through things I probably would have said, I probably would have asked more questions to staff. I might have even just given them a questionnaire and said, hey just go through these things and rate these things, do you see this happening and that type of thing.

It is important to note the intent of the program directors to involve staff members more significantly in the PAS assessment recommendation in future. As the discussion surrounding involvement in the PAS ensued, participants drew comparisons from their current practices which demonstrated each of the three programs currently supported and participated in acts of shared leadership.

Shared Leadership as Task Oriented

Encompassed within the theme of Shared Leadership as Task Oriented, are the elements of task delegation, buy-in and decision making. As representative subthemes within the study findings, these components provided further distinction of participant beliefs and actions.

Task Delegation. All participants shared varying understandings of the idea of distributed leadership. Embedded within the definitions provided, was a consistent component of task delegation; from this, two distinct facets presented themselves. One of

the directors sharing aspects of their job and another of leadership being a classroom

based practice. All of the directors considered themselves to be leaders who shared their

leadership roles with staff members through a process of delegation as a means of

expanding staff experience. Alicia presented an example of leadership and the tasks that

she provided as a way of engaging staff, however, none of which had a direct relation to

the PAS assessment:

> I think shared leadership would be and probably distributed would be me
> delegating some of the responsibilities off to my teachers of what we have to do
> and we've started to do some of that for example, going through the teacher's
> files. There is one teacher who makes sure that all the teacher's files are up to
> date, makes sure that all their immunizations records are in there, their CPR and
> First Aid is up to date. I have another teacher who goes through all the children's
> files to make sure their immunizations are up to date. So we've gone through that
> process of sharing some leadership so that's what taking some of the things off of
> my plate and giving it to them builds ownership in a program.

When asked for illustrations regarding shared leadership within their program,

staff of Children's Play Place provided examples of similar tasks as those presented by

their director. Such activities tended to be related to program maintenance as one stated:

> She also does just on a day to day basis like somebody is just in charge of making
> sure lesson plans are done and printed out for the families or somebody would be
> in charge of the medical records making sure that they're up to date or somebody
> making sure that the schedule is ok and break schedules. Just different, I mean
> they may not be big jobs but everybody has a little bit of something to do.

Participants in The Learning Center focus group were also quick to note the

availability of opportunities related to sharing leadership tasks with their director. Their

definitions of shared leadership, as well as the associated tasks, mirrored those of the

participants of Children's Play Place. Both groups viewed leadership as a way of

engaging in program activities through which they could share their ideas and expertise.

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An interesting focus of the groups were activities related to staff meetings, program

events, and health and safety regulations. As one staff member responded:

> I think they're also really good at picking out the people that have certain skills
> and talents, you know, because we all have different talents and skills in different
> things and different interests. So they're real good at picking out those who have
> interests in one thing and then others, personally I don't like to cook so if they tell
> me there is something doing with the kitchen and cooking for that special event or
> something I would not, I would rather be on the decorating team so they're real
> good at knowing what our strengths are and putting the people in those spots.

Vanessa reiterated views of the staff participants regarding delegation when she

stated, "…for instance as shared leadership I may instead of me being over one of our

staff meeting I may delegate or ask one of the staff you bring a topic to the staff meeting,

you present it and that's how we do, that's how I do it I share, I'm just not, I share what I

have".

Sandra provided an added dimension to the discussion related to delegation of

duties to staff by stating:

> I'm not afraid to delegate responsibilities but more importantly sharing the goals
> and objectives, the direction that we want to go in the school, making sure they're
> fully aware of that and then finding out how they can get involved in that process.
> To me that's how I share that leadership with them.

This provided an interesting contrast to viewing leadership as simply a transferring of

tasks. However, Sandra represented the only participant to express such a viewpoint.

In addition to discussions around the topic of leadership, the majority of

participants within the focus group sessions also acknowledged they believed themselves

to be leaders. The key constituent provided for this definition was one centered on

leading from within the classroom. Focus group participants highlighted the support they

received from their administrators to engage their leadership skills, providing a direct

impact on the classroom environment. This was often seen as an integral element of

supporting a strong team atmosphere within the center. As one focus group participant

alluded, "Leadership is everywhere, not just administration but in the center all around

everybody should be a leader. If everybody is being a leader then it makes the team

stronger." Vanessa depicted leadership as a means of supporting children and families

within the classroom. She posited:

> The staff they see families more often than I do, they form a bond with the
> families they, they talk and they know what the parents would like, they know
> what, not saying that I do not but you know the staff they work with their children
> closely and they hear.

Sandra provided additional support for classroom-based leadership by noting, "It's

empowering. I put it in my teachers' lap to be the leader of their classroom. They're

responsible for everything within that, the operations of the classroom, even from

managing their own people, licensing issues you name it."

Staff members in the Children's Play Place presented a distinction between

classroom leadership and administrative leadership functions, which was also supported

by the other focus group session participants. As one focus group participant stated when

referring to her director, "what she does, a lot of administration, we wouldn't have

anything to do with but as far as the classroom, I think it helps to have a say, a little bit of

what's going on in the classroom." Subsequently, when discussing elements of the PAS,

Vanessa reflected the tool would benefit from "a section in there maybe, that [would

allow] the staff can assess their leadership in the classroom." As noted, this statement

also supported the idea of a distinction between classroom and administrative leadership

practice.

Regardless of the extent of distributed leadership being implemented, directors within the three programs highlighted some difficulty in letting go of job duties and allowing staff members to take over. As illustrated by Alicia:

> My challenge is to let go. Sometimes I have difficulty in letting go and I have learned to let go because I can″t do everything. I would be here twelve hours a day or more every day. It also shows, when they take that responsibility they feel like there is ownership so they are able to say this is not just the program the belongs to Children″s Play Place but it″s our program so it goes from them to us and we and our.

Despite a difficulty in letting go of aspects related to decision making and responsibilities, the center directors all viewed the distributed leadership process as worthwhile for both reducing workload and engaging staff. Directors frequently saw an increase in staff participation when the premise of shared leadership was established. Vanessa recalled, "I see now that since I have opened up delegating, I see they [the staff] are very eager to develop." Sandra expounded on this by stating:

> It makes my job easier with all the little things. I don″t have to do everything, I can delegate because I have trustworthy leaders right here within the facility that can pick up and help carry the workload associated with running a school. I don″t have to work near as hard. I don″t, I″m a very hard worker by nature but like I said because my team has been treated like managers I treat them very professionally.

A common element of task delegation was willingness of the program staff members to engage in such tasks. While each program provided opportunities for staff input, the role of buy-in was also presented as a theme within the research to which further analysis is needed.

Buy-in. The participants within the study often spoke of the need to understand the varying leadership and administrative tasks embedded within their given centers. Ironically, decision making at the organizational level was often referred to as a task needing group input. This viewpoint transcended the discussion of staff involvement in

PAS to encompass all elements of program pronouncements. To do so staff participants believed support needed to be garnered from staff concerning the necessity of their involvement proceeding decision making. As Sandra verbalized, staff should impact the decisions made by the director both prior and subsequent to implementation:

> It"s one thing to make decisions whether it be from an administrative office or corporate office. I"ve been in both environments, corporate USA childcare to privately owned to faith-based and you have to be very careful about making decisions that impact the field, you have to get their buy-in, you have to get their feedback and I think that"s critical. So when you get their feedback you can actually do a better job making decisions that will not be a negative impact on the organization as a whole.

Alicia spoke further on this line of reasoning including the benefit to staff when their input was pursued as a means of improving the center environment:

> They take a little more pride in their jobs, it means more to them so they think twice before they say, ok I don"t want to do this job anymore. They really say, you know what I"m vested, I"m invested in this, it"s not that I"m vested because I"m getting retirement funds but I"m invested in this program so I want to see it thrive so they work a lot harder to make it work.

Conversely, most staff members within the focus group identified the importance of buy-in as a means of assisting the program in improving their practice. Multiple staff members asserted leadership, was in fact, a process of everyone coming together to generate ideas which would be beneficial to the population of children and families that were served. As one member of The Learning Center focus group purported:

> I like giving my input, because you know what I feel and what I know, like I said before it"s important so I like giving my input because everybody has ideas and ways of doing things but if we"re not able to give our ideas then it"s kinda like, I think everyone should be able to give their ideas because we"re all good at different things.

In conjunction with this statement, one focus group member at Respect Academy afforded an elaboration on the inevitability of how many staff members view the impact

of their buy-in. Such a practice of informed consent between administrators and staff

members, allowed staff to reflect on the more personal influence such buy-in had on their

job duties. This reflection had the ability to provide an outline of the domino effect

created by their input as suggested by the staff member:

> If we know what"s going to happen before it happens and we"re on board then we feel some ownership of it and so then we have the motivation to ok I know what"s going on, I know why we"re doing this, I know what I want out of it, I know what they need out of it.

Finally, there was a sense of need projected by the focus group members of

Respect Academy around the desire to have more personal interaction with their director

to gather their support and perspective. Staff members shared an interest in sitting down

with the director to discuss essential aspects of both administrative and classroom

necessities and how they impacted one another. Many of the study participants noted an

element of team membership and inclusion was provided when the directors sought staff

support as opposed to making singular administrative decisions. Vanessa imparted

credence to this approach when she included her perspective of staff providing supporting

roles:

> I think they like it and I think they will like it [being asked to provide support] I think they like to make decisions because it can make improvements at the center they have a voice just as well not just management.

Participants not only acknowledged the need for staff buy-in but also the

appropriateness of staff being viewed as important stakeholders within the program. As

one focus group participant alluded, " I think it"s important to get feedback from us as

well a lot of times things affect us as administrative decisions but it trickles down we"re

the ones affected by it as well."

Decision Making. When reviewing the actual process of decision making, all

three directors were cognizant of the need to include staff on a level which allowed their

input to be impactful within the program. None of the program participants related this

process from the standpoint of directly addressing PAS recommendations. The program

directors perceived staff decision making as a means for improving staff contribution to

the program and increasing the level of leadership performance among their employees.

When reflecting on the reactions her staff members often employ, Alicia presented the

following illustration:

> I think I try to give everybody an opportunity to see if it"s something that they can
> manage first of all. Some people ask for more and say, you know what, I need
> something else, this isn"t enough. Some people I know can do it but won"t ask for
> it and so I give it to them and they"re like, Oh my goodness do I really have to do
> this? And I"m like, yeah that"s my expectation. I think some people don"t realize
> that they have it unless you give it to them and some of them are not going to ask
> for it. So some are in the position that they want to move up, some are willing to
> work within and some just don"t know that they have it and I"ve got to give them
> something so that they know well I can do this.

When asked to provide her opinion, Sandra reflected on the entire spectrum of

responses she received from staff, noting both a positive and negative outlook. She too,

however, acknowledged the importance of involving staff in decision making. A

component of this process which she highlights is the unintended benefit of failure and

how even that is a beneficial aspect of encouraging staff participation. While not a

perspective which the other directors included, the concept of acceptable failure allows

staff a cushion of support for their varying attempts involving program decision making

as noted by Sandra:

> Some have absolutely no interest whatsoever. I had one go, I just want be a
> teacher, all I want to worry about is the kids in my classroom and what"s going
> on. I"ve had that extreme, I"ve also had the teach me what is on your plate and
> what"s expected of you so that we can support you. I"ve had both extremes and I

have some that, I hate to say, It's not that they don't care, it's just that they are so disconnected with the concept of the administrative offices of the school that it doesn't relate to them. I think you have to be careful about not singling out just one person. It just happens, you'll find somebody that just knows how to make things happen, they work hard, they do things with excellence but I think the challenge is giving somebody that perhaps hasn't met your complete trust yet, some leadership opportunity. Allowing them the opportunity even to fail and helping them learn how to get back up again and restoring that confidence in them, not just in themselves but for yourself towards that individual. It's developing leadership in people.

Staff with the Respect Academy focus group recognized this viewpoint as well; however, participants expounded on this by articulating the need for allowing staff to contribute their ideas and feedback to the process. As one group member reflected:

I think it benefits people, I mean if you're willing to do that some people don't want an extra responsibility, but if you are…in my prior experience that works out a lot better than one person, two people trying to do every job because whatever, they don't feel like we're responsible enough to handle that, I don't know.

The same sentiment was presented by the majority of staff participants within the study who considered themselves to be linked to their programs in a fundamental way. This belief assisted in laying the foundation for how they viewed the importance of the feedback they provided to their administrators; and how those decision making acts helped to solidify the bond they experienced with their individual programs. One staff member at Children's Play Place provided this description:

I think it's almost critical. We consider ourselves a family and when family decisions are made just basing it on the outside, everyone has an input and you can agree to disagree. So I feel no different about us here in that we should. I mean we can agree to disagree but if we come together then that makes the process so much easier but I think we, I mean to me that's probably like normal, should be normal.

Participation in decision making within programs tended to either to be generalized or anonymous acts. While multiple examples of practice prevailed, the use of surveys eliminating the origin of the suggestion or idea, and mass group decision making

as a component of program staff meetings were utilized. In relation to the PAS, Vanessa

described using a general center improvement survey when asking for ideas from her

staff.

> We also give the staff an opportunity it"s almost like a survey. How can we
> improve, what we can do, we share what our rating was, how can we ask staff to
> give us feedback on how can we make improvements as well. Sometimes I will
> try to make an opportunity or will make an opportunity, I want your feedback
> write it on a piece of paper, in an envelope, sealed, in a locked box and that"s how
> we have done that in the past with surveys as well, so they can feel comfortable
> sharing their ideas.

While a considerate approach to gaining feedback, it must be noted the surveys

provided did not clearly relate to specific elements of PAS recommendations, but instead

focused on the overall constituent of general program improvement. Additionally, Alicia

provided examples which included the use of staff meetings which created a platform for

discussing program expectations and completing strategic visioning sessions with staff.

Her belief being " if we"re gonna make this change then we have to make it together as

opposed to saying to me can we make this change and then there is no follow through

because I"m willing to follow through, but they have to follow through on their end as

well." Alicia also generated the most autonomy in regards to staff input by using staff

meetings, small group brainstorming sessions, and allowing staff to make the most

impactful decision on areas where they had acknowledged expertise.

Interestingly enough, the staff of The Learning Center repeatedly associated their

input in the decision making process as a function of counteracting ineffectual program

practice. One participant shared:

> I know sometimes there is policies for us, for example and maybe the way that
> their doing it isn"t working so they"ll ask for our input. I would say, you know
> that they do come and get our input about to see what we may can do differently
> or to get ideas because you know what is already in place maybe isn"t effective.

Another member of the focus group elaborated on this concept providing support

for the approach of the administrators in beginning the change process at the staff level

by enlisting their views and feelings when expressing:

> I appreciate the opportunity because there may be a reoccurring situation that needs some addressing and possibly the administration doesn"t see it like we see it on an everyday basis and so to get our input they"re gonna see it from our everyday level. So you know like the down to ground level because they"re busy doing administrative things, so I think that"s very much necessary.

Many of the focus group participants also recognized that some components of

leadership would remain functions of the recognized administrative structure. However,

staff participants believed a concerted effort needed to be made by administrators to

provide varying avenues for staff involvement. As one member of the Respect Academy

focus group purported:

> I"m not saying that everybody needs to be involved in everything, but it would be nice if we"re talking about budget to have just somebody say, you know ok, I"ll be part of that little committee so that we can, you know, have an idea of what"s going on. Or if we"re talking about building maintenance and somebody else, you know has an idea what"s going on, what it costs, just so we feel like we are part of that, I just think it would be a good idea.

All three early childhood programs demonstrated an acclimation to adapting

shared leadership practices when engaging in decision making tasks within their given

programs. However, the degree to which this was applied within the program and to the

PAS process was minuscule and varied. Conversely, in the following chapter a

summation of the research findings detail an analysis of all sources of collected data

regarding the role of distributive leadership in PAS assessment result recommendations.

Summary

 The objective of Chapter Four was to provide an account of the study design, data collection methods, conceptual underpinnings of the study, research questions, and an outline of data analysis. The researcher attempted to add context to the study by establishing an outline of both the setting and the participants. By viewing the data through a conceptual lens of Distributed Leadership, the researcher was able to elicit themes related to early childhood program practice. Presented in Chapter Five is an account of the findings and study limitations, as well as implications for practice and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study was to examine the evolution of early childhood program decision making practices as they related to the Program Administration Scale (PAS) assessments. Distributive leadership provided the conceptual framework for understanding the connections programs have between shared leadership practices and PAS assessment recommendations. Data collected within the study were triangulated between comparisons of director interviews and staff focus group sessions, as well as program documents. Member checking was also instituted for authentication purposes and used as a support for the interpretations and conclusions in this qualitative study (Mertens, 2005) study. From the data collected, two themes developed: 1) the Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool with the identified subthemes consisting of: a) Staff Familiarity b) Coaching c) Involvement and 2) Shared Leadership as Task Oriented with the subthemes of: a) Task Delegation, b) Buy-in and c) Decision Making.

A summary of the findings related to the study as well as conclusions garnered from the analysis of study data are discussed in Chapter Five. In addition, implications for practice and recommendations for future study were conferred. The qualitative outline of this study allowed the researcher to gain an "… interpretive, experience based, situational, and personalistic" (Stake, 2012, p.31) account of the values and beliefs held by participants. Through the use of a multi-case study approach, this gathering of effectual data was expanded providing more support for participant accounts.

Summary of Findings

The broader question associated with this qualitative inquiry was: What is the role of distributive leadership in the implementation of PAS assessment recommendations? And, how do programs go about determining what new practices they will incorporate based on the findings of the PAS review? Distributive leadership represented the framework upon which this study was formed. When reviewing the data associated with understanding the role of distributive leadership in relation to implementation of the PAS assessment recommendations, the following two themes emerged: The Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool and Shared Leadership as Task Oriented. Based on the conceptual framework presented within the study, the researcher sought to provide answers for the following questions:

1. How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?

2. What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the PAS rating recommendations?

3. How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

4. What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

5. What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

Through a summary of the data presented in Chapter Four, the researcher addressed the abovementioned questions.

How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?

Within the analysis of data a consistent plan of action emerged related to how program directors began the process of interpreting and addressing the recommendations provided by the PAS. Alicia described the process as follows:

> My coach comes out and we go through the results together and then we try to, the initial visit or after the, then we go through the results and if there is any things that I can change then I will go through and I"ll change so when we have the post then I can pull the score up a little bit more.

As this account is corroborated by the other director participants, it was obvious that coaching mentors play a significant role in the evaluation and decision making related to PAS recommendations. Although the interrelation of leadership and early childhood program quality and assessment were discussed in the review of literature (Bennett, Wise, Woods & Harvey, 2003; NAEYC, 2003), no account was provided as to the role or importance of coaching and mentoring. It was, however, apparent to this researcher that this aspect of the study is important as it is a reoccurring aspect within the data. Further research on the subject of coaching and mentoring in relation to PAS assessments is needed to determine the full impact of such a process.

The data presented a significant amount of evidence supporting the relationship between the program director and coaching mentor as paramount in the review of PAS recommendations. Further noted was the absence of staff members at this level of the decision making process.

What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the PAS rating recommendations?

Distributive leadership did not influence the changes programs made related to PAS recommendations. The researcher was able to confirm this assertion through accounts from both the director and staff participants who provided culminating evidence of a lack of familiarity among staff members with all aspects of the PAS tool and resulting recommendations. Program directors noted while they strived to foster an environment of shared leadership this practice was not an element of decision making for the PAS recommendations. Staff members did provide, however, that any attempts employed to enact their involvement in program changes based on PAS recommendations would be welcome. As one staff participant surmised:

> I guess it''s basically we would feel more empathetic or understanding of what administrative rules and regulations that inevitably come down and we have to abide by so we would be more understanding and feel more a part of, not just something that is imposed on us more of something that we are a part of.

As Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004) denoted, the quality of decisions made by a group of staff members is often more effective than changes enacted by a single established leader. Sandra eloquently noted the importance of this concept by drawing on her extensive and varied working experiences; however, her staff conceded that they were not involved in any of the elements related to PAS recommendations. Therefore, in relation to the PAS recommendation process directors worked primarily from an instructional leadership standpoint, creating a community of practice inclusive of the established administration (Hallinger, 2005; Supovitz & Poglinco, 2001) and the coaching mentor. Conversely, the review of literature established (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004) distributive leadership includes the role of community within its framework. This difference, however, is the expanded viewpoint that communal groups include more than the administrative staff (Gronn, 2002). Therefore, it

has been established from the data and subsequent summary of findings that directors are inclusive of other program administrators in the PAS recommendation process. Staff members do not provide direct input on changes made to program policies and procedures as a result of PAS recommendations.

How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

As noted, the researcher found that all staff participants within the study had little to no knowledge of the PAS tool and, therefore, could not provide an account of the effectiveness of distributive leadership strategies as they related to the PAS. All three program directors involved in the study, acknowledged the limited or non-existent role of staff members in any of the change processes associated with the PAS. This description incorporated the belief of program directors that the PAS was designed more as an administrative tool for established program leaders. Within Vanessa's reflection on practice, she countered:

> To me it was more weighing on management. I wish that it had a part, I wish that it could be more with the whole staff to be part of it but to me I think it's more geared towards the management part.

By viewing the PAS assessment process as a dichotomy of program administration and those not involved (staff members), there was limited interaction among the groups as a whole concerning past, present and future practice. This lack of engagement stemmed both from an understanding of the PAS as a tool for formal administrative use, as well as a lack of understanding as to how distributive leadership could benefit the assessment process by relying on the latent expertise of program staff.

What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

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Research relevant to the topic of distributive leadership stated, one of the drawbacks of the process is varying degrees of implementation regarding shared practice (Kagan, 1993). This was observed within all three program settings. Even though directors could provide broad based descriptions of distributive leadership their accompany examples of practice provided within the research study were limited in scope, focusing mostly on administrative tasks and program events and activities. As one participant at The Learning Center noted:

> Well like every time we have an event or something she always has a team whether it"s a holiday coming up or we"re getting ready for like the fall festival or something everyone has a job that they"re assigned to and they work to, you know get the ideas and everything together of what they"re gonna do with that, whatever the task is and everyone kinda just works together.

This lack of clarity can be problematic as to how much of the leadership engaged in within a program is distributed amongst individual staff members.

Also discussed within the review of literature was the challenge of involving multiple individuals with varying backgrounds and beliefs in the decision making process. Duignan and Macpherson (1993) believed such a corroboration of individuals may create an environment of viewpoints which are not in sync with one another. Alicia accounted that a large portion of shared decision making within her program was conducted during all-staff meetings. This allowed time for individuals to process information and add input. However, it was not noted to what extent each member of the staff engaged in this process. Nevertheless, by engaging staff members during meetings, Alicia modeled Spillane"s (2005) belief of the interactions among individuals being more important than their subsequent actions.

What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

As Talan (2010) stated, the use of distributive leadership allows for individuals not traditionally engaged in leadership practice to gain enhanced experience by applying their skills to leadership functions. Sandra affirmed this assertion, indicating she believed in providing such opportunities for staff members and even when said staff fails at given leadership task, they are provided with a chance to reflect on their practice. As Lambert (2002) asserted, distributive leadership allowed for the most staff interaction of all the available leadership practices. Alicia supported the process noting that staff members were able to step outside of their traditional roles and gain a better understanding of integral elements of the program. Participants also noted engaging in distributive leadership within their given programs made them more sympathetic to the job of the program administrator and increased their interest in assisting in the completion of program goals and objectives. As a participant in The Learning Center stated:

> I think if we have a better understanding too exactly what it is then we can be able to help our administrators, you know is there anything we can do to help her out, you know with the assessment or anything like that if we knew exactly what it is then we can do what we need to do in here or outside the room to help make it better.

This represents the sentiment of Leithwood and Mascall (2008) who believed individuals involved in distributive leadership practices often gained a vested interest in observing the successful culmination of their efforts.

<center>Conclusions Derived from the Themes</center>

Qualitative research is interpretive in nature thus, "…interpretive research is investigation that relies heavily on observers defining and redefining the meanings of what they see and hear" (Stake, 2010, p. XXX). In essence, qualitative research unearths the complexity associated with social interactions communicated in everyday occurrences

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and delves into the meanings individuals associate with said interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Mertens (2005) espoused, "Qualitative methods are used in research that is designed to provide an in-depth description of a specific, program, practice, or setting" (p.229). As a qualitative approach to research accounts, there are multiple realities existing within the social give and take individuals engage in (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the role of participant beliefs is integral to whichever study process and in this circumstance, best established through the use of a multi-case study.

Case studies are representative of qualitative research design, as they allow for the particularities of a given situation to be studied at length (Gillham, 2000). By engaging a multi-case study approach, the researcher is afforded the opportunity for deeper illustrations of the phenomenon being studied. By using a case study approach, a better understanding of the characteristics associated with individual early childhood programs is also attested. As such, the researcher provided the following conclusions related to study findings of the role of distributive leadership in the implementation of PAS assessment recommendations.

The Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool

The emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool represents the first principal theme ascertained from the research data. Three connecting subthemes formed a nexus which included: Staff Familiarity, Coaching, and Involvement. The first emerging conclusion from the data presented regarded the role of distributive leadership in implementing PAS assessment recommendations. Findings within the research data revealed PAS involvement occurs at the level of the director, and staff members have little familiarity and interaction with the tool.

Both director and staff participants provided corroborating accounts of the limited interaction of staff members in the PAS process. There was a consistent focus within the data revealing program directors engaged in similar recommendation review and decision making practices. The inclusion of other administrative staff members and the coaching mentor provided the basis for all program PAS appraisal. A broader account was provided within the review of literature as to suggested practice when examining programmatic assessments and deciding on implementation methods. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) upholds the belief that change related to program assessments should incorporate varying leadership techniques. The review and monitoring of such quality practices should be conducted in a participatory fashion (Bennett, 2003). As assessments are intended to improve quality, program stakeholders such as staff members should be involved (NAEYC, 2003). As such, programs create a conduit for a more extensive understanding of the procedure as well as greater possibility for staff support. The current elements related to the Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool are depicted in Figure 1.
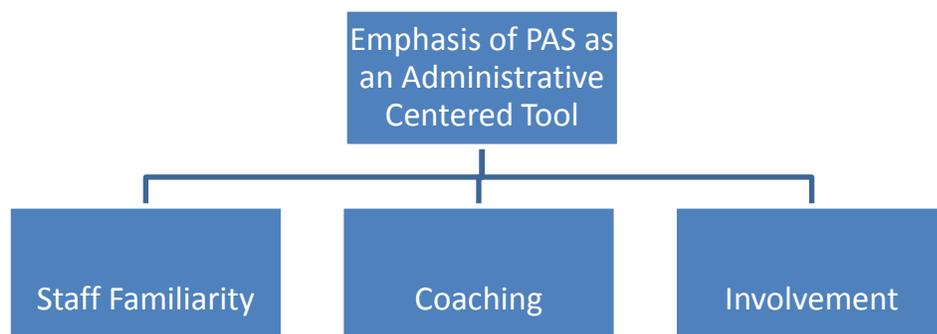

Figure 1: The Emphasis of PAS as an Administrative Centered Tool

The components depicted present a silo effect in how the PAS is viewed within early childhood education programs. From the perspective of distributive leadership practice, programs currently do not necessitate shared involvement in decision making related to PAS recommendations. However, as directors, like Alicia and Vanessa, who are familiar with the process noted, by involving staff in the PAS process in the future, they can create opportunities for staff members without traditional role authority to become involved in leadership functions within the program (Talan, 2010). Such opportunities have the ability to create a vested interest in program decisions (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) related to the PAS, as well as act as a catalyst for the professional development of individual staff members (Mayrowetz, 2008).

Shared Leadership as Task Oriented

The second principal theme identified through the coding of research data was that of Shared Leadership as Task Oriented. The identified subthemes which represent components of this premise are: Delegation, Buy-in and Decision Making. The conclusion drawn from this set of data related to the role of distributive leadership in implementing PAS assessment recommendations was the identified practice of distributive leadership within programs unrelated to the tool and recommendations. As the juxtaposition of staff understanding of the PAS and their level of input was limited. Figure 2 provides a representation of the current elements of the theme: Shared Leadership as Task Oriented noting programs" currently established processes related to distributive leadership.
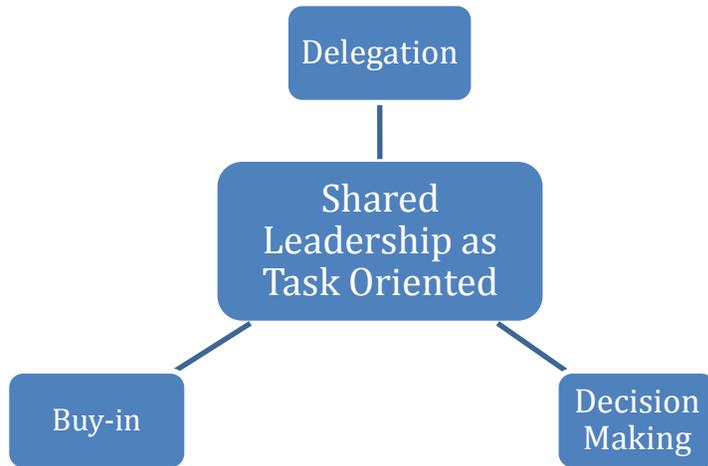
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Figure 2: Shared Leadership as Task Oriented

The shared leadership and decision making practices programs engaged in are narrow in scope and tend to be more administrative or classroom centered. While not provided with extensive options related to program leadership, staff members appreciate the ability to make impactful decisions related to the center and consider their input is crucial to program success. Drath and Palus (1994) supported, this idea asserting that distributive leadership is considered an essential element of lasting change within an organization.

Conclusions related to the level of shared leadership prospects within differing early childhood settings, are hence represented in Figure 3:
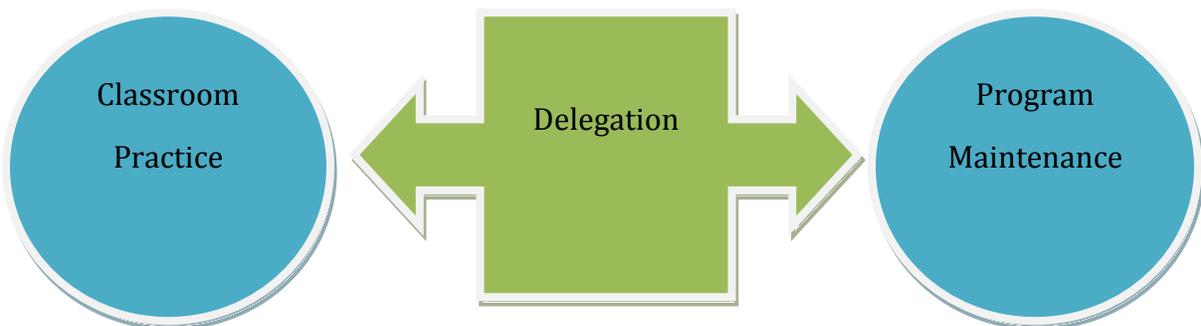

Figure 3: Shared Leadership Prospects

As denoted in Figure 3, distributed or shared leadership practices within early childhood programs tend to follow two well established tracks. Opportunities currently available to staff are based upon classroom practice or program maintenance. Program directors must recognize that staff members need leadership options which engage them on a more fundamental level. Developing additional avenues for staff to enlist in leadership at a more profound level creates an environment of both inclusion and diversified expertise (Woods, Bennett, Harvey & Wise, 2004).

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Marshall and Rossman (2006) noted, "…all proposed research projects have limitations; none is perfectly designed" (p.42). In relation to this case study research, the researcher noted the following limitations:

All participants in the study were from the same geographical area. This restricted sample size was intentionally set as the researcher wished to better understand the particularities of the participant groups selected as opposed to generalities provided by a more substantial sampling (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Yin, 1989). As this was a multi-case study, the researcher intended to focus on the phenomena of individual program interpretations (Creswell, 2007). While limited in scope, the geographic area chosen was representative of the general early childhood education population, as the majority of center based programs function with a general administrator and various teaching staff (Morrison, 2012). Thus, the small geographic area used did not impact the overall results of the study as Creswell (2007) believed "…no more than four or five cases" were needed for generalizations regarding a study.

Additionally, as part of the implementation of program review suggestions, some programs received additional support through coaching and mentoring which could have impacted implementation of new program policies related to PAS recommendations. As this was not an aspect of the current research study, there was no way to determine if coaching and mentoring directly influenced how change was adopted within a program. Further research is needed to determine if coaching and mentoring has an effect on PAS assessment implementation and leadership roles. However, the researcher had a familiarity with a number of programs participating in the MCEL PAS review, which could be sited as having an impact on the responses to study questions. However, the researcher believed, knowledge of the participants allowed for a deeper understanding of the research and provided a filter for considering the impact of mentorship on the implementation of PAS assessment results.

Subsequently, a multi-case study approach was used as the foundation for the research design (Creswell, 2007). It can be argued that case studies provide an oversimplified situational account as well as limited foundation for scientific generalization, which can lead to erroneous conclusions related to the study (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 1989). Subsequently, "…case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample", and the [researcher's] goal [wa]s to expand and generalize [emerging] theories" (Yin, p. 21).

Finally, the researcher was an early childhood professional with multiple years of experience in the field and prior familiarity with the PAS assessment method, which created a bias viewpoint. This acknowledgement of prior experiences and heightened

awareness of bias, assisted in structuring the study and subsequent interpretation

(Creswell, 2007). To further the accountability process, member checking of the data was

enacted to establish credibility in relation to the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Implications for Practice

Implications related to this research study are applicable to early childhood

practitioners within differing program settings. The study findings indicated the

importance of providing clarity regarding the purpose of the PAS tool. As many of the

participants noted (both directors and staff members), their understanding of the PAS was

as an instrument intended only for directors. By creating a broader awareness of the PAS,

which encompasses the idea of leadership and management being a center based tool as

opposed to individual practice, the concept of involving staff in the process may be

legitimized. In addition, creating a preparatory program for directors which provides

possible leadership strategies that can be used in conjunction with reviewing the PAS

assessment and subsequent recommendations could prove beneficial. Such professional

development opportunities could enhance the knowledge of program directors and

provide them with possible avenues for educating staff about the PAS tool and engaging

them more effectively in the assessment recommendation process.

Subsequent to the previous account, the study also found staff members played a

negligible role in decision making related to the changes made within their program

based on the PAS assessment recommendations. Allowing staff members to take part in

both the discussion of program modifications and the actual change process, may create a

level of buy-in which helps sustain the choices that are ultimately considered. Study

participants also supported this idea of infused sharing as a way to impact future program

change. Furthermore, this process could possibly contribute to more effective implementation of forthcoming PAS assessments recommendations.

The findings also revealed a need for programs to provide more sustained leadership opportunities for staff members. Definitions of shared leadership practice described by program participants allowed for limited interaction in the program decision making process. However, such tasks often did not provide staff members with a holistic understanding of program functionality. By creating additional avenues for leadership involvement, staff members will have more opportunities to practice skills needed in creating programmatic change.

As coaching and mentoring was mentioned throughout the study as a substantial aspect of the decision making process, more attention should be given to this practice. Additionally, expanding the coaching and mentoring relationship to include key staff members will assist in broadening the knowledge base of the center related to the PAS tool and subsequent recommendations.

Future Study Recommendations

Results associated with this study should enhance the current body of knowledge available on the subject of PAS assessments and the aspects of leadership utilized in the process of determining the programmatic changes adopted by early childhood programs. As there is limited research available in conjunction with the PAS, researchers may consider examining further the individual interpretations programs have of subsequent recommendations related to the tool. As the PAS is currently the only tool created to measure early childhood leadership and administrative practice (Talan & Bloom, 2004),

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the need to review components used to interpret PAS assessment results would add further distinction of the level of leadership engaged in by program staff members.

In addition, further analysis of distributive leadership practices employed within early childhood programs would provide an additional perspective as to the level of implementation related to such a practice. As many participants noted, individual programs provided multiple opportunities to engage in leadership tasks. By building an understanding of what is included beneath the umbrella of distributive leadership, it may be determined to what level such a practice has on overall program improvement. Further analysis may challenge the focused view of leadership as a function solely executed by the established program administrator (Neugebauer, 2003).

In relation to the general implementation of shared leadership practice within a program, additional research is also recommended on the role of shared leadership in comparison to the application of other recommendations related to early childhood assessment and evaluation tools. By delving deeper into the connections between shared leadership with the implementation of assessment results and program change, distinctions can be drawn between the similarities and differences between the various assessments practices. As there are multiple early childhood assessment tools that examine varying elements of program functionality, a comparison and contrast to the PAS may prove useful in examining the role of distributive leadership in differing assessment processes.

Lastly, future researchers may consider exploring the role of coaching and mentoring in the implementation of PAS assessment recommendations. As each of the three director participants noted, their first act upon receiving PAS recommendations was

to brainstorm with their program coach. This relationship and decision making process may play a fundamental role in the choices programs make regarding PAS recommendations.

<center>Concluding Overview</center>

This qualitative case study examined the procedure early childhood programs engage in subsequent to receiving assessment recommendations related to the PAS. A review of this process and the role distributive leadership played in determining program action were assessed. The findings presented proposed the PAS was considered by participants as a tool focused on program directors and their practice and had little integration of staff input. The directors engaged in a process of decision making related to the PAS recommendations which was inclusive of other administrative staff and program coaching mentors but not of staff. However, the research found that while programs did not engage in a process of distributed leadership when reviewing the PAS and accompanying recommendations; a sense of the importance of this permeated both the interviews and focus group sessions.

The data revealed a need for follow up research to be conducted in a single case study format using a program which incorporates distributive leadership practices and PAS recommendations. Additionally, an investigation surrounding the role coaching and mentoring play in program improvement related to the PAS assessment process would be of benefit. Moreover, an extended review of the actions implemented by program directors in high scoring programs in relation to PAS recommendations could provide an additional framework for reviewing assessment recommendations. Also, a review of the distributive leadership practices implemented by early childhood programs as they

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pertain to other assessment and evaluation recommendations may offer a broader perspective on the benefits, uses, and possible drawbacks of shared leadership practice.

In conclusion, when addressing the overarching question of whether or not distributive leadership plays an integral role in implementing PAS assessment recommendations, the researcher identified the following: Early childhood program directors and staff members believe in the use of distributive leadership to improve program quality and outcomes. However, this process has not been attached to the PAS recommendations, as both directors and their staff had a fundamental belief in the tool being purely an aspect of the administrative and management office. Program directors also noted they could improve the level of input and support by expanding the opportunities provided for staff members to be more engaged in the PAS recommendations.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

1. Institutional Review Board University of Missouri-Columbia

Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia

485 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-1150
PHONE: (573) 882-9585
FAX: (573) 884-0663

February 15, 2012

Principal Investigator: Foster-Nelson, Asia
Department: Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Your Application to project entitled *THE ROLE OF DISTRIBUTIVE LEADERSHIP INTHE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMADMINISTRATION SCALE ASSESSMENT RECCOMMENDATIONS* was reviewed and approved by the MU Campus Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	1201242
Initial Application Approval Date	February 15, 2012
IRB Expiration Date	February 15, 2013
Level of Review	Exempt
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Regulation	45 CFR 46.101b(1) 45 CFR 46.101b(2)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, serious adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All modifications must be IRB approved by submitting the Exempt Amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Annual Exempt Certification Form must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped document informing subjects of the research and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eIRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585 or umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu.

Thank you,

Charles Borduin, PhD
Campus IRB Chair

Appendix B

Introductory Forms

1. Center Gatekeeper Permission for Staff Participation Letter

2. Center Permission for Staff Participation

3. Introductory Letter to Directors

4. Preliminary Questionnaire Early Childhood Program Director

Center Gatekeeper Permission for Staff Participation Letter

Dear (insert name)

With your permission I would like invite members of your staff to participate in a doctoral research study titled: "The Role of Distributive Leadership in the Implementation of Program Administration Scale Assessment Recommendations" which will focus on the shared leadership practices of early childhood program directors and staff that have gone through the Program Administration Scale (PAS) pilot with the Mid-America Regional Council. This project provides an opportunity for individuals to participate in new research concerning the PAS. All individual and program information will be confidential and therefore your name, the name of individual members, and the name of the center will not be included in the research study.

To conduct my research I will need both the center director and staff to volunteer. I intend to conduct one administrator interview, lasting one to one and a half hours; and one staff focus group, consisting of six to eight individuals lasting one to one and a half hours. An additional follow-up interview with the program administrator may also be conducted. The interviews and focus group sessions will all be conducted at the early childhood program site. As the lead administrator, I am requesting your permission to contact the program director and staff members regarding participation in the study.

Participation in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants also have the right to decline to answer any of the questions presented during the interview and focus group processes. For your convenience and perusal, I have included a copy of the interview protocol, questions and informed consent forms.

You may contact me at any time with questions or comments regarding the proposed research study. I can be contacted by phone at (816) 797-8171 or through email at asiyafoster@gmail.com. My dissertation advisor, Dr. Barbara Martin is also available to answer questions regarding the study and she can be reached at 660-543-8823 or bmartin@ucmo.edu

If you decide to allow me to contact your staff concerning participation in this study, please complete and sign the attached permission form. Signing the attached form indicates that you understand and agree to the terms presented for allowing participation in the study. Please retain a copy of this letter and your written consent for your records.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Asia Foster-Nelson
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri-Columbia

Center Permission for Staff Participation

I, _____, grant permission for the
program director and staff to be contacted to participate in the study entitled "The Role of
Distributive Leadership in the Implementation of Program Administration Scale
Assessment Recommendations" being conducted by Asia Foster-Nelson, a doctoral
candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. I understand the following:

- I have been provided an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and
  those questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- Participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time prior to
  study completion.
- The responses that are provided by both program directors and staff members will
  be used both in this dissertation and in future research publications.
- The identity the program director and staff members as well as any program
  affiliation will be kept confidential throughout the research process.
- A one (1) to one and a half (1 ½) hour audiotaped interview with the program
  director will be conducted as well as a one (1) to one and a half (1 ½) hour audio
  and video-taped focus group with five (5) to eight (8) interested staff members. A
  one hour follow-up interview with program administrators may also be
  conducted. Interviews and focus groups will be conducted at the early childhood
  program site.
- Necessary related documents which would provide the researcher with a more
  comprehensive view of the program will be provided.

I have read the above mentioned statements

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Please return the following document to Asia Foster-Nelson,
7719 Loma Vista Drive, Kansas City MO 64138
Cell Phone: 816-797-8171; Fax: 816-282-6322
asiyafoster@gmail.com

Dear Director,

My name is Asia Foster-Nelson and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri- Columbia. I am currently in the process of preparing for my doctoral research which will focus on the shared leadership practices of early childhood program directors that have gone through the Program Administration Scale (PAS) pilot with the Mid-America Regional Council. To conduct my research I will need several directors and their staff to volunteer. I intend on conducting one administrator interview, lasting one to one and a half hours; one staff focus group, consisting of six to eight individuals lasting one to one and a half hours, and one, one hour follow-up interview with the program administrator.

This project provides an opportunity for both you and your staff to participate in new research concerning the PAS. All individual and program information will be confidential and therefore your name, the name of your staff members, and the name of the center will not be included in the research study.

I understand that your time and that of your staff is very valuable and both the interviews and focus groups will be conducted on site and at your convenience. Lunch or dinner, depending on the time of the focus group will be provided for staff.

If you are interested in participating in this research project please complete the included form and fax or email it back to me at your earliest convenience. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Asia Foster-Nelson

Preliminary Questionnaire Early Childhood Program Director

Name_____   Program Name _____

Number of children served _____   Years in operation _____

Employed at current program since: _____   Level of Education _____

Percentage of staff who have been with the program two or more years _____

_____ Familiar with Program Administration Scale prior to current position

_____ Completed two Program Administration Scale review cycles

_____ Familiar with the term "distributive" or "shared" leadership

Contact Information

Address of program_____

Preferred phone number _____

Preferred time to contact_____

Email address _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent Forms

1. Early Childhood Program Participant Informed Consent Form

2. Early Childhood Letter of Informed Consent Participant Form

Early Childhood Program Participant Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

This letter represents an invitation to participate in a research study titled "The Role of Distributive Leadership in the Implementation of Program Administration Scale Assessment Recommendations" This study will be conducted as a component of the doctoral requirements for Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri. You have been invited to participate based on your involvement in the Mid-America Regional Council"s Program Administration Scale pilot.
 The information obtained from the study may prove beneficial to early childhood program directors responsible for the implementation of program assessment results. Provided within this letter is a summary of the study as well as what your involvement would entail should you decide to participate.

Researcher: Asia Foster-Nelson. University of Missouri, Doctoral Candidate, email asiyafoster@gmail.com or call (816) 797-8171.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr. Barbara N. Martin, University of Central Missouri, Dr. Martin can be reached at 660-543-8823

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of whether or not distributive leadership plays a role in how Program Administration Scale recommendations are implemented within a program.

Procedures: After agreeing to participate in the research study, the researcher will conduct a one (1) hour interview with program director and a one (1) to one and a half (1 ½) hour focus group session with staff members using a number of open- ended questions. Participants have the option of answering any or all of the questions asked. Permission will also be requested to audio –tape the interview and audio and video-tape the focus group process to ensure accuracy when transcribing participant responses. Transcription will be a verbatim account of the entire interview. Upon completion of interview transcriptions participants will be provided a copy to review for verification and any changes requested by participants will be made immediately. The researcher will also conduct a one hour follow up interview with the program administrator. Early childhood program directors will also be asked to provide any information that supports or refutes the use of distributive leadership in the implementation of Program Administration Scale recommendations.

Participation: Participation in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants also have the right to decline to answer any of the questions presented during the focus group process. If there any questions regarding participation feel free to contact the research at any time by calling (816) 797-8171. The dissertation advisor for this study, Dr. Barbara Martin, is also available to answer questions regarding this research study, and can be reached at (660) 543-8823. Any questions regarding your participant rights in this research study can be

addressed to the program Compliance Officer within your organization and/or the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate.

Risks: This research study does not involve any known risks to the participant

Benefits: Participation in this research study will hopefully add to the body of knowledge available on shared leadership practices in the field of early childhood education. The study may also provide insight into how programs make improvements based on assessment recommendations that are inclusive of all staff members.

Confidentiality: All documents related to this research study including transcriptions, audio-tapes, field notes and program documents will be placed in a locked cabinet supervised only by the researcher. Information related to the study will remain in the locked cabinet for a period of three years after which time all related study documents will be destroyed. Tapes and transcripts of interviews will be separated from any other identifying information. Participants will be assigned a code for use by the research to note responses. All participants will have an opportunity to review the transcripts related to their particular interviews for verification and accuracy purposes. The researcher and dissertation advisor will be the only individuals allowed to view identifiable data. Results reported within the research study will not include identifying program or participant markers. The names of participants and their programs will remain confidential within the dissertation and in future related research.

Signatures: In order to participate in this study a signed statement of consent must be completed. If you have decided to participate in this study, please sign the attached consent form. Signing the attached form indicates that participants understand and agree to the terms presented for participation in the study. Please retain a copy of this letter and your written consent for your records.

Sincerely,

Asia Foster-Nelson
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri

You have been given an opportunity to have your questions answered related to this study and you have agreed to participate.

_____
Name of Participant (print)

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

The researcher has clearly outlined the research study and all related components in a clear and concise manner with the subject.

_____
Name of Principal Investigator (print)

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Early Childhood Program Participant Letter of Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

Please regard this letter as a formal invitation to participate in a research study titled "The Role of Distributive Leadership in the Implementation of Program Administration Scale Assessment Recommendations" This study will be conducted as a component of the doctoral requirements for Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri. The information obtained from the study should prove beneficial to early childhood program directors responsible for the implementation of program assessment results. Provided within this letter is a summary of the study as well as what your involvement would entail should you decide to participate.

<u>PURPOSE</u>

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of whether or not distributive leadership plays a role in how Program Administration Scale recommendations are implemented within a program. The following research questions are intended to guide this qualitative study:

1. How do key stakeholders within an early childhood education program interpret and address the results provided from program assessments?
2. What role does distributive leadership play in implementing substantive changes related to the Program Administration Scale (PAS) rating recommendations?

3. How do staff members perceive the effectiveness of distributive leadership practices when used to implement program changes related to the PAS?

4. What are perceived barriers for implementing distributive leadership practices?

5. What values do staff members attribute to the distributive leadership process?

Before making a final determination regarding participation, it is important to note that your rights will be protected:

If you decide to participate in the study and share your professional knowledge and opinion, you will need to review the included "Informed Consent Form" at your earliest convenience and return the form signed and dated. Two copies of the consent form have been provided, one is for you to keep for your records. Questions will be asked to you in an interview format which will take approximately one hour. This letter can be faxed to me at (816) 282-6322 or mailed in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. Your participation in the study would prove invaluable and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Asia Foster-Nelson
Doctoral Candidate
University of Missouri- Columbia

Early Childhood Program Participant Informed Consent Form

You, _____, have agreed to participate in the study entitled "The Role of Distributive Leadership in the Implementation of Program Administration Scale Assessment Recommendations" being conducted by Asia Foster-Nelson, a doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. You understand the following:

- You have been provided an opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and those questions have been answered to your satisfaction.
- Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to its completion.
- The responses that you provide will be used both in this dissertation and in future research publications.
- Your identity as well as your program affiliation will be kept confidential throughout the research process.
- You agree to participate in a one (1) hour audio-taped interview as the program director or a one (1) to one and a half (1 ½) hour audio and video-taped focus group as a staff member.
- You agree to provide any necessary related documents which would provide the researcher with a more comprehensive view of your program.

You have read the above-mentioned statements

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

Organization: _____

Please return the following document to Asia Foster-Nelson,
7719 Loma Vista Drive, Kansas City MO 64138
Cell Phone: 816-797-8171; Fax: 816-282-6322
asiyafoster@gmail.com

Appendix D

Forms

1. Interview Protocol Form
2. Document Review Form

Interview Protocol Form

Date of Interview_____   Participant Name_____

Start Time_____   End Time_____

Program_____

Field Notes:

Document Review Form

Type of Document _____   Date Procured_____

Document
Name_____

Document Coding # _____   Received From_____

Related Notes:

Appendix E

Director's Interview Questions

<u>Introduction</u>

Good Morning. I first want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me and answer questions. My name is Asia Foster-Nelson and I am the doctoral candidate who will be conducting the interview. This interview will be audio taped to ensure accuracy. My questions will focus on how the Program Administration Scale assessment results are interpreted and incorporated within your program and the role staff members play in this process.

The interview will take about an hour to complete. Please answer the questions as you see fit. If any of my questions are unclear please feel free to ask for clarification. If there is anything you would like to elaborate or follow up on please do so as well.

<u>Opening Question: 5 min.</u>

1. Please tell me your name and job title

<u>Introductory Question: 5-10 min.</u>

2. Can you explain the process you go through after you receive your PAS assessment results? Q1

3. Who makes the decisions on what changes will be made within the center based on PAS assessment results? How so? Q2

<u>Transition Question: 5-10 min.</u>

4. How would you describe the term shared or distributed leadership? Q3 transition question

<u>Key Questions: 10-15min.</u>

5. How do you incorporate such practices within you program? Q3

6. What are the challenges to sharing the leadership responsibilities with staff members? Q4

7. How do you think sharing the leadership decisions impacts the program? Q5 transition question

8. How would you describe the benefits of engaging staff members in making decisions related to the PAS assessment results? Q5

Key Questions: 10-15 min

9. As a director how do you create an environment where staff members are involved in making administrative changes? Q2

10. How do you believe engaging staff in decision making related to PAS assessment results impacts your job as a director? Q4

11. How do you believe staff members feel about being engaged in making decisions related to the PAS? Q5

Ending Question: 5-10 min.

12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I have not asked about?

Appendix F

Staff Focus Group Questions

Introduction

Good evening and thank you all for coming. My name is Asia Foster-Nelson and I am the doctoral candidate who will be moderating this focus group session. This focus group session will be videotaped to ensure accuracy. I am interested in learning about how the Program Administration Scale assessment results are interpreted and incorporated within your program; and the role you as staff members play in this process.

The session will take about an hour and a half to two hours to complete. Please answer the questions as you see fit. If any of my questions are unclear please feel free to ask for clarification. If there is anything you would like to elaborate or follow up on please do so as well.

Opening Question: 10-15 min.

1. Please tell me your name and how long you have been working with the center?

Introductory Question: 15-20 min.

2. Describe what you know about the PAS assessment process and assessment results? Q1

3. How are you engaged in the changes that are made within the center based on PAS assessment results? Q2

Transition Question: 10-15 min.

4. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word shared or distributed leadership? Q3 transition question

Key Questions: 25-30 min.

5. How important do you believe it is to participate in the decisions that your director makes related to PAS assessments? In what ways does the director engage you in leadership tasks? Q3

6. How do you feel about being asked to provide your input on changes made in the center? Q5

7. How does the director include your input when making changes related to PAS assessment results? Q2

Key Questions: 15-20 min.

8. In considering the PAS assessment results what significant challenges or obstacles exist when deciding on program changes? Q4

9. What do you believe is the most important aspect of participating in making program changes? Q5

Ending Question: 5-10 min.

10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I have not asked about?

Appendix G

Question Key

Q1- Questions related to research question 1 (noted in blue)

Q2- Questions related to research question 2 (noted in red)

Q3- Questions related to research question 3 (noted in purple)

Q4- Questions related to research question 4 (noted in green)

Q5- Questions related to research question 5 (noted in orange)

Appendix H

Data Codes

(D1) Director participant 1

(D2) Director participant 2

(D3) Director participant 3

(FG1/1) Focus group 1 participant 1

(FG1/2) Focus group 1 participant 2

(FG1/3) Focus group 1 participant 3

(FG2/1) Focus group two participant 1

(FG2/2) Focus group 2 participant 2

(FG 2/3) Focus group 2 participant 3

(FG2/4) Focus group 2 participant 4

(FG 3/1) Focus group 3 participant 1

(FG3/2) Focus group 3 participant 2

(FG3/4) Focus group 3 participant 4

(PASLEAD) Program Administration Scale leadership

(DISLEAD) Distributed leadership

(VAL) Values

(PER) Perceptions

(BAR) Barrier

(DOC) Documents

VITA

Asia Foster-Nelson was born August 27th, 1981, in Nassau, Bahamas. She graduated from The Islamic School of Greater Kansas City in 1998. From there she pursued an Associate's degree in Child Development. She then went on to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree in Child and Family Studied from Park University and a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration. In 2012 she completed a Doctorate of Education from The University of Missouri- Columbia.

Asia Foster-Nelson has held multiple positions within the field of education. She began her career as a preschool teacher and moved on to become an early childhood program director, resource specialist, faculty member, and state training coordinator. She currently holds the position of Chair of Education at Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas.

Her research interests include: leadership in early childhood education, shared leadership, early childhood policy development, and international early childhood practice. As her educational experiences are firmly planted in the field of early childhood, Asia has a keen interest in participating in the development and professionalism of the field.