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An Analysis of Florida Educators' Perceptions of the School Superintendency, Qualifications, Leadership Skills, Longevity, and Student Achievement: A Quantitative Study

Natalie Bruzzese

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by
Natalie Bruzzese

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Natalie Bruzzese under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Natalie Bruzzese
Name

June 30, 2022
Date

Acknowledgments

I dedicate this work, with great love and gratitude, to my wife, Michelle, and to my parents, Lillian Raimondi Bruzzese and Joseph Bruzzese

Abstract

An Analysis of Florida Educators' Perceptions of the School Superintendency, Qualifications, Leadership Skills, Longevity and Student Achievement: A Quantitative Study. Natalie Bruzzese, 2022: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: school superintendent, qualifications, leadership skills, longevity, student achievement, Florida

High turnover in the role of school superintendent signaled functional disruption, decreased morale and impaired student achievement. The principal researcher sought to explain perceptions among professional Florida K-12 public school educators about key factors related to the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement.

The principal researcher disseminated a 10-question online self-administered survey she developed for the study to a sample of 199 professional Florida K-12 public school educators. Independent demographic variables among sample participants included: gender, current job, highest level of completed education and years of experience as an educator. Dependent variables included: qualifications, leadership skills, longevity and student achievement. In this her final report, the principal researcher documented the problem, presented a literature review and research methodology, reported descriptive analysis of simple frequencies for guiding research question one and reported findings of nonparametric Kruskall -Wallis H testing for guiding research questions two through five. Current job was statistically significant in sample participant perceptions. School teachers rated a doctoral degree in education, 10+ years' experience in education and experience in the same district more highly as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates than did school and district leaders. School teachers also rated advocating for employees, trust and confidence in employees and fairness and integrity more essential than did school and district leaders, as important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity. School leaders rated longevity and student achievement more essential than did school teachers and district leaders, as factors related to the role of school superintendent. School leaders also rated classroom teachers experience more highly than did school teachers and district leaders as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Finally, school leaders rated more highly than school teachers and district leaders a four-to-10-year term of service for school superintendents for maximum impact on student achievement. Discussion, elaboration and interpretation of findings, implications of findings and recommendations for future research are included herein.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Recruiting and retaining, with longevity, qualified men and women in the role of school superintendent has been a problem in the United States (Bollinger & Grady, 2018; Goyle, 2020; Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Hackett, 2015; Kamler, 2009; Kominiak, 2016; Sampson, 2018; Wright, 2017). In professional K-12 public education, employees in key positions, in particular the school superintendent, must possess appropriate leadership skills for the hiring school board and school district. High job stress and low job satisfaction among men and women selected for the role of school superintendent has led to high frequency turnover, conflict and disruption through diminished personnel support resulting in impaired school district culture and climate and decreased student achievement (Bell, 2019; Bollinger & Grady, 2018; Bridges, Plancher & Toledo, 2019; Hart, Schramm-Possinger, & Hoyle, 2019; Henrikson, 2018; Plotts & Gutmore, 2014). School boards and school districts must proactively plan how to handle these changes (Grier, 2015; Hackett, 2015; Morris, Lummis, Lock, Ferguson, Hill, & Nykiel, 2019; Rothwell, Stavros & Sullivan, 2016).

Job stress and job satisfaction affect working men and women in the United States. Even seasoned and well-qualified job candidates chosen for employment roles suffer employment stress and dissatisfaction, causing them to leave their roles. High rates of turnover in key supervisory, management and administrative positions can negatively affect organizational morale and productivity throughout employee ranks.

Despite the development of attractive compensation and benefits packages for school superintendents in many school districts in the United States, including relocation

expenses (Glass, 2005), many men and women selected for the role of school superintendent have not enjoyed great longevity in the hiring district. (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). While some retired from the field, many chose to leave hiring districts in favor of accepting a competing job offer elsewhere. In some instances, school boards asked men and women selected for the role of school superintendent to leave.

Many individuals perceive employment decisions involving the school superintendent, including the selection and evaluation process, as inherently political in nature. School boards may find that those selected for the role of school superintendent do not possess the right combination of qualifications and leadership skills to adequately suit school district needs at a given time. In school districts where school boards appointed men and women to the role of school superintendent, school boards strived to negotiate suitable performance goals for the appointee (Eadie, 2003). In appointive school districts, boards monitored the proficiency of school superintendent appointees in achieving negotiated performance goals prior to and throughout the duration of appointees' employment contracts (Morgan, 2003). In elective school districts, board supervision was frequently lacking.

Researchers often disagreed about critical issues in the field and possessed different perceptions about relationships, if any, between school superintendent qualifications, leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement. Through the identification, evaluation and analysis of school superintendent qualifications, leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement, researchers explained contractions and growth in personnel support, organizational culture and climate and student achievement. For example, Marzano and Waters, (2006)

described a positive correlation between improved leadership skills in a particular school superintendent and increased student achievement (pp. 10-11). Candidates perceived as lacking critical qualifications and leadership skills in the hiring school district, at any given time, did not achieve longevity and thus failed to reach negotiated and long-term performance and student achievement goals. This in turn negatively impacted school districts' bottom lines, employee morale and the overall organizational well-being.

The Topic

The pressures involved in school improvement reforms in the U.S., including increased accountability for academic gains, increased visibility and increased vulnerability among men and women in the role of school superintendent led to decreased longevity and increased turnover (Kamler, 2009). Candidates perceived as lacking germane leadership skills in a given school district at a given time were held accountable for poor student achievement. Frequent turnover among short-term school superintendents adversely impacted personnel support, organizational cultures and climates and student achievement. Effective school boards and school districts promote organizational learning and development their responses to change (Rothwell, Stavros & Sullivan, 2016).

Researchers examined the concept of longevity among men and women in the role of school superintendent through both quantitative and qualitative lenses. Regardless of selected research lenses, controversy and debate persisted about the level of longevity required for a school superintendent to implement, monitor and tweak educational initiatives to maximize school improvement efforts and enrich long-term student achievement. Researchers concluded, too many school superintendents in a given school

district in too few years was functionally disruptive and adversely impacted personnel support, organizational culture and climate (including teacher morale) and student achievement (Giaquinto 2011). Conversely, too few school superintendents in too numerous years often signaled perceptions of stagnancy and complacency when student achievement failed to grow. Within both appointive and elective school districts, educational researchers demonstrated interest in studying school superintendent longevity.

Some state governance systems proscribed predetermined terms for men and women in the role of school superintendent, evidenced by school district policy and relevant state law and regulations. In some states, school districts and school boards appointed men and women to the role of school superintendent with the discretion to determine and negotiate individual contract terms with each appointee (Kamler, 2009). School boards and respective members in appointive school districts were responsible to play an active part in: a) selecting and supervising school superintendent appointees; b) negotiating performance targets for appointees; and c) assessing appointee performance (Eadie, 2003). In 2019, a majority 41 out of the total 67 school superintendents in the state were elected pursuant to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) website (https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/school-dis-data/superintendents.stml). By 2022, the majority of elected school superintendents in Florida decreased to 38 out of the total 67 (https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/school-dis-data/superintendents.stml).

In school districts where school boards appointed men and women to the role of school superintendent, school boards terminated many appointees before the completion

of mutual performance on a given appointee's employment contract. In contrast, many male and female school superintendent appointees resigned prior to the competition of mutual performance on their employment contracts. Early terminations and resignations resulted were disruptive and costly.

The Research Problem

Many men and women selected for the role of school superintendent in school districts in the United States failed to enjoy optimized levels of personnel support, positive organizational cultures and climates and failed to attain the longevity required to achieve long-term term negotiated goals, including goals for student achievement. To advance the study of this problem, the principal researcher explored and examined extant literature related to the role of school superintendent in the United States.

The principal researcher delved pointedly into literature that would form the basis for her own study instrument. She reviewed and read selected publications including, but not limited to books, journal articles and reports regarding the historical context for both education and the role of school superintendent in the United States, including education and philosophy, democracy and debate, policy and funding, school improvement reform, accountability and high-stakes testing and the evolving nature of the role in the face of change. She also closely read publications documenting professional standards for the role of School Superintendent and studies involving school superintendent qualifications, including educational backgrounds, experiences and career paths, communication with school board members, leadership style and skills, experiences with job stress and job satisfaction in the role and longevity and its impact on student achievement.

Finally, the principal researcher determined that school superintendent

qualifications, leadership skills, longevity and student achievement were the most salient research variables with which to confront the problem. She reflected upon relationships between and among variables she found in the research and combinations thereof. Her primary reflective aims were fourfold: (a) to explore the problem; (b) to understand the relevance of the role of school superintendent; (c) to determine qualifications for school superintendent candidates, leadership skills in the role, longevity and its impact of student achievement; and (d) to understand perceptions about the problem and the related variables held by professional Florida K-12 public school educators.

Background and Justification

In the United States, the role of school superintendent grew increasingly complex over time (Bjork, Kowalski, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2014). Many men and women selected for the role of school superintendent in the United States did not enjoy success and longevity in the role (Hackett, 2015). As part of an ongoing accountability movement in United States' public system of education, school boards experienced pressure to hire the best educational leaders and to closely monitor school performance regularly (Tripses, Hunt, Kim, & Watkins, 2015).

School superintendents resigned prior to implementing necessary plans and achieving common goals, suffered from job stress and had low levels of job satisfaction. Under pressures from the federal and state governments, many school boards terminated school superintendents who failed to implement improvement reform plans and failed to achieve goals. Kamler (2009) observed, many school boards' elevated expectations resulted in heightened visibility, scrutiny, and vulnerability for newly selected school superintendents. Fullan (2000) suggested, elevated expectations contributed to increased

frequency of school superintendent turnover and long-term impact.

Frequent turnovers in the role of school superintendent, whereby multiple men and women relocated or left the field completely, derailed collaborative goals aimed at school improvement, decreased personnel support, impaired organizational culture and climate and decreased student achievement (Augustine-Shaw, 2013). Grissom and Mitani (2016) explained, low-performing school districts had higher rates of school superintendent turnover than higher performing school districts. Retaining qualified and experienced men and women in the role of school superintendent with longevity remained an all-important objective for school districts and stakeholders who actively sought improvement and stability. (Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

Communication between school superintendents and school board members was a pivotal factor involved in school superintendent longevity and student achievement. Grissom and Mitani (2016) emphasized, to obtain the objective of stability and improvement through school superintendent longevity, school board members and school superintendents maintained positive relations, as part of a joint-venture for success, rather than an adversarial battle for power. In school districts where school board members served staggered elected terms, choosing relevantly qualified candidates for school superintendent was as problematic as retaining selected candidates.

Relevantly qualified school superintendents with strong and germane leadership skills were valuable assets to school districts. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) concluded, active school superintendents with more career experience in a hiring state had more influence on student achievement than active school superintendents with less career experience in a hiring state. Plotts and Gutmore also highlighted, the more career

experience a school superintendent gained in a hiring state, the more effective he or she became in managing the increased pressures of accountability in that state. Hart, Schramm-Possinger and Hoyle (2019) affirmed, school superintendents with in-state career experience were more effective in influencing student achievement than those without it. In-state career experience, specifically with curriculum and testing, related to enhanced organizational stability and professional relationships resulting in effective leadership skills applications.

Debate existed about the right amount of time required for a school superintendent to implement, monitor and tweak educational initiatives, maximize school improvement efforts and enrich student achievement. Schibler (2006) suggested, 10 years was an ideal tenure and term within which school superintendents could achieve systemic and positive organizational growth and development and increased student achievement through stability and deeper relations. Other researchers concluded five years was a sufficient tenure or term of service within which to accomplish goals (Domenech, 2015). Chirichello (2018) suggested, 20 years was an ideal term for men and women to serve with distinction.

Although the position of school superintendent was important and became well paid, the role was not entirely glamorous. Domenech (2015) compared candidates for the role of school superintendent to highly educated migrant workers. According to Domenech, the average school superintendent tenure remained consistent at about three years because candidates moved repeatedly. Research about school superintendent longevity, service and tenure expectations assisted school boards and school districts in planning and budgeting for present and predicted needs. It also helped candidates

selected for the role of school superintendent to plan and budget for their own professional and personal needs.

Deficiencies in the Evidence

School districts in the United States had varied and diverse populations and needs. Some states had many and more numerous, smaller school districts than the 67 county school districts carved out in the state of Florida. The extent, if any, to which increased intrastate school district numerosity and size may have played in school superintendent longevity and turnover was an area for further examination beyond the scope of the study.

Socio-economics played a significant role in school superintendent turnover. Grissom and Andersen (2012) found a positive relationship between student poverty and school superintendent turnover. The largest 10% of districts in their sample had significantly higher school superintendent turnover than the remaining 90% (Grissom & Anderson, 2012). They classified larger school districts as urban and found them to be associated with student poverty and low student achievement.

Low performing school districts were anathema for men and women seeking the role of School Superintendent. Grissom and Mitani (2016) suggested, school superintendents desired longevity in high-performing school districts but did not desire it in low-performing school districts. In lower-performing school districts, school superintendents had the added responsibility of school district transformation and thus were at higher risk for career burnout. Shorter tenures were most common in the lower-performing school districts.

In low-performing school districts, more intense and sustained school

superintendent-driven strategic planning was required for improved student achievement. Low-performing school districts also required stronger school board supervision and monitoring of school superintendent goals, objectives and initiatives. The principal researcher determined, in-depth examination of socio-economic and performance diversity among school districts and respective needs-assessments were subjects for future research, beyond the scope of the study.

Variables not fully considered among the extant research literature nor examined herein also included in-depth examination of variance in qualifications, leadership skills, longevity and student achievement among specific school superintendents recruited from out of state, or out of district, as compared with those recruited internally. Fusarelli, Cooper, and Carella (2003) suggested, more research was required to identify "what can be done to attract more qualified men and women into the superintendency and push them up the career ladder to service in larger and more difficult systems" (p. 308). The principal researcher considered in depth exploration of in-state and in-district career experience as it correlated with leadership skills, longevity and student achievement as valuable areas for future research beyond the scope of the study.

More research was required into the nature of national preparation, licensing, and the effectiveness of professional development programs designed to improve school superintendent performance and longevity at the local level (Plotts & Gutmore, 2014). Henrikson (2018) explained, school board evaluation of men and women in the role of school superintendent had to balance the need for institutional accountability with the need for ongoing professional growth and support for men and women in the role. The principal researcher concluded that an examination of the extent to which school boards

and their standing committees, if any, were involved in school superintendent professional development was an appropriate area for further research, beyond the scope of the study.

Audience

The audience for the study includes Florida's K-12 public school board members, school district personnel, including district and school leaders and teachers, students and parents. It also includes university and college administrators, faculty, and personnel, professional education consultants and other related educational services providers involved in supporting Florida's K-12 public school system, training Florida's K-12 professional educators and leaders and recruiting Florida's K-12 public school graduates for higher education studies and programs. Finally, community members and stakeholders are also included in the intended audience.

A major focal point of the study was student achievement, a variable statistically correlated with graduation rates, rates of homeownership, employment, crime and other variables of social and economic interests. As such, community members are further included in the audience. An Analysis of Florida Educators' Perceptions of the School Superintendency, Qualifications, Leadership Skills, Longevity and Its Impact on Student Achievement: A Quantitative Study, can empower stakeholders to make better informed decisions related to school district governance, human resource practices, professional training and development, best practices and systems of school improvement. It can also provide a valuable resource to communities involved in the cogitation of civic issues involving public-education and its' funding.

Setting of the Study

The setting of this study was Florida's K-12 public school districts. Charter schools did not fall squarely within public school district organizational charts for purposes of accountability nor for payroll purposes. Therefore, the principal researcher did not invite charter school educators to participate in the study but rather only invited professional K-12 professional educators employed by a Florida public school district to participate in the study. Charter school employees were not included in the sample.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was twofold: (a) to determine Florida educators' perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement; and (b) to determine how Florida educators' current jobs affect their perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement. The following five research questions guided the study: 1. What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement? 2. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent? 3. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates? 4. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity? 5. How does current job affect educators'

perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement?

The principal researcher determined demographic variables among a sample of professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed within Florida's 67 school districts. Independent demographic variables among sample participants included: gender, current job, highest level of completed education and years of experience as an educator. Dependent variables included: qualifications, leadership skills, longevity, and student achievement.

Definitions of Terms

Coach

This term referred to individuals who helped others develop specific skills through personalized training (Berman & Brandt, 2006).

Communication

This term referred to the rational transmission and receipt of messages involving skills in sharing and responding to emotions and negotiating shared interpretations and understandings (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

Leadership

This term referred to a process wherein individuals influenced others to accomplish a collaborative objective (Northouse, 2013). It also referred to communication that influenced opinions to achieve mutual goals (Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

Mentor

This term referred to an individual who taught and nurtured others (Munoz,

Pankake, Ramaalho, Mills, & Simonsson, 2014).

Organizational Culture and Climate

This term referred to shared and learned beliefs used to solve problems and achieve shared goals. It also referred to shared meanings attached to events, policies, practices, procedures, and behaviors (Ehrhart & Schneider, 2016).

Personnel support

This term referred to employee approval of a given school superintendent and increased performance given by the employee based on the approval (Morris, Lummis, Lock, Ferguson, Hill, & Nykiel, 2020).

Professional Associations, Accreditation Agencies, and Licensure Groups

This term referred to entities that protected public interests and legitimized a professional social standing by the provision of quality controls (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005).

Qualifications

This term referred to the combination of education, experience, leadership skills and traits a selected candidate brought to the role of school superintendent (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006).

Satisfaction

This term referred to feelings of enjoyment and gratification derived from performance in the role of school superintendent and was closely related to stress (Bell, 2019).

School Improvement Reform

This term referred to legislation and policy aimed at the development of more

effective School systems and at raising levels of student learning and achievement. (Hopkins & Levin, 2000).

School Superintendent Longevity

This term specifically referred to "the number of consecutive years worked in the same position in the same school district" and broadly referred to combined years of experience in multiple school superintendent roles, regardless of location. (Giaquinto, 2011, p. 11).

Sponsor

This term referred to an individual with the power to advance another's career (Munoz et al., 2014).

Stress

This term referred to harmful physical and emotional manifestations in school superintendents that occurred when his or her qualifications, skills and needs did not match role requirements (Bell, 2019).

Student Achievement

This term referred to student academic performance in areas such as English and language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, as measured by standardized assessments (Cunningham, 2012).

Tenure

This term referred to longevity and service in a given employment role (though in other contexts, it referred to the status of holding one's position on a permanent basis (Giaquinto, 2011, p.11).

Turnover

This term referred to one or more individuals exiting an employing organization (Chaitra & Murthy, 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The principal researcher reviewed extant educational research related to the role of school superintendent in the United States. From the literature, she unpacked the following prevailing themes: (a) historical context of education in the United States, (b) the developing role of the school superintendent in the United States, (c) professional standards for the role, (d) qualifications: educational background, experience and career path, (e) Florida school superintendent selection methods: election and appointment, (f) the school superintendent and the school board, (g) leadership style and skills in the role, (h) job stress and satisfaction in the role, and (i) school superintendent longevity and student achievement. From the prevailing themes, the principal researcher generated five guiding research questions.

Theoretical Framework

For the study's theoretical framework, the principal researcher chose: a) organizational development, b) organizational learning, and c) systems theories. Use of the three theories enhanced her understanding of the extant literature, particularly as it related to school improvement reform efforts, increased concerns for global citizenship and social responsibility and the role of school superintendent in the United States. The principal researcher determined that these broad factors impacted more narrow issues of curriculum, instruction, accountability and student achievement in the United States and in the State of Florida.

Fundamental organizational development and learning challenges in the field of education were similar to those in the business field (Senge, 1990). The means and ends

for leading schools and business organizations changed as globalization, interdependence, internet technology, workforce diversity and workforce mobility grew (Marquardt, 2011). As a result, individuals, groups and organizations established voluminous social responsibility initiatives while they maintained ongoing goals for profitmaking. Organizational decision-making involved consideration of diverse stakeholders and dynamic circumstances and conditions.

Organizational development theory was useful in planning how an organization (whether a school or a business) would handle environmental change (Rothwell, Stavros & Sullivan, 2016). Both environmental and internal change created conflict in organizations (Boleman & Deal, 2013). Developing organizations that effectively withstood change required long-term planning, executive leadership and support, and interactive learning and synergy throughout the employee ranks (Rothwell et al., 2016). Without those factors in place, successful implementation and monitoring of improvement initiatives became dubious.

Likewise, organizational learning theory was instructional for leading organizations. Organizational learning within schools, school districts and school boards was a collective process, wherein applications capacity was enhanced in pursuit of common vision (O'Neil, 1995). The sustainability of organizations was contingent upon their steady adaptation, through continuous learning, to the changing environment (Marquardt, 2011). Via continuous learning, organizations, including schools, school districts and school boards, were able to build strong and flexible knowledge bases. These dynamic and synergistic organizational knowledge bases stimulated the actions necessary to meet the challenges of changing needs.

Finally, the principal researcher found that systems theory related closely with organizational learning theory and was significant for understanding organizations. Systems theorists encouraged the recognition of interdependence and positive relationships among organizational units, members and their activities, as contributors to a streamlined process in furtherance of common missions, visions and goals (Marquardt, 2011). Appreciation for systems theory was useful in creating agile and responsive learning organizations wherein individuals cooperatively learned and applied practical knowledge in varied circumstances and situations.

Organizational learning and systems theories involved examination and analysis of feedback for improvement and included "high levels of communication, coordination, time, money, and continuous organizational reassessment and realignment" (Thorton, Shepperson, & Canavero, 2007, p. 48). Sharing common language and content was essential for successful organizational learning and performance. Organizational development, organizational learning and systems theorists incorporated data-based decision-making (Togneri & Anderson, 2003) necessitating comprehensive integration of information technology and deep learning of components.

Interpreting and evaluating organizational decision-making and performance was often a complex undertaking related to divergent perceptions among individuals and groups. Bolman and Deal (2013) emphasized, in complex systems, links from causes to effects often appeared severed, feedback appeared delayed and misleading and solutions appeared detached from problems. Obtaining a broad-based perception of success in schools and school districts demanded a broad-based commitment to continuous learning within schools and school districts (Thorton, et al., 2007).

Congruence was a goal for overarching organizational culture and organizational subcultures (Rothwell et al., 2017). Fullan (2010) suggested, districts implemented collaborative school improvement planning with a combination of moral purpose, high expectations, accountability, individual and collective capacity and resolute leadership and support to achieve high levels commitment and performance. Without concomitant support, leadership failed.

Strategic school improvement planning was impeded via disruption caused by School Superintendent turnover (Hatch & White, 2002). Problems in organizational knowledge bases and collective learning such as delays, inconsistencies and contradictions were compounded by lack of longevity in the role of school superintendent (Hatch & White, 2002). Through a learned appreciation for systems theory and thinking, educational leaders kept student achievement in mind as a perennial common goal, tied to total organizational culture and climate.

Successful school superintendents maintained high expectations throughout school districts and employed professional communication to facilitate broad commitment to common vision and goals. As Berkowicz and Myers (2014) pointed out, school superintendents set the tone and provided the energy to drive personnel activity and behavior throughout the school district. Successful school superintendents motivated individual and cooperative learning and applications to meet the demands of a changing environment and to manage internal change. Institutional subunits and cultures shared data-based feedback to build capacity and flexibility within complex school district organizations.

Successful school superintendents also held school district and school leaders accountable for implementing and monitoring plans. They themselves were accountable for promoting broad-based organizational learning, support and systems-alignment for improved student achievement. Successful school superintendents served with longevity and higher probabilities and percentages in the realization of long-term school district student achievement goals.

Historical Context of Education in the United States

In the United States, men and women long debated public education, its goals, methods and results. Individuals often associated education with wealth (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2004). They also associated education with power (Fowler, 2013). Frequently, people exercised power in groups, despite individual inadequacies in financial resources. Thus, through collaborative reform efforts, men and women struggled to make education more democratic and widely available (Apple, 1987).

Education, Philosophy, Democracy and Communication

Education was an integral part of life in the United States. Dewey (1916) suggested, Education was necessary for U.S. democracy in that it facilitated communication and social continuity. As he explained, "the communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures emotional and intellectual dispositions – like ways of responding to expectations and requirements" (Dewey, 2006, p. 7). Part art, part science, human communication, Dewey explained, had the power to inform, educate, train, assimilate, socialize, guide, and nurture present and future generations. Through formal education, U.S. citizens empowered other citizens and residents.

Researchers distinguished between formal and informal education (Kim, 2013). Although Kim (2013) suggested informal education was incidental, Dewey (1916) highlighted that it was natural and important. Dewey distinguished formal education, whether of children or adults, as more a deliberate and explicit purpose of organization. Better-developed societies, he also explained, had better-developed formal teaching, training, instructional devices, materials, institutions and individuals tasked with teaching than lesser-developed societies and social groups. Complex society demanded common language, Dewey suggested, and not merely symbolic literacy.

Although Dewey's appreciation for formal education, language and communication may have been unquestionable, many people questioned the importance of formal education in the United States, its' public schools and its' teachers (Marzano & Waters, 2006, 2009). Marzano and Waters described the 1966 research report entitled *Equality in Educational Opportunity* as an example of critical commentary of public education. In the report, Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfield and York (1966) concluded that students' background and general social context were predominant factors in the lives of students and that schools and teachers did little to exert influence on student achievement.

Debate and Democracy

Other researchers concluded differently than Coleman et al. (1966). For example, Marzano and Waters (2006, 2009) suggested, effective schools, school leaders, and teachers made substantial differences in student achievement. Debate in the United States continued about education policy, legislative goals and educational and organizational leadership towards those goals.

Debate, democracy, leadership and criticism were concepts that frequently went hand in hand. Nelson, Palonsky, and McCarthy (2004), explained, "criticism of schools is fully consistent with open democracy" (p. 9). However, some criticism, they opined, was neither justified nor useful and was actually quite detrimental to education in the United States. Communication remained an essential bridging tool in education necessary for societal continuity.

United States' societal groups, men and women, aspired to improve democracy through open channels of communication, discussion and education. Belief in the capacity for improvement led to criticism and diversity to test ideas about goals, methods and results. For many educators, sustaining school reform was a critical goal despite being fraught with multitudes of issues that would not be fully addressed by any one man or woman (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement Newsletter, 2005). However, Nelson et al. (2004), cautioned, diversity became chaotic and irrational without unity of purpose. In fact, chaotic economic and political environments, including the nation's public schools, provided fodder for unscrupulous opportunism, as evidenced by historic structural changes to school superintendent selection methods within individual states, including the State of Florida (Schuh & Herrington, 1990).

Criticism of Education and Testing in the United States

American men and women were capable of agreeing education was worthy of discussion and they were also capable of agreeing on school goals, methods and results (Hirsch, 1996). Historically, many men and women viewed schools in the United States as a primary means to assimilate diverse students through the use of English language and western influences (Nelson et al., 2004). Katz (1971) tenebrously reflected,

compulsory public education at the turn of the 20th century in the U.S. was merely a means to indoctrinate working class and immigrant students into the life of a factory worker. Dewey (1916) challenged simplistic views of education in favor of the view that in the United States, education was the birthplace of functional democracy.

During the depression-era of the 1920s, many men and women blamed the education system in the United States for societal ills, including increased crime, increased divorce and political corruption (Chambers, 1948). Criticism of education in the United States heightened through World War II and the 1950s (Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, & Koff, 2013). Nelson et al. (2004) described public fear in the 1940s and 1950s that through schools in the United States, certain individuals and groups were advancing not only progressive, but communist thought.

Men and women debated the term progressive. Garte (2017) described one version of progressive education as "emancipation of poor children" (p. 14). Lynd (1950) and Bestor (1953) both articulated a philosophical dichotomy between traditional education and progressive education and argued against the latter. Dewey (1938) described the rise of "new education and progressive schools" as "a product of discontent with traditional education" (p. 18).

Researchers distinguished progressive education from more traditional education. Dewey (1938) explained, the progressive movement took aim against traditional "imposition from above and from outside" of a limited-skills set that was at odds with opposed expression, individuality, freedom and real-world application (pp. 19-20). Dewey (1938) urged readers to incorporate the old with the new rather than reject one in favor of the other. Through criticism and debate, improvements took place (Nelson et al.,

2004). Nelson et al. (2004) pointed out, there was value in critically thinking about urgent issues in education.

In the United States, men and women criticized education and tested ideas but testing was not always accomplished peaceably. Nelson et al. (2004) suggested, a relationship existed between student violence, global military violence that erupted during World War II and violent criticism of United States' education. This relationship may have been evidenced by the United States' government's hiring of educational psychologists to introduce "the first wide-scale use of standardized intelligence tests" for use with potential soldier draftees (p. 356).

Psychologists developed Army Alpha and Army Beta tests and used them to distinguish between potential soldier draftees for the armed forces. Nelson et al. (2004) suggested human subjects who were literate in English invariably demonstrated exceptional ability during testing and were thus deemed fit to be drafted as soldiers in the United States' armed forces. According to Nelson et al. (2004), those who did not demonstrate exceptional ability in English during testing were deemed unfit to be drafted as soldiers. The unused tests were allegedly purchased by colleges and Universities in the United States where they were used to distinguish between candidates for admission and existing students.

U.S. Public Education Policy, School Improvement Reform and Federal Funding

After the violence of World War II ended, U.S. men and women continued to debate the goals, methods and results of public education. Policy and legislative changes in finance, governance, curriculum and assessment took place (Hopkins & Levin, 2000). Harvey, Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, and Koff (2013) traced three types of major

education reform efforts back to the 1960s and 1970s: 1) equity-based, 2) school-choice and 3) standards-based. In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States' federal government adopted and enacted policies and programs to increase equity for "minority children, poor children, children with disabilities, children with limited English proficiency, and women and girls" (Harvey et al., 2013, p. 5).

Equity-Based Reform. Attorneys argued in courthouses myriad civil rights issues including gender and race discrimination in the United States. While most schools in the United States were coed (open to both males and females), by 1900, many schools remained cloistered by race well into the 1950s. In 1954 and 1955, the U.S. Supreme Court announced opinions about the existence and unconstitutionality of racial discrimination in public education (Stader, 2013). In her research on educational policy in the U.S., Fowler (2013) focused heavily on racial segregation and suggested both northern and southern School Districts in the United States were guilty of "pursuing racial segregation policies" in 1950 (p. 6).

Although expanding civil rights for African-Americans was an important policy issue in the 1960s (as evidenced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964), the reduction of poverty was an equally important policy issue. Harvey et al. (2013) expressed hope that the United States' public school system would serve primarily to reduce childhood poverty. He strongly cautioned against the perpetuation of generational poverty.

In 1958, Congress passed The National Defense Education Act (NDEA), in an effort to strengthen national security, improve schools, and increase learning in science and technology. Congress passed NDEA amidst concerns of growing communism abroad, after communist Soviets launched the spacecraft Sputnik in 1957 (Kessinger,

2011). After the passage of the act, Congress provided for federal funding of vocational programs in the United States.

In 1965 Congress facilitated additional federal funding for education through The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Act was reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and in 2015 as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This legislation provided categorical aid and programs for children of low-income families and other groups of students "at-risk for educational problems" (Harvey et al., p. 5). Parents, teachers, teachers' unions and others criticized the legislation for setting unrealistic student achievement expectations, overreliance on standardized testing, for solidifying an impression that traditional public schools were in need of turnaround while diverting funding from them to charter schools.

In 1975, Congress facilitated additional federal funding of education with the enactment of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), reauthorized in 2004, as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The legislation built upon the premise that disability was a natural part of human experience that did not detract from societal participation nor contribution (Stader, 2013). Individuals previously denied benefits of public education became comprehensively incorporated into school system.

In 2009, in response to fears of continued global recession, the United States' Congress made more federal funding available and advanced specific policies through the enactment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (The Recovery Act) (Schneller, 2017). Through the Recovery Act and ESSA, Congress provided additional funding of education for children of low-income families, tied to student achievement

standards and goals. It also provided grants for early childhood and state stabilization via funding of programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start. These programs promoted school readiness among children of low-income families, from birth to age four, via health and food entitlements, housing entitlements and free early learning experiences in community-based centers (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Congress also authorized more funding for students with disabilities through the legislation.

Congress also funded the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top Fund (RTTT) which provided discretionary and competitive grants (Schneller, 2017). RTTT encouraged states to adopt common standards for student achievement and institute performance-based evaluation systems for teachers and school leaders. Parents, teachers, teachers' unions and others criticized The Recovery Act, ESSA and RTTT for creating content too complex for K-12 students, for overreliance on standardized testing, for using exam results in teachers' evaluations and compensation and for encouraging proliferation of more charter schools.

Controversy continued over federal funding of public education in the United States. Bjork, Kowalski, and Brown-Ferrigno (2014) suggested, despite bipartisan support for spending, significant differences existed between fiscal conservatives and fiscal progressives, both within and without Congress, as to how to spend funding. Although political and ideological differences existed, many agreed, federal funding for education would enhance education based on democratic commitment to children, rather than a family's economic situation (Nelson et al., 2004).

School-Choice Reform. Another major school reform, primarily concerned with race and poverty, was the school-choice movement, premised upon parental choice at

public expense (Harvey et al., 2013). It encompassed policy initiatives towards public vouchers for private school tuition, tax credits towards private school tuition, the development of charter schools, school choice and magnet schools (Harvey et al., 2013). Federal lawmakers adopted portions of the movement via funding legislation. Family choice and school improvement were critical issues behind the movement (Nelson et al., 2004).

Standards-Based Reform. Despite Dewey's (1916, 1938) caution against the intense isolation of technical knowledge combined with use of symbols in favor of practical language and experience, the standards-driven movement evolved into a lengthy set of numerically-coded targets or learning goals in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The standards-driven movement took root in verbal discourse and debate but men and women behind the movement found form in a multitude of artful yet succinct language-based written standards, in combination with sequential numerical values for discrete learning objections within identified subject matter and curriculum. The standards provided another source of discourse and more cause for debate.

Researchers authoring reform reports and national media outlets and contributors created an impression that public schools in the United States were to blame for economic decline (Bacharach,1990). Bacharach (1990) suggested this impression was an impetus for standards-based reform. As explained by Bjork et al., (2014), reports such as *A Nation at Risk, A Nation Prepared, Time for Results, Making the Grade, Action for Excellence, and Educating Americans for the 21st Century,* and *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*, called for increased standards-based testing and

scores, increased high school graduation requirements, increased school accountability for student outcomes and a focus on student-centered learning and support for parents.

An unintended negative effect of standard-based reform may have been an overreliance on standards-based testing and accountability measures. As Harvey et al. (2013) described, the standards-based reform movement "morphed into test-driven accountability" (p. 6). Despite possibly achieving the most comprehensive testing system for students around the globe, the United States may have accomplished very little in terms of actual improvement (Koretz, 2019). As criticism had existed about previous tests developed by psychologists for the purposes of distinguishing between potential United States' armed forces draftees and between student applicants for higher education as well as between existing college and university students, criticism existed as to standards-based testing developed for use in distinguishing primary and secondary education students in the United States.

The source and flow of standardized educational tests in the United States was questioned. Nelson et al. (2004) suggested psychologists first developed standardized examinations in England and France at the request of the governments there for the purpose of identifying children who could not function in the mainstream classroom due to low intelligence. According to the researchers, test translators in the United States discriminated based upon their own individually-held biases and changed test items on which certain groups outscored others.

Despite concerns about overreliance of test-driven accountability and concerns about standards-based test reliability, men and women behind the standards-based reform movement focused attention on achievement gaps between different groups of students

and high expectations for learning (Harvey et al., 2013). By creating a culture of testing however, they may have lost sight of at least one target, improved instruction.

Preoccupation and enhanced attention and time devoted to achievement gaps and with associated high expectations and frequent testing resulted in neglect of needed instructional improvements. The very educational data and analysis aimed at driving instructional change also stalled it. The culture of testing held ethical problems in the form of pecuniary bias and further discrimination through selective test-preparation programs (Nelson et al., 2004).

Negative relationships existed between the policies adopted for school improvement reforms, federal funding, standards-based testing and low morale among students, parents, educators and other stakeholders existed. Wright, Shields, Black, Banergee, and Waxman (2018) suggested both teacher autonomy and teacher satisfaction declined in States that operated under RTTT requirements. Wieczorek, Clark, and Theoharis (2018), suggested the use of RTTT's for teacher evaluation created contractual disruptions as well routine instructional disruption.

Concern among men and women remained as to improving instruction in the classroom and influencing what was taught in the classroom (Harvey et al., 2013). Diversity among students in the United States and their growing needs was amplified by test-driven accountability (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Hoyle et al. (2005) suggested, the public gradually lost faith in the United States' public schools through complex factors.

Education and Testing in Florida

In Florida, minimum standards for student achievement date back to 1968, According to the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) website (https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/archive/history-fl-statewide-assessment/hsap6878.stml). In 1971, the FLDOE established goals for education the state legislature established the Florida Statewide Assessment Plan (FSAP) and the first administration of state assessment tests for students took place in 1972. The first Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) was administered to public school students in 1998. In 2010, Florida lawmakers adopted common core standards for curricular-based standardized testing which were replaced and followed by Florida standards in 2014. In 2015 the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) replaced the FCAT.

The United States Department of Education (ED) standardized testing requirements were not enforced in March and April of the 2019-2020 school year, due to the global coronavirus pandemic known as COVID-19 (Barnum & Belsha, 2020). That same year, Florida's governor cancelled year-end testing for the same reason as the United Sates Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended closing school campuses to stem the spread of the virus (Downey, 2020). Distance-learning or virtual learning was made available for Florida students as they remained off-campus for an extended spring break through the summer months. ED testing resumed in the 2020-2021 school year in Florida, but not without debate among men and women, including debate over school district mask mandates (Ceballos & Wilson, 2021).

In 2022, Florida lawmakers enacted law to take effect in July, 2022, eliminating FSA (and common core standards) and replacing it with a progress-monitoring system for the 2022-2023 school year known as Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (F.A.S.T). According to the FLDOE website, F.A.S.T. will reduce testing time by seventy-five percent. The F.A.S.T. may be a computer adaptive test (CAT) which may be more individualized for student test takers. The progress monitoring may be also be more individualized in that it is adaptive progress monitoring (APM). Critics suggested the statewide assessment program will actually increase testing time and argued it fails to focus on student learning (Strauss, 2021).

According to Conley, Everett & Pinkelman (2019), progress monitoring "is an essential element of effectively implementing individualized behavior support", rather than learning. Progress monitoring studies have been published in journals dedicated to the education of students with disabilities (Roehrig, Duggar, Moats, Glover & Mincy, 2008). Florida Statutes (2021) section 1008.25 provides for public school student progression and requires that "each student participate in the statewide, standardized assessment program". Section 1008.22, subsection three, also mandates that the Florida commissioner of education continue to implement standardized testing based upon Next Generation Sunshine Standards (NGSSS) core curriculum.

The Developing Role of the School Superintendent

The role of school superintendent in the United States developed over 185 years. Unlike countries that practiced centralized control of public education, the United States long valued the concept of local control, dating back to its colonial era (Bjork, et al., 2014). Each State controlled its schools, school districts, boundaries, jurisdiction,

defining powers and funding.

Researchers credited the city of Buffalo, New York, with having first formally established the School Superintendent position in 1837 (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). By 1900, most urban school districts in the United States had school superintendent appointments rather than elections (Brunner et al., 2002). Ongoing economic, demographic, and social shifts, including continued influx of diverse immigrants necessitated that schools, school districts, school boards and their members and school superintendents serve a wide array of students to encourage literacy, responsibility and understanding of the United States (Bjork et al., 2014). Through a revolving door of change, researchers concluded, men and women in the role of school superintendent moved away from responsibilities associated clerks and records keepers and became active managers.

The Rise of School Boards

The establishment and proliferation of corporations in the United States following WWI in the early 1900s inspired the creation of school boards that mimicked corporate boards (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). School boards' main function was legislative: to create policies to govern school districts. School boards collected the majority of school district funding through local tax monies and approved annual budgets and expenditures. School superintendents, responsible to the school board, came to be viewed as chief executive officers (CEOs) of their respective school district and its schools.

The Contemporary Role of School Superintendent in the United States

As evolution and increased in complexity took place, via reform efforts, the role of school superintendent also evolved and increased in complexity (Bjork et. al, 2014; Nelson et al. 2004;). Bjork et al. (2014) concluded, reform efforts had deep implications for men and women in the role of school superintendent. School superintendents became responsible for successfully supervising the implementation of school improvement reform initiatives. Ireh and Bailey (1999) explained, "reforms in American schools cannot be realized without school superintendents acting as catalysts" (p. 22). Long hours, increasing accountability, high performance expectations and juggling professional duties were factors frequently associated with the role (Wells, 2018).

Men and women in the role of school superintendent in the United States were all responsible to serve under their respective school boards (Greenleaf, 1977). In addition to vocation, some described the role as a calling (Hoyle et al., 2005). As public servants, men and women in the role of school superintendent dedicated themselves to working with school board members and communities to provide education for all students (Hoyle et al., 2005). As CEOs for local school districts, men and women in the role of school superintendent in the United States also managed multiple and changing school district affairs for all school sites in a given school district as well as the school district site, under the auspices of their state government and respective state schools and departments of education.

School Superintendent Role Dimensions. Researchers enumerated multiple dimensions of the school superintendent role in the United States, in addition to manager and CEO, democratic-political leader, social-scientist, and communicator (Bjork et al.,

2014). Men and women in the role often occupied multiple dimensions at a given time (Kowalski, 2005). In her findings on perceptions about leadership dimensions, Giaquinto (2011) explained, the majority of her sample participants functioned as managers and CEOs (p. 110). Other researchers found the role of communicator paramount (Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010; Wright, 2017)

Superintendent as Manager and CEO. Historically, men and women viewed school superintendents in the United States as intellectual leaders (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). However, as school districts increased in size, the role of manager became increasingly important as school superintendents were made responsible for larger budgets, budget development and administration, standardization of operations, personnel management and facility management. The role of manager and CEO was closely associated with control and task-orientated leadership (Kowalski, 2005).

Superintendent as Democratic-Political Leader. The democratic-political leader dimension of the role of school superintendent in the United States dated back to the 1950s (Bjork et al., 2014). School superintendents in the United States, responsible to elected school boards, experienced political pressure from community interest groups. Appointed school superintendents strongly resisted the label politician because they were not elected (Kowalski, 2005, Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). Kotter (1985) cautioned school superintendents against being too naïve or too cynical about organizational politics. He suggested school superintendents find middle ground between the extremes of naivety and cynicism to bring individuals together to accomplish meaningful objectives, despite

forces tending to push them apart. Agenda-setting, coalition building, and negotiating were key factors in political skills.

Superintendent as Social-Scientist. Through the proliferation of charitable foundation grants for university research in school administration as "an established academic discipline equal to business management and public administration" men and women encouraged scientific inquiry and method became more common school superintendent practice (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). As managers, school superintendents supervised daily affairs in a complex system. As social-scientists, they also diagnosed complex academic and behavioral problems within the system and applied solutions. Both the democratic-political leader role and the social-scientist role required expert and technical knowledge.

Superintendent as Communicator. Another important dimension of the role was that of communicator. Communication was necessary for relationship building, collaboration, collective vision, planning, implementation, modification and improvement (Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) pointed out, school superintendents were the main source of information for school board members. McClellan, Ivory, and Dominquez (2008) suggested, through effective communication, school superintendents facilitated "an open exchange of expertise and influence" for decision-making among educators and educational leaders (p. 354). After interviewing 21 Arizona school superintendents, Wright (2017) determined, relationship-building was the most important factor in school superintendent longevity. Similarly, Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010)

concluded the communicator dimension was the most important for men and women in the role of school superintendent.

Professional Standards for the Role

Just as men and women developed standards for student achievement, men and women in professional associations developed benchmarks for performance standards to drive school superintendent behaviors (Hoyle et al., 2005). Hoyle et al. (2005) explained, men and women used standards to guide preparation, licensure, selection, evaluation and retention of school superintendents (as well other K-12 Educational Leaders). Kowalski & Bjork (2005) described, *The University Council for Educational Administration* (UCEA), *The American Association of School Administrators (AASA)*, and the *American Education Research Association* (AERA) as national organizations influential in education reform, school improvement, school administration preparation, accreditation, and licensing standards. These organizations assisted in increasing a sense of competence, skill, and reliability for men and women in the role of school superintendent in the United States (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005).

The main sources for standards of professionalism for school superintendents in the United States were AASA's *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993) and the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). The following AASA targets existed: (a) leadership and district culture, (b) policy and governance, (c) communications and community relations, (d) organizational management, (e) curriculum planning and development, (f) instructional management, (g) human resources management and (h) values and ethics leadership (Hoyt et al., 2005). The

following ISLLC targets existed: (a) developing a shared vision within schools, (b) creating cultures that support learning, (c) ensuring safe, efficient and effective learning, (d) collaborating with the broad community, (h) acting in a fair and ethical fashion and (i) understanding the socioeconomic, legal, political, and cultural contexts of schools (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008).

Men and women used the standards to guide improvement reform of school administration preparation programs, assess student progress, assist in credential review for licensure and to provide schema for evaluating school superintendent and school principal performance. Through proficiency in and adherence to the standards, men and women in the role of school superintendent developed and maintained the semblance of professionalism necessary for public confidence in them (Hoyle et al., 2005). Hoyle et al. (2005) recommended the *Superintendent Executive Assessment Model* (SEAM) as a valid cost-effective, time-managed and standards-based process for school boards to measure and evaluate school superintendent performance. The researchers suggested, school board evaluation of the school superintendent using the model improved executive skills and promoted greater school district effectiveness.

Low-performing school districts did not hire candidates for the role of school superintendent who lacked certification in school turnaround (Norris, 2017). AASA (2019) offered a national school superintendent certification program that involved a broad curriculum and capstone project involving action research. Through the program, school superintendents applied learning to identified school district problems.

Qualifications: Educational Background, Experience, and Career Path

Most men and women in the role of school superintendent began their careers in

education as classroom teachers (Kim & Brunner, 2009). They taught in the classroom during the day and earned graduate degrees in leadership and administration, at night, on the weekends, and through distance learning. Some remained in school site positions up until the time of their first assignment as a school superintendent. Others gained administrative experience at school district sites immediately prior to their first school superintendent assignment.

Educational Backgrounds

Men and women in the role of school superintendent possessed graduate degrees in educational administration and leadership, including doctoral degrees, specialist's degrees, and master's degrees. In their study of the school superintendency, Glass et al., (2000) found that 45% of school superintendents he studied possessed a doctoral degree. Of that 45%, 89% concentrated their doctoral studies in educational administration.

The more educational attainment men and women in the role of school superintendent had, the longer was their longevity in the role. Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla, & Ghosh (2002) found a positive correlation between educational attainment and longevity in the role. There was a growing trend in the 1990s and 2000s among school districts to hire men and women who possessed doctoral degrees in education, prior to their assumption of the role of school superintendent (Kowalski & Stouder, 1999; Wyland, 2016).

Experience and Career Paths

Despite finding commonalities in career paths, researchers ultimately found men and women in the role of school superintendent had unique career paths. Few men and women who entered the education field shared an intent to assume the role of school

superintendent (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Finnan, McCord, Stream, Mattocks, Petersen, & Ellerson, 2015). Reynold and Warfield (2010) explained simply, the role of school superintendent demanded competency in the education field. Individuals with teaching experience in a school site in addition to leadership experience in a school and district site had relevant work experience to understand complex issues that men and women in the role of school superintendent faced (Reynold & Warfield, 2010).

In one study, competency in the education field frequently involved less than 15 years of in-field experience (Kowalski et al., 2010). Thirteen and three tenths' percent of men and women in the study assumed their first position as School Superintendent with 15 years in-field experience. Men and women were more likely to begin their first school superintendent assignment between the ages of 41 and 55 (Kowalski, et al., 2010).

Career paths in the field differed among men and women in the role of school superintendent. Kim and Brunner (2008) found, women moved more horizontally than men, through school district staff roles, rather than vertically, through school site positions. Ortiz (1982) found, school leader positions involved more risk than school district leader positions, but offered more opportunity for promotion and compensation. In some studies, men appeared more willing than women to relocate to obtain the role of school superintendent, but most men and women in the role of school superintendent spent their careers in the same state and maintained the same retirement system benefits (Orr, 2006). In a study of women aspiring to the role of school superintendent and advancing in educational leadership careers, Sperandio and Devdas (2015) concluded women were hesitant to consider positions that required relocation or even more than a one-hour commute from their current homes and families.

Gosmire, Morrison, and Van Osdel (2010) found no defined career path among sample participants studied. In contrast, Bjork and Kowalski (2005) identified two common career paths for men and women in the role of School Superintendent. Forty-eight percent of men and women in the role of school superintendent went from teacher to assistant principal or principal, to school district site administrator, to school superintendent. Thirty-one and two-tenths percent of men and women in the role of school superintendent went from teacher to assistant principal to principal, to school superintendent. Sperandio (2015) suggested the first common path identified by Bjork and Kowalski was non-traditional and the second was traditional. She concluded men predominantly followed traditional paths and women predominantly followed non-traditional paths.

Florida School Superintendent Selection Methods: Election and Appointment

Nationwide, local school boards may have appointed to office the majority of school superintendents (Schuh & Herrington, 1990; Sello, 1987). Florida Statutes (2021), Chapter 1001, provided for the election of school board members and both election and appointment of school superintendents. Under state law, Florida school superintendents served a four-year elected term of office but Florida school districts, via school boards, could both adopt and rescind an appointive office of school superintendent.

The number of appointed school superintendents in Florida increased over time but the average tenure of appointed school superintendents in Florida was only around three years. In 1987, 18 of Florida's 67 School Districts had appointed School Superintendents (Sello, 1987). The number rose to 22 in 1990 (Schuh & Herrington, 1990) and to 29 in 2018 (McLaughlin, 2019).

According to Schuh and Herrington (1990), Florida lawmakers chose the elective system of school superintendent selection after rampant abuses of patronage took place in 1800's following the U.S. Civil War and the Reconstructionist Era. Unscrupulous opportunists without local connections took advantage of political and economic chaos during that time (Schuh & Herrington, pp. 8-11). To prevent corruption and profiteering and to protect the public, Florida state legislators made election the only method for school superintendent selection in the state between 1885 through 1957 (p. 12).

Through the 90s and 2000s, men and women elected to the role of school superintendents came to enjoy longer tenure in the role than those appointed to the school superintendent role, generally seven or more years, (Donalds, 2018). The Florida Office of the Attorney General (2019) concluded, school districts that wished to move to an appointive selection process would not be permitted to terminate an elected incumbent's term in the course of so-doing. The office explained, elected offices and duties were subject to constitutional protections of property rights.

Nationwide searches conducted in appointments were expensive and could involve multiple third-party consulting firms for school board contract and reliance (McLaughlin, 2019). For example, the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA), a non-profit organization, provided candidate search support on a cost basis (2020). Florida Statutes (2019), Chapter 1001, incorporated language for continuing professional education and leadership opportunities and certifications.

There was a common perception of greater efficiency in decision-making in the appointive method with greater accountability resting in school boards (Schuh & Herrington, 1990). However, McLaughlin (2019) highlighted, there existed undesirable

effects of increased turnover and instability resulting from the appointment of school superintendents who were perceived as more interested in garnering greater salaries than in student achievement. Local candidates were actually alienated (rather than included) by appointive processes that neglected to include them as applicants but included candidates who had never lived in the same county as the school district. Additionally, candidates selected for the role were not subject to the will of voters and often left their offices prior to the completion of performance on their respective employments contract for higher paid positions elsewhere. Furthermore, school boards terminated appointed school superintendents prior to the completion of performance on employment contracts.

The appointment system may have cost more than the election system of school superintendent selection because it offered a semblance of enhanced professionalism in the role. However, Moses (2018) explained, there was a dearth of evidence to suggest nationwide searches produced more professional school superintendents or that they resulted in improved student performance. Donalds (2018) concluded, school superintendent appointment was not a predictor of student achievement, despite higher salaries for appointed school superintendents. Habersham (2012) and Partridge and Sass (2011) conducted studies but found no significant differences between elected and appointed school superintendent performance nor in student outcomes.

Distinctions in education backgrounds of candidates for the role of school superintendent were revealed through appointment. Habersham (2012) found appointed school superintendents possessed higher levels of education than elected school superintendents. Similarly, Oakley, Watkins & Sheng (2017) suggested, appointed school superintendents were better versed in policymaking and implementation and thus were

more authoritative and influential than elected school superintendents. However, Schuh & Herrington (1990) explained, appointed school superintendents were less focused on budget and finance than with school board relations. The two further explained, elected school superintendents were more autonomous of the school board and therefore more independent in decision-making.

The School Superintendent and the School Board

Whether appointed or elected, communication between school superintendents and school boards was often a critical factor for success among men and women in the role of school superintendent. According to Blumberg and Blumberg (1985), relations between the school superintendent and the school board was the most significant factor in effectively managing a school district. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) similarly emphasized, effective long-term strategic planning required effectively communicating with the school board and counseling the school board members about policy and procedure implementation.

Although local issues arose, it was imperative that school superintendents could convincingly communicate to the public a vision of common federal, state, school district, school board and school superintendent goals (Ivory & Acker-Hocevar, 2007). Although pressures existed from the federal and state levels for school reform efforts, successful school boards established clear policies, incorporating reform efforts, school superintendents successfully administered the school board policies and enjoyed longevity and increased student achievement in the role.

School boards terminated men and women appointed to the role of school superintendent when they did not successfully administer school board policies and

implement reform plans. Despite that, productive school boards were able to hold school superintendents accountable for performance and also provide needed supports to them (Ivory & Acker-Hocevar, 2007). Anything less than positive and productive working relationships between school board members and school superintendents related to adverse impacts on student achievement and overall, school district performance (Moody, 2011).

By using high-impact governing strategies, school boards used policy to limit school superintendent discretion (Eadie, 2003). These high-impact school boards assigned accountability for managing their employment relationship with school superintendents to standing committees. Through standing committees, school boards executed employment contracts with school superintendents with specific performance and student achievement targets, based on real problems and challenges in school districts. Whereas Berkowicz & Myers (2014) concluded, teachers were directly responsible for student achievement, Eadie (2003) explained:

> Without question, as CEO of the whole district, your superintendent is always accountable for overall district performance -educationally, financially, administratively. Your superintendent is accountable to your school board for meeting planned revenue and expenditure targets monthly, quarterly, and annually; for planned improvements in state test scores and graduation and drop out rates; for planned efficiencies from implementing the contracting process; and the like. If districtwide performance lags significantly in any area, your board has the right and the responsibility to ask the superintendent for an explanation and to take

this into account in evaluating the superintendent's performance (p. 28). Semi-annually and annually, school boards assessed school superintendents' performances against the contractual targets.

School boards and school superintendents struggled with effective governance practices (Bridges, Plancher & Toledo, 2019). However, shared values and agendas, clear understanding of respective roles and authority, clear and reliable communication and effective decision-making with school board members increased school superintendent success and longevity. Men and women who filled the role of school superintendent with longevity acquired social capital with school boards by fulfilling obligations, keeping communication channels open and by promoting student achievement goals and norms for common good (Ripley, Mitchell & Richman, 2013). They influenced school board effectiveness by building trust, promoting better board practices and building back the public confidence.

Pressures of school reform were related to increased levels of role conflict and role ambiguity between school board members and school superintendents (Moody, 2011). School superintendents, successful in influencing school boards, understood their role in administering school board policy throughout the school district and schools but also promoted public accountability for school boards and their members. (Moody, 2011; Bridges et al., 2019). Despite changes in school board member composition, school superintendents who stayed above the political fray of school board elections, maintained influence with the school boards and their members (Grier, 2015).

School superintendent engagement with school boards and their members via professional development activities promoted positive relations and reduced role

confusion amidst the pressures of school reform from the federal and state levels. (Moody, 2011). Although Mountford (2004) concluded, professional development and training "though well-intentioned, appear to have had little effect on improving the relationship between school board members and superintendents" (p. 735), Roberts and Sampson, (2011) found, professional development activities among school board members positively related to increased student achievement.

Mountford (2004), Roberts & Sampson (2011) and Grier (2015) expressed urgency in understanding school board members' motivations for joining school boards. Many conflicts between school board members and school superintendents stemmed from differences in values and beliefs. Men and women successful in the role of school superintendent were able to identify school board member motivations, act and behave benevolently and establish personnel connections while keeping professional distance (Ripley, Mitchell & Richman, 2013).

Leadership Style and Skills in the Role

Leadership and management theories and concepts coincided with contemporary organizations, including corporations and school districts. Kotter (1990, 1995) distinguished between the functions of leadership and the functions of management. In some instances, men and women produced change and movement through leadership. In other instances, they produced order and consistency through management (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Men and women who led in addition to managing tended to communicate more routinely about public education in the United States to denote the existence and promotion of mutual purposes, democratic ideals and responsibilities of citizens, including participation, in the United States (Bush, 2011).

Leadership Styles

Researchers observed, leadership style was a combination of task-related and relationship-related behaviors (Northouse, 2013). Leaders were responsible for creating a positive and change-conducive organizational culture and climate and for unifying groups towards a common organizational vision with tangible attainable goals (Kanter, 1983; Walker, 1994). In some instances, receptivity and maturity among followers determined the correct balance in leadership style for men and women in the role of school superintendent (Ireh & Bailey, 1999).

Researchers differentiated between mature and immature followers. Mature followers were critical thinkers and active participants (Kelley, 1992). The more mature organizational members were, the more likely men and women in the role of school superintendent were able to tend to relationship behaviors rather than task behaviors alone. Men and women in the role of school superintendent had fewer relationships with members who required greater leadership and management of task behaviors.

Men and women effective in the role of school superintendent gauged follower maturity and receptivity and guided members towards increased maturity for the purpose of facilitating goal achievement and vision fulfilment (Hershey & Blanchard, 1988; Northouse, 2013). Bolman and Deal (2013) suggested, leaders who focused on people generated higher morale but -effective leaders focused on both people and tasks -resulting in greater productivity. Those effective in the role of school superintendent explained decision-making, solicited suggestions, shared decision-making and supported employees in their performance efforts and had "positive trust and confidence in their employees' maturity level, competence and professional conduct" (Ireh & Bailey, 1999, p. 26).

Transformational leaders had to go above and beyond transactional exchange for task performance to inspire followers and advocate for them (Bolman and Deal, 2013).

Leadership Skills

While in the role of School Superintendent, men and women's leadership skills evolved as their experience in the role grew (Copeland & Chance, 1996). Copeland and Chance (1996) identified: a) financial acuity, b) facilities management, c) trust-building, d) knowledgeability, e) fairness, f) integrity and g) community involvement as key Leadership Skills. Chirichello (2018), Hoyle, et al. (2005), and Schacter (2006) described, communication, motivating others, vision, strategic planning, critical thinking for continuous improvement and learning and positive relationship-building as important skills. Hitt, Woodruff, Meyers, and Zhu (2018) further identified: a) commitment, b) drive for results, c) persistence, d) directiveness and attention, e) problem-solving, f) analytical and conceptual thinking and g) confidence as influential leadership skills. School superintendent knowledgeability included an understanding of various influences on education in democratic society (Copeland & Chance, 1996; Hoyle et al., 2005) and was closely related to a growth mindset, as described by Chirichelli (2018) and to critical-thinking, as described by Schacter (2006).

Men and women effective in the role of school superintendent framed, analyzed, and resolved problems (Hoyle et al., 2005). They took initiative for their own learning and sought out opportunities for professional and personal growth (Copeland & Chance, 1996). They read, they listened, and they constantly scanned information to guide decision-making (Hoyle et al., 2005). They acted with integrity and were reliable (Copeland & Chance, 1996).

Leadership Communication. Complexity in educational leadership and school district administration existed, precluding many researchers from finding any one leadership domain completely dispositive in organizational success and effectiveness. Researchers identified leadership skills and styles generally significant for organizational success and effectiveness (Ireh & Bailey, 1999). Leadership communication, specifically, Kowalski (2005) concluded, was of paramount importance for men and women in the role of school superintendent. Freeley and Seinfeld (2012) explained, communication was "the most critical aspect of the superintendency" (p. 94). Leadership communication qualities, included trust and relationship-building, threshold requirements for success among men and women in the role of school superintendent (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Wright, 2017).

Leadership communication involved successful sending and receiving of messages in furtherance of shared goals (Northouse, 2013). Bernal, Monosov, Stencler, Lajoie, Raigoza, and Akhaven (2017) highlighted, mindful use of language was critically important among men and women in the role of school superintendent. Effective communication involved first listening, then acknowledging and validating others' viewpoints before expressing one's own thoughts about an issue (Greenleaf, 1977). Leadership communication with men and women in the role of school superintendent involved not only school boards and their members and the public, but district and school site personnel, leaders, teachers and parents (Isernhagen & Bulkin, 2013).

Confidence, competence, and integrity were involved in leadership communication and relationship-building (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Positive attitude and strong self-esteem were observed as predictors of good leadership communication

skills and acceptance by stakeholders (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Optimism and resilient leadership communication, particularly in the face of opposition and crisis, were indispensable qualities (Reed & Blaine, 2015).

Job Stress and Job Satisfaction in the Role

Researchers documented the demands of the role of school superintendent as stressful. They identified job stress as a factor in decreased job satisfaction, increased turnover and lack of longevity for men in women in the role of school superintendent. Many men and women in the role of school superintendent left their roles voluntarily, as opposed to having had the school board sever the employment relationship (Hackett, 2015).

Researchers identified multiple strategies, employed by men and women in the role of school superintendent, to deal with job-related stress. Professional support for men and women in the role of school superintendent existed in the form of mentors, sponsors, general personnel support, and executive coaching, in addition to personal support from family and friends (Augustine-Shaw, 2013; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Duevel, Nashman-Smith, & Stern, 2015; Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Gosmire, Morrison, & Van Osdel, 2010; Kowalski, & Stouder, 1999; Munoz et al., 2014). High salaries and good benefits also contributed to decreased job stress and increased job satisfaction among men and women in the role of school superintendent.

Leadership Strategies for Dealing with Job-Stress

Effective use of strategic planning to cope with change, including economic and demographic change was critical to satisfaction and extended longevity in the role of school superintendent (Schacter, 2006). In one study, school superintendents reported the

use of strategic planning in combination with vision as having contributed to their job satisfaction (Bollinger & Grady, 2018). Other school superintendent sample participants in that study described instructional leadership, relationship-building, leadership development and task variety as relevant to their job satisfaction (Bollinger & Grady, 2018). In another study of a sample of school superintendents with longevity between 21 and 41 years, Copeland and Chance (1996) found sound financial management was characteristic of success, effectiveness and job satisfaction in the role.

Support. Researchers determined that men and women successful in the role of school superintendent had mentors, sponsors, personnel support and support from family and friends (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012; Kowalski, & Stouder, 1999). Some men and women sampled reported career mentors as most influential for adapting to an established school system and navigating to the role of school superintendent (Kowalski & Stouder, 1999). Augustine-Shaw (2013) explained, veteran school superintendent mentors, appointed through a formal induction program, provided valuable support to men and women in the role of school superintendent.

Researchers described mentors as excellent role models for effective communication skills, courage, collaboration, work ethic, and humility (Freeley & Seinfeld, 2012). However, they concluded it was sponsors and not mentors that exerted the greater influence over career advancement in the lives of men and women in the role of school superintendent (Duevel et al., 2015). Mentors studied, taught and nurtured, but did not have the ability to promote, as did sponsors (Munoz et al., 2014). Mentors were observable in all levels of organizational personnel whereas sponsors were more difficult to locate.

Executive coaching promoted greater levels of job satisfaction (Pendleton, 2016). Moen and Federici (2012) suggested, executive coaching positively affected job satisfaction through an increased sense of autonomy and relatedness. Some school boards decided to pay for executive coaching services on behalf of the school superintendent for the good of the school districts, its schools, students, school leaders, teachers and other personnel.

Family members and friends were valuable sources of support for men and women in the role of school superintendent (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). Derrington and Sharratt (2009) explained, those successful in the role of school superintendent had "unusually resilient, flexible, and accommodating systems of family support" (p. 11). Gosmire et al., (2010) similarly suggested, family and friends (in addition to professional mentors) empowered men and women in the role of school superintendent to keep up with the demands of the job.

Salary. Higher paid school superintendents were more likely to stay in a given role (Grissom & Mitani, 2016). Chaitra and Murthy (2015) suggested, job satisfaction was strongly related to financial incentives, including lifetime and retirement benefits and job security. School boards desirous of attracting, recruiting and retaining men and women for the role of school superintendent provided various types of insurance, including health insurance, disability insurance, life insurance, and post-employment health insurance. School boards provided the school superintendents' social security contributions, annual retirement contributions, cost-of-living allowances, performance bonuses, annual raises, annuities, sick leave buy-outs and vacation reimbursements (Glass, 2005).

Salary in Florida. Pursuant to Florida Statutes (2021), section 1001.50, school superintendents were not subject to general law governing personnel contracts and tenure. Rather, Florida school superintendents had their own employment contracts with school boards. However, neither school superintendents nor school districts could stipulate more than $225,000.00 in renumeration from state funds in employment contracts. Florida school superintendent salaries were dependent upon school district resources, the number and nature of schools, geographic size and student body population and growth.

School Superintendent Longevity and Its Impact on Student Achievement

The number of years men or women served in the role of school superintendent was known as their tenure, service and longevity in the role. Researchers reported that overall longevity in the role of school superintendent declined in the United States between 1950s and 2000s, from 20-year-plus tenures to tenures ranging from 3 to 7 years, with 7-year tenures being less frequent than 5-year tenures, and 5-year tenures being less frequent than 3-year tenures (Chingos, Whitehurst, & Lindquist, 2014; Giaquinto, 2011; Sampson, 2018). Some researchers determined the role was generally short-term, typically limited to 3 or 4 years (Chingos et al., 2014; Domenech, 2015). According to Sampson (2018), 5 years of effective service in the role in the same school district signaled future longevity in the role in the same school district. Chingos et al. (2014) explained, school superintendents who served 7 or more years were a minority.

Polished organizations maintained vital and high-quality services by retaining experienced and effective employees (Chaitra & Murthy, 2015). High employee turnover in an organization, whether employee-initiated, or employer-initiated, was a symptom of conflict and poor management (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). Conflict between school

board members and men and women in the role of school superintendent invariably resulted in voluntary and involuntary job moves and loss (Hackett, 2015). Stable, high-performing school districts retained men and women in the role of school superintendent with longevity.

Relevantly qualified school superintendents with strong and germane leadership skills were valuable assets to school districts. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) concluded, active school superintendents with more career experience in a hiring state had more influence on student achievement than active school superintendents with less career experience in a hiring state. The two researchers also highlighted, the more career experience a school superintendent gained in a hiring state, the more effective he or she became in managing the increased pressures of accountability in that state. Hart, Schramm-Possinger and Hoyle (2019) affirmed, school superintendents with in-state career experience were more effective in influencing student achievement than those without it. In-state career experience, specifically with curriculum and testing, related to enhanced organizational stability and professional relationships resulting in effective leadership skills applications.

Debate existed about the right amount of time required for a school superintendent to implement, monitor and tweak educational initiatives, maximize school improvement efforts and enrich student achievement. Schibler (2006) suggested, 10 years was an ideal tenure and term within which school superintendents could achieve positive, systemic organizational growth and development and increased student achievement through stability and deeper relations. Other researchers concluded five years was a sufficient tenure or term of service within which to accomplish goals (Domenech, 2015).

Chirichello (2018) suggested, 20 years was an ideal term of longevity for men and women to serve with distinction.

School Improvement Reform and School Superintendent Longevity

Student Achievement was a major concern in school improvement reform efforts. As a result of the pressures of education reform, school boards placed increased responsibility on men and women in the role of school superintendent for improved student achievement (Black, 2007). School boards had expectations for men and women in the role of school superintendent to carry out education reform initiatives (Fowler, 2013). Grissom and Mitani (2016) suggested, low-performing school districts demanded radical, innovative transformation through quick reform implementation. Despite high needs, notably low-performing school districts in states that valued equity-based, school-choice and standards-based reforms had difficulty retaining men and women in the role of school superintendent (Grissom & Mitani, 2016).

Men and women hired in high-needs school districts faced increased pressures of accountability while faced with temptation from better job prospects in less needy, higher-performing school districts. Many men and women in the role of school superintendent could not deliver the results school boards desired. Some delivered desired results, but could not sustain them over time.

Implementation and monitoring of reform initiatives required time, energy and money. Schacter (2006) suggested, minimally 10 years might be required for school superintendents to effect the systemic change education reform demands. Black (2007) explained, a five-year tenure was minimally required for school superintendents to play a meaningful part in systemic, stable, and predictable leadership. However, Black (2007)

highlighted, five-years was not long enough to monitor and modify strategic plans.

School Superintendent Longevity and Its Impact on Student Achievement

Instability in the school superintendent's office disrupted management functions and resulted in negative impact on organizational culture and climate in addition to overall performance (Grissom & Andersen, 2012). With a domino-like effect, disruptive school superintendent turnover negatively impacted school district culture and climate, school improvement efforts and student achievement (Archer, 2006). High turnover in the role of school superintendent turnover negatively affected staff morale, staff satisfaction, principal and teacher performance and student achievement and also resulted in increased principal and teacher turnover (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

Mixed findings existed among researchers who specifically studied school superintendent turnover and student achievement. Alsbury (2008) found school superintendent longevity was a significant predictor of student achievement in larger districts. Berlau (2011) determined -through regression analysis -that school district enrollment and socioeconomic status were more significant predictors of student achievement than school superintendent longevity (p. 73). Chingos et al. (2014) also concluded, men and women in the role of school superintendent had little, if any, effect on student achievement.

Some researchers suggested school superintendents had absolutely no impact on student achievement (Schuh & Herrington, 1990). Other researchers confirmed the suggestion via studies (Bennett, Finn & Cribb, 1999, Morgan, 2003 & Habersham, 2012). Although school superintendents (whether elected or appointed) set the tone and energy for staff, Berkowicz & Myers (2014) concluded, teachers alone were directly responsible

for student achievement because they had the greatest proximity to students.

In contrast, Marzano and Waters (2006, 2009) suggested, high caliber school superintendents could produce demonstrable positive effects on student achievement within the first two years of assuming the role. Men and women in the role of school superintendent positively impacted achievement by collaboratively and actively setting goals and monitoring achievement with school board members, improving their leadership skills and styles and supporting common understandings at schools and the district (Archer, 2006; Eadie, 2006; Kalmer, 2006; Marzano & Waters, 2006, 2009). Copeland and Chance (1996) observed, the longer men and women remained in the role of school superintendent, the more evolved their leadership skills became. Marzano and Waters (2006, 2009) emphasized, as men and women in the role of school superintendent improved their leadership skills, styles and abilities, student achievement improved.

In a 2011 report, Myers described a positive relationship between longevity and student achievement. Specifically, Myers explained, school superintendents' total years' experience in education combined with their longevity in the role, predicted increased student achievement, evidenced by reading assessment data. Hart, Shram-Possinger & Hoyle (2019) also found a positive relationship between school superintendent longevity and student achievement. They concluded in-state experience among school superintendents was a positive predictive variable capable of offsetting challenges like poverty and larger district size.

In addition to increased student achievement, longevity among school superintendents was associated with increased teacher engagement. Kominiak (2016) explained, short school superintendent tenures and high turnover in the role resulted in

low teacher morale, substandard teaching and substandard learning. According to Kominiak (2016), happy teachers produced better results. School superintendents who served with at least three years longevity earned trust from teachers but not enough to create desired levels of synergistic performance and productivity.

Summary of the Literature Review

Within a theoretical framework based in organizational development, organizational learning and systems theories, the principal researcher reviewed extant educational research and unpacked nine prevailing themes: 1) historical context of education in the United States, 2) the developing role of school superintendent in the United States, 3) professional standards for the role, 4) qualifications: educational background, experience, and career-path, 5) Florida school superintendent selection methods: election and appointment, 6) the school superintendent and the School Board, 7) leadership style and skills in the role, 8) job stress and satisfaction in the role and 9) school superintendent longevity and student achievement. Researchers highlighted, the role of school superintendent was demanding and complex. They described school improvement reform initiatives as having contributed to the growth in complexity in the role. Effective use of leadership skills, particularly communication, was found necessary to balance work tasks and work relationships, facilitate and maintain positive organizational cultures and climates, increase personnel support, increase student achievement and increase satisfaction and longevity in the role. Increased longevity in the role promoted greater and more comprehensive strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and modification of plans related to school improvement reform, leading to greater long-term gains in student achievement, in teacher and staff morale and

engagement and in overall organizational success.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement?

2. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent?

3. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates?

4. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity?

5. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the study was twofold: (a) to determine Florida educators'
perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school
superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student
achievement; and (b) to determine how Florida educators' current jobs affect their
perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school
superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student
achievement. The following research questions guided the study: (a) What are Florida
educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary
qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on
student achievement?; (b) How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of
the role of the school superintendent?; (c) How does current job affect educators'
perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates?; (d) How
does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent
leadership skills related to longevity?; and (e) How does current job affect educators'
perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student
achievement?

The principal researcher determined demographic variables among a sample of
professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed within Florida's 67 school
districts. Independent demographic variables among sample participants included:
gender, current job, highest level of completed education and years of experience as an

educator. Dependent variables included: qualifications, leadership skills, longevity, and student achievement.

Research Design

Prior to determining her approach to the research design, the principal researcher identified the problem, reviewed the literature, generated research questions, and specified the purpose for her research (Creswell, 2015). She also carefully reviewed multiple research design types used to "collect, analyze, and interpret data, using quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell, 2015, p. 293). The researcher chose a nonexperimental approach and an explanatory, cross-sectional, quantitative survey design.

Nonexperimental Research Approach

The principal researcher chose a nonexperimental (i.e., noninterventional) research approach. As Creswell (2015) documented, rather than test "the impact of activities or materials" (p. 21), researchers frequently elect to focus "more on examining the association or relation of one or more variables" (p. 21). The chosen nonexperimental research approach is evident in the self-administration of the survey by both pilot and sample participants.

Explanatory, Cross-Sectional, Quantitative Survey Design

The principal researcher chose an explanatory, cross-sectional, quantitative survey design. She planned to use her results to explain relationships among professional Florida K-12 public school educators. A frequently cited central aim of survey design -one of the most common approaches to nonexperimental research -is to generalize findings to the entire population (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Oftentimes, survey research is also conducted to learn more about the studied sample and to explain their perceptions.

The principal researchers' chosen survey design provided a one-time data collection, rather than multiple data collections (e.g., annual or semi-annual data collection that might be involved in a longitudinal study). She determined demographic subgroups and isolated and ranked perceptions between subgroups among the larger sample. She began with descriptive techniques to summarize the data before moving on to nonparametric testing on ranks, specifically, the Kruskall-Wallis H test to compare subgroups with a focus on central tendency (Huck, 2012) and to perform analyses of variance between the groups.

Participants

The principal researcher herein employed organizations and individuals as units of analysis (Creswell, 2015). Specifically, she utilized the 67 school districts in the state of Florida and professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed therein, including district leaders, school leaders, teachers and academic coaches. She invited 1000 members from the target population of close to 200,000 to participate in her 10-question survey.

Sampling Procedures

Through a multi-stage cluster approach, the principal researcher chose the sample in several phases (Creswell, 2015). First, she identified Florida's 67 school districts, using the FLDOE website and related independent Florida school district sites to generate an electronic list wherefrom she would seek out public contact information for professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed with a Florida school district. Second, she completed an exhaustive electronic list of employed educators, including teachers, school leaders and district leaders and their

contact information, school district by school district. Several school districts did not disclose employee contact information, but many more did. Third, via random sampling, the researcher identified and listed general population subsets, according to school district, and she identified and listed 1,000 potential sample participants for recruitment. Fourth, the researcher sent invitations, via email, to the 1,000 potential sample participants. A copy of the survey invitation letter is attached as Appendix A. Fifth, the researcher sent out follow-up reminders to all potential participants, two weeks after sending the initial invitations. A copy of the follow-up reminder is attached as Appendix B. Out of the 1,000 identified potential sample participants, 199 participated in the study by self-administering the survey. The overall response rate was 19.9%.

Instrument Development

Development of the instrument involved two phases: review and piloting. The principal researcher initially composed the survey instrument by hand and later transcribed it into electronic format in Microsoft® Word for formative review. Eventually, she revised and transcribed a third time, moving it to an electronic copy in Google Docs Editors Suite™ software, specifically, Google forms, a component of G-Suite for Education ™ productive applications for piloting, administration, formative and summative review.

She consulted with data collection and analysis experts who reviewed the second and third versions of the survey instrument. In response to their feedback, the principal researcher edited and revised the electronic surveys and gained approved to invite potential participants to pilot the electronic online survey. Later, the principal researcher

invited individuals similar to potential participants to pilot the electronic online survey instrument before inviting participants from the general population.

Instrument Review

The principal researcher recruited a panel of five research experts, each experienced in educational research design, data collection and data analysis. All panel experts were employed in higher education. At least one member was employed outside the researcher's institution.

Panel members performed formative and summative review of the final survey instrument. Based on formative review feedback, the principal researcher edited and revised the instrument by limiting the number of questions, types of questions, and possible question responses. Survey items opened for discussion included the identification of independent and dependent variables, the use of closed questions to determine demographic data, the use of Likert scale questions to determine relationships between independent variables and dependent variables and the use of open-ended questions to collect qualitative data that might help elaborate quantitative findings. After the principal researcher completed the suggested edits and revisions, the panel completed a summative review and determined the instrument was ready to pilot.

Piloting

The principal researcher piloted the survey instrument for the following reasons: (a) to examine the feasibility of the nonexperimental research approach she chose and intended for use with the broader target population; (b) to determine whether she asked the questions she intended to ask in the survey instrument; (c) to determine whether participants comprehended the survey instrument in its format; and (d) to determine

whether the survey was appropriate for the broader target population (Lancaster, G.A., Dodd, S. & Williamson, P., 2004). As Creswell (2015) recommended, the principal researcher piloted the instrument with 15 individuals similar to potential participants. Pilot participants included active and retired New York, New Jersey and professional Florida K-12 public school educators.

Pilot participants provided feedback as to ease and timing of the survey instruments self-administration. According to the pilot participants, they were able to complete the survey in 5 minutes or less and it was user-friendly. No pilot participant reported having experienced technical issues in the self-administration of the instrument.

The School Superintendent Longevity Survey

The School Superintendent Survey and its self-administration by sample participants was the source of all study data. The survey contained 10 questions and had three sections. Section I of the survey instrument contained four multiple-choice demographic questions related to gender, current job, highest level of completed education and years of experience as an educator. Section II of the survey instrument contained four Likert scale questions concerned with key factors related to the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, school superintendent longevity and its impact on student achievement. In the final chapter of this final report, the principal research provided elaboration, interpretation and implications for the research questions from findings reported in chapter four from data collected from participant responses to survey questions one through eight, as contained in survey sections I and II. Although section III of the survey instrument contained two open-ended questions for short responses

regarding educators' experience(s) with school superintendent longevity and student achievement and although qualitative data was retrieved and analyzed, the principal researcher did not present those findings herein. A copy of the School Superintendent Longevity Survey is contained in Appendix C.

Procedures

Data Collection Procedures

After seeking and obtaining the approval of her dissertation committee and the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Nova Southeastern University (NSU), the principal researcher completed a list of potential participants to whom she sent a participation letter and a link to a self-administered, one-time, anonymous, electronic, online survey. Participants took approximately 5 minutes to complete the survey. The principal researcher sent a reminder email within one week of the initial invitation to participate. She closed the survey when the desired response rate was achieved.

Data Analysis Procedures

First, the principal researcher created a data file in IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®), an electronic program for statistical analysis. Second, the principal researcher numerically coded individual participant's surveys. Third, the principal researcher custom defined variables in SPSS®. As Green and Salkind (2017) described, defining variables in SPSS® included "everything from providing a name for the variable or the column in the Data View window, to defining the type of variable it is and how many decimal places it will use" (p. 22).

Fourth, the principal researcher conducted descriptive demographic analysis, including frequency distributions based on research question 1: What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement?

Fifth, the principal researcher conducted nonparametric testing, specifically, Kruskal-Wallis H testing based on the research questions 2 through 5: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent?; How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates?; How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity?; How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement?

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the study was twofold: (a) to determine Florida educators' perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement; and (b) to determine how Florida educators' current jobs affect their perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement. The following research questions guided the study: (a) What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement? (b) How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent? (c) How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates? (d) How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity? (e) How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement?

The principal researcher disseminated a 10-question online self-administered survey she developed for the study to a sample of 199 professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed within Florida's 67 school districts. Independent demographic variables among sample participants included: gender, current job, highest level of

completed education and years of experience as an educator. Dependent variables included: qualifications, leadership skills, longevity, and student achievement.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Educator Sample

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	134	67.3
Male	65	32.7
Highest Level of Education Completed		
Bachelor's Degree	64	32.2
Master's Degree	89	44.7
Post-Master's Degree	22	11.1
Doctorate or Professional Degree	24	12.1
Current Job		
School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	65.8
School Leader	41	20.6
District Leader	27	13.6
Years of Experience as an Educator		
Less than 4 years	12	6
4 to 10 years	37	18.6
More than 10 years	150	75.4

Sample Demographic Descriptive Data Analysis

As illustrated in Table 1, the principal researcher analyzed frequencies among demographic variables within the sample (N), as determined by responses to Survey Questions 1 through 4. A written descriptive report follows.

Educator Sample and Gender

There were 199 total participants in the study. As illustrated in Table 1, 36.3 % of total sample participants identified themselves as male. The female subgroup more than doubled the male subgroup.

Educator Sample and Highest Level of Education Completed

As defined by the variable highest level of education completed, the largest subgroup was composed of sample participants who identified themselves as having completed a master's degree. This majority subgroup constituted 44.7 % of total sample participants, as illustrated in Table 4. The second largest subgroup, as defined by the highest level of education completed, was compromised of participants who identified themselves as having completed a bachelor's degree. This second largest subgroup constituted 32.2 % of the sample. The third largest subgroup (as defined by the highest level of education completed) was comprised of participants who identified themselves as having a doctoral or professional degree. This subgroup constituted 12.1 % of the total sample. The smallest subgroup among those defined by the completed education variable was comprised of participants who identified themselves as having completed a post-master's degree (such as a specialist's degree) and constituted 11.1 % of the total sample.

Educator Sample and Current Job. As illustrated in Table 1, the largest subgroup of total sample participants, as defined by the demographic variable current job, identified themselves as school teachers and academic coaches. School teachers and academic coaches constituted 65.8 % of the overall sample. Participants who identified themselves as school leaders (either principals or assistant principals) compromised 20.6% of the overall sample. Participants who identified themselves as district leaders (including superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors and assistant directors) constituted 13.6 % of the total sample of participants.

Educator Sample and Years of Experience as an Educator. Among subgroups defined by the variable years of experience as an educator, the largest subgroup contained

sample participants who identified themselves as having more than 10 years of experience. As exhibited in Table 1, sample participants who identified themselves as having more than 10 years of experience as an educator comprised 75.4 % of the total sample of educators. The smallest subgroup (defined by years of experience as an educator) was compromised of educators who identified themselves as having less than four years of experience as an educator and constituted 6% of the total sample. Participants who fell into the least experienced educator subgroup (less than four of years) constituted only 4% of the total educator sample. Participants identified themselves as having four to 10 years' experience as an educator and comprised 18.6% of the total sample of educator participants.

After determining frequencies among participant demographics within the sample, as determined by Survey Questions 1 through 8 and reported in Table 1, the principal researcher analyzed participant responses to Survey Questions 5 through 8. She used the results of the analyses to answer the five guiding research questions. The findings are presented below.

Data Analysis and Findings for Research Question 1

The first research question study guiding the study was: What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity, and its impact on student achievement? Simple frequency distributions are presented in Tables 2 through 5 below. Participants rated school superintendent longevity, leadership skills, personnel support, school district culture and climate and student achievement factors related to the role of school superintendent. Sample participants also rated level of agreement with the

following variable statements related to necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates: (a) School superintendents should have classroom teaching experience, (b) School superintendents should have a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership, and or administration, (c) School superintendents should have at least four to 10 years' career experience in education prior to assuming the role, (d) School superintendents should have 10+ years career experience in education prior to assuming the role and (e) School superintendents should have career experience within the same school district prior to assuming the role. Sample participants further rated the following important school superintendent leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity: (a) effective communication, (b) balancing task and relationship behaviors, (c) trust and confidence in employees, (d) inspiring employees, (e) advocating for employees, (f) financial acumen, g) critical thinking and problem solving, (h) fairness and integrity, (i) good listeners, and (j) confident and positive, as important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity. Finally, sample participants ranked level of agreement with the following variable statements related to school superintendent longevity and student achievement: (a) Superintendent career experience within the state will lead to increased student achievement in the school superintendents district in the same state, (b) Increased longevity among effective school superintendents in a district will lead to increased student achievement in that district, (c) School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement, and d) School superintendents should serve more than 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement.

Table 2

Factors Related to the Role of School Superintendent

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Factor	Not Important at All		Somewhat Important		Moderately Important		Extremely Important		Essential	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
School Superintendent Longevity	8	4.0	29	14.6	74	37.2	65	32.7	23	11.6
Leadership Skills	2	1.0	5	2.5	7	3.5	36	18.1	149	74.9
Personnel Support	1	0.5	0	0	14	7.0	66	33.2	118	59.3
School District Culture and Climate	2	1.0	2	1.0	8	4.0	59	29.6	128	64.3
Student Achievement	2	1.0	6	3.0	18	9.0	74	37.2	99	49.7

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Factors Related to the Role of School Superintendent

Among combined sample participant responses, extremely important and essential, participants rated school district culture and climate highest in importance. Leadership skills and personnel support closely followed by leadership skills, second, and personnel support, third. Participants ranked student achievement fourth highest in importance and school superintendent longevity fifth highest in importance. Simple frequency distributions presented in Tables 2 through 5 illustrated, almost one third of study participants (32.7%) ranked school superintendent longevity as an extremely important factor related to the role of school superintendent. An additional 11.6% of study participants ranked it essential. Over 90% of sample participants rated as either

extremely important or essential, leadership skills (18.1 + 74.9%), personnel support

(33.2 + 59.3%) and school district culture and climate (29.6 + 64.3%).

School Superintendent Longevity. Over eighty percent (81.5%) of sample

participants rated school superintendent longevity as moderately important (37.2%),

extremely important (32.7%) or essential (11.6%) Over fourteen percent (14.6%) of

sample participants responded that school superintendent longevity was a somewhat

important factor related to the role of school superintendent. Four percent of sample

participants responded that school superintendent longevity was not important at all to the

role of school superintendent.

Leadership Skills. Ninety-three percent of sample participants responded

leadership skills were either an extremely important factor (18.1 %) or an essential factor

(74.9%) related to the role. Six percent of sample participants responded that leadership

skills were an either somewhat important (2.5%) or moderately important factor (3.5%)

related to the role of school superintendent. One percent of sample participants responded

that leadership skills were not important at all as related to the role of school

superintendent.

Personnel Support. Ninety-two-and one-half percent of sample participants

responded that personnel support was either an extremely important factor (33.2%)

related to the role of school superintendent or an essential factor (59.3%) related to the

role of school superintendent. Seven percent of sample participants responded that

personnel support was a moderately important factor related to the role of school

superintendent. One-half percent responded that personnel support was not important at

all to the role of school superintendent. No respondent reported that it was somewhat important.

School District Culture and Climate. Ninety-three and nine-tenths' percent of sample participants responded that school district culture and climate was either an extremely important factor (29.6%) related to the role of school superintendent or an essential factor (64.3%) related to the role. Five percent of sample participants responded that school district culture and climate was either a somewhat important factor (1%) related to the role of school superintendent or a moderately important factor (4%) related to the role of school superintendent. One percent of sample participants responded that school district culture and climate was not important at all to the role of school superintendent.

Student Achievement. Eighty-six and nine-tenths percent of sample participants responded that student achievement was either extremely important (37.2%) or essential (49.7%). Twelve percent of sample participants responded that student achievement was somewhat important (3%) factor or moderately important (9%). One percent of sample participants responded that student achievement was not important at all to the role of school superintendent.

Necessary Qualifications for School Superintendent Candidates

As illustrated in Table 3, the principal researcher identified in the extant literature, necessary qualifications for school superintendent and therefore included them in the survey for sample participant responses: (a) classroom teaching experience, (b) doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration, (c) at least four to 10 years of experience in education, (d) 10+ years of experience in education; and

(e) career experience in the same school district. Among combined sample participant responses agreed and strongly agreed, participants ranked classroom teaching experience highest as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Participants ranked candidate possession of at least four to 10 years of experience in education second highest, followed by 10+ years of experience in education third highest, candidate possession of a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration fourth highest and candidate possession of career experience within the same school district fifth highest.

Table 3

Necessary Qualifications for School Superintendent Candidates

Qualification	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Classroom teaching experience	0	0	0	0	3	1.5	39	19.6	157	78.9
Doctoral Degree	3	1.5	27	13.6	73	36.7	47	23.6	49	24.9
At least four to 10 years of experience in education	2	1.0	8	4.0	13	6.5	46	23.1	130	65.3
10+ years of experience in education	1	0.5	12	6.0	25	12.6	42	21.1	119	59.8
Career experience within the same school district	10	5.0	35	17.6	63	31.7	54	27.1	37	18.6

Ninety-eight and one-half percent of sample participants either agreed (19.6%) or strongly agreed (78.9%), classroom teaching was a necessary qualification for school

superintendent candidates. Eighty-eight and four-tenths' percent of sample participants either agreed (23.1%) or strongly agreed (65.3%), at least 4 to 10 years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Eighty and nine-tenths percent of sample participants either agreed (21.2%) or strongly agreed (59.8%), 10+ years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Forty-eight and one-half percent of sample participants either agreed (23.6%) or strongly agreed (24.6%), a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

Classroom Teaching Experience. Ninety-eight and one-half percent of sample participants responded in either agreement (19.6%) or strong agreement (78.9%) that classroom teaching experience was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. One and one-half percent of sample participants responded they were neutral as to whether classroom teaching experience was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. No sample participants disagreed that classroom teaching experience was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

Doctoral Degree in Educational and or Organizational Leadership and or Administration. Forty-eight and one-half percent of sample participants responded in either agreement (23.6%) or in strong agreement (24.9%) that a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Thirty-six and seven-tenths percent of sample participants responded they were neutral as to whether a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration was a necessary

qualification for school superintendent candidates. Fifteen and one-tenth percent of sample participants responded in disagreement (13.6%) or in strong disagreement (1.5%) that a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

At Least 4 to 10 years of Experience in Education. Eighty-eight and four tenths' percent of sample participants responded in either agreement (23.1%) or in strong agreement (65.3%) that at least 4 to 10 years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Six and one-half percent of sample participants responded they were neutral as to whether at least 4 to 10 years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Five percent of sample participants (1 + 4%) responded in either disagreement (1%) or in strong disagreement (4%) that at least four to 10 years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

10+ Years of Experience in Education. Eighty and nine tenths' percent of sample participants responded in either agreement (59.8%) or in strong agreement (21.1%) that 10+ years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Twelve percent of sample participants responded they were neutral as to whether 10+ years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Six and one-half percent (6 + .5%) of sample participants responded in either disagreement (6%) or in strong disagreement .5%) that 10+ years of experience in education was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

Career Experience Within the Same District. Forty-five and seven tenths' percent of sample participants responded in either agreement (27.1%) or in strong agreement (18.6%) that career experience within the same school district was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Thirty-one and seven-tenths' percent of sample participants responded they were neutral as to whether career experience within the same school district was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. Twenty-two and one-sixth percent of sample participants responded in disagreement (17.6%) or in strong disagreement (5%) that career experience within the same school district was a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates.

Important Leadership Skills Related to School Superintendent Longevity

As illustrated in Table 4, the principal researcher identified in the extant literature, leadership skills indicators related to school superintendent longevity and therefore included them in the survey for sample participant responses: (a) effective communication, (b) balancing task and relationship behaviors, (c) trust and confidence in employees, (d) inspiring employees, (e) advocating for employees, (f) financial acumen, (g) critical thinking and problem solving, (h) fairness and integrity, (i) good listeners, and (j) confident and positive. Among combined sample participant responses, extremely important (15.6%) and essential (82.4%), ninety-eight percent of sample participants rated fairness and integrity first in importance. Ninety-seven and one-half percent of sample participants rated critical thinking and problem solving either extremely important (31.7%) or essential (65.8%). Ninety-seven and one-half percent of sample participants rated trust and confidence in employees either extremely important (24.6%) or essential (72.9%). Ninety-seven and one tenth percent of sample participants rated effective

communication either extremely important (17.6%) or essential (79.5%). Ninety-seven

and one tenth percent of sample participants rated advocating for employees either

extremely important (24.6%) or essential (72.4%).

Table 4

Important Leadership Skills Related to School Superintendent Longevity

Leadership Skill	Not Important at All		Somewhat Important		Moderately Important		Extremely Important		Essential	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Effective Communication	1	0.5	2	1.0	3	1.5	35	17.6	158	79.5
Balancing Task and Relationship Behaviors	1	0.5	2	1.0	17	8.5	89	44.7	90	45.2
Trust and Confidence in Employees	1	0.5	1	0.5	3	1.5	49	24.6	145	72.9
Inspiring Employees	0	0	0	0	20	10.0	67	33.7	112	56.3
Advocating for Employees	0	0	0	0	6	3.0	49	24.6	144	72.4
Financial Acumen	1	0.5	2	1.0	26	13.1	86	43.2	84	44.2
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	0	0	0	0	5	2.5	63	31.7	131	65.8
Fairness and Integrity	0	0	0	0	4	2.0	31	15.6	164	82.4
Good Listeners	0	0	2	1.0	10	5.0	74	37.5	113	56.8
Confident and Positive	0	0	1	0.5	10	5.0	79	39.7	109	54.8

Table 5

Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement

Longevity Type and Impact	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
School Superintendent Longevity Within the Hiring State Will Increase Student Achievement in the Hiring District	4	2	17	8.5	55	27.6	87	43.7	36	18.1
School Superintendent Longevity Within the Hiring District Will Increase Student Achievement in the Hiring District	2	1.0	20	10.1	47	23.6	91	45.7	39	19.6
School Superintendent Longevity of Four to 10 Years Will Have Greatest Impact on Implementing And Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement	2	1.0	23	11.6	42	21.1	87	43.7	45	22.6
School Superintendent Longevity of More than 10 Years Will Have the Greatest Impact on Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement	9	4.5	58	29.1	58	29.1	63	31.7	25	12.6

One hundred percent of sample participants rated inspiring employees, advocating for employees, financial acumen and fairness and integrity, either moderately important, extremely important or essential. Ninety-nine and one-half percent of sample participants rated confident and positive either moderately important (5%), extremely important (39.7%) or essential (54.8%). Ninety-nine percent of sample participants rated trust and

confidence in employees either moderately important (1.5%), extremely important (24.6%) or essential (72.9%). Ninety-eight and six-tenths percent of sample participants (1.5 + 17.6 + 79.5%) rated effective communication either moderately important (1.5%), extremely important (17.6%) or essential (79.5%). Ninety-eight and four-tenths percent of sample participants rated balancing task and relationship behaviors either moderately important (8.5%), extremely important (44.7%) or essential (45.7%). Ninety-four and eight tenths' of sample participants rated good listeners either moderately important (5%), extremely important (37.5%) or essential (56.8%).

Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement

As illustrated in Table 5, the principal researcher identified the following school superintendent longevity types and impacts on student achievement in the extant literature and therefore included in them in the survey for sample participant responses: (a) school superintendent longevity within the hiring state will increase student achievement in the hiring district, (b) school superintendent longevity within the hiring district will increase student achievement in the hiring district, (c) school superintendent longevity of four to 10 years will have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement, and (d) school superintendent longevity of more than 10 years will the greatest impact on monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement. Among school superintendent longevity types and impacts on student achievement, sample participants rated their level of agreement with the variable statement: School superintendent longevity of 4 to 10 years will have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement first in priority among statement variables. Sixty-six

and three-tenths' percent of sample participants either agreed (43.7%) or strongly agreed 22.6%) with the variable statement. Twelve and six-tenths' percent of sample participants responded in disagreement (1.0%) or in strong disagreement (11.6%) with the variable statement.

Sample participants also rated their level of agreement with the variable statement: Superintendent longevity within the hiring district will increase student achievement in the hiring district second highest. Sixty-five and three-tenths' percent of sample participants (45.7 + 19.6%) either agreed (45.7%) or strongly agreed (19.6%) with the statement variable. Eleven and one-tenth percent of sample participants (1.0 + 10.1%) either disagreed (1.0%) or strongly disagreed (10.1%) with the variable statement.

Sample participants further rated their level of agreement with the variable statement: School superintendent longevity within the hiring state will increase student achievement in the hiring district third highest in priority. Sixty-two and eight-tenths' of sample participants either agreed (43.7%) or strongly agreed (18.1%) with the variable statement. Ten and one-half percent of sample participants (2 + 8.5%) either disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (8.5%) with the variable statement.

Finally, sample participants rated the variable statement: School superintendent longevity of more than 10 years will have the greatest impact on monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement. Forty-four and three-tenths' percent of sample participants either agreed (31.7%) or strongly agreed (12.6%) with the variable statement. Thirty-three and six-tenths' of sample participants either disagreed (4.5%) or strongly disagreed (29.1%) with the variable statement.

Table 6

Statistical Testing: Perceptions of Factors Related to the Role of School Superintendent

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Current Job	School Superintendent Longevity	School Superintendent Leadership Skills	Personnel Support	School District Culture and Climate	Student Achievement
Kruskal-Wallis					
H	6.036	2.056	.578	2.672	10.123
df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.049	.358	.749	.263	.006

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Data Analysis and Findings for Research Question 2

The second research question study guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent? A Kruskal-Wallis *H* test for analyses of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with current job as the IV and Survey Question 5 components as DVs. As illustrated in Table 6, testing revealed, current job played a significant role in educators' perceptions of school superintendent longevity (H (2, N = 199) = 6.04, p = .05) and student achievement (H (2, N = 199) = 10.12, p = .02) as factors of the role of school superintendent. Between sample subgroups, the mean rank sum was highest among school leaders for both school superintendent longevity (116.60) and student achievement (117.50), as evidenced in Table 7.

School leaders rated school superintendent longevity as more essential (*M* rank = 116.60, *n* = 41) compared to district leaders (*M* rank = 106.74, *n* = 27) and school teachers (*M* rank = 93.42, *n* = 131). School leaders ranked student achievement as more important (*M* rank = 117.50, *n* = 41) compared to district leaders (*M* rank = 114.56, *n* =

27) and school teachers (*M* rank = 91.52, *n* = 131). The other results failed to reach

significance, as illustrated in Table 6.

Table 7

Rankings Among Sample Participants' Perceptions of Factors of the Role of School Superintendent Grouped by Current Job

Factors of The Role of School Superintendent	Current Job	*n*	Mean Rank
School Superintendent Longevity			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	93.42
	School Leader	41	116.60
	District Leader	27	106.74
School Superintendent Leadership Skills			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	97.33
	School Leader	41	101.77
	District Leader	27	110.28
Personnel Support			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	100.87
	School Leader	41	101.67
	District Leader	27	93.24
School District Organizational Culture and Climate			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	96.10
	School Leader	41	109.60
	District Leader	27	104.33
Student Achievement			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	91.52
	School Leader	41	117.50
	District Leader	27	114.56

Data Analysis and Findings for Research Question 3

The third research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect

educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications school superintendent candidates? A

Kruskal-Wallis *H* test for ANOVA was conducted, with current job as the IV and

components of survey six question as the DVs. As illustrated in Table 8, testing revealed,

current job played a significant role in educators' perceptions of 10+ years' career experience in education (H (2, N = 199) = 13.834, p = .001), classroom teaching experience (H (2, N = 199) = 11.640, p = .003), career experience within the same school district (H (2, N = 199) = 8.827, p =.012) and a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration (H (2, N = 199) = 8.002, p = .018), as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates.

Table 8

Statistical Testing: Perceptions of Necessary Qualifications for School Superintendent Candidates

Current Job	Classroom Teaching Experience	Doctoral Degree	Four to 10 Years' Career Experience in Education	10+ Years' Career Experience in Education	Career Experience Within the Same School District
Kruskal-Wallis					
H	11.640	8.002	1.404	13.834	8.827
df	2	2	2	2	2
Asymph. Sig.	.003	.018	.496	.001	.012

As illustrated in Table 9, Teachers rated career experience within the same school district as more essential as compared to school leaders (*M* rank = 89.72, n = 41) and district leaders (*M* rank = 76.70, n = 27). Teachers rated a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration as more essential as compared to school leaders (*M* rank = 95.51, n = 41) and as compared to district leaders (*M* rank = 74.37, n = 27). Teachers rated 10+ years' career experience in education as more essential as compared to school leaders (*M* rank = 104.74, n = 41) and as compared to district leaders (*M* rank = 66.28, n = 27).

Table 9

Rankings Among Sample Participants' Perceptions of Necessary Qualifications for School Superintendent Candidates

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Qualification	Current Job	*n*	Mean Rank
Classroom Teaching Experience			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	103.79
	School Leader	41	104.27
	District Leader	27	75.1
Doctoral Degree			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	106.6
	School Leader	41	95.51
	District Leader	27	74.37
Four to 10 Years' Career Experience in Education			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	102.08
	School Leader	41	99.96
	District Leader	27	89.94
10+ Year's Career Experience in Education			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	105.47
	School Leader	41	104.7
	District Leader	27	66.28
Career Experience Within the Same School District			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	108.02
	School Leader	41	89.72
	District Leader	27	76.7

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The mean rank sum was highest among school leaders for classroom teaching experience (*M* rank = 104.27, *n* = 27) as a necessary qualification for candidates for school superintendents. School leaders rated classroom teaching experience more essential as compared to school teachers (*M* rank = 103.79, *n* = 131) and as compared to district leaders (*M* rank = 75.11, *n* = 27). The other result failed to reach significance.

Data Analysis and Findings for Research Question 4

The fourth research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity? A Kruskal-Wallis *H* test for ANOVA was conducted with current job as the IV and components of survey question seven as the DVs. As illustrated in Table 10, testing revealed, current job played a significant role in educators' perceptions of advocating for employees (H (2, N = 199) = 16.73, p < .001), fairness and integrity (H (2, N = 199) = 8.02, p = .18), and trust and confidence in employees (H (2, N = 199) = 7.48, p = .024) as leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity.

Table 10

Statistical Testing: Perceptions of Important School Superintendent Leadership Skills Related to Longevity

Leadership Skill	Kruskal-Wallis *H*	df	Asymp. Sig.
Effective Communication	1.846	2	.397
Balancing Task and Relationship Behaviors	5.270	2	.072
Trust and Confidence in Employees	7.478	2	.024
Inspiring Employees	4.950	2	.084
Advocating for Employees	16.731	2	.000
Financial Acumen	3.846	2	.146
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	.832	2	.660
Fairness and Integrity	8.019	2	.018
Good Listeners	2.976	2	.226
Confident and Positive	1.210	2	.546

As illustrated in Appendix D, between sample subgroups, the mean rank sum was highest among school leaders for advocating for employees as a leadership skill related to school superintendent longevity (M rank = 103.95, n = 41). School leaders rated advocating for employees more essential as compared to teachers (M rank = 100.16, n = 131) and as compared to district leaders (M rank = 93.22, n = 27). The mean rank sum was highest among school teachers for fairness and integrity as a leadership skill related to school superintendent longevity (M rank = 103.23, n = 131) as compared with school leaders (M rank =102.38, n = 41) and as compared with district leaders (M rank = 80.74, n = 27). Finally, the mean sum rank was highest among school teachers for trust and confidence in employees as leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity (M = 104.89, n = 131). School teachers rated trust and confidence in employees more essential as compared with school leaders (M rank = 97.98, n = 41) and as compared to district leaders *(M rank = 79.33, n = 27).* The other results failed to reach significance.

Data Analysis and Findings for Research Question 5

The fifth research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement? A Kruskal-Wallis H test for ANOVA was conducted with current job as the IV and components of survey question eight as the DVs. As illustrated in Table 11, testing revealed, current job played a significant role in educators' perceptions of the variable statement: School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement (H (2, N = 199) = 6.314, p = .043). As illustrated in Appendix D, between sample subgroups, the mean sum rank was highest among school leaders for the variable

statement: School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement (M rank = 115.41, n = 41). School leaders rated the variable statement more essential as compared to school teachers (M rank = 98.85, n = 131), and as compared to district leaders (M rank = 94.61, n =27). The other results failed to reach significance.

Table 11

Statistical Testing: The Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement

Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
Superintendent Career Experience Within the State will Lead to Increased Student Achievement in the School Superintendents District in the Same State	.422	2	.810
Increased Longevity Among Effective School Superintendents in a District will Lead to Increased Student Achievement in that District	4.978	2	.063
School Superintendents Should Serve from Four-to 10 years to Have the Greatest Impact on Implementing and Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement	6.314	2	.043
School Superintendents Should Serve More than 10 years to Have the Greatest Impact on Implementing and Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement	.241	2	.886

Summary of Findings

Data analysis revealed, study participants perceived school superintendent longevity, leadership skills, personnel support, school district culture and climate and

student achievement as key factors related to the role of school superintendent. Additionally, study participants perceived classroom teaching experience, a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration, at least four to 10 years, 10+ years of experience in education, and career experience within the same school district as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. Current job was statistically significant in educators' perceptions.

Among sample participant subgroups based on current job, school leaders rated superintendent longevity and student achievement higher than school teachers and district leaders as key factors related to the role. Among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, school leaders ranked classroom teaching experience higher than teachers and district leaders as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. School teachers ranked a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration, 10+ years of experience in education and career experience within the same school district higher than school leaders and district leaders as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. Among important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity, school teachers rated advocating for employees, trust and confidence in employees and fairness and integrity higher than school leaders and district leaders did. Finally, in connection with the impact of school superintendent longevity on student achievement, school leaders rated the variable statement: School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement higher than did teachers or district leaders.

School Leaders

School leader participants ranked school superintendent longevity and student achievement as most essential key factors. They also ranked teaching experience higher than school teachers and district leaders. Finally, school leaders ranked 4 to 10 years' experience as the best fit for school superintendent longevity impacting student achievement.

School Teachers

School teachers rated 10+ teaching experience, experience in the hiring district and a doctoral degree higher than did school leaders and district leaders among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. School teachers also ranked fairness and integrity, trust and confidence and advocating for employees higher than did school leaders and district leaders among important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity.

In Chapter 5, the principal researcher will elaborate and interpret these findings. In addition, she will discuss study implications and limitations, including reliability and validity and threats to validity. Finally, the principal researcher will conclude and recommend future directions for research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of the study was twofold: (a) to determine Florida educators' perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement; and (b) to determine how Florida educators' current job affects their perceptions of the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications of school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement. The following five research questions guided the study: 1. What are Florida educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement? 2. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of factors of the role of the school superintendent? 3. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates? 4. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity? 5. How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement?

The principal researcher determined demographic variables among a sample of professional Florida K-12 public school educators employed within Florida's 67 school districts. Independent demographic variables among sample participants included: gender, current job, highest level of completed education and years of experience as an

educator. Dependent variables included: qualifications, leadership skills, longevity, and student achievement.

Summary of Findings

Data analysis revealed, study participants perceived school superintendent longevity, leadership skills, personnel support, school district culture and climate and student achievement as key factors related to the role of school superintendent. Additionally, study participants perceived classroom teaching experience, a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration, at least four to 10 years, 10+ years of experience in education, and career experience within the same school district as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. Current job was statistically significant in educators' perceptions.

Among sample participant subgroups based on current job, school leaders rated superintendent longevity and student achievement higher than school teachers and district leaders as key factors related to the role. Among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, school leaders ranked classroom teaching experience higher than teachers and district leaders as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. School teachers ranked a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration, 10+ years of experience in education and career experience within the same school district higher than school leaders and district leaders as necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. Among important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity, school teachers rated advocating for employees, trust and confidence in employees and fairness and integrity higher than school leaders and district leaders did. Finally, in connection with the impact

of school superintendent longevity on student achievement, school leaders rated the variable statement: School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement higher than did teachers or district leaders.

School Leaders

School leader participants ranked school superintendent longevity and student achievement as most essential key factors. They also ranked teaching experience higher than school teachers and district leaders. Finally, school leaders ranked 4 to 10 years' experience as the best fit for school superintendent longevity impacting student achievement.

School Teachers

School teachers rated 10+ teaching experience, experience in the hiring district and a doctoral degree higher than did school leaders and district leaders among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates. School teachers also ranked fairness and integrity, trust and confidence and advocating for employees higher than did school leaders and district leaders among important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity.

Elaboration and Interpretation of Findings

All Research Findings

The majority of sample participants were school teachers and overall, sample participants rated school district culture and climate higher than other key factors of the role of school superintendent. Statistical testing revealed significance in participant school leaders' ranking of both school superintendent longevity and student achievement

as key factors of the role. Overall, the majority of sample participants rated teaching experience most highly as a school superintendent candidate qualification and statistical testing revealed significance in participant school leaders' rating of teaching experience. Statistical testing revealed highest significance among qualifications as 10+ years' experience in education among participant school teachers. Testing also revealed statistical significance for experience in the hiring district and a doctoral degree among study participant school teachers. Overall sample participants rated equally highest, fairness and integrity, trust and confidence, and advocating for employees, among important leadership skills for school superintendents. Statistical testing revealed significance in participant school teachers for these leadership skills as well. Finally, sample participants rated 4 to 10 years' school superintendent longevity the best fit for impact on student achievement overall. Statistical testing revealed significance for participant school leaders for this tenure term as well as the best fit for impacting student achievement.

Research Question 1

The first research question guiding the study was: What are Florida educators' perceptions of key factors of the role of the school superintendent, necessary qualifications of candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement? Study participants rated school district culture and climate the most important factor related to the role of school superintendent. Among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, participants ranked classroom teaching experience highest. Participants rated fairness and integrity highest among important leadership skills related to school superintendent longevity. Finally, among

school superintendent longevity types and impacts on student achievement, sample participants rated their highest the variable statement: School superintendent longevity of 4 to 10 years will have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement.

Key Factors of the Role. While leadership skills, student achievement and longevity were subjects for expanded research within the scope of the study, addressed further in Research Questions 4 and 5, the school superintendent's impact on school district culture and climate and personnel support were not. As Bridges, Plancher & Toledo (2019), Eadie (2003), Henrikson (2018), Kamler (2009) and Plotts and Gutmore (2014) suggested, school superintendents will be held accountable for failures within the school district, whether the failure is poor student test scores, poor school district culture and climate or low levels of personnel support. The school superintendent's impact on school district culture and climate and personnel support are subjects for future research that were beyond the scope of the study.

Necessary Qualifications for School Superintendent Candidates. Among necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, sample participants rated classroom teaching experience highest. As the majority of sample participants were teachers, it was not a surprise to find that they wanted a school superintendent who would understand the demands of their roles and take those demands into consideration in decision making. Not only are teachers uniquely influential in student achievement (Berkowicz & Myers, 2014), but many go on to the school superintendent role without ever having contemplating it when they began their career (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Finnan et al., 2015).

Important Leadership Skills. Among important leadership skills, sample participants rated fairness and integrity most important. Sample participants also rated highly, trust and confidence in employees and advocating for employees. These findings suggest that relationships with employees and not merely with school board members are critical for men and women in the role of school superintendent, affirming the need for future research about school superintendent impact on school district culture and climate and personnel support.   As concluded by Starr (2017, p. 17), "nobody is in a better position to strengthen a school system's culture than it's superintendent".

Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement. Among variable statements about school superintendent longevity and its impact on student achievement, sample members rated highest the variable statement: School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement. This finding affirmed conclusions in the extant literature. For example, Shibler (2006) concluded 10 years' longevity was optimum to achieve goals. Domenach (2015), suggested five years' longevity was sufficient for a school superintendent to achieve goals. Similarly, Sampson (2018) suggested, if a school superintendent could achieve five years' longevity in the role, he or she would likely be able to achieve eight to 10 years' longevity in the role.

Research Question 2

The second research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of key factors of the role of the school superintendent? Testing revealed, current job was statistically significant in relationship to sample participants'

perceptions of both school superintendent longevity and student achievement. School leaders ranked both superintendent longevity and student achievement more essential than did school teachers and district leaders. Among sample participant subgroups, the mean rank sum was highest for both dependent variables among school leaders. As school leaders are accountable for school site student achievement, among other issues, maintaining a positive and stable relationship with a school superintendent with longevity supports school leaders' professional goals. As Wright (2017), explained, relationship-building was the most important factor in school superintendent longevity. Similarly, Harvey (2019) concluded school superintendents in the U.S. have an obligation to effectively communicate on behalf of U.S. schools (including school leaders), and make the case that the U.S. has best public schools in the world, despite the fact that many students in the U.S. are currently living in third world conditions.

Research Question 3

The third research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates? Testing revealed, current job was statistically significant in explaining sample participants rating the variable statement: School superintendents should have 10+ years of experience in education in education prior to assuming the role. Specifically, the mean rank was highest among the teacher subgroup in the study sample. As teachers are frequently deemed most accountable for student achievement (Berkowicz & Myers, 2014), school superintendent experience of 10+ years (Shibler, 2006) supports stability in teaching and testing goals and expectations, supporting school teachers' professional goals (Kominiak, 2016). Based upon the findings for Research Question 1 regarding the

importance of leadership focus on employees and based upon the average years of career experience in education among the majority of study participants, it is understandable that teachers would want a school superintendent to have as much in-field experience as them.

The principal researcher determined current job was also statistically significant in educators' perceptions of classroom teaching experience. As previously reported in Chapter 4, the mean rank sum was highest among school leaders for classroom teaching experience. A possible explanation for this finding is that participants in the study sample's school leader subgroup were uniquely aware of a need for instructional leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Harvey et al., 2013, Holye et al., 2005), that they perceived only candidates with classroom teaching experience could fully appreciate.

Current job was statistically significant in participant school teachers' perceptions of career experience within the same school district as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. A possible explanation for this finding would be a possible belief among participants in the study sample's teacher subgroup that candidates chosen from within the school district would better relate to their unique needs and the needs of students. Previous studies involving statistical testing for in-district career experience failed to reach significance (William, 2018). More research is required into this topic.

Finally, current job was statistically significant in participant school teachers' perception of a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership and or administration as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates. As

previously reported in Chapter 4, the mean rank sum was also highest among school teachers. Additionally, over 65% percent of study sample participants responded they completed a master's degree or higher. Thus, a possible explanation for the finding would be a possible belief among participants in the study sample's teacher subgroup that a candidate with a doctoral degree would be more capable of becoming socialized into the role and its responsibilities (Orr, 2006, Wyland, 2016).

Research Question 4

The fourth research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of school superintendent leadership skills as they relate to longevity? Current job was statistically significant in educators' perceptions of the importance of advocating for employees, fairness and integrity and trust and confidence in employees. The mean rank sum among the study sample's teacher subgroup was highest for each of these dependent variable components. An explanation for this finding might be a possible belief among teacher subgroup participants that the global pandemic, in addition to the advent of high stakes testing and accountability put them at-risk for job stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout, creating a need for teacher advocacy at the highest levels of school district organizations (Jennings, 2021; Kasalak & Dagyar, 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). As Tran, Hardie and Cunningham (2020) highlighted, superintendents must support teachers and be employee-centered when dealing with human resource issues.

Research Question 5

The fifth research question guiding the study was: How does current job affect educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student

achievement? The principal researcher determined current job was statistically significant in educators' perceptions of the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement. Specifically, school leader participants ranked the variable statement: School Superintendents should serve from four- to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement higher than school teachers and district leaders did. Plotts and Gutmore (2014) urged district leaders and boards to retain their superintendents, offer longer tenure, create more continuity and longevity based upon their finding of positive correlation between school superintendent longevity and student achievement. As concluded by Sampson (2018), if school superintendents could serve with five years' longevity, they were likely to be able to serve even longer.

Implications of Findings

The study research findings affirmed the importance of the theoretical framework, including organizational development theory, organizational learning theory, and systems theories. The statistically significant rankings by school leader participants for: (a) longevity as a key factor of the school superintendents' role, (b) student achievement as a key factor of the school superintendents' role, (c) teaching experience as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, and (d) 4 to 10 years' longevity as the best fit to impact student achievement mark the importance of school superintendent continuity for success among school leaders, inclusive of professional development, indicative of systems theories (Trust, Carpenter & Krutka, 2021). The statistically significant rankings by school teacher participants for: (a) 10+ years' experience as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, (b) experience in the hiring

district as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, (c) a doctoral degree in educational and or leadership and administration, (d) fairness and integrity as an important leadership skill related to school superintendent longevity, (e) trust and confidence in employees as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates and advocating for employees as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates is suggestive of the importance of collaboration and engagement between stakeholders including school superintendents, district leaders, school leaders and teachers, from organizational development and learning theories and systems theories standpoints (Desai, 2018). Through leadership, collaboration, professional development, commitment and support, school superintendents can empower teachers and have a measurable effect on student achievement (Williams, Tabernik & Krivak, 2009). School superintendents can take ownership over district-wide goals, lead and inspire stakeholders for systemic improvement (Starr, 2017).

The study provided clear findings of perceptions of internal stakeholders, as to key factors of the role of school superintendent. The study also provided clear findings as to identified differences and similarities in the perceptions of the internal stakeholders related to necessary qualifications for school superintendent, important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity, and the impact of the school superintendent's longevity on student achievement. While the study focused only on stakeholders internal to the school system, it did not address the perceptions of the role of the superintendent of external stakeholders such as parents, the general school community, or students.

With the likelihood that there would also be differences in perceptions among the external stakeholders, a search for hiring a new school superintendent should include processes to gain feedback from both internal and external stakeholders related to the new school superintendent's qualifications. Also, the School Board should make it clear to the school community of how they will take into consideration the different perceptions of the stakeholders in making the final hiring decision. This will help make the hiring process, to the extent possible, more transparent to the school community.

The School Superintendent Longevity Survey will provide a future framework for communicating with stakeholders. By providing relevant data for specific, relevant and targeted participant samples, school districts and boards can inform recruitment and retainment decision-making for the role of school superintendent. The survey can be modified to include more stakeholders, both internal and external to the school district, among participant subgroups. School boards can utilize survey results to communicate back to stakeholders and affirm decision-making commitments and support for school superintendent hires, strengthening school district organizational culture and climate and improving academic achievement.

Limitations of Findings

There were limitations to the study. The principal researcher described findings and attempted to generalize findings from the sample to the population, as is typically the goal when approaching research via survey design (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). However, the principal researcher was not be able to establish direct cause and effect relationships. For example, the principal researcher did not determine any causal relationships between organizational culture and climate and school superintendent

longevity, nor between personnel support and school superintendent longevity, nor between leadership skills and school superintendent longevity. As Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) opined, "[n]onexperimental research is primarily used to explain or predict relationships or to describe and measure the degree of association (relationship) among variables" (p. 118). Herein, the principal researcher ultimately determined the study research to be explanatory with respect to research questions two through five, only in connection with the independent demographic variable current job.

Reliability and Validity

The principal researcher's survey instrument was the cornerstone for the study. Although a panel of experts performed formative and summative review of the survey, although the principal researcher revised the survey and respondents self-administered a pilot survey, this was the first time the School Superintendent Longevity Survey was used for the purpose of educational research. Therefore, the content validity of the survey was determined rather than its reliability. A determination of reliability may be a valuable subject for future research.

Threats to Validity. Limitations included threats to validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Creswell (2015) described such threats as "specific reasons for why we can be wrong when we make an inference" (p. 624). Any condition that compromised the validity related to the research design was determined a threat. In this nonexperimental explanatory approach and cross-sectional correlative and regressive survey research design threats existed.

Sample Bias. Bias among participants was a foreseeable threat to external validity. Although the principal researcher followed random sampling procedures,

including identifying a target population, selecting a subgroup for study, and planning to generalize findings to the population, it was foreseeable that respondents elected to participate based on common bias. Kennedy and Edmonds (2017) found sample characteristics (i.e., sampling bias) to be the most recognizable threat or limitation to external validity for survey approaches. They defined sample characteristics as "the extent to which the sample represents the population from which it is drawn" (p. 9).

Survey participation was voluntary. Thus, the possibility that sample participants may have shared common bias that non-participants in the population did not share, was a potential threat to the current study. Common bias may remain a limitation in the generalizability of findings from the sample to the population.

Construct Validity and Statistical Conclusion Validity. Survey data consists of self-reported information. Therefore, the study data can only be said to have related to what participants thought rather than what they did. As Creswell (2015) described, "one drawback of attitudinal measures is that they do not provide direct evidence of specific behaviors" (p. 151). Additionally, the survey could not control for all variables that might have explained relationships that may existed among educators' perceptions of key factors related to the role of school superintendent, necessary qualifications for school superintendent candidates, important leadership skills, longevity and its impact on student achievement. Construct and conclusion validity threats were potential limitations related to statistical power and statistical conclusion validity.

Conclusion

The principal researcher developed a study instrument, The School Superintendent Longevity Survey, after completing a review of relevant literature related

to the problem described in chapter one. After successfully piloting the instrument, the principal researcher invited potential participants from the target population of professional Florida K-12 public school educators to self-administer the survey online. The response rate was 19.9%. The majority of study sample participants were female teachers, possessed a master's degree or higher and had 10 years of experience as an educator.

Overall, sample participants ranked school district culture and climate, leadership skills, personnel support, student achievement and longevity as moderately important to essential, in descending order. Sample participants, generally agreed classroom teaching experience, at least 4 to 10 years of experience in education, 10+ years of experience in education, a doctoral degree in education and or organizational leadership and or administration and career experience within the same school district were important qualifications for school superintendent candidate (in descending order). Overall, sample participants ranked inspiring employees, advocating for employees, financial acumen, critical thinking and problem solving, and fairness and integrity highest among important school superintendent leadership skills related to longevity. The majority of study sample participants agreed with the variable statement: School superintendent longevity of four- to 10 years will have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for student achievement. The majority also agreed with the statement: Increased longevity among effective school superintendents in a district will lead to increased student achievement in that district. Finally, the majority of sample participants agreed with the statement: Superintendent career experience within the state will lead to increased student achievement in the school superintendents district in the same state.

The principal researcher determined through nonparametric Kruskall-Wallis *H* testing for ANOVAs, statistically significant rankings by school leader participants and school teacher participants. School leader participants' perceptions were significant for: (a) longevity as a key factor of the school superintendents' role, (b) student achievement as a key factor of the school superintendents' role, (c) teaching experience as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, and (d) 4 to 10 years' longevity as the best fit to impact student achievement. School teacher participants' perceptions were significant for: (a) 10+ years' experience as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, (b) experience in the hiring district as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates, (c) a doctoral degree in educational and or leadership and administration, (d) fairness and integrity as an important leadership skill related to school superintendent longevity, (e) trust and confidence in employees as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates and advocating for employees as a necessary qualification for school superintendent candidates

Future Research Directions

Based on the study findings, the principal researcher recommends future research into longitudinal studies of school superintendent longevity, including qualifications for school superintendent candidates, leaderships skills related to school superintendent longevity, and the impact of school superintendent longevity on student achievement. Such studies would focus on relationships between variables to determine the extent to which men and women in the role of school superintendent can influence school district culture and climate and personnel support and which leadership skills related most closely to such influence in given school districts. The principal researcher also

recommends future research into organizational culture and climate as a key factor related to the role of school superintendent. Finally, the principal researcher recommends additional future research into the relevance of school superintendent experience in the hiring district and its impact on longevity and student achievement.

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Appendix A

School Superintendent Longevity Survey
Invitation Letter

Dear Educator,

As a student researcher, I am conducting a nonexperimental educational study, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. My study topic is school superintendent longevity. This summer, I will measure educator perceptions regarding the role of the school superintendent, qualifications for the role, leadership skills, longevity in the role, and student achievement. I will also determine relationships among those perceptions. My population is Florida K-12 public-school educators.

Your response to my study instrument, the School Superintendent Longevity Survey, can add to the extant research on the topic. Your participation in the study is voluntary and anonymous and you will self-administer the 10-question survey in five minutes. Neither email addresses nor other identifying information will be collected.

Attached, you will find a participation letter containing a link to the School Superintendent Longevity Survey, as authorized by Nova Southeastern University. Please take a moment to review the participation letter, then navigate to the School Superintendent Longevity Survey, via the link provided at the conclusion of the letter.

I greatly appreciate your time and participation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Natalie P. Bruzzese, M.Ed.
Nova Southeastern University
Fischler College of Education

Appendix B

School Superintendent Longevity Survey
Invitation Follow-Up Letter

Dear Educator,

If you have not yet had the opportunity to self-administer the voluntary and anonymous School Superintendent Longevity survey, please consider doing so today. As a student researcher, I am conducting this nonexperimental educational study, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. My research on K-12 public-school educator perceptions and the role of school superintendent, qualifications for the role, leadership skills, longevity in the role, and student achievement will add to extant research on the topic of school superintendent longevity, and it will enhance understanding.

Once again, your participation in this research is voluntary and anonymous. You will be able to self-administer the 10-question survey in five minutes. Neither email addresses nor other identifying information will be collected.

Attached, you will find a participation letter, containing a link to the School Superintendent Longevity Survey, as authorized by Nova Southeastern University. Please take a moment to review the participation letter then navigate to the School Superintendent Longevity Survey, via the link provided.

I greatly appreciate your time and participation.

Sincerely,
Natalie P. Bruzzese, M.Ed.
Nova Southeastern University
Fischler College of Education

Appendix C

School Superintendent Longevity Survey

School Superintendent Longevity Survey

Section I - Demographic Information
Please select the most appropriate response.

* Required

1. **What is your gender?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Female

   ◯ Male

2. **Which position would you most identify as your current job?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ School Teacher/Academic Coach

   ◯ School Leader - Principal/Ass't Principal

   ◯ District Leader - Superintendent/Ass't Superintendent/Director/Ass't Director

3. **What is your highest level of completed education?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Bachelor's Degree

   ◯ Master's Degree

   ◯ Post-Master's Degree

   ◯ Doctoral or Professional Degree

4. **Approximately how many years of experience do you have as an educator?** *
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Less than four years

   ◯ Four - 10 years

   ◯ More than 10

School Superintendent Longevity Survey

Section II - Critical Issues Affecting the Role of School Superintendent
Please select the most appropriate response for each statement.

5. **Please rate the following factors as they relate to the role of school superintendent.** *
Mark only one oval per row.

	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Extremely Important	Essential
School Superintendent Longevity	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School Superintendent Leadership skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Personnel Support	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School District Organizational Culture and Climate	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Student Achievement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

6. **Please rate the following statements as they relate to qualifications for candidates for school superintendent.** *
Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
School superintendents should have classroom teaching experience.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should have a doctoral degree in educational and or organizational leadership, and or administration.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should have at least four to 10 years' career experience in education prior to assuming the role.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should have 10 + years' career experience in education prior to assuming the role.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should have career experience within the same school district prior to assuming the role.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. Please rate the following school superintendent leadership skills as they relate to school superintendent longevity. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Moderately important	Extremely important	Essential
Effective communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Balancing task and relationship behaviors	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Trust and confidence in employees	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Inspiring employees	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Advocating for employees	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Financial acumen	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Critical thinking and problem solving	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Fairness and integrity	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Good listeners	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Confident and positive	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

8. Please rate the following statements regarding school superintendent longevity and student achievement, based on your level of agreement. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Superintendent career experience within the state will lead to increased student achievement in the school superintendents district in same state.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Increased longevity among effective school superintendents in a district will lead to increased student achievement in that district.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should serve from four-to 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School superintendents should serve more than 10 years to have the greatest impact on implementing and monitoring strategic planning for improved student achievement.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

School Superintendent Longevity Survey

Section III - Personal experience with school superintendent longevity
Please provide a written response, if applicable.

9. **Describe any positive experience(s) you had related to a superintendent. How long did the superintendent serve in the district?**

10. **Describe any negative experience(s) you had related to a superintendent. How long did the superintendent serve in the district?**

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Appendix D

Subgroup Rankings of Important School Superintendent Leadership Skills
Related to Longevity

Subgroup Rankings of Important School Superintendent Leadership Skills Related to School Superintendent Longevity

Leadership Skills	Current Job	*n*	Mean Rank
Effective Communication			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	98.20
	School Leader	41	99.32
	District Leader	27	109.78
Balancing Task and Relationship Behaviors			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	99.01
	School Leader	41	113.51
	District Leader	27	84.28
Trust and Confidence in Employees			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	104.89
	School Leader	41	97.98
	District Leader	27	79.33
Inspiring Employees			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	106.98
	School Leader	41	98.59
	District Leader	27	115.57
Advocating for Employees			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	100.16
	School Leader	41	103.95
	District Leader	27	93.22
Financial Acumen			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	103.23
	School Leader	41	102.38
	District Leader	27	80.74
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	98.85
	School Leader	41	107.23
	District Leader	27	94.61
Fairness and Integrity			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	103.23
	School Leader	41	102.38
	District Leader	27	80.74
Good Listeners			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	102.19
	School Leader	41	103.21
	District Leader	27	84.48
Confident and Positive			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	98.85
	School Leader	41	107.23
	District Leader	27	94.61

Appendix E

Subgroup Rankings of the Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement

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Impact of School Superintendent Longevity on Student Achievement	Current Job	n	Mean Rank
Superintendent Career Experience Within the State will Lead to Increased Student Achievement in the School Superintendents District in Same State			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	99.29
	School Leader	41	104.56
	District Leader	27	96.54
Increased Longevity Among Effective School Superintendents in a District will Lead to Increased Student Achievement in that District			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	31	94.60
	School Leader	41	116.13
	District Leader	27	101.70
School Superintendents Should Serve From Four-to 10 years to Have the Greatest Impact on Implementing and Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	93.10
	School Leader	41	115.41
	District Leader	27	110.07
School Superintendents Should Serve More than 10 years to Have the Greatest Impact on Implementing and Monitoring Strategic Planning for Improved Student Achievement			
	School Teacher/Academic Coach	131	98.64
	School Leader	41	103.20
	District Leader	27	101.76