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Table of Contents

Board of Editors	2
Sponsorship and Appreciation	3
Research Articles	
The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement: A (Questionable) System of Teacher Accountability and Professional Support	4
by <i>Edward Sloat, PhD; Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, PhD; Kent E. Sabo, PhD</i>	
Transformational Leadership: Creating a Learning Culture in an Age of Accountability	12
by <i>Eric Mayes, PhD and Katchia Gethers, MEd</i>	
Do Years of Experience and Hours of Training Really Matter? Investing in School Leaders' Efficacies and English Learners' Language Development	32
by <i>Pilar Moreno-Recio, EdD; Antonio Corrales, EdD; Amy Orange, EdD; Renee Lastrapes, PhD</i>	
Mission and Scope, Copyright, Privacy, Ethics, Upcoming Themes, Author Guidelines & Publication Timeline	53
AASA Resources	57

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The TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement: A (Questionable) System of Teacher Accountability and Professional Support

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Abstract

In this study, we investigated the factor structure underlying the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement used across the nation for increased teacher-level accountability purposes. We found evidence of poor fit based on the factor structure posited and found large correlations among dimensions, suggesting one-to-two factors with one accounting for the majority of explained variance (i.e., a general or common, underlying factor). We use this evidence to question the validity of the inferences drawn from TAP scores, which is of import when users (e.g., principals) use the factors as independent indicators of teacher effectiveness as theorized, and also of concern when users attach consequences (e.g., merit pay) to the indicators as such. This practice is not warranted as evidenced.

Key Words

teacher accountability, teacher evaluation, accountability policy, factor analysis, high-stakes assessment, performance assessment

Background

Over the past decade, federal and state educational policymakers have enacted multiple reform initiatives in support of improving teacher effectiveness, emphasizing teacher-level accountability systems that come along with, typically peripheral and theoretical systems of teacher-level professional support. Federal legislative acts such as Race to the Top (2011) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waivers awarded to states that adopted stronger teacher accountability systems (Duncan, 2011), for example, prioritized accountability mechanisms tied to measurements of teachers' impacts on their students' academic performance over time, with a tangential purpose that these mechanisms also yield objective data that could be used to support teachers' instructional improvements at the same time.

Respectively, these stronger teacher accountability and support mechanisms continue to be highly (and often solely) reliant upon measurements of teachers' value-added and observational dimensions, whereby statisticians calculate the relatively "more objective" value-added measures to assess the "value" a teacher "adds" to (or detracts from) standardized student achievement indicators from the point students enter a teacher's classroom to the point students leave, and whereby practitioners construct the relatively "more subjective" observational system measures to capture latent teacher effects by breaking down teacher effectiveness into a set of tangible and scorable factors (e.g., organization, student engagement, time management). Ideally, these observable factors can also be reduced, quantified, and then used alongside their relatively "more objective" counterparts (i.e., teachers' value-added estimates) for similar teacher accountability and support purposes, although in terms of teacher support observational systems are

purposefully designed to provide teachers targeted and timely feedback to help teachers improve their professional practice.

Notwithstanding, and despite the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2016) which reinstated state-level control over states' teacher evaluation systems, there remain such "multiple measure" based systems, as well as much controversy over the appropriateness of both measures as valid representations of teachers' effects. This especially of note when consequential decisions (e.g., teacher merit pay, tenure, termination) are to be attached to the output derived via both measures.

Consequently, because not until recently have such observational tools been used within such high-stakes policy environments, have observational systems undergone the research required to support such high-stakes decision-making purposes, or rather warrant the high-stakes decisions to which such observational systems have been increasingly tasked. Put differently, because these systems were not designed for high-stakes accountability but rather informative purposes, whether using observational systems for high-stakes teacher evaluation purposes warrants much more consideration, not to mention research into whether such measurement systems are worthy of their newly elevated tasks.

Teacher Observational Systems

The observational systems now most widely for such increased teacher-level accountability purposes include Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (Danielson Group, n.d.), the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Teachstone, n.d.), Robert Marzano's Causal Teacher Evaluation Model (Marzano, n.d.), California's Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT, n.d.) and, of particular interest in this case, the

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement (hereafter referred to as the TAP; see NIET n.d.a., n.d.b., n.d.c., n.d.d., n.d.e.). These (and really all other) observational systems, if they are to be used for consequential decision-making purposes, require examination of the measurement properties that support their newly charged uses, as again now quite different (i.e., with high-stakes consequences attached) than before (i.e., (in)formal uses meant to support teachers' professional improvements).

In addition, while the application of value-added models in evaluation frameworks continue to be rigorously vetted in the literature, observation-based evaluation systems have received much less empirical attention. Hence, and often by default, many school leaders and practitioners simply assume that just because many of these observational systems have been in use for extended periods of time (i.e., decades), and because they are also habitually advertised as "research-based," this means that they can be used in multiple ways, for multiple purposes, with multiple consequences attached. However, this simply is not true. Just because an observational system might be "tried-and-true" (i.e., used in the past and worked well for formative purposes) and "research-based" (i.e., based on what we know from the research regarding what good teachers should know and be able to do), this does not mean that these observational systems' technical properties are "research-evidenced," or perhaps more importantly "research-warranted" when high-stakes decisions are, quite frankly, at stake.

Purpose

Subsequently, we argue that a research void exists surrounding most (if not all) of the well-known observational systems currently being used across most (if not all) teacher-level

accountability and support systems. We also suggest that use of such systems in high-stakes consequential environments, without supporting research evidence warranting high-stakes use, counts as educational malpractice, and more specifically conflicts with the measurement principles outlined in the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* developed by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME; see AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014). Should research evidence not warrant a high-stakes use, in other words, a state or district may be liable for misuse. See, for example, *Education Week* (2015) for the approximately 15 lawsuits surrounding the alleged misapplications of teachers' high-stakes teacher evaluation data (i.e., teachers' value-added and observational data) for high-stakes decision-making purposes.

Hence, to set forth one example of what might *not* be warranted when using such observational systems, as per our research on one of the aforementioned and most widely used systems marketed and used for high-stakes decision-making purposes, we studied whether the aforementioned TAP should be used for high-stakes purposes including the distribution of teacher merit pay. More specifically, we investigated whether the factors (i.e., the overall concepts, competencies, and characteristics meant to capture teacher effectiveness) and items (i.e., the individual items meant to be observed in order to capture the overall factors) included within the TAP observational rubric function as intended. We also investigated whether the factors advanced by TAP should be, therefore, weighted and used to allocate consequences, including the monetary incentives advanced (see, for example, Jerald & Van Hook, 2011; NIET n.d.d.). We also did this because to our

knowledge this type of investigation does not yet exist, although it is necessary, again, to warrant any such evaluative judgments or decisions.

The TAP System

The TAP is advertised and promoted as a comprehensive model that provides “powerful opportunities for career advancement, professional growth, instructionally focused accountability and competitive compensation for educators” (NIET, n.d.b.), that is in use and

“impacting over 200,000 educators and 2.5 million students,” with “[o]ver 90 percent of participating TAP schools [serving] high-need and diverse areas” (NIET, n.d.c.). TAP is built upon three-factors and 19 items: *Instruction* (n=12 items), *Designing and Planning Instruction* (n=3 items), and the *Learning Environment* (n=4 items), all of which are used to evaluate teacher instructional competency, especially in consequential ways (see also Table 1). These factors and items are also, at least in theory, to help support teachers’ professional development.

Table 1

TAP Factors and Subscales (Items Per Subscale Not Included)

TAP Subscales and Components

Classroom Instruction (n=12)	Designing and Planning Instruction (n=3)	Learning Environment (n=4)
I1: Standards and Objectives	D1: Instructional Plans	L1: Expectations
I2: Motivating Students	D2: Student Work	L2: Managing Student Behavior
I3: Presenting Instructional Content	D3: Assessment	L3: Environment
I4: Lesson Structure and Pacing		L4: Respectful Culture
I5: Activities and Materials		
I6: Questioning		
I7: Academic Feedback		
I8: Grouping Students		
I9: Teacher Content Knowledge		
I10: Teacher Knowledge of Students		
I11: Thinking		
I12: Problem Solving		

During the school year, teachers are evaluated by certified evaluators on at least three different occasions. Some observations are unannounced while others are scheduled, with certified evaluators including mentor/master teachers and school principals, each of which are to be local to each evaluated

teacher’s campus. All evaluators are certified under TAP protocols, and during observational sessions rating scores are assigned to each of the 19 TAP performance items (see Table 1) using a 1 to 5 scale with a rating of 1 representing unsatisfactory performance, 3 representing proficiency, and 5 representing

exemplary performance, after which items are collapsed and then weighted in order to make overall summative decisions about the evaluated teachers and their measured effects.

Following each observation, a post-conference session is also convened between the teacher and observer to review each teacher's evaluation scores and identify/discuss instructional strengths and weaknesses. The intent here (i.e., the formative function) is for teachers to use this information to focus on and improve their professional practice. At the close of each school year, however, a teacher's final (i.e., summative) observational score is also constructed as a weighted composite for the year. It is this composite score with which we were explicitly concerned.

While this weighted measure is also combined with each teacher's academic (i.e., value-added) indicator or estimate, the overall computational measure assumes that the underlying observational metric and its weighted subcomponents are also sound and empirically defensible. While we are certainly also concerned about the soundness and defensibility of the value-added component, as are many other scholars in this area of research, of priority here was whether the intended and marketed uses of TAP's observational system, as "research-based," were also "research-warranted," or rather sound, defensible, and also valid.

Methods

Hence, we assessed the foundational characteristics of the TAP observational system's factor structure within using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) approaches. More specifically, we utilized a single set of unweighted, observational ratings to anchor the analysis to our primary research question: to investigate whether the TAP System's posited

factor structure was supported by empirical evidence.

Sample

We examined teacher observation data for 1,081 teachers collected from a set of 14 school districts in one state. These districts represented a total of 54 schools including 39 elementary (72%), nine middle (17%), and six high schools (11%) enrolling a combined 34,055 K-12 students (just over 3% of the state's total K-12 school enrollment). The race/ethnicity of the student population taught by TAP teachers in the sample included students representing higher proportions, that were statistically significant as compared to state averages, of students who were from racial minority and poor backgrounds. This is likely due to NIET's focus on serving teachers and students from lower income communities/schools.

Procedures

We first applied CFA approaches to evaluate whether the TAP System's posited factor structure was supported by empirical evidence. Because the observation rating information nests teachers within schools, we estimated multilevel CFA models to account for the lack of error independence (Bryne, 2012; Heck & Thomas, 2015; Muthén, 1991, 1994; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002).

We followed this with EFA approaches to more explicitly examine attributes of the latent structures inherent in the empirical data. When generating EFA models, we again recognized both the categorical nature of the measured variables and the nested structure of the data set. For the latter attribute, we estimated two-level EFA models specifying ordered extraction of one-to-four latent factors at the within-school (individual) level while leaving the between-school (group) level unrestricted. For all EFA rotations we utilized the Oblimin (oblique) procedure and based our

warranted factor extractions on review of scree plots, Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues greater than 1.00), size of rotated factor loadings, and factor interpretability.

Based on results obtained from the EFA analysis, inclusion/examination of a primary common factor seemed warranted. In this regard, we reformulated four additional CFA models to evaluate the appropriateness of both second order and bi-factor solutions including a single common factor model. All other sampling, procedural, and other methodological details of our study can be found in Sloat, Amrein-Beardsley, and Sabo (2017).

Findings

As noted, our findings suggest that the posited three-factor TAP observational framework (see Table 1) yields a poor-to-marginal fit (i.e., the factor and items do not function or “hold together” per factor as posited). Rather, a dominant first- or sole factor dimension was present suggesting that the TAP observational rubric is measuring one versus three dominant factors as marketed and claimed. That is, an overall “teacher effectiveness” factor was observed, as measured by the 19-items when combined or collapsed together, that should *not* be separated or much less weighted by factor. Put differently, using the TAP to yield a common (i.e., general) sense of whether a teacher is effective or not might very well be a defensible use of the TAP (and perhaps other) observational system(s), but the factors or subcomponents postulated to more distinctively capture what it means to be an effective teacher as per the TAP (and perhaps other) observational system(s), do not hold, empirically speaking. From an application point of view, this also means that taking

consequential actions (e.g., making merit-based decisions) based on the factor scores as conceived is not warranted as per the evidence.

Moreover, one should not simply assume that without empirical evidence factor-level scores are uniquely measuring factor-level teacher effectiveness behaviors, when instead they might be contributing to a larger, more general, definition of what it means to be an effective teacher, or what it means to *not* be an effective teacher, neither of which can be justifiably apportioned as desired in at least this case (e.g., in terms of weights and monies or other consequences attached to inappropriately weighted measures). Herein exist concerns in both policy and practice, for this observational system and perhaps others.

Conclusions

As noted, classroom observations serve as critical components of many federal and state educational reform initiatives because they appear to provide summative as well as actionable formative information to practitioners. On the latter point, it seems reasonable to expect that teachers use evaluation information in a formative manner to improve targeted areas of professional practice. On the former point, it stands to reason that the use of summative measures within pay-for-performance and other high-stakes decision-based systems may provide incentives (and disincentives) that may motivate teachers to improve specific competencies and increase their overall performance, not to mention student performance, over time. Indeed, TAP developers presume this type of causal pathway whereby such summative and formative evaluation measures should lead to improved

instructional competence, and increased student academic performance over time, again as incentivized (Jerald & Van Hook, 2011; NIET, n.d.d.).

However, results from this study suggest that reliance on different factor-level scores to identify targeted practices, initiate interventions, and consequentially infer on attributes of teachers' professional effectiveness may be suspect, in this and perhaps other cases.

Due to TAP's widespread use this is certainly important to note, however, also given the potential pragmatic implications (e.g., teachers who might contest not receiving a merit pay sum given an unjustifiably weighted score), policy implications (e.g., school leaders who might via local policy require the attachment of high-stakes consequences to one or more factors over other(s)), and potential

legal ramifications (e.g., teachers who might be terminated, at least in part, due to performing poorly on one or more factors over other(s)).

At the same time, while the three-factor structure of the TAP may not be empirically supported, this does not mean that the summative scale constructed from the individual indicators (i.e., representing the general or common factor) does not capture essential elements of quality instructional practices.

Indeed, and accordingly, school leaders, policymakers, and the like might be wiser (and safer) to simply attach high-stakes decisions (and low-stakes decisions for that matter) to the overall scores derived via this, and perhaps other observational systems, until the empirical evidence supports such partitioning practices otherwise.

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Transformational Leadership: Creating a Learning Culture in an Age of Accountability

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Abstract

This article explores the notion that the shifting responsibilities of school principals have required the incorporation of new and different leadership styles that will require advanced skillsets in organizational management and performance and instructional leadership. Further, how teachers perceive their school leader's ability to effectively demonstrate these capacities can have a tremendous impact on student learning and organizational effectiveness. This study seeks to explore how incorporating a blended leadership model using a professional development model can have positive effects on schools and focus school leadership on creating and articulating a clear school vision, promoting a climate of high expectations, effectively distributing leadership responsibilities, and improving teaching and learning, while designing and implementing effective staff development initiatives (Hallinger, 2005; Printy et al., 2003).

Key Words

transformational leadership, instructional leadership, blended leadership, teaching and learning, school climate, educational leadership

Introduction

Leadership Frameworks in Context

Two conceptual models in the field of educational leadership are instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Hallinger, 1992, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). Instructional leadership, narrowly defined, focuses the principal's efforts on student outcomes, teaching, and learning. However, transformational leadership focuses the principal on organizational capacity and is derived from the business community (Hattie, 2012). Marks and Printy (2003) found principals overemphasized transformational leadership.

While transformational leadership is necessary to improve schools, this model by itself is inadequate to achieve high-quality teaching and learning and raise student achievement. They argue that this imbalance will lead to lower student learning outcomes (Marks and Printy, 2003; Hattie, 2015). The shifting responsibilities of principals have required that they incorporate new and different leadership styles that will focus on the members of the organization, their performance and instruction. How teachers perceive their school leader has a great impact on student achievement and organizational capacity. This study sought to explore how incorporating a blended leadership model using a professional development model can have positive effects on schools and focus school leadership on creating a purpose, promoting a climate of high expectations, distributing leadership, improving teaching and learning, and planning staff development (Hallinger, 2005; Printy et al., 2003).

Project objectives

The objectives of the study were to examine the perceptions principals and staff members have regarding the principal leadership practices to

determine (a) which transformational leadership practices principals have determined to be the most effective transformational leadership traits; (b) the frequency with which principals are implementing those transformational leadership practices; and (c) if a relationship exists between the principal's self-perceptions and the perceptions of the teachers they lead. Also, because few have been formally trained by the Hawaii Department of Education in transformational practices, (d) is there a difference between the perception of the teachers and staff whose principals have participated in the training provided by the state, which includes transformational practices, compared to those staff members of principals who have not received formal training and a focus on instructional leadership practices?

Purpose of the Study

Schools are under pressure to improve. Therefore, principals need to reflect upon the key competencies associated with being a transformational leader, while focusing on their perceptions as well as the perceptions of the various stakeholders. Transformational leadership theory is used in various schools and supported by research (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 451), which shows that transformational leadership can assist with making fundamental changes in schools.

The purpose of the study was to explore the transformational leadership practices believed of principals in Hawaii in underperforming schools to be the most effective. Principals' self-perceptions and the perceptions others have of them while implementing those practices will be examined. The results of the study can provide ideas for creating a leadership model that can support principals in the development of effective practices.

Context of study

The setting for the study was a professional development conference held by an educational company that focuses on providing leadership support to schools recognized by the state as a focus or priority.

All schools attending the conference receive consulting support from this educational company. There were 15 schools that attended the conference. Each school registered one principal and a minimum of four teachers and/or staff members to attend the conference. One school registered five teachers and/or staff members to attend.

A total of 76 participants registered for the conference. The staff members who were registrants for the conference attended based upon their role as school leaders (e.g., lead teacher, curriculum coordinator, grade-level chair, department chair).

Population and sample

The composition of the elementary and middle schools' grades was eight participants from K–5 institutions, one from a K–6 school, one from K–8, three from 6–8, and two from a school with grades 7 and 8. Five principals of the six schools fell in the 41- to 50-year-old age range, and one was over 50.

According to the respondents, the ethnicities they identified with included White, Asian, mixed, Japanese, Hawaiian, and Hawaiian/Chinese. Four principals were male, and two were female. All principals had obtained a master's degree in education. Two of the six principals participated in the New Principals' Academy, and the four remaining principals did not.

Concept operationalized

Transformational leadership must be operationally defined. McClesky (2014) cites

Burns (1978) in defining a transformational leader as somebody who raises the followers' level of consciousness about the importance and value of desired outcomes and the methods of reaching those outcomes. This person "can convince his followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organization, while elevating the followers' level of need on Maslow's (1954) hierarchy from lower level concerns for safety and security to higher level needs for achievement and self-actualization" (p. 117).

Leithwood (1992) defines transformational leadership as "leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people's mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of the system for goal accomplishment" (p. 9). Transformational leadership invests in ways to promote and develop the capacity of the organization (Baylor, 2012; Bickmore & Sulentic–Dowel, 2014; Fullan, 2012; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Ross & Gray, 2006). Transformational leadership practices are the focus of the four research questions.

Variables

The survey instrument operationalizes leadership practices with the following variables associated with the research questions and the needs assessment:

1. Years of experience is the number of years the principal has served as a sitting principal, as this indicates the leadership training received from the state, with 0–2 years indicating that the principal has participated in the New Principals Academy and/or the Hawaii Certification Institute for School Leaders.
2. Principals' beliefs refer to an opinion regarding transformational practices

that are most effective, causing great organizational change, and least effective, that if implemented will not likely cause change if implemented.

3. Perception: According to McDonald (2012), perception can be defined as the way one sees the world.

Research questions

Informed by the historical perspective, the theoretical framework, and the current literature, the research questions guiding the needs assessment are as follows:

RQ 1. What are the most effective transformational practices that principals believe are crucial for leading in a culture of change?

RQ 2. How frequently do principals implement transformational leadership practices?

RQ 3. What is the relationship between the principals' self-perceptions of the frequency with which they implement these practices and of perceptions of the staff they lead?

RQ 4. Is there a difference between the perceptions of the staff whose principals have participated in the recently adopted leadership training provided by the state and those staff members of principals who have not received that formal training?

Methodology

Data collection

Surveys were used to gather data on respondents' demographics, the frequency with which principals implemented transformational leadership practices, the beliefs on transformational practices that principals

thought were most and least effective, and perceptions teachers and/or staff members had of their principals implementing transformational practices.

Instrumentation

The survey method was used to gather data on respondents' demographics, as well as quantitative data on the frequency with which principals implemented transformational leadership practices, beliefs concerning transformational practices that principals thought were most and least effective, and perceptions that teachers and/or staff members had of their principals implementing transformational practices.

The survey questions were similar to those of Provost, Boscardin, and Wells (2010), who set out to study the beliefs of principals (Appendix A). The survey questions of Provost et al. asked principal participants to perform a Q-sort method and to sort and prioritize from high to low priority knowledge and skill statements generated from the literature review of 21 descriptors of principal leadership known to impact student achievement.

Another quantitative measurement that the researcher considered was the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) used by Provost et al. to rank levels of transformational practices, including idealized influence (developing rapport, holding students accountable), individualized consideration (collaborative decision making), inspirational motivation (being encouraging and supportive), and intellectual stimulation (challenging the status quo and encouraging risk taking).

Additionally, Louis, Dretzle, and Wahlstrom (2010) survey was considered; however, it was not chosen for this study. Louis et al. (2010) conducted a survey using a Likert scale that was presented to teachers in

elementary and secondary settings. The survey focused on three attributes of leadership: instructional leadership, shared leadership, and organizational trust. Teachers were asked to identify which of the three attributes were positively related to student achievement. Their use of the Likert scale helped conceptualize the survey that the researcher provided for this needs assessment.

Procedure

Using Louis et al.'s (2010) survey and the MLQ as guides, the researchers created a paper-pencil questionnaire (see Appendix B) to focus on transformational practices in the areas of creating goals using a collaborative decision-making process; communicating vision, mission, and school goals; focusing on instruction; and creating a culture of high expectations and risk taking. A 5-point Likert scale (1 = almost never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, and 5 = almost always) was used to ascertain the frequency with which principals implemented transformational leadership practices, and teachers and/or staff members were asked to rate the degree to which they believed their principal implemented those practices.

Principals were asked to provide demographic information (see Appendix D). In addition, the instrumentation provided to principals consisted of 26 statements that principals used a 5-point Likert scale to rate and determine the frequency with which transformational leadership practices were being implemented. Teachers were given the same 26 statements (see Appendix D) related to transformational practices and were asked to rate the frequency with which the principal displayed these leadership attributes. MLQ scores for each respondent were calculated by taking the mean across the 26 items, (Cronbach's $\alpha = .980$). Additional data were collected on demographic items related to years

of experience, to determine frequency, average, and correlation between teacher perceptions and principal perceptions along with years of experience and gender.

Findings

Initial summary of results

The research questions guided the study and this section provided an initial summary of the findings for the questions. Tables and charts that are referenced are located in the appendix section of the needs assessment.

Research question 1

What are the most effective transformational practices that principals believe are crucial for leading in a culture of change?

Each principal ranked the attributes they felt were necessary for transformational leaders to demonstrate from most important to least important. Of the 25 attributes, those that were most commonly associated with creating goals using a collaborative decision-making process and communicating the vision were ranked as most effective. Overwhelmingly, protecting teachers from outside influences was ranked 23 or 24 on a scale of 1–25 by over 80 percent of the principals. This indicated that protecting teachers was not perceived as an effective transformational practice (see Appendix E, Figure 1).

Research question 2

How frequently do principals implement transformational leadership practices?

When principals self-reported the frequency of demonstrating exemplary practices, the principals generally perceived themselves as frequently demonstrating exemplary practices. (see Appendix E, Figure 2). Mean responses to the 26 questions in the questionnaire instrument ranged from a high of 4.69 to a low of 3.54. With three representing a

response of “sometimes” implementing the associated item, and four representing “frequently”, the results show that principals positively self-assess their use of transformational techniques. Interestingly, although principals tended to rank culture items as most important (see Appendix E, Figure 1), they tend to self-assess as scoring implementing this least often (see Appendix E, Table 1). The mean response to the culture items was 3.98, compared to 4.43 for school goals, 4.33 for instruction, and 4.08 for communication.

Research question 3

What is the relationship between the principals’ self-perceptions of the frequency with which they implement these practices and of perceptions of the staff they lead?

Fewer teachers regarded their principals as implementing transformational leadership practices. Not one of the school’s staff members viewed their principal better in regard to implementing transformational practices compared to the principal’s self-assessment (see Appendix F, Figure 3). An independent samples t-test found that the difference in assessments was statistically significant in a two-tailed test with alpha set at .10 due to the small sample size, $t(22) = -1.764$, $p = .092$. The average staff score on the questionnaire scale was .702 lower compared to the average principal.

Research question 4

Is there a difference between the perceptions of the staff whose principals have participated in the recently adopted leadership training provided by the state and those staff members of principals who have not received that formal training?

Principals who participated in New Leadership academy and had recent training

were perceived by their staff as implementing transformational leadership practices more frequently. Although the small sample size prohibits mean difference testing, (see Appendix E, Figure 4) shows that the average reported frequency for those receiving recent training ($M = 3.97$) was higher than those who have not received recent training ($M = 3.29$).

Limitations

The researcher does recognize that the sample size is small, so the generalizability of the findings and conclusions is limited. Another limitation of this study was the number of participants who did not complete the survey in its entirety. While principals and staff members were provided the same time to complete the instrumentation, staff members had a higher completion rate. Principals were likely to complete the survey section, with most not completing the rank ordering of the most effective and least effective practices. This may be indicative of the activity, which caused principal participants to lose interest. Alternatively, this component of the survey was not the best approach for the researcher to collect evidence on the practices principals found to be the most effective and least effective in the area of transforming schools.

There may have been a variety of reasons that there was lower respondent participation than expected and that the lack of responses was significantly lower than what was expected. However, this did not hinder the researcher from collecting data and drawing some type of conclusions from the data.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the transformational practices needed by principals in order to serve as change agents in schools that most need school reform—low achieving and high minority schools. Moreover, it is those practices of transformational leaders that get

people to want to change, improve, be led, and transform schools. Using the historical context, theoretical perspective, and research questions as a guide, the needs assessment sought to gather information regarding the transformational practices principals thought were most effective and least effective for changing the culture and leading an organization. It also examined the perceptions principals have of themselves in the role of transformational leader and if those perceptions were different when comparing the formal leadership training received, and the perceptions of their staff.

Results from the data revealed that principals perceive themselves frequently implementing the practices, and there was not much variability in self-assessments among the school leaders. The most significant finding revealed from the research was that the staff members had a much lower perception of their school administrators exhibiting transformational leadership attributes.

After analyzing the findings, it is clear that future research must include the reasons staff members may not view their principals as transformational leaders, what consistent practices or values staff members are looking for in transformational leaders, and whether the staff expectations align with the transformational leadership attributes defined in current research.

It is therefore evident that principals are over-confident in their abilities to provide transformation leadership. This may stem from a poor understanding of both what the components of transformational leadership actually entail as well as how those actions are interpreted by the people that matter, namely staff and students.

Improved leadership should therefore follow from an intervention that improves self-awareness of leadership weaknesses and what can be done to address those shortcomings.

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Appendix A

Principal Survey

Please read each statement and identify the characteristics of an effective transformational principal. Use 1-25 to rank order the most effective practices, with 1 as the most effective and 25 as the least effective.

Statements	Rank
A. Develops school-wide goals	
B. Communicates school-wide goals	
C. Obtains stakeholders' input to create school-wide goals	
D. Use several data points to create the school-wide goals	
E. Utilizes the Plan-Do-Check-Act process for continuous improvement	
F. Stakeholders understand the role they play in meeting the school-wide goals	
G. Shares the mission and vision with all stakeholders	
H. Communicates instructional goals to the staff and to the students	
I. Posts academic goals	
J. Shares academic progress with all stakeholders	
K. Collaborates with all stakeholders to set academic goals	
L. Aligns classroom and instructional practices with the state and complex	
M. Makes frequent classroom observations both formal and informal	
N. Identifies instructional areas of growth and strengths of teachers	
O. Helps staff members improve instructional practices	
P. Use the data collected from classroom observations to create professional development	
Q. Seeks staff input regarding curricular and instructional programs	
R. Articulates who is responsible for instructional programs	
S. Protects instructional time	
T. Holds high expectations of the staff and of student performance	
U. Maintains high faculty morale	
V. Monitors student progress using a systematic process	
W. Creates an orderly learning environment	
X. Allows teachers to teach	
Y. Protects teaches from outside influence	

Appendix B

Principal Survey

Please use the scale to indicate the degree to which you implement the following practices. Please circle only one number per statement. Please try to answer every statement.

1= Almost Never	2= Seldom	3= Sometimes	4= Frequently	5= Almost Always
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School Goals					
1. I develop school-wide goals with the staff	1	2	3	4	5
2. I seek input from all stakeholders (staff, students and community) to create the school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
3. I ensure that all stakeholders (staff, students and community) understand the role they play in meeting the school's goals	1	2	3	4	5
4. I use several data points (student data, demographics, perceptual) are used to create the school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
5. I use the Plan-Do-Check-Act-Process to evaluate the implementation of the school-wide goals and course correct when needed	1	2	3	4	5

Communication					
6. I share school-wide goals, along with the mission and vision, with stakeholders (staff, students and community)	1	2	3	4	5
7. I communicate instructional goals to the staff and to students	1	2	3	4	5
8. Academic goals are posted throughout the school	1	2	3	4	5
9. Academic goals are highly visible (e.g. bulletin boards, classrooms, hallways)	1	2	3	4	5
10. I share academic progress with all stakeholders (staff, students and community)	1	2	3	4	5
11. The setting of academic goals is collaborated across stakeholder groups (staff, students and community)	1	2	3	4	5

Principal Survey (continued)

Instruction					
12. I ensure that classroom practices and instructional activities are consistent with the state and the complex	1	2	3	4	5
13. I make regular classroom observations, both informal (drop-in visits with or without verbal or written feedback) or formal (pre-conference and post-conference where observation data are recorded and discussed with the teacher)	1	2	3	4	5
14. I identify instructional areas of growth and strengths for teachers during formal post-conferences	1	2	3	4	5
15. I help staff members improve their instructional practices	1	2	3	4	5
16. I use the data collected from classroom observations to create professional development opportunities that are meaningful for the staff	1	2	3	4	5
17. I seek staff input regarding curricular and instructional decisions	1	2	3	4	5
18. I articulate clearly who is responsible for the instructional programs among the grade levels (e.g. principal, curriculum coordinator, vice-principal, grade-level chairs, department heads, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
19. I protect instructional time	1	2	3	4	5

Culture					
20. I hold high expectations of the staff and of student performance	1	2	3	4	5
21. I celebrate student and teacher accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5
22. I maintain high faculty morale	1	2	3	4	5
23. I monitor student progress using a systematic process	1	2	3	4	5
24. I create an orderly learning environment	1	2	3	4	5
25. I allow teachers to teach	1	2	3	4	5
26. I protect teachers from outside influences	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Principals' Demographics

Demographic Information		Answers
1.	What is your school setting (elementary K-5, elementary K-6, middle school 6-8, middle school 7-8, high school)	
2.	What is the current enrollment at your school?	
3.	Is your school a Title I school?	
4.	What is your gender?	
5.	What is your ethnicity?	
6.	How many years have you been a principal?	
7.	How many years were you an assistant administrator before becoming a principal?	
8.	How many years have you been at your current school?	
9.	What is your age range? Less than 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 +	
10.	What is your highest level of education attained?	
11.	Does your district provide leadership training and mentoring?	
12.	Do you participate in leadership training and mentoring?	
13.	How frequently within the school year do you meet with the complex area superintendent to formally discuss the school's performance and your performance?	

Appendix D

Teacher Survey

Please use the scale below to indicate the degree that your principal implements the following practices. Please circle only one number per statement. Please try to answer every statement.

1= Almost Never	2= Seldom	3= Sometimes	4= Frequently	5= Almost Always
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School Goals					
1. Develops with the staff school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
2. Stakeholder input has been provided to create the school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
3. Stakeholders understand the role they play in meeting the school's goals	1	2	3	4	5
4. Several data points (student data, demographics, perceptual) are used to create the school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5
5. Plan-Do-Check-Act-Process is used to evaluate the implementation of the school-wide goals and course correct when needed	1	2	3	4	5

Communication					
6. Shares school-wide goals, along with the mission and vision, with stakeholders (staff, students and community)	1	2	3	4	5
7. Communicates instructional goals to the staff and to students	1	2	3	4	5
8. Posts academic goals throughout the school	1	2	3	4	5
9. Posts academic goals that are highly visible (e.g. bulletin boards, classrooms, hallways)	1	2	3	4	5
10. Shares academic progress with all stakeholders (staff, students and community)	1	2	3	4	5
11. Collaborates across stakeholder groups (staff, students and community) to set school-wide goals	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Survey (continued)

Instruction					
12. Ensures that classroom practices and instructional activities are consistent with the state and the complex	1	2	3	4	5
13. Makes regular classroom observations in classrooms, both informal (drop-in visits with or without verbal or written feedback) or formal (pre-conference and post-conference where observation data are recorded and discussed with the teacher)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Identifies instructional areas of growth and strengths for teachers during formal post-conferences	1	2	3	4	5
15. Helps staff members improve their instructional practices	1	2	3	4	5
16. Uses the data collected from classroom observations to create professional development opportunities that are meaningful for the staff	1	2	3	4	5
17. Seeks staff input regarding curricular and instructional decisions	1	2	3	4	5
18. Articulates clearly who is responsible for the instructional programs among the grade levels (e.g. principal, curriculum coordinator, vice-principal, grade-level chairs, department heads, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
19. Protects instructional time	1	2	3	4	5

Culture					
20. Holds high expectations of the staff and of student performance	1	2	3	4	5
21. Celebrates student and teacher accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5
22. Maintains high faculty morale	1	2	3	4	5
23. Monitors student progress using a systematic process	1	2	3	4	5
24. Creates an orderly learning environment	1	2	3	4	5
25. Allows teachers to teach	1	2	3	4	5
26. Protects teachers from outside influences	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E

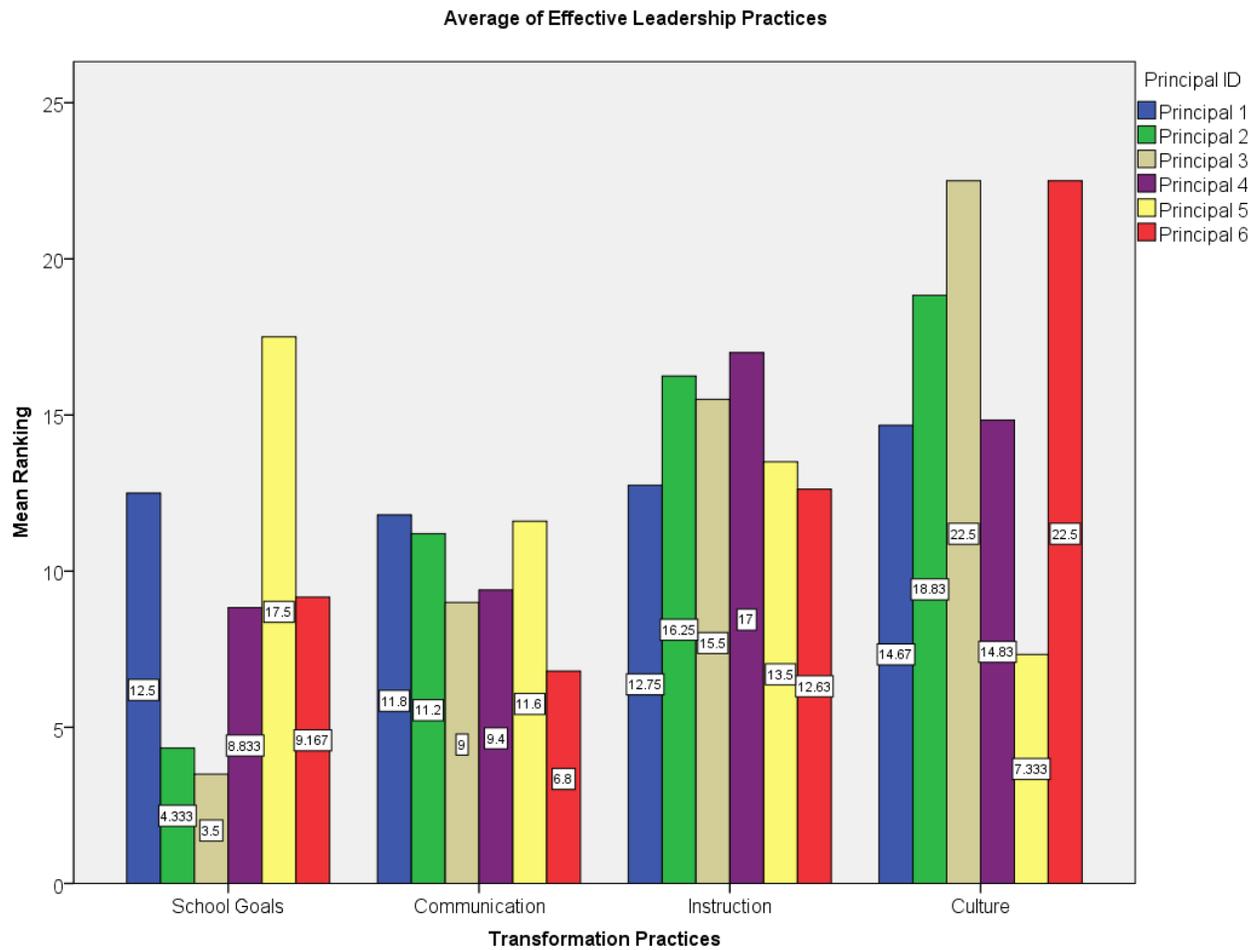


Figure 1. Principals ranking most effective leadership practices to least effective practices.

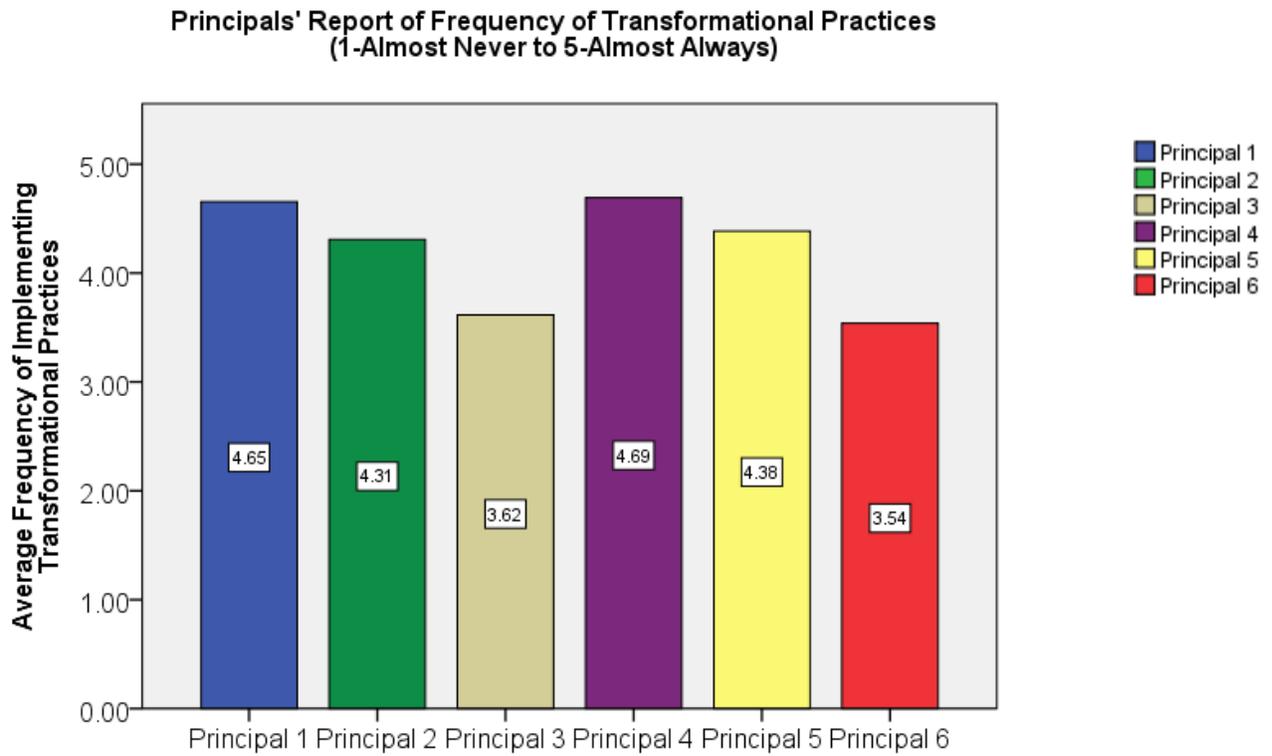


Figure 2. Frequency of principals implementing transformational practices.

Table 1

Mean Responses on MLQ Subscales

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
School Goals	3.80	5.00	4.4333	.49666
Communication	2.67	4.83	4.0833	.92346
Instruction	3.75	4.75	4.3333	.40052
Culture	3.00	4.57	3.9762	.56725

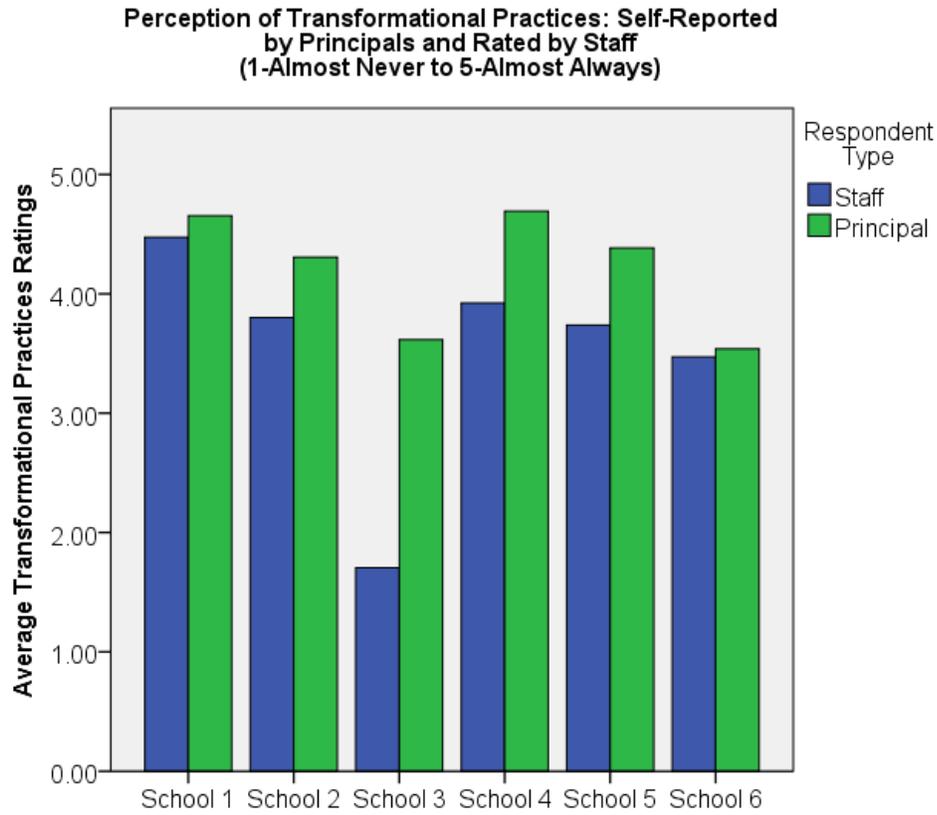


Figure 3. Frequency of transformational practices, self-reported and ranked by staff.



Figure 4. Perceptions of staff whose principals attended previous or recent leadership training

Do Years of Experience and Hours of Training Really Matter? Investing in School Leaders' Efficacies and English Learners' Language Development

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Abstract

This study examined if there were differences between central office administrators', school administrators', and bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers' efficacies when controlling for years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and hours of training on the English language proficiency standards (ELPS). Data from a purposeful sample of 150 school leaders in an urban school district in Texas were examined. Face-to-face interviews captured school leaders' perceptions about the ELPS and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) implementation in bilingual/ESL classrooms. Quantitative results indicated that school leaders' hours of ELPS training influenced leaders' efficacies. Leaders' perceptions revealed the benefits of the ELPS and TELPAS, but there was a need for differentiated instruction and school ELPS and TELPAS instructional advocacy. Recommendations included district strategic planning to meet the needs of all learners and leaders.

Key Words

English learners, leaders' efficacy, English language standards, language assessments, bilingual/ESL education, years of experience, professional development

Introduction

The United States (US) ranks as the number one country with the largest migrant population that includes 40 million foreign-born people. In addition, the US and Mexico have the biggest international migration in the world (Lee, Guadagno, Wagner, Cho, & Takehana, 2015; Vavrus, 2015). The percentage of English learners (ELs) in public school was 9.5% or an estimated 4.6 million students in school year 2014-2015, compared to the 9.3% or 4.5 million students in 2013-2014 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

The large and growing number of ELs born in the US calls for language assistance programs to ensure they attain English proficiency and mastery of all academic content and achievement standards that all students are expected to master. With the emergence of standard-based reform, school districts receive guidance on the type of English language instruction that ELs will receive. Improving English language proficiency, under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, is a required indicator in every state's school accountability system, which will help make sure that the schools where these students are struggling get the right kind of support (United States Department of Education, 2016). Schools have to demonstrate that they are improving the English language proficiency of their English-language learners (United States Department of Education, 2016). Therefore, each US state, either within consortia or on their own, developed ELP standards to implement along with content standards within their school systems. Twenty-seven states use World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards along with the common core standards.

In Texas, every school district shall ensure linguistically accommodated instruction through the cross-curricular ELPS along with the Texas essential knowledge and skills (Texas Education Agency, 2007). Even though experience and professional development on the standards is important, the ELPS do not work alone, just as it happens with the content standards. Similarly, the expertise of both bilingual/ESL teachers and content teachers is necessary to help ELs achieve academically. Teachers, language standards (ELPS), and language assessment (TELPAS) are intrinsically connected as parts of the teaching-learning process. These language standards and assessments correlate to the content standards or the Texas essential knowledge and skills (TEKS) and the State of Texas Assessment for Academic Readiness (STAAR). The more language a student has, the more content he can understand (Quintanilla-Shelton, 2016). Providing linguistically accommodated instruction to students with different language proficiency levels while acquiring rigorous academic content is a challenge. This fact makes it hard for the students to master the English curriculum and succeed in the STAAR test.

The theoretical framework of the study of this article drew from the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1986, 1993, 1997, 2001) and the social capital theory (Burt, 1992; Coleman, 1990). According to the social cognitive theory, self-efficacy allows leaders to apply what one learns to new situations and challenges (Seibert, Sargent, Kraimer, & Kiazad, 2017). In the same way, social capital theory refers to the leaders' social network of relationships that allows one to take

production action within a particular social context. Social capital (Coleman, 1990) consists of any social-structural resources or features that are useful to leaders for specific actions. Coleman stresses social capital as public good. These assets and features are available to all members of a particular group regardless of which members actually promote, or contribute to such resources. This research looks at district, school administrators' and bilingual/ESL teachers' years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and hours of training received on the ELPS and TELPAS as additives to the leaders' self-efficacy and social capital. School leaders increased social capital on the areas of knowledge and experience eventually impact English learners as a group building capital or investing on the students as public good.

Schools with large proportions of ELs require strong leadership in order for students to succeed academically (Baecher, Knoll, & Patti, 2013; Becerra, 2012; Goldenberg, 2003; Slavin & Calder on, 2000; Theotaris & O'Toole, 2011). This investigation sheds more light into the specific perceptions educators have about their efficacy. Both self and means efficacy produce extra effort and engagement in activities, such as empowering others to succeed (Bandura, 1997; Eden, Ganzach, Granat-Flomin, & Zigman, 2010). Most of the findings in this study reside on the need to examine school leaders' efficacy, professional development, and years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms. Experience in this sense is on-the-job challenges that provide opportunities for learning (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998; Dragoni, Oh, Vankatwyk, & Tesluk, 2011; Seibert et al., 2017). Individuals with high self-efficacy for development are more likely to engage in development activities than are individuals who have low self-efficacy for development (Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeitte, 2003; Reichard,

Walker, Puter, Middleton, & Johnson, 2017). Understanding that years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and the amount of hours on the ELPS trainings may lead to higher efficacy and, therefore, more English language growth in ELs is critical.

The authors of the leadership efficacy questionnaire (LEQ) used in this study created the instrument with the intent of supporting and increasing leader efficacy (Hannah & Avolio, 2012). The LEQ measures three areas of efficacy: (a) leader action efficacy or ability to mentor, motivate or empower stakeholders; (b) leader means efficacy or reliance on others, resource or policies; and (c) leader self-regulation efficacy or ability to empathize with others and problem-solve. Participants rated their efficacies using a 1-100% rating scale to measure level of confidence. The larger the score, the higher the levels of leaders' efficacies.

Research implementing the LEQ demonstrated that leaders and self-efficacy can be developed through mentoring programs and other specific leader development programs (Hannah & Avolio, 2012). Current research supports the notion that the capacity of the leaders regarding preparation and experience versus the leadership effectiveness to produce results goes hand in hand (Coleman & LaRoque 1988; Corrales, 2016; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Mintrop & Trujillo 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

Recent studies have analyzed in depth the impact of the English language proficiency standards on student achievement; the implementation and leadership of language standards at school district level; the relationship between language acquisition tests and standardized assessments; and the perceptions of TELPAS by school teachers

(Badgett, Harrell, Carman, & Lyles, 2012; Boals, Kenyon, Blair, Cranley, Wilmes, & Wright, 2015; Echevarria, Vogst, & Short 2017; Morita-Mullaney, 2017; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015; Quintanilla-Shelton, 2016; Moreno-Hewitt, 2015).

However, this study looks to contribute within the field on different levels of school leaders' efficacies: central office, teachers, and school administrators based on their years of experience with bilingual/ESL programs, as well as professional development hours on ELPS and TELPAS. In addition, the study presents educators' perceptions about both the ELPS and TELPAS implementation to support ELs.

Methods

Participants

A sample of school leaders (central office and school administrators and teachers) was drawn from a large school district in Texas. For the quantitative portion of the study, a purposeful sample of 150 pre-kindergarten through twelve central office administrators (n=27), school administrators (n=40), and bilingual/ESL teachers (n= 83) participated in the study. A previous purposeful sample of 40 bilingual/ESL teachers took the LEQ to pilot and help refine the survey and focus of this study.

The qualitative part of the study included face-to-face interviews with a purposeful sample of 24 participants based upon having at least three years of administrative and or teaching experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and implementation of the ELPS. The sample included seven central office administrators, seven school administrators, and nine teachers. A previous purposeful sample of nine bilingual/ESL teachers helped polished questions in this research study article.

Data Collection and Analysis

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests helped determine if there were differences in district administrators', school administrators', and teachers' overall efficacy controlling for years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and hours of training on the ELPS. Further analysis with multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) tests helped determine if there were differences in district administrators', school administrators', and teachers' action, self-regulation, and means efficacies controlling for years of experience with bilingual/ESL classrooms and hours of training on the ELPS. The researcher calculated the effect size using partial eta squared and statistical significance of 0.5.

The qualitative part of the study included a generic approach to coding (Lichtman, 2013) to analyze the face-to-face transcribed interviews from the purposeful sample of 23 leaders. The questions asked participants to name the ELPS and TELPAS trainings attended, hours they received, how those trainings helped them understand, and they provided their perceptions about the quality of implementation in their schools. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using the three Cs of analysis: from coding to categorizing to concepts (Lichtman, 2013). Axial coding strategies and open coding were also employed "to make connections between category and its subcategories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97) to further explain and categorize the data for the emerging themes.

Results

An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with leader's years of experience as the covariate and the district assignment as the fixed factor, indicated that there were not significant differences among the overall efficacy for any of these leaders' groups: central office, school

administrators, and bilingual/ESL teachers when controlling for years of experience $F(1, 146) = 2.4, p > .05$

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), with the subscales (action, means, and self-regulation efficacies) as the dependent variables, the years of experience as the covariate, and leaders' district assignment as the fixed factor, indicated that there were significant differences among leaders' efficacies on the three efficacy subscales when controlling for years of experience in bilingual/ESL classrooms $F(3, 144) = 1.4, p > .05$; *Wilks' $\Lambda = .97$* .

Results from an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), with leader's amount of hours on ELPS training as the covariate and the district assignment as the fixed factor, indicated that leaders' hours of ELPS training did significantly predict their overall efficacy, but not by district assignment. Results indicated that there were not significant differences on the three efficacy subscales tested separately as

dependent variables for any of these groups: central office, school administrators, and bilingual/ESL teachers, $F(3, 144) = 1.4, p > .05$; *Wilks' $\Lambda = .97$* .

Results from a MANCOVA test with the subscales (action, means, and self-regulation efficacies) as the dependent variables and the hours of ELPS training as the covariate and district assignment as the fixed factor, indicated that there were significant differences among leaders' efficacies on the three efficacy subscales when controlling for hours of ELPS training $F(3, 144) = 3.3, p = .02$; *Wilks' $\Lambda = .94$* ; *partial $\eta^2 = .07$* . In addition, there were significant differences among leaders' district assignment and their efficacies $F(6, 288) = 2.2, p = .04$; *Wilks' $\Lambda = .91$* ; *partial $\eta^2 = .04$* on the omnibus test. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed that only hours of ELPS training were statistically significant for action efficacy $t(2) = 2.3, p = .02$, *partial $\eta^2 = .04$* ; and self-regulation efficacy $t(2) = 2.9, p = .01$, *partial $\eta^2 = .06$* , but not for means efficacy (See table 1)

Table 1

Hours of ELPS Training and the Impact on Action and Self-regulation Efficacies

Dependent Variable	Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Action Efficacy	Intercept	8.753	.197	44.445	.000	8.364	9.142	.931
	Hours ELPS	.005	.002	2.311	.022	.001	.009	.035
	[District Assignment=1]	.232	.323	.718	.474	-.406	.870	.004
	[District Assignment=2]	-.483	.278	-1.742	.084	-1.032	.065	.020
	[District Assignment=3]	0 ^a	.	.	.	.	.	.
Means-Efficacy	Intercept	8.468	.220	38.492	.000	8.033	8.903	.910
	Hours ELPS	.002	.002	.934	.352	-.003	.007	.006
	[District Assignment=1]	.202	.361	.560	.576	-.511	.914	.002
	[District Assignment=2]	-.166	.310	-.535	.594	-.779	.447	.002
	[District Assignment=3]	0 ^a	.	.	.	.	.	.
Self-Regulation Efficacy	Intercept	9.103	.164	55.519	.000	8.779	9.427	.955
	Hours ELPS	.005	.002	2.980	.003	.002	.009	.057
	[District Assignment=1]	.582	.269	2.165	.032	.051	1.113	.031
	[District Assignment=2]	.008	.231	.034	.973	-.449	.464	.000
	[District Assignment=3]	0 ^a	.	.	.	.	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

ELPS and TELPAS training as support for school administrators, teachers, and ELs

All leaders found the ELPS and TELPAS trainings useful when they were asked how the training has helped them understand. One principal shared: “The ELPS training helped me gain a better understanding on the ELPS, language objectives and the content

objectives.” Another principal indicated: We made a 21% [growth] gain in our second language acquisition [state report]. So, we did see quite an impact on how understanding the proficiency level descriptors of [TELPAS] impact our scores.” For instance, a central office leader indicated: “TELPAS gives us an opportunity to demonstrate students’ progress,

their proficiency as they move towards their educational journey. It helps us set goals. It also clarifies the question: “Are we providing the opportunities for our students to demonstrate language?”

One of the administrators shared that TELPAS training worked best when “breaking down the training over time and understanding what a beginner, intermediate...students looks like and putting real students’ [writing] examples made a difference.” This principal saw a 21% TELPAS composite growth in her scores from 2016 to 2017. She attributed the TELPAS composite growth to how the training was sequenced and built over time during her campus PLC meetings.

ELPS rationale, training format, and professional learning communities

All administrators agreed that understanding of the ELPS had to do with how the training was presented to the staff. On-going training and discussion on the ELPS through professional learning communities (PLCs) seemed to have helped teachers and principals because of the knowledge gained and growth in their TELPAS composite scores. One of the teachers shared: “If I had not attended our district bilingual PLCs and get together as ESL teachers and ask lots of questions, [I would not have reached the level of understanding I have today]. The discussions during the PLC meetings were most useful.”

Teachers’ lack of understanding about the ELPS and need to differentiate instruction

Overall, all leaders reported that the ELPS were not easy to implement for teachers. One central office administrator shared: “Teachers have a good understanding about the ELPS, but where there is room for growth is how to implement. Not just know what the ELPS are, but how to use them to linguistically accommodate the instruction for ELs.” A teacher with more than

twenty years of experience shared: “It is not easy to implement the ELPS because you have to look at every individual student, but it is possible. You just have to know where your students are and offer the support.”

Need for ELPS instructional leadership at the school level

Participants perceived that the responsibility of the implementation of the ELPS fell on the school administrators, more specifically on the principal. The expectations for ELPS implementation “needed to start at the central office level, but making ELPS a priority in schools, in every classroom, and setting the tone of implementation were the principals’ responsibilities” as expressed by one of the teachers. One supervisor of school principals reported:

The implementation of the ELPS just depends on the school leadership. You can have two campuses, one right by each other, and you have one principal who does not see it as a priority, they do not see the concerted effort, and then you go to another campus where the principal feels that this is important and it is going to help not only ELs, but all students and it’s monitored and gets implemented more.

Teachers perceived the same discrepancy regarding ELPS instructional leadership. One teacher shared: “TELPAS data were discussed at the end of the year. They will be having action goals on the area of the ELPS. The action goal will include not only posting the ELPS, but making sure students understand the ELPS.” In contrast, one of her colleagues commented: “One big issue is that our administrators are not aware of how important bilingual education is. For this

teacher it was key that her administrators spent more time in her class.” She shared: “a 15-minute walk-through, a 45-minute observation is never good enough.” She wanted her administrators “to be there more, be longer time, and be able to see, and then, go to the next teacher.”

TELPAS isolation versus integration

According to teachers, during training, TELPAS was presented as a separate test they had to administer as opposed to an assignment embedded during daily instruction. The TELPAS test made students anxious and their performance got compromised. Teachers shared that TELPAS “is extra on the teacher, the extra writing assignment.” She felt her students “performed better on a regular paper than the one I set aside for their TELPAS”. These teachers viewed TELPAS as an additional task as they had to require students to write for TELPAS as a specific assessment instead of integrating it during daily instruction. In turn, the way TELPAS was presented to their students may compromise students’ performance.

TELPAS and STAAR prestige

Overall leaders perceived STAAR as having more prestige than TELPAS. The STAAR test had more accountability weight than TELPAS making TELPAS occupy a lower level of importance in school instruction. One of the principals commented:

Some of my classrooms [teachers] may not understand, especially my new teachers, they do not understand how all [TELPAS and ELPS] tie together and the importance of it. It [ELPS] is going to be more of a push based upon the STAAR scores we received based upon

the writing scores and reading for 4th and 3rd grade, so we got to do a better job with that.

Despite TELPAS being a state assessment, this test was not regarded with the same level of importance as STAAR. One of the central office leaders shared:

Because TELPAS is not a critical part of our evaluation system, I do not think the sense of urgency is not the same as for STAAR or an End of Course exam. It is not accessible to our community. They do not speak that language. They speak: *Am I an improvement required campus?* Which has nothing to do with TELPAS. *Am I meeting standard? Am I an A-F campus?* So its focus is more on STAAR results.

Despite the importance of TELPAS data, TELPAS data were not used to the same degree as STAAR data were. One principals’ comment included:

I think that TELPAS is important. I do not think it is given enough attention in comparison to STAAR and the data from TELPAS seems to me to be more authentic because is a case study on the child’s language ability.

One of the teachers’ pointed out that the TELPAS-STAAR prestige perception was a state issue:

I think that TELPAS can be a powerful tool, but it is not well

respected, and I think it is not well respected because it is not as important as STAAR ... This is just not a thing that happens in our district, it is across the state.

District system and collaboration with campuses on ELPS and TELPAS

Central office leaders elaborated on the support they provided to campuses to share the importance of the ELPS and TELPAS. One of central office administrators indicated:

Our bilingual director has provided rosters of students. What powerful information to have conversations with teachers and why do we have children regressing, why are they not progressing, why do they plateau? I think we demonstrate that we see the value within the [TELPAS] data. I believe we are demonstrating that.

As an example, one of the principals reaped the benefits of working in very close collaboration with the bilingual/ESL director and specialists to train and collaborate directly with her teachers on the understanding of the ELPS, TELPAS, and PLDs. This principal commented:

We were unacceptable in TELPAS according to our campus score card [last year]. So, we did see quite an impact on how understanding the PLDs impacted our scores. I feel we will keep on going with that next year. I foresee us being recognized for TELPAS next year because we have a much better understanding about the TELPAS process, what it should look like for every student.

Another teacher shared that analyzing students' writing samples during the campus PLC meetings in collaboration with central office staff "was very useful."

School leaders' perceptions on subjectivity in rating

All participant groups shared concerns about the subjective nature of the TELPAS. The holistic rating of these students' language domains relied on teachers' subjectivity and level of expertise with the ELPS, TELPAS and proficiency level descriptors (PLDs), creating validity issues. For instance, one of the principals indicated that the only reliable instrument in TELPAS "was the reading test for grades 2-12" and that students took on the computer.

Teachers' and students' fear of/and stress with TELPAS

Teachers reported feelings of fear or anxiety when (a) teachers had to take the online TELPAS rating test to calibrate students' writing samples and (b) when they had to rate the students in the areas of writing. One of the school principals expressed: "I think it is all in how we present it [TELPAS] ... I think the teachers are still scared." One of the teachers commented that TELPAS "can be stressful." She worked very hard "just trying to integrate it."

Teachers were not the only ones fearing the TELPAS writing calibration tests, 45% of the teachers perceived that students also were afraid of TELPAS. One of the teachers shared: "the kiddos they feel uncomfortable because of their spelling, their handwriting, so I feel that they have a lot of... their affective filter affects them." For students, the feelings of stress and anxiety came when TELPAS was another writing test they have to do.

Online Testing of Listening and Speaking Domains as a Positive and as a Concern

All central administrators felt that the online TELPAS testing would bring consistency of rating. One central office administrator indicated: “TELPAS is going to bring consistency. There is no question because there is going to be a core of individuals that are trained that are going to evaluate at the same level [with consistency].”

All leaders felt that they needed to think about embedding practice time and support during instruction to ensure the students were successful with the new test format. On the other hand, sixty seven percent of the teachers worried about listening and speaking going online as they “did not know how the computer is going to judge accurately how to be able to listen an EL speak.”

Discussions

The findings of the study indicate that the amount of hours in ELPS training not only created significant differences on the overall efficacy for any of the leaders’ groups: central office, school administrators, and bilingual/ESL teachers, but the hours in ELPS training also revealed significant differences on these leaders’ action, self-regulation, and means efficacy.

These findings are congruent with previous research on self-efficacy for development as a predictor of an individual’s attitude toward employee development programs (Maurer, Mitchell, & Barbeite, 2002; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Reichard et al., 2017), learning motivation during training (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000), participation in development activities outside of work (Maurer et al., 2000). Individuals with high self-efficacy for development are more likely to

engage in development activities than are individuals who have low self-efficacy for development (Maurer et al., 2003, Reichard et al., 2017).

Some teachers and principals indicated that ELPS were best practice they implemented in the classrooms. Some teachers felt ELPS contributed to enriching their teaching toolkit along with strategies they implemented and trainings they had attended such as sheltered instruction or SIOP training (Echevarria et al., 2017). These perceptions aligned with research on linguistically accommodated instruction (Knight & Wiseman 2006; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015).

Face-to-face and on-going trainings and professional learning community meetings rather than online versions of training seemed to produce more understanding and positive perceptions on teachers and administrators. These findings align with previous literature indicating that effective professional development must include follow-up support, coaching, and inclusion within professional learning communities (Calderon & Slakk, 2016; Joyce & Showers, 1996, 2002; DuFour, 2004).

During the district PLC meetings, teachers collaborated, discussed, and revisited the ELPS or TELPAS data, which allowed deepening their understanding (DuFour, 2004). These remarks align with previous research indicating that preparation prior to a test is important to create more confidence and success for both teacher and student (Portolese, Krause & Bonner, 2016; Cizek, 2010).

In addition, these findings reinforce previous research emphasizing that teacher collaboration and professional development opportunities on the area of assessments

resulted in more confident teachers and deeper understanding of their assessment practices (Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015).

The school leaders in this study shared the importance of supporting students during the year to expose them to the online test format and expectations before the real spring test administration (Moreno-Hewitt, 2015; Portolese et al., 2016). Teachers of ELs, especially new teachers should receive professional development focused on understanding language development that differentiate between ELs' capacities for the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Campbell & Evans, 2000; Knight & Wiseman, 2006; Maclellan, 2004; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015). Teachers of ELs are unprepared to work with linguistically diverse students and fail to acquire needed expertise to meet the needs of ELs (Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015). Specialized assessment knowledge is critical for teachers of bilingual and dual language programs (Heritage, 2010; Plake, Impara, & Fager, 1993; Maclellan, 2004; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015; Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011).

If individual plans were not created and formative assessments were not used to meet the needs of the different proficiency levels in the classroom, some damage happened (Cizek, 2010; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015). The situation may have worsened for ELs when school administrators did not sustain the same level of expectations for the implementation of the ELPS and TELPAS as they did for the TEKS or the STAAR test (Williams, Hakuta, Haertel et al., 2007; Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008; Moreno-Hewitt, 2015; Morita-Mullaney, 2017).

The lack of ELPS and TELPAS school leadership perceived by central office and teachers corroborate previous research findings

highlighting that follow up systems are critical to succeed academically (Williams et al., 2007; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Morita-Mullaney, 2017). In addition, this finding reinforces the notion that the principal stands out as the individual who influences the most the long-term success of the EL programs (Reyes, 2006; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

Equitative access to technology is key to prevent academic gaps (Leu, Forzani, Rhoads, Cheryl, Kennedy, & Timbrell, 2014). Previous research indicated that students do not perform better with online test and the access to technology (Leu et al., 2014; Yonker 2011). Test knowledge and preparation tend to impact the academic success of the students (Heritage, 2010; Plake et al., 1993; Maclellan, 2004; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015; Moreno-Hewitt, 2015; Portolesse et al., 2016).

Implications

Strategic professional development plan for all and by all

Hours of training and not years of experience predict leaders' efficacy. Investing on individuals' preparation programs rather than rewarding years of experience could yield to higher results for school districts. The creation of long-range strategic plan could include a continuous tiered professional development, support for campus administrators, and teachers (Allison & Kaye, 2005).

The goal of evidence-based professional development should be to improve academic achievement in students (Calderon & Slakk, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2009). Effective professional development must include follow-up coaching and inclusion in professional learning communities (Calderon & Slakk, 2016; Joyce & Showers, 1996, 2002; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; DuFour, 2004). Investing in on-going professional development on assessment practices may result in teachers

who are more confident to improve their assessment practices (Mertler 2009; Téllez & Mosqueda, 2015).

A locally viable and well-designed curriculum could help meeting the needs of ELs as they progress through grade levels (Genesse, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian 2006; Lucas et al., 2004). Districts and schools should ensure these language standards are embedded in the curriculum, as well as monitored implementation.

Social justice, heroic and instructional leadership for English learners

Social justice for ELs may be obtained as principals are able to create inclusive services for ELs such as prioritizing students' language learning including their families and cultures in the school community, assuming language as a right and asset (Theotaris & O'Toole, 2011; Reyes, 2006).

Considering the benefits of bilingual education, the district strategic plan could include the implementation of a two-way bilingual education model to keep the language development as one of the main focus within the organization. This dynamic could contribute better preparing all students with the twenty-first century language skills, in order to succeed and better compete in the global economy (Umanski, Valentino, & Reardon, 2015;).

ELs' access to technology

School districts and schools may try to ensure the new online testing is supported through planning and budgeting within the school district strategic plan, in order to ensure access to resources and successful online testing for all students. Practice and exposure may be essential to succeed academically (Moreno-Hewitt, 2015; Portollesse et al., 2016).

Shared learning targets, criteria for success, goal setting and feedback

Students need to know what and why they are learning through intentional shared learning targets. Shared learning targets should indicate the what, the how deep students will learn and how they will demonstrate they got the learning (Moss & Bookhart, 2012; Moss, Brookhart, & Long, 2011). The rubric for success in this case could include examples of the English language proficiency level descriptors (PLDs) for the different proficiency levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. English learners could visualize the success rubric and set their language goals. Students' portfolio-based assessments for the language domains can be used to set goals and confer with the students individually through EL talks process. The EL talks or student led conferences could happen continuously as checkpoints along the year to assist students monitoring their goals and growth. Feedback offered to students should be corrective, timely, and specific to the level of skill or knowledge (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Trammel, Schloss, & Alper, 1994).

Instructional rounds as a tool for district and school collaboration

Leaders should keep learning as the main focus (Elfers & Stritikus, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009). Creating and implementing school collaborative approaches to reform factors such as learning goals may be critical to achieve academic success (Coburn & Russell, 2008; Hopkins, Spillane, Jakopovic, & Heaton, 2013; Liou, 2016). Both district and campus staff could engage in ongoing instructional rounds where the ELPS are intentionally addressed (City, Elmore, Friarman, & Teitel, 2009). Instructional rounds could help developing individual and collective efficacy by involving the entire educational community within the data collection process and instructional practices.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that hours of ELPS training are statistically significant to develop leaders' overall efficacy. More efforts should be invested in hiring effective administrative leadership and developing personnel based on professional development hours, in order to ensure successful implementation of the ELPS, TELPAS, and academic achievement in general. School districts may be able to develop leaders' efficacies through targeted professional development on the areas of ELPS and TELPAS as part of their strategic plan. A viable curriculum that includes the ELPS and linguistic accommodated instruction guidance may help teachers. Additionally, shared learning goals may allow students to own their

learning. Students monitoring their own learning goals tend to be aware of the expectations and are able to receive immediate feedback. Instructional Rounds may provide all levels of educators in the educational community: central office, school administrators, and teachers, with an opportunity to work together (City et al., 2009).

This process may be viewed as a catalyst to improve not only individual but collective efficacy, and ultimately overall student achievement (Hattie, 2017; Leithwood & Jentzi, 2008). Different levels of educators within the educational community may need to work together helping students to increase their capacity, by allowing them to effectively acquire more language and academic content simultaneously.

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*R (Registration required)