THE PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAM INTERNSHIP:
THE MENTOR SELECTION PROCESS

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by

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Approval of the Dissertation in Practice

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Organizational Innovation

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The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if an intern in a principal preparation program had a better experience during their internship if they were able to select their field-based mentor as opposed to being assigned a mentor by the administrators of the program. The literature addressed the current role of the principal and discussed the principal preparation programs that educate and prepare them for leadership. In particular, the internship phase of principal preparation programs was reviewed with respect to the framework of adult learning theory and current principal leadership standards. The internship phase has been shown to be the key component of a principal preparation program, and the intern-mentor relationship has been shown to be the critical factor for a successful field experience. An online survey with 14 Likert statements was given to graduates of a principal preparation program and was used to measure the effectiveness of the intern-mentor relationship based on five mentoring domains and the interns’ satisfaction level with their mentor. Using descriptive statistics, the results of the study found that interns who were able to select their mentor had a more favorable perception of their mentor’s effectiveness and were more satisfied with their mentor.
relationship. Implications for future research and future practice are presented for universities that administer principal preparation programs.

*Keywords*: principal preparation program, educational leadership, principal internship, mentor selection process
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Manny who was with me every step of the way and to my children Helen and Andrew. I thank you for your sacrifice to support my dreams and your enduring love, patience, and understanding. Without your faith in me, this achievement would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The success of a school begins with the principal who is charged with a very diverse set of roles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2007). Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) describe principals’ roles as “educational visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders” (p. 1). Over the past two decades, principal preparation programs have moved from teaching administrative and operational skills to developing instructional leaders (Young et al., 2016). As part of this change, the internship phase of principal preparation programs has evolved into competency-based programs that have brought depth and authenticity to aspiring principals’ internship experiences that will better prepare them for the rigors of leading a school (White et al., 2016).

The intern-mentor relationship is integral to the success of the internship phase of a principal preparation program (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Barnes, 2008; Bush, 2013). According to a study conducted by Barnes (2008), all interns studied agreed that their mentor had the most significant impact on their internship experiences. Since the greatest impact on an aspiring principal’s internship is the relationship with their mentor, then the selection process used to find and pair the intern and mentor needs to be investigated. Administrators of principal preparation programs should monitor the relationships between their interns and mentors to better determine the most effective manner in which to select mentors (Geismar et al., 2000).

The case will be made for studying the mentor selection process used by universities during the internship phase of a principal preparation program by reviewing
the pertinent literature and background information and determining a problem statement that is based on the theoretical framework of adult learning theory (Mezirow, 1997). The purpose of the study and its significance will be explained and will determine the research questions to be answered.

Educational leadership challenges loom large in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic with achievement gaps between socioeconomic groups of students and learning losses across math and reading (Kuhfeld et al., 2022). Perrone & Tucker (2019) suggest there is a need for quality principal preparation programs across the United States. These principal preparation programs must adopt rigorous principal leadership standards (Briggs et al., 2013) and provide research-based best practices for effective mentoring during the crucial internship phase of the program (Brondyk & Searby, 2013).

It is critically important, now more than ever, to properly prepare future leaders of schools to face the everchanging demands of strong leadership to positively impact future generations (Branch et al, 2013).

**Background of the Study**

The relevant related literature supporting this research states that the effectiveness of the field-based mentor is a key component of providing a meaningful internship experience for the intern (Geer, 2020). Literature related to Adult Learning Theory is also essential to this research because it identifies an adult learner as one who is motivated intrinsically and who can direct their learning based on their accumulated life experiences with an interest in the immediate application of their newfound knowledge (Merriam, 2004). Transformative learning theory, developed by Jack Mezirow (1997), suggests that adults use their lived experiences, or frames of reference, to define their world.
Therefore, a principal preparation program must incorporate experiential learning in all facets of its program with the culminating experience being the principal internship (Gray et al., 2007).

According to Geer (2020), the effectiveness of the mentor is critical to providing the intern with authentic, real-world experiences during their internship. There is a gap in research related to how principal preparation program mentors are selected and how they are assigned to their interns. The mentor selection process cannot be haphazard; it must be studied to determine the best practices to be used to find the right mentor for each intern.

**Problem Statement**

The most critical component to the performance of a school is the principal who has the primary function of assuring that each student meets challenging grade-level standards while maintaining the smooth and efficient operations of the school (Leithwood et al., 2004; Gray et al., 2007; Briggs et al., 2013). Principal preparation programs must provide aspiring principals with the tools and skillset to lead the instructional process of their schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Barnes, 2008). One of the key components in a principal preparation program discussed in the research is the internship, particularly the relationship between the intern and their field-based mentor (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995). Although the research discusses the importance of the relationship between intern and mentor, it does not discuss the selection process for the field-based mentor. Further research is needed to investigate the field-based mentor selection process in principal preparation programs to provide interns with mentors who will adequately prepare them for the rigors of leading a school.
It is not known what impact the mentor selection process has on interns’ satisfaction levels and perceptions of their mentors’ effectiveness during the internship phase of a principal preparation program in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs.

**Theoretical Framework**

Adult learning theory states that adults learn better experientially, and that they are self-directed learners (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997) suggests that adults use their lived experiences, or frames of reference, to define their world. The internship phase of a principal preparation program provides real-world experiential learning for aspiring principals. Evidence suggests that in most cases the internship was a critical variable in developing knowledge and skills around the broad concept of leadership for learning (Mombourquetter & Bedard, 2016). The success of an internship relies on a strong intern-mentor relationship (Griffin et al., 2012). This study investigated whether the interns’ satisfaction levels and perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness were more positive when the intern selected their mentor rather than having a mentor assigned to them.
Misawa & McClain (2019) studied the process of using the adult learning theory of transformative learning as an approach to mentoring. The findings of the study revealed three major themes that correlate adult learning theory to mentoring: relational, reciprocal, and environmental as shown in Figure 1. The relational theme speaks to the roles of both the mentor and the intern. The reciprocal theme relates to the give and take relationship between the mentor and the intern, and the environmental theme correlates to the setting and the focus of the mentoring process. Anderson et al. (2012) reviewed several instruments that measured evidence-based approaches to evaluating mentor effectiveness and categorized them into the five mentoring domains listed in Figure 1.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to examine the impact of the mentor selection process on interns’ satisfaction levels and perceptions of
their mentors’ effectiveness during the internship phase of a principal preparation program in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. Since the greatest impact on an aspiring principal’s internship is the relationship with their mentor (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Barnes, 2008; Bush, 2013), then the selection process that is used to find and pair the intern and mentor needs to be investigated. Strong school leaders are developed during the experiential internship phase of their preparation program (Gray et al., 2007). The internship phase of principal preparation programs needs to be studied to determine if they adequately prepare future leaders for the rigors of school-based leadership (Herman et al., 2022). Additionally, administrators of principal preparation programs should monitor the relationships between their interns and mentors to better determine the most effective manner in which to select and pair mentors (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008).

**Research Questions**

Two research statements and null hypotheses were developed that relate to the principal preparation program mentor selection process.

**H1:** The mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

**H01:** The mentor selection process does not have an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.
H2: The mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

H02: The mentor selection process has no effect on how principal program candidates rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions were employed for this study:

**Intern**: An intern is a principal candidate who is participating in a principal preparation program and is currently enrolled in the internship phase of the program. (citation)

**Internship Phase**: The Internship Phase of a Principal Preparation Program provides students with an opportunity to synthesize and apply acquired knowledge in the workplace, and to develop and refine skills included in the program’s coursework (Educational Leadership Intern and Mentor Handbook, 2017).

**Mentor**: A mentor is the K-12 school-based administrator who collaborates with the principal intern during the internship phase of a principal preparation program.

**Mentor Selection Process**: The process by which a mentor is found and paired with an intern. For purposes of this study, the process will either be that the intern chose their own mentor or their mentor was assigned by the administrators of their principal preparation program.

**Principal Preparation Program**: A program designed and administered by a university or a school district that aligns with state and professional standards that focus on
instructional leadership for principals in K-12 education. The programs contain the following requirements:

1. A State approved principal endorsement or principal license
2. Partners with school districts
3. A competency-based internship
4. Collaborative support for candidates from both faculty and mentor principals

(Bultinck, 2013; White et. al., 2016)

Anticipated Limitations

1. The number and type of participants who choose to participate in the study may limit the findings of the study.
2. The researcher’s positive experience during her principal preparation program internship may produce some bias that might limit the study.

Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction, background information, the problem statement, the theoretical framework for the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, definitions of key terms, and an overview of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature related to principal preparation programs. Chapter 3 details the methodology of the study. Chapter 4 contains the statistical analysis of the data, and Chapter 5 includes the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

Introduction to the Chapter

According to Dare & Saleem (2022), a “school constitutes a complex bureaucratic managerial organization with decentralized services set up by relevant societal laws that draw and exert influence from both regional and global communities” (p. 1) and school administrators or principals are a determining factor in the school’s performance as an educational institution. Future principals must be provided with real-world experiences in “instructional leadership, school improvement, and consequently, student achievement” (Greer et al., 2014, p. 130).

This literature review addressed the current role of the principal and discussed the principal preparation programs that educate and prepare them for leadership. In particular, the internship phase of principal preparation programs was reviewed with respect to the framework of adult learning theory and current principal leadership standards. “Internships need to emulate the fast-paced, ever-changing environment of the contemporary school with its complex systems influenced by external and internal forces” (Greer, 2020).

The review of the literature set the stage for this research study which investigated the selection process that pairs a principal intern with their field-based mentor. This study determined if the mentor selection process influenced how interns view their mentor’s effectiveness and overall satisfaction level with their mentor during their internship.

Background

Learning to be an educator is similar to learning to be an artisan because you must experience the craft firsthand before you can step into the job and perform it with
precision (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). In order to attain a teaching license, teacher candidates must complete student teaching as a practicum, or internship, that gives them authentic experiential learning opportunities in a real-world setting (Magaya & Crawley, 2011). The same standard should apply to aspiring school leaders as they seek to take on the awesome leadership responsibilities of running a school. All future school principals should participate in an internship that provides competency-based, real-world experiences led by an experience field-based mentor (Bultinck, 2013; White et al., 2016).

According to (Pounder & Crow, 2005), many educators see the role of the school principal as being too challenging and not worth the effort, and too many talented teachers with leadership potential go unnoticed or are not interested in moving into an administrative role at a school. As stated by Maxwell (2015):

> The principal’s job is often called the loneliest in K-12 education, but it’s just as fitting to call it the toughest.

> Hours are long. Demands come from every direction: the central office, teachers, students, parents, and the community. And no one else in a school has the same responsibilities.

> Managing buses, budgets, and buildings is still central to the job, but the current generation of principals—and the generation who will succeed them—also must oversee colliding rollouts of some of the most dramatic shifts in public schooling in more than a decade: more rigorous academic standards, new assessments, and retooled teacher evaluation systems.

> That principal’s time is so often strained by day-to-day requirements of the job while they are held responsible for the success of myriad new initiatives
makes their main mission—to be their schools’ instructional leaders and chief architects of a positive school climate—all the more challenging.

So who would want the job? (para. 1-5)

Current school administrators should be tapping leadership talent among their teachers and encouraging them to participate in leadership roles at the school as well as enrolling in a principal preparation program (Pounder & Crow, 2005). However, new research indicates ever-increasing teacher staffing shortages in the United States due to the coronavirus pandemic, political tensions, and a lack of educational resources (Eferighe et al., 2022). According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2021), 68% of principals surveyed are concerned about the shortage with 41% stating that they are extremely concerned. The principal pipeline is being affected by this shortage along with principal recruiting and retention (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2021).

The staffing shortage extends to principals with four out of ten principals stating they will leave their job within the next three years (Ruggirello, 2022). According to the Illinois Principals Association (2022), the number of teachers completing a principal preparation program in Illinois was 626 in 2020, down from 2,637 in 2011. Principal preparation programs must redesign their programs and make “changes in four areas: recruitment and selection, curriculum and instruction, clinical experience, and use of cohorts” (Herman et al., 2022, p. 7) in order to attract more students to their programs.

This leads to the critical question of how principal preparation programs can better prepare aspiring principals for the role of the principalship. A key component of principal preparation programs is the clinical experience or internship that gives aspiring
administrators real-world experience in educational leadership under the tutelage of a mentor. According to Bultinck (2013), a principal preparation program should contain a continuous, structured, and supervised internship which includes specific requirements for the on-site principal to serve as the intern’s mentor. Most principal preparation programs require an internship phase as part of their program, but many of these internships are far often too short and lack authentic learning experiences (Pounder & Crow, 2005).

With general consensus throughout the field of education as to the importance of the internship phase of a principal preparation program, there is surprisingly very little guidance that provides clear and specific recommendations for the activities and experiences that should be included in the internship. The quality of the field-based mentor is a key component of providing a quality internship experience for the intern (Geer, 2020). Additionally, there is a dearth of guidance on how to select a quality mentor and how to appropriately pair them with an intern.

Dunaway et al. (2010) recommend that more qualitative studies should be conducted that monitor the principal intern relationship with their field-based principal mentor from the beginning of the internship to the end of it. There appears to be a gap in research regarding the selection process of the field-based mentor assigned to an aspiring principal during the internship phase of their preparation program. If the intern-mentor relationship is critical to the success of future school leaders, then how does the selection and pairing process of the mentor to the intern affect the relationship between the intern and the mentor? According to Malone (2001), intern-mentor relationships that are
constructed artificially or out of convenience may not make the best match and may result in “neutral-effect relationship” (p. 4) when the intern and mentor fail to connect.

This research is significant as it seeks to inform the field of education as to the current status of the mentor selection process for preparing future school leaders in principal preparation programs and to provide recommendations as to the best practices for mentor selection. The remainder of the chapter discusses the critical role of the principal, the current literature regarding principal preparation programs, the theoretical framework of adult learning theory, and takes a closer look at the principal internship, and principal leadership standards for administering a principal preparation program.

**Identification of the Problem Space**

**The Role of the Principal**

Principals are important to student learning, almost as important as teachers. “Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 5). It is the role of the principal to support the teachers in a building so as to allow them to support and teach their students (Branch et al., 2013). In today’s complex world, schools demand a high level of performance from every professional in the building (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The most critical component to the performance of a school is the principal who has the primary function of assuring that each student meets challenging grade-level standards while maintaining the smooth and efficient operations of the school (Dare & Saleem, 2022). The principal’s leadership skills will be the determining factor in whether a school becomes a high-functioning place of teaching and learning or a failed operation that does not serve the needs of students, staff, families, and the community.
(Gray et al., 2007). Being an instructional leader ensures that a principal can provide the necessary support to their teachers, and principal preparation programs must provide aspiring principals with the tools and skill set to lead the instructional process of their schools (Wallace Foundation, 2016). This can best be accomplished by providing a highly structured and authentic internship with real-world experiences.

After conducting an analysis of administrative data from the University of Texas at Dallas Texas School Project in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency’s data that matched student, teacher, and principal data sets over many years, Branch et al. (2013) concluded that “highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount” (p. 62). They found that the impact of a principal on students is only slightly lower than the impact of a highly effective teacher. The difference is that teachers only have impact on the students in their classroom while a principal has impact on all the students in a school. Additionally, this study found that a principal’s impact on the teaching staff increases over time as a larger share of teachers were hired by this principal. The impact of a principal is far-reaching in that it affects all the students in the school due to the principal’s instructional leadership capabilities as well as their hiring of qualified and effective teachers.

A study by Allen et al. (2015), found that successful school leaders need to have a basic set of three core practices in order to be effective leaders. These practices do not directly impact student learning but are necessary to the effective functioning of a school. These three practices are: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the
organization. In setting directions, leaders develop a set of shared understandings about the school, its goals, and its vision. A leader must be a role model for staff and behave in accordance with the values they espouse and promote. This, in turn, builds commitment to the school and its goals, which can lead teachers to perceive the school climate as positive.

Leithwood et al. (2004) state that by developing people, leaders provide a stimulating workplace, individualized support, and model best practices. Redesigning the organization has highly effective leaders developing their schools as efficient organizations that support the high performance of staff, faculty, and students. Inefficiencies in organizational structure or procedural conditions can negatively impact the functioning of a school.

According to Briggs et al. (2013), effective principals are critical to student achievement because of their ability to influence teacher quality. They are responsible for hiring, developing, and managing teachers, who then have the single greatest impact on student learning. Principals are in the position of ensuring that students have high-quality teachers each year. Great, and even good, teachers will likely not remain at a school with an ineffective principal which jeopardizes the learning of every student in the school.

Effective principals have the responsibility to provide instructional guidance to teachers along with ongoing professional development based on a set of professional standards for assessing performance (Leithwood et. al., 2004). “Thus, an effective principal is vital to student achievement” (Briggs et. al, 2013, p. 7).

The role of the principal has changed in the 21st century due to economic, technological, and global changes which have challenged traditional ideas of schooling.
The focus has shifted from teaching to learning in the classroom as instruction has become student-centered, not teacher led. Future school leaders “are being called on to lead in the redesign of their schools and school systems. In an outcome-based and accountability driven era, administrators have to lead their schools in the rethinking of goals, priorities, finances, staffing, curriculum, pedagogies, learning resources, assessment methods, technology, and use of time and space” (Levine, 2005a, p. 12).

**Principal Preparation Programs**

After conducting a four-year study of the nation's schools of education, sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, and the Wallace Foundation, Arthur Levine (2005a) released a report titled *Educating School Leaders* which was criticized by colleges and universities with principal preparation programs. In the report, Levine (2005a) concluded that very few strong programs existed. Most programs had irrelevant and incoherent curricula, low admissions criteria, weak faculty, and very inadequate clinical instruction or field experience.

One month after the release of the report, Levine (2005b) wrote an opinion piece in The Chronicle of Higher Education in the review section describing the reaction to the release of his report. He wrote that he had received many emails after the release of his report with most of them being positive. Many of these emails came from graduates of principal preparation programs who believed their programs failed them. He also stated that “the angriest responses were the e-mail messages, public statements, letters, and phone calls from leadership programs. They criticized the writing of the report for giving
aid and comfort to critics. They said the problems described in the report did not exist on their campuses or even in their states. They criticized the study's methodology, its intent, and, in some cases, its failure to recognize their program’s advances” (Levine, 2005b, para. 11).

However, public school districts and graduates from principal preparation programs agreed with Levine’s findings and assessment. Levine (2005a) used the following nine-point template to evaluate a principal preparation program:

1. **Purpose**: The program’s purpose is explicit, focusing on the education of practicing school leaders; the goals reflect the needs of today’s leaders, schools, and children; and the definition of success is tied to student learning in the schools administered by the graduates of the program.

2. **Curricular coherence**: The curriculum mirrors program purposes and goals. The curriculum is rigorous, coherent, and organized to teach the skills and knowledge needed by leaders at specific types of schools and at the various stages of their careers.

3. **Curricular balance**: The curriculum integrates the theory and practice of administration, balancing study in university classrooms and work in schools with successful practitioners.

4. **Faculty composition**: The faculty includes academics and practitioners, ideally the same individuals, who are expert in school leadership, up to date in their field, intellectually productive, and firmly rooted in both the academy and the schools. Taken as a whole, the faculty’s size and fields of expertise are aligned with the curriculum and student enrollment.
5. Admissions: Admissions criteria are designed to recruit students with the
capacity and motivation to become successful school leaders.

6. Degrees: Graduation standards are high and the degrees awarded are
appropriate to the profession.

7. Research: Research carried out in the program is of high quality, driven by
practice, and useful to practitioners and/or policy makers.

8. Finances: Resources are adequate to support the program.

9. Assessment: The program engages in continuing self-assessment and
improvement of its performance.

The Levine report (2005a) prompted many states along with their colleges and
universities to reassess their principal preparation programs. In 2010, Illinois was one of
the first states to redesign principal preparation programs in their state. Using research
and input from stakeholders, the new Illinois requirements for a principal preparation
programs are as follows (Bultinck, 2013; White et. al., 2016):

1. a targeted principal endorsement, instead of a general administrative
certificate

2. partnerships with school districts in preparation program design and delivery

3. selective admissions criteria

4. P-12 licensure (adding Pre-Kindergarten to the leadership training)

5. a competency-based internship

6. collaborative support for candidates from both faculty and mentor principals

As criticism of principal preparation programs increased, Cosner et al. (2012),
found that “complete program overhauls and new metrics for assessing program
effectiveness have become prevalent in calls for reform” (p. 128). After analyzing Levine’s report as well as other relevant literature related to issues and problems in educational leader preparation programs, Cosner, Tozer, & Smylie (2012), three professors at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) in the Department of Educational Policy Studies described their school’s move of “replacing a modest Master’s level leader preparation program to an innovative Ed. D program” (p. 127). Cosner et al. (2012) found no evidence in the literature that reforms being undertaken at colleges and universities were addressing how to prepare future school leaders to improve student learning and also found a lack of student and program outcome data.

According to Perrone & Tucker (2019), from 2000 to 2014, there was substantial growth in both the number of: (a) institutions granting educational leadership degrees and (b) degrees awarded in educational leadership. Overall, there was a 72% increase in the number of institutions with educational leadership programs and there were twice as many educational leadership graduates produced in 2014 as compared with graduates in 2000. This study suggests a great need and desire for quality principal preparation programs throughout the country.

Once the framework for a principal preparation program has been established, the next key component is the curriculum. Hewitt (2014) found four elements present in a principal preparation program that provide future school leaders with transformational leadership abilities: developing a shared vision and building goal consensus, building structures to enable collaboration, leading for strategic and systematic change, and modeling valued behaviors, beliefs, and values. These elements align with the three basic
core practices of setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization proposed by Leithwood et al. (2004).

According to Shapiro (2006), the field of educational administration has been accused of being out of touch with practitioners while also being weak in theory development. This conclusion was also drawn by Cunningham & Sherman (2008) who stated the “two major themes of contemporary criticisms are that educational leadership programs lack contextual relevancy and that leadership preparation content lacks focus on instructional leadership and, in turn, student achievement” (p. 309). Field experience should be the major driver for learning using classroom instruction as a support which will situate learning within the context of practice not just theory (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008). In a study of a principal preparation program, Rubens (2019) found that participants identified field experience, or the internship, as the pivotal facet of the principal preparation process, and showed that it contributed to a leader’s longevity as a principal. In a study of twelve secondary principals who participated in a principal preparation program administered by a large school district in the mid-Atlantic, Rubens (2019) stated that the intern-mentor relationship was found to be a critical determinant of intern growth.

**Theoretical Foundations**

**Adult Learning Theory**

Merriam (2004) states that since students in principal preparation programs are adults, the program developers should use adult learning theory as the basis for their program curriculum and that the program should take into account that adult learning must be differentiated from the manner in which children learn. Merriam (2004) states
that andragogy, posited by Malcolm Knowles in 1968, identifies an adult learner as one who is motivated intrinsically and who can direct their own learning based on their accumulated life experiences with an interest “in the immediate application of their newfound knowledge” (p. 203).

Transformative learning theory, developed by Jack Mezirow (1997), suggests that adults use their lived experiences, or frames of reference, to define their world. These frames of reference which include associations, concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses, are the assumptions adults use to understand their experiences and the natural tendency is to reject ideas that do not fit into our assumptions. (Mezirow, 1997). Thus, to transform learning, adults must use critical thinking skills to change their perspective by being more self-reflective while connecting to past experiences (Mezirow, 1997; Merriam, 2004).

Kolb & Kolb (2005) developed the experiential learning theory using the theories previously developed by John Dewey and Kurt Lewin. Experiential learning theory states that adults use experiences to create new knowledge. This is done via a learning cycle with four modes of learning: 1) concrete experience, 2) reflective observation, 3) abstract conceptualization, and 4) active experimentation. “This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner ‘touches all the bases’—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned” (p. 194). The study also states that institutes of higher education should use experiential learning theory in the development of adult education programs. These programs should be based on a clear vision and mission that promotes learning and includes curriculum development, faculty development, student
development, and resource development. Bringing all stakeholders together provides the synergy needed for a successful program (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Effective use of the experiential learning theory learning cycle is dependent on a strong and authentic set of experiences and activities during the internship.

In an article describing coaching for leadership, Turesky & Gallagher (2011) discuss using Kolb’s experiential learning theory as a way to improve a coach’s ability to understand their own learning style in order to increase the learning capabilities of their client. The authors believe that using the experiential learning theory framework is necessary to manage the coaching, or mentor-intern, relationship. A mentor must understand the importance of developing future leaders who are knowledgeable about their work and are sensitive to the needs of their workforce.

The common theme running through these adult learning theories and their application is the critical component of experience which encompasses past experiences, current experiences, and future experiences. Therefore, a principal preparation program must incorporate experiential learning in all facets of its program with the culminating experience being the principal internship (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

**Review of the Literature**

*The Principal Internship*

The intern-mentor relationship is integral to the success of the internship phase of a principal preparation program. “All of the interns agreed that the element that had the biggest impact on their internship was their mentor” (Barnes, 2008, p. 91). In a study comparing educational leadership internships in Scotland and the United States, Hines (2008) found that in order to help aspiring principals build confidence in their abilities to
lead a school, principal preparation programs must address the question of “who, and how many, should serve as mentors during the internship” (p. 3).

Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan (1995) found that 36 participants in a principal preparation program determined the importance of the internship was dependent on the mentor assigned to the intern and the kinds of responsibilities the intern was assigned. The data collected from this study found five themes that emerged with authenticity and real experiences, being the most salient. The second theme of relevancy speaks to andragogy theory which states that adult learners need to find value in what they are learning and can directly apply it to their lives. The third theme of independence allowed interns to actively solve problems in real-world situations and be held accountable for their actions. Working closely with another person was the fourth theme identified and places importance on the relationship between the intern and their mentor. Lastly, the fifth theme was the ability to use theory as a referential framework and apply it to practice. The data and findings from this study provided insight into the importance of the relationship between an intern and their mentor, but also stated that the mentor was assigned to the intern without providing details as to how the mentor was selected.

Using adult learning theory as the referential framework for a collaborative relationship between intern and mentor will help to provide a focused way for interns to evaluate the effectiveness of their mentors. Anderson et al. (2012) reviewed several instruments that measured evidence-based approaches to evaluating mentor effectiveness. The authors categorized these measures into five domains: (1) meetings and communication, (2) expectations and feedback, (3) career development, (4) educational support, and (5) psychosocial development. Jack Mezirow (1997) states that
transformative learning “is rooted in the way human beings communicate” and that “educators must assume responsibility for setting objectives” (p. 10).

The field of education, according to Brondyk & Searby (2013) has been slow in its efforts to clearly define the term mentor and to associate an appropriate skill set with the dispositions needed to be an effective mentor. Additionally, institutes of higher education have not developed research-based, agreed-upon best practices for what constitutes effective mentoring “Put another way, not everyone in education shares the same paradigms regarding mentoring” (p. 192).

In a phenomenological study of five new principals who recently graduated from a large state university principal preparation program, Bush (2013) found that:

interns were often left to fend for themselves when it came to participating in leadership experiences during the span of the internship. Mentors thoroughly absorbed in carrying out the duties of their position had little time to provide or guide meaningful learning opportunities or to incorporate their intern’s participation in formative leadership activities. Most often, the intern was left to observe what the principal did on a daily basis with little opportunity to engage in or exercise leadership. When the interns were encouraged to participate, their responsibilities usually involved a mundane task the mentor principal did not particularly want to do. This tendency contradicts the goal that the internship constitute[s] an insider experience, one providing a perspective that can be gained only through direct participation. (p. 73)

Bush (2013) continues to suggest that further research needs to be done to determine how national standards can be used by principal preparation programs to
provide a universally accepted set of standards that will provide a framework that guides the internship experience.

In 2007, Darling-Hammond et al. studied eight different principal preparation programs that they defined as exemplary due to evidence that each provided strong outcomes in preparing future school leaders while providing a varying set of approaches and curricula design. Four of the programs studied were pre-service programs at colleges and universities and the other four programs studied were in-service programs conducted by existing school districts. This study found that exemplary pre-service principal preparation programs aligned with state and professional standards that focused on instructional leadership. These same pre-service programs also had well-designed internships that allowed interns to engage in authentic leadership responsibilities while working with expert mentors in the field. Additionally, the study found that in-service principal preparation programs provided aspiring leaders with “a well connected set of learning opportunities that were informed by a coherent view of teaching and learning, grounded in both theory and practice” (p. 7). One of the implications of the findings of this study stated that “professional standards provide an important tool for strengthening a program’s focus on instructional leadership and school improvement” (p. 21). Although this study was comprehensive in its scope and its suggestions for exemplary principal preparation programs, the authors did not provide data or recommendations regarding the selection process of mentors to work with future leaders during their internship.

In a 2013 report produced by the George W. Bush Institute, Briggs et al. recommended that state and local policymakers require clinical experience, internships, in principal preparation programs to provide “authentic learning experiences in real
school settings over a significant period of time (at least 6 months) with candidates assuming real school leadership responsibilities” (p. 21). The report also provided recommendations for states to use to design and/or strengthen principal effectiveness standards, oversight of principal preparation programs as well as principal licensure policies (Briggs et al., 2013).

**Principal Leadership Standards**

The quality of principal preparation programs and their effectiveness have long been a concern in the field of education. “States should adopt and implement rigorous program-approval standards to ensure that principal preparation programs produce high quality candidates” (Briggs et al., 2013, p. 33). Over the last 20 years, many states, but not all, have adopted licensure and accreditation policies based on the standards for school administrators developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in 1996 (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). The ISLLC standards, which were adopted by programs nationwide, had a strong emphasis on democratic leadership (Machado, 2012).

Recognizing the changes that have occurred in education leadership practice since the ISLLC standards were released, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) released updated standards in 2011. The ELCC standards asked principal preparation programs to “change their focus from program content to program impact” (Young et al., 2016, p. 18). Recognizing the historic shift in the role of the principal, stakeholders of PK-12 schools are holding school leaders accountable for students’ academic success (NPBEA, 2018) as opposed to simply running a cost-effective, safe building that works efficiently. Principals must show evidence that their students are
better prepared for college and the future. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) developed the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards, which replaced the ELCC standards in 2018. Two of the assumptions used in developing the NELP standards relate to the internship, or field experience practice, of a principal preparation program. These two assumptions are: 1) the preparation of school leaders requires overt connections and bridging experiences between research and practice, and 2) the preparation of school leaders requires comprehensive practice in, and feedback from, the field over an extended period of time (NPBEA, 2018).

Standards-based principal preparation programs that incorporate adult learning theory along with experiential learning place more emphasis on real-world experiences improve a principal’s impact teaching and learning in their school (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012).

Problem Statement

A review of the research on principal preparation programs found a major shift in the focus of these programs that began in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. This shift aligns closely with the ever-changing role of the principal. One of the key components in a principal preparation program discussed in the research is the internship, and in particular, the relationship between the intern and their field-based mentor. Although the research discusses the importance of the relationship between intern and mentor, it does not discuss the selection process for the field-based mentor.
It is not known what impact the mentor selection process has on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor and their satisfaction level with their mentor during their field-based internship.

Summary

This research study will investigate the field-based mentor selection process in principal preparation programs. The research questions for this research are:

1. How does the mentor selection process impact principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship?

2. How does the mentor selection process impact principal preparation program interns’ satisfaction level with their mentor during their field-based internship?

The research methodology best suited for this research was a quantitative methods approach that collected data from graduates of a university-based principal preparation program in the Chicago area. Participants in the study rated the effectiveness of their mentor based on mentoring domains that stem from adult learning theory as well as rated their overall satisfaction with their mentor. Quantitative research was best suited for this study in order to apply the results to a larger population and assist the educational leadership community in understanding the intern-mentor relationship better.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Learning to lead as a school administrator requires field-based experience in order to learn experientially (Misawa & McClain, 2019). Just as teachers must go through the process of student teaching, school leaders must go through their own form of student leading. According to Magaya & Crawley (2011), student teachers are assigned cooperating teachers based on K-12 teachers who are selected by the student teacher’s college or university and, oftentimes, do not reflect quality teachers, just available ones. The study goes on to state that cooperating teachers serve as important role models for student teachers and very little research exists relating to how they are selected.

Similarly, the process of selecting field-based mentors for aspiring principals during the internship phase of their principal preparation program has not been widely studied. Yirci & Kocabas (2010) state that “good principals are made, not born” (p. 3) and that mentoring future principals will prepare them to be administrators who will develop and lead successful schools.

Future leaders in most principal preparation programs are assigned their own school principal (Bultinck, 2013) to serve as their mentor during their internship phase of the program even though not every principal preparation program intern has a good working relationship with their principal. Geismar et al. (2000) state that despite the need for effective mentoring of principal interns more often than not the mentor selection process is based on convenience.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to examine the impact of the mentor selection process on interns’ perceptions of their mentors’ effectiveness and their satisfaction levels with their mentor during the internship phase of a principal preparation program in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. According to Hoy & Adams (2016), non-experimental research means that the researcher does not have control over the independent variable because it has already taken place. This study attempted to determine if the effectiveness and satisfaction levels within the intern-mentor relationship, as perceived by the intern, were related to the ability of the intern to choose their own mentor, the independent variable, during the internship phase of a principal preparation program.

Research Questions

Two research statements and null hypotheses were developed that relate to the principal preparation program mentor selection process.

H1: The mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

H01: The mentor selection process does not have an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

H2: The mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.
H02: The mentor selection process has no effect on how principal program candidates rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

Rationale for Methodology

This research study used a quantitative method to determine if the mentor selection process had an impact on interns’ perceptions of their mentors’ effectiveness and their satisfaction levels during the internship phase of a principal preparation program. The quantitative methodology was best suited for this research because it was used to ascertain interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor based on the five mentoring domains identified by Anderson et al. (2012). This data can be generalized to a larger population of students in principal preparation programs. It sought to uncover patterns by using statistical data and descriptive statistics to derive results. The study was a simple case of relational non-experimental quantitative research. The categorical independent variable was whether the participant was able to choose their own mentor or whether the mentor was assigned to them. The study analysis looked for a relationship between the selection method of a mentor, the independent variable, and the perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentor and the satisfaction levels of the intern-mentor relationship, the dependent variables. Attention was paid to identifying any confounding variables such as an intern’s rating of their relationship with their mentor prior to the internship which may have influenced the intern’s perceptions of the intern-mentor relationship before it even began. Quantitative data collection methods were preferable for this study due to the ability to have a larger sample size and to create
questions that ask for objective answers attempting to limit the chance for bias in the results.

**Rationale for Research Design**

The research sampling method was a voluntary convenience sampling based on ease of access as well as the availability of this population. Participants were recruited from Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) in Chicago, Illinois. The data collection method used was an online survey that collected demographic information that was not identifiable. The researcher contacted the coordinator of the principal preparation program to seek approval for the dissemination of the study survey to graduates who had completed their principal preparation program.

**Population and Sample Selection**

The research population were individuals who had completed a principal preparation program in the Chicago area and received a principal license from the State of Illinois School Board. These individuals were working in K-12 schools as teachers, team leaders, administrators, or in other leadership positions. Individuals who had moved into higher education or had left the education field were not be considered for this research study.

Geographically, the sample population was taken from the Chicago, Illinois area and its surrounding suburbs. Teachers were included as participants because not all individuals who have completed a principal preparation program have gone on to serve in leadership positions within schools as some attain this licensure in order to increase their salary on the salary schedule for their school. Individuals who had completed a principal preparation program and were currently serving as school leaders may have been more
inclined to respond to this survey which may have caused some sampling bias since the survey was voluntary.

This research sampling method was a voluntary convenience sampling based on ease of access as well as the availability of this population. This may have resulted in some bias in the sample since some individuals will be more likely to volunteer than others due to their stronger feelings about their internship experience. Despite the possible bias in convenience sampling, “the majority of experimental researchers do not select random samples” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p.253). This indicates that although convenience sampling is not considered random sampling, it can be used to generalize to a larger population. Because the population had a homogeneous component of completing a principal preparation program, the sample size sought for this study had a minimum of 40 participants to attain a confidence level of 95% when computing the margin of error (Budiu & Moran, 2021).

Participants were asked to identify other individuals who had completed a principal preparation program and who may have interest in taking the study survey. This method is known as snowball sampling and may have generated additional participants who meet the study requirements.

Sources of Data

The Mentor Evaluation Tool (MET) created by Yukawa et al. (2020) was used to collect data. The data collection instrument was an online survey with Likert statements based on five mentor domains. These mentor domains were (1) meetings and communication, (2) expectations and feedback, (3) career development, (4) educational support, and (5) psychosocial development (Anderson et al., 2012). The MET had 13
statements based on the five mentor domains to measure mentor effectiveness and one additional Likert scale statement to measure overall intern satisfaction level with their mentor. The MET had a standardized Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of 0.94, which indicates high scale reliability. The MET and the five mentor domains aligned with the research questions of this survey as they measured the perceived effectiveness and satisfaction levels of the intern-mentor relationship. The online survey collected multiple choice demographic information that was not identifiable in addition to a set of Likert scale statements as means to collect quantitative data.

This research study developed statements for the online survey based on the MET mentioned above. Quantitative data was collected from educators who had completed a principal preparation program in which they completed an internship phase. The research questions asked whether there was a difference in the internship experience if an intern selected their own mentor or if a mentor was assigned to them. The survey collected some demographic information related to how long ago the individual participated in their internship, information about the institution that administered their program, their current position in academics, and the mentor selection process.

The survey data collected generated information regarding how the participant was matched with their mentor. This information served as the independent variable in the data analysis. After the determination of how the intern and mentor were matched, the remaining data collected provided information about the interns’ satisfaction levels and their perceptions of their mentors’ effectiveness during the internship.
Data Collection and Management

The researcher contacted the coordinator of the principal preparation program at NEIU to seek approval for the dissemination of the study survey to graduates who had completed their principal preparation program. A link to the anonymous online survey was emailed to prospective participants. The survey described the nature of the research study and the research questions that drove the research. Participants were informed that they were providing consent to use their information by completing the survey. Additionally, the consent form was made available to participants to read via a link on the survey.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data collected from the online survey was analyzed to find relationships between mentor and intern satisfaction levels and perceived effectiveness as well as the relationship between mentors who were assigned by the administrators of the principal preparation program versus mentors who were selected by the intern. Additional statistical analysis used measures of central tendency such as mean and distributions to determine consistency and variance in the data. Descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and the Mann-Whitney U test for significance were used to determine the relationship between the independent variable, the mentor selection process, and the dependent variables, the effectiveness and satisfaction level of the intern-mentor relationship.

Ethical Considerations

This research was based on using human subjects to collect data for analysis which required the ethical treatment of all research participants by considering respect for
persons, beneficence, and justice. To foster respect for persons, the subject population consisted of persons who are at least 21 years of age. All subjects in the sample were assured that their participation was voluntary, and they were asked to provide informed consent. All participants were notified of their right to withdraw their participation at any time. Participants completed an online survey in which no identifying information was collected. The survey was administered through Qualtrics, and online survey provider, was anonymous, and all data collected was kept confidential and not shared. The data collected is currently on one computer that is password protected and will be deleted one year from the time this study is published.

The intern-mentor relationship is very important during the internship phase of a principal preparation program, and if the relationship is not strong, there may be a lack of trust, or the two may have different personalities and styles, and a psychological toll may be inflicted on the intern (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995). Answering questions about their relationship with their mentor may have caused some participants distress. To alleviate this distress, the emotional questions were situated toward the beginning of the survey to allow participants to cool down as they took the survey so they could regulate their emotions. To show beneficence, the goal of the research was shared with the participants explaining that the findings will contribute to the research regarding the effectiveness of assigning a mentor to an intern versus letting the intern select their own mentor. This may help future students in principal preparation programs when it comes to mentor selection and subsequently improve satisfaction with their mentor relationship.

NEIU is a Hispanic-Serving Institution located on the north side of Chicago. The university serves a diverse population which helps to ensure social justice by representing
a more diverse population that is representative of the Chicago area. Since this research was centered on human subjects and the findings should contribute to the betterment of principal program internships, the researcher focused on the ethical principles of research and followed all guidelines and procedures to protect the human population of the research.

Assumptions and Delimitations

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Significant information can be obtained through a questionnaire.

2. Participants in this study will answer all questions honestly.

3. Identification of the impact the mentor selection process has on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship is useful information to principal preparation programs.

4. Identification of the impact the mentor selection process has on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship is useful information to principal preparation programs.

5. Interns who are given the choice to select their mentor will choose someone with whom they have a good to excellent working relationship.

Delimitations

This study was confined by the following delimitations:
1. The participants surveyed were distributed to graduates of one university principal preparation program in the Chicago, Illinois area.

2. The research objectives did not relate to the effectiveness of principal preparation programs just the mentor selection process.

3. The data collection instrument was designed by other researchers and may not have been good fit for the anticipated pool of participants.

One university offering a principal preparation program in the Chicago, Illinois area was selected due to geographic convenience for the researcher which may limit the research findings.

The focus of the study was on the selection process that assigns a mentor to a principal preparation program intern for their internship phase of the program. The study did not focus on the recruitment process, curriculum, or instruction, nor other factors related to the success of a principal preparation program.

**Summary**

This chapter described the methods used to identify the impact of the mentor selection process that pairs a mentor to an intern during the internship phase of a principal preparation program as it relates to the interns’ satisfaction levels with their mentor and perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness. The methods used included the rationale for the methodology, the rationale for the research design, the population and sample selection, the sources of data, the data collection and analysis processes, assumptions, delimitations, and ethical considerations.
Chapter 4 will provide a detailed description and analysis of the data collected. Research study findings and results will be presented in tabular and narrative form, and limitations of the study will be discussed.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to examine the impact of the mentor selection process on interns’ perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness during the internship phase of a principal preparation program in a university-based program offered in Chicago, Illinois. Since the greatest impact on an aspiring principal’s internship is the relationship with their mentor (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Barnes, 2008; Bush, 2013), then the selection process that is used to find and pair the intern and mentor needs to be investigated. The relevant related literature supporting this research states that the effectiveness of the field-based mentor is a key component of providing a meaningful internship experience for the intern (Geer, 2020). Although the research discusses the importance of the relationship between the intern and mentor, little is written about the selection process that pairs an intern with their field-based mentor. Administrators of principal preparation programs should monitor the relationships between their interns and mentors to better determine the most effective manner in which to select and pair mentors (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008).

Two research statements and null hypotheses were developed that relate to the principal preparation program mentor selection process.

H1: The mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.
H₀₁: The mentor selection process does not have an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

H₂: The mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

H₀₂: The mentor selection process has no effect on how principal program candidates rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

**Research Design**

This research study was a quantitative method to determine if the mentor selection process had an impact on interns’ perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness and their satisfaction level with their mentor during the internship phase of a principal preparation program. Quantitative research uses measurements and statistics to make the “connections between empirical observation and mathematical expressions of relations” (Hoy & Adams, 2016, p. 1). The quantitative methodology was best suited for this research because it followed the scientific method and used hypothesis testing to describe the data collected and find relationships within the data (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The study analysis looked for a relationship between the selection method of a mentor and the perceptions of the effectiveness of the mentor by the principal intern and the intern’s overall satisfaction with their mentor.
Sample and Data Collection Techniques

The research population were individuals who had completed a principal preparation program at a university that led to principal licensure in the State of Illinois. The research sampling method was a voluntary convenience sampling based on ease of access as well as the availability of the population. This may have resulted in some bias in the sample since some individuals may have been more likely to volunteer than others due to their stronger feelings about their internship experience. Despite the possible bias in convenience sampling, “the majority of experimental researchers do not select random samples” (Johnson & Christensen, 2020, p.253). This indicates that although convenience sampling was not considered random sampling, it can be used to generalize to a larger population. Because the population had a homogeneous component of completing a principal preparation program, the sample size sought for this study had a minimum of 40 participants to attain a confidence level of 95% when computing the margin of error (Budiu & Moran, 2021).

The data collection instrument was the Mentor Evaluation Tool (MET) created by Yukawa et al. (2020) and had a standardized Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of 0.94, which indicates high scale reliability. Eight demographic questions were added at the beginning of the survey in order to better understand the characteristics of the sample population. An online survey containing the 8 demographic statements, 13 Likert statements to measure mentor effectiveness, and one Likert statement to measure an intern’s overall satisfaction with their mentor was created in Qualtrics and was used as the data collection instrument. Yukawa et al. (2020) aggregated the 13 effectiveness Likert statements into five mentor domains: (1) meetings and communication, (2) expectations and feedback,
(3) career development, (4) educational support, and (5) psychosocial development based on research by Anderson et al. (2012). The survey data that was collected generated information regarding how the participants were matched with their mentor and information about the interns’ satisfaction level with their mentor and their perceptions of their mentors’ effectiveness during the field-based internship.

**Data Analysis Process**

The data collected from the online survey was imported into the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze measures of central tendency such as mean and standard deviation as well as frequency distributions in order to determine consistency and variance in the data. An inferential statistical test, the Mann-Whitney U test for significance was used to test whether perceptions of mentor effectiveness, measured on an ordinal scale, differ based on the mentor selection process, which was categorical with two groups: mentor chosen and mentor assigned. The Mann-Whitney U test for significance was used to test whether interns’ satisfaction levels with their mentor, measured on an ordinal scale, differ based on the mentor selection process, which was categorical with two groups: mentor chosen and mentor assigned.

The remainder of this chapter represents the data analysis procedures used and the results that were found from the sample data collected. The online survey contained three sections as follows: 1) the first section collected demographic information such as years since completion of their principal preparation program, type of institution attended, attainment of principal certification/licensure in their state, current academic position in K-12 education, and the mentor selection process that paired the intern to their mentor, 2)
the second section collected data regarding the intern’s perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness based on the 13 Likert statements of effectiveness, and 3) the third section collected data regarding the intern’s overall satisfaction level with their mentor based on one Likert statement.

**Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis and Descriptive Data**

**Preparation of Raw Data for Analysis**

Data was collected from an online survey completed by graduates of a principal preparation program that led to state licensure in Chicago, Illinois. The data was analyzed to identify and describe the levels of satisfaction and the perceptions of effectiveness that principal interns had toward their field-based mentors during the internship phase of their principal preparation program.

A total of 31 surveys were completed with 100% of the surveys being usable for this study having met the required inclusion criteria detailed in earlier chapters.

The demographic data consisted of years since completion of their principal preparation program, type of institution attended, attainment of principal certification/licensure in their state, current academic position in K-12 education, and the mentor selection process that paired the intern to their mentor.

Four participants (13%) completed their principal preparation program more than five years ago, and twenty-seven participants (87%) completed their principal preparation program less than five years ago. The vast majority (93%) of participants completed their principal preparation program as a graduate program administered by a university while only 7% completed a principal preparation program administered by their school district.
All 31 participants answered that they attained state certification/licensure, and all 31 participants were currently working in a K-12 school.

Sixteen participants (52%) were allowed to choose their field-based mentor during their internship while 15 (48%) participants were assigned their own school principal by the institution administering their principal preparation program. If a respondent answered that they had been assigned their own school principal, they were given an additional Likert statement that asked them to rate the quality of the relationship with their principal prior to the internship. This variable was used to compare the intern’s perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness in relation to the quality of their relationship prior to the internship. The quality of the intern–principal relationship prior to the internship was suspected to be a confounding variable that might impact the data and needed to be analyzed.

**Descriptive Data**

**Table 1**

**Demographic Information of Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years since completion of program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Institution Attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University graduate program</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district program</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attained Principal Certification/License</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants in this study were 31 graduates of principal preparation programs in the Chicago area. Table 1 shows the frequency data by years since completion of program, type of institution attended, certification/license attained, current academic position, and mentor selection process. Approximately 87% \((n = 27)\) of the participants completed their principal preparation program less than five years ago, and 13% \((n = 4)\) completed it more than five years ago. The majority of participants 93% \((n = 29)\) attended a university graduate program with only 7% \((n = 2)\) attending a principal preparation program provided by their school district. All 31 participants (100%) attained principal state certification/licensure. All 31 participants (100%) were still working in K-12 schools with 32% \((n = 10)\) working as teachers and 68% \((n = 21)\) serving as school administrators. There was a nearly even split between participants who were able to choose their mentor 52% \((n = 16)\) and those who were assigned their mentor 48% \((n = 15)\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>(n)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current academic position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 teacher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 administrator</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor Selection Process</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \((N = 31)\)
Table 2

Demographic Information of Participants by Mentor Selection Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Mentor chosen</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mentor assigned</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years since completion of program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Institution Attended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University graduate program</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School district program</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current academic position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 teacher</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 administrator</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 31 (n = 16 for mentor chosen and n = 15 for mentor assigned).

For participants who chose their mentor, all 16 (100%) completed their principal preparation program less than five years ago. The majority of participants who were assigned their mentor 11 (73%) completed their principal preparation program less than five years ago and four (27%) completed their principal preparation program more than five years ago. Of the 16 (100%) participants who chose their mentor, all of them attended a university graduate program. For participants who were assigned their mentor, 13 (87%) attended a university graduate program with only two (13%) having attended a program provided by their school district. For both categories in the mentor selection process, mentor chosen, or mentor assigned, approximately two-thirds of each group moved on to currently hold an administrative position in a K-12 school while one-third remained as teachers in a K-12 school. For the 16 participants who chose their mentor, 11
(69%) hold administrative positions and five (31%) are teachers. For the 15 participants who were assigned their mentor, ten (67%) hold administrative positions and five (33%) are teachers.

If a participant was assigned their current principal as their mentor, they were given an additional Likert statement on the survey: if your school principal was assigned as your mentor by default, please rate the quality of your relationship with this individual prior to your internship. This statement was used to analyze the relationship between the principal intern and their current principal prior to the internship to determine if there was a relationship between the intern’s perceptions of their mentor prior to the internship and their perceptions of their mentor after the internship. The five-point Likert Scale used for measuring this statement was (0) very poor, (1) poor, (2) average, (3) good, and (4) excellent.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Principal Preparation Intern’s Perceptions of the Quality of the relationship with their School Principal Prior to the Internship Phase of their Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n =15 (n is the number of participants who were assigned their current principal as mentor with N = 31 representing the total number of participants).*

For the 15 participants who were assigned their principal as their mentor, zero participants (0%) rated their relationship with their principal prior to the internship as
very poor, one participant (6%) rated their relationship as poor, four participants (27%) rated their relationship as average, six participants (40%) related their relationship as good, and four participants (27%) rated their relationship as excellent. In aggregate, only 6% of participants had a negative perception, a rating of very poor or poor, of their relationship with their current principal while 84% had a slight to strong positive perception, a rating of average, good, or excellent, of their relationship with their current principal.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

**Data Analysis Steps**

Data collected from the Qualtrics online survey was input into SPSS and various statistical analyzes were performed to determine if the data found in the study were significantly different from data that would be found by chance. Because the total number of participants was 31 which was less than 40, the expected minimum of number participants to attain a confidence level of 95% when computing the margin of error (Budiu & Moran, 2021), tests of significance such as a t test or analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were not used. The chi square test for independence which computes the critical ratio between two categorical variables was used to compare the analysis results found in the data with results expected by chance (Hoy & Adams, 2016). Due to the small data size, results for the chi square test for independence were not usable because the assumption that all cells have an expected count of at least five was not met. The Mann-Whitney U test can be used for this small sample size because all four assumptions needed for this test were met: 1) the dependent variables were ordinal or continuous, 2) the independent variable had two categorical, independent groups, 3) each group
consisted of different participants, and 4) the independent and dependent variables were not normally distributed.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data set. The independent variable in this research study was categorical with two categories: 1) the intern chose their mentor, or 2) the mentor was assigned to the intern. The dependent variables, the perceptions of effectiveness and satisfaction levels, were ordinal with four categories and were measured using a Likert scale. The participants were asked to rate their mentor’s effectiveness and their satisfaction level with their mentor on a four-point scale: (1) disagree, (2) slightly agree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The dependent variable of perceptions of effectiveness was also calculated as a continuous variable by adding the rating score for each of the 13 Likert scale statements and then dividing by the number of participants to attain a mean score for each statement. The dependent variable of satisfaction level was also calculated as a continuous variable by adding the rating score for the one Likert scale statement and then dividing by the number of participants.

**Results**

*Presenting the Results*

The analysis for hypothesis one (H1) and its null hypothesis follow.

**H1:** The mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

**H₀₁:** The mentor selection process does not have an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.
Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Intern’s Perceptions of Effectiveness by Statement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Mentor rating (My mentor…)</th>
<th>Mentor Selection</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>was accessible</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>was an active listener</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>demonstrated professional expertise</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>encouraged me to establish an independent career</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>provided useful critiques of my work</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>motivated me to improve my work</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>was helpful in providing direction and guidance on professional issues</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>acknowledged my contributions appropriately</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>took a sincere interest in my career</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>helped me formulate clear goals</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>facilitated building my professional network</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>provided thoughtful advice on my scholarly work</td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.908</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2

Descriptive Statistics for Intern’s Perceptions of Effectiveness by Statement

Table 4 above shows the mean score for perceptions of effectiveness by mentor selection process and the standard deviation for each of the 13 statements. Figure 2 illustrates the mean perception of effectiveness by mentor selection process as a bar graph. Comparing the means for each perception of effectiveness statement for participants who chose their mentor and those who were assigned their mentor, the results show that for each statement, the participants who chose their mentor rated their mentor higher than participants who were assigned their mentor. Additionally, it is important to note that except for statement three, my mentor demonstrated professional expertise, the mean for 12 of the 13 statements rated by participants who were assigned their mentor did not rise above 3.0. Ratings below 3.0 indicate that the participant selected disagree or slightly agree.

Note: \( N = 31 \)
### Table 5

**Effectiveness Statements Aggregated by Mentor Domain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Domain</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Effectiveness Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meetings &amp; Communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>was accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>was an active listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>was an active listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>provided useful critiques of my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>acknowledged my contributions appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>provided thoughtful advice on my scholarly work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>encouraged me to establish an independent career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>was helpful in providing direction and guidance on professional issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>acknowledged my contributions appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>helped me formulate clear goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>facilitated building my professional network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>demonstrated professional expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>provided useful critiques of my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>motivated me to improve my work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>provided thoughtful advice on my scholarly work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial Support</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>took a sincere interest in my career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>was supportive of work-life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Effectiveness statements 2, 5, 8, and 12 were included in more than one mentor domain.
Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Interns’ Perceptions of Effectiveness by Mentor Domain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Domain</th>
<th>Mentor Selection</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>Assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings &amp; Communication</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychosocial Support</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Support</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: N = 31 for total sample (n = 16 for mentor chosen and n = 15 for mentor assigned).*

**Figure 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Intern’s Perceptions of Effectiveness by Domain*

![Bar graph showing mean effectiveness ratings by mentor domain](image)

*Note: N = 31 for total sample (n = 16 for mentor chosen and n = 15 for mentor assigned).*

Table 5 above shows the mean score for perceptions of effectiveness by mentor selection process grouped into the five mentor domains. Figure 3 above illustrates the mean perception of effectiveness by mentor selection process grouped into the five mentor domains as a bar graph. The bars are arranged from left to right in descending
order and shows that for both mentor selection instances, mentor chosen, and mentor assigned, the order was the same. Participants rated their mentors highest in the meetings & communications domain followed by psychosocial support, expectations & feedback, career development, and lastly, educational support.

All five means for mentor chosen (3.41, 3.34, 3.23, 3.20, and 3.17) were above 3.0 indicating ratings of agree or strongly agree for effectiveness of their mentor. All five means for mentor assigned (2.83, 2.70, 2.58, 2.55, and 2.52) were below 3.0 indicating ratings of slightly agree and disagree for effectiveness of their mentor. The mentor chosen mean was higher than the mentor assigned mean for all five mentor domains indicating that interns who were able to choose their mentor rated them higher than interns who were assigned their mentor in all five mentor domains.

Figure 4

Descriptive Statistics for Interns’ Rating the Relationship with Their Principal Prior to the Internship

Note: \( N = 15 \) for interns who were assigned their principal as their mentor.
Figure 4 shows how interns who were assigned their mentor, their current principal, rated their relationship with their principal prior to their internship on a five-point scale: (4) excellent, (3) good, (2) average, (1) poor, and (0) very poor. To find the mean score of a frequency, the following equation was used.

\[
M = \frac{(1 \times 1) + (2 \times 4) + (3 \times 6) + (4 \times 4)}{15}
\]

\[
M = 2.87
\]

The number of participants in each rating category was multiplied by the point scale for that category, and the numbers were added together and divided by the total number of participants to find the mean rating of 2.87. The mean rating falls between a rating of average and good tending closer to the rating of good. The mode of the data, the rating selected most frequently, was a rating of good (3) with six of the 15 participants selecting the good rating. The median of the data, the 50th percentile, was a rating of good (3). Four interns each selected average or excellent, and with one intern rating their relationship as poor. Very poor was given as a rating option, but no intern selected it.
Figure 5

Descriptive Statistics Comparing the Mean Effectiveness Between Interns Who Chose Their Mentor and Interns Who Were Assigned Their Principal as Their Mentor and Had a Poor Relationship with Them

Note: Only one participant selected a rating of very poor making the sample size too small to use standard deviation as determinate of significance.

Figure 5 compares the mean perception of effectiveness between interns who chose their mentor and the one intern who had a poor relationship with their principal and was assigned their principal as their mentor. For 12 of the 13 statements, interns who chose their mentor rated their mentor higher. For statement four, my mentor encouraged me to establish an independent career, the one mentor assigned their principal rated their mentor higher than the mean of the 16 interns who chose their mentor. Due to only one participant selecting a rating of poor, standard deviation cannot be used to determine statistical significance of noted differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Effectiveness Statements</th>
<th>chosen</th>
<th>poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6

*Descriptive Statistics Comparing the Mean Effectiveness Between Interns Who Chose Their Mentor and Interns Who Were Assigned Their Principal as Their Mentor and Had an Average Relationship with Them*

Note: The black error bars show two standard deviations of uncertainty for each mentor effectiveness statement.

Figure 6 compares the mean perception of effectiveness between interns who chose their mentor and the interns who had an average relationship with their principal and were assigned their principal as their mentor. For all effectiveness statements, interns who chose their mentor had higher ratings than the interns who were assigned their mentor. The difference in the means for all effectiveness statements was more than two standard deviations apart because the error bars do not overlap. Standard deviation is a measure of variability with 95% of the data expected to fall within two standard deviations of the mean. Standard deviation is not a statistical test of significance but when comparing two means, error bars that do not overlap may indicate significance depending on sample size (Von Bargen, n.d.).
Figure 7

*Descriptive Statistics Comparing the Mean Effectiveness Between Interns Who Chose Their Mentor and Interns Who Were Assigned Their Principal as Their Mentor and Had a Good Relationship with Them*

Note: The black error bars show two standard deviations of uncertainty for each mentor effectiveness statement.

Figure 7 compares the mean perception of effectiveness between interns who chose their mentor and the interns who had a good relationship with their principal and were assigned their principal as their mentor. For all effectiveness statements, interns who chose their mentor had higher ratings than the interns who were assigned their mentor. The difference in the means for all effectiveness statements was not more than two standard deviations apart because for all effectiveness statement, the error bars overlap slightly. Standard deviation is a measure of variability with 95% of the data expected to fall within two standard deviations of the mean. Standard deviation is not a
statistical test of significance but when comparing two means, error bars that overlap slightly indicate that the difference is likely not significant (Von Bargen, n.d.).

**Figure 8**

*Descriptive Statistics Comparing the Mean Effectiveness Between Interns Who Chose Their Mentor and Interns Who Were Assigned Their Principal as Their Mentor and Had an Excellent Relationship with Them*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Effectiveness Statements</th>
<th>chosen</th>
<th>excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.44</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* The black error bars show two standard deviations of uncertainty for each mentor effectiveness statement.

Figure 8 compares the mean perception of effectiveness between interns who chose their mentor and the interns who had an excellent relationship with their principal and were assigned their principal as their mentor. For seven effectiveness statements, (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 11) interns who were assigned their current principal as their mentor and had an excellent relationship with their principal rated their effectiveness higher than interns who chose their mentor. This is the only case analyzed in the data set where mentor assigned had higher values than mentor chosen. For all 13 effectiveness
statements, interns who were assigned their mentor had a mean rating at or above 3.0 which gives a rating of agree or strongly agree. For two effectiveness statements in the case of mentor chosen, number five, my mentor provided useful critiques of my work \((M = 2.94)\), and number ten, my mentor helped me formulate clear goals \((M = 2.94)\) were below 3.0. The difference in the means for all effectiveness statements was not more than two standard deviations apart because for all effectiveness statement, the error bars overlap and are nearly the same. Standard deviation is a measure of variability with 95% of the data expected to fall within two standard deviations of the mean. Standard deviation is not a statistical test of significance but when comparing two means, error bars that overlap and are nearly the same indicate that the difference is not significant \((\text{Von Bargen}, \text{n.d.})\).

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics for Intern’s Perceptions of the Overall Effectiveness of Their Mentor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Effectiveness</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mann-Whitney U test for significance was used to determine if the difference in the overall effectiveness rating between interns who chose their mentor and interns who were assigned their mentor was statistically significant. Interns who choose their mentor mean rank \((19.25)\) and interns who were assigned their mentor mean rank \((12.53)\) were determined to be statistically significantly different, \(U = 68, p = .041 \text{ (<.05)}\).
Based on the findings of the Mann-Whitney test \( (N = 31\) for total sample, \(n = 16\) for mentor chosen, \(n = 15\) for mentor assigned), the null hypothesis was not accepted which indicates that the mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

The analysis for hypothesis two (H2) and its null hypothesis follow.

**H2:** The mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

**H_{02}:** The mentor selection process has no effect on how principal program candidates rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

**Table 8**

*Descriptive Statistics for Intern’s Satisfaction with Their Mentor During the Internship Phase of a Principal Preparation Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intern Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Chosen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Assigned</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>.986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mann-Whitney U test for significance was used to determine if the difference in the overall satisfaction rating between interns who chose their mentor and interns who were assigned their mentor was statistically significant. Interns who choose their mentor mean rank (19.16) and interns who were assigned their mentor mean rank (12.63) were determined to be statistically significantly different, \( U = 69.5, p = .045 < .05 \).
Based on the findings of the Mann-Whitney U test for significance ($N = 31$ for total sample, $n = 16$ for mentor chosen, $n = 15$ for mentor assigned), the null hypothesis was not accepted which indicates that the mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

**Possible Limitations**

This study was limited to a specific geographic location and the institutions of higher education residing in that area. The online survey link was sent to only one university offering a graduate level principal preparation program in the Chicago, Illinois area limiting the number of potential participants. Snowball sampling was used so some participants may have attended a different university program or may have attended a program through their school district. The information presented in this study was limited to the views and perceptions of graduates of principal preparation programs from one geographic area and are not intended to represent all principal preparation programs. The sample collected was not a random sample as data was collected from one university with the possibility of some participants attending other universities due to snowball sampling. The sample size was small ($N = 31$) and may not be representative of the general population. Due to the small sample size, standard tests to determine significance such as a $t$ test for independence or ANOVA tests were not used. A less used test for significance the Mann-Whitney U test for non-parametric data was used to determine statistical significance.

The data collection window was during the month of December when universities and K-12 schools were nearing a break in the school year. Participants may have missed
the email with the link to the survey due to being on school break or may have missed the window of the survey when they read the email. The data collection tool used to gather data was designed by other researchers and may not have been the best fit for this sample population as the purpose of their study may not be aligned with the purpose of this study.

Limitations of this study include the number of years since a participant was in the internship phase of their principal preparation program with more recent graduates having been more likely to respond. Since no two internship experiences are the same, the interns’ perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness may be dependent on factors that were in each intern’s personal and professional environment. In other words, one participant’s rating of “slightly agree” may be the equivalent to another participant’s rating of “agree.”

The study was limited by self-reported data that cannot be independently verified so participants responses must be taken at face value. The scope of the measuring tool may have been limiting in having only fourteen statements for responses. Time constraints on the researcher may have negatively impacted the collection and analysis of the data set.

**Summary**

The data analysis was based on an online survey taken by graduates of principal preparation programs offered in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. The survey measured the graduates’ perceptions of their mentor’s effectiveness and their satisfaction level with their mentor during the internship phase of their principal preparation program. Based on the results of the data collected, the null hypothesis was rejected for hypothesis
H1, and the null hypothesis was rejected for hypothesis H2. A statistical difference was found between the mentor selection process and mentor effectiveness, and a statistical difference was found between the mentor selection process and satisfaction levels. The relationship between the intern and the mentor prior to the internship was found to be the variable that was most critical to how an intern rated their mentor.

Chapter Five will provide an introduction and summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications, recommendations for further research, and a reflection on the problem space.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine principal interns’ perceptions of their field-based mentor’s effectiveness and their overall satisfaction level with their mentor during the internship phase of their principal preparation program based on whether they were able to choose their mentor, or a mentor was assigned to them by the administrators of their principal preparation program.

A review of the literature shows that the internship phase of a principal preparation program is a critical component of the program (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; White et al., 2016; Rubens, 2019) and that the relationship between the intern and their mentor is key to a successful internship experience (Cordeiro & Smith-Sloan, 1995; Barnes, 2008; Hines, 2008; Griffin et al., 2012; Bush, 2013; Mombourquetter & Bedard, 2016).

The theoretical framework for this study was based on adult learning theory which states that adult learners are self-directed and can create their own learning environment in which to maximize their learning (Mezirow, 1997; Merriam, 2004). However, some principal preparation programs deny interns the ability to be self-directed in their choice of a mentor by assigning their on-site principal as their mentor (Bultinck, 2013) out of convenience (Geismar, 2000; Malone, 2001). If the most important part of a principal preparation program is the internship and the relationship between the intern and their mentor is the most important part of that internship, then allowing interns to choose their mentor may positively impact their internship experiences.
Two research hypotheses were developed that relate to the principal preparation program mentor selection process and its possible effects on an intern’s perceptions of their mentor.

H1: The mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

H01: The mentor selection process does not have an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship.

H2: The mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

H02: The mentor selection process has no effect on how principal program candidates rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship.

Due to significant teacher shortages in the United States (Eferighe et al., 2022), the principal pipeline is being impacted along with principal recruiting and retention (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2021). Principal preparation programs need to provide future school leaders with the skills to create and lead high-functioning schools that serve the needs of students, staff, families, and the community (Gray et al., 2007). Letting principal interns choose their own mentor for their internship gives them the best chance for a successful and impactful learning experience and sets them up to be better-prepared leaders of schools.
The remainder of this chapter will provide a summary of the study findings, conclusions based on the findings, practical implications of these research findings, and recommendations for future research.

**Summary of Findings and Conclusion**

**Findings**

The findings of this study support both hypothesis H1 and hypothesis H2. The Mann-Whitney U test for non-parametric data was used to determine statistical significance and both null hypothesis, $H_01$ and $H_02$ were not accepted.

The first research question addressed in this study asks if the mentor selection process has an impact on principal preparation program interns’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their mentor during their field-based internship. The data show that interns who were able to choose their own mentor rated their mentors as more effective than interns who were assigned their mentors in all 13 effectiveness statements on the survey. The literature shows that the relationship between an intern and a mentor is the most important component of the internship phase of a principal preparation program (Cunningham & Sherman, 2008; White et al., 2016; Rubens, 2019). If interns were given the opportunity to select their own mentor, then they would choose someone with whom they are compatible and whom they believe would collaborate well with them. The data indicate that selection of one’s own mentor will positively impact the intern’s perceptions of the effectiveness of their chosen mentor. These interns will be more likely to agree or strongly agree that their mentors are effective in all areas measured.

When the 13 effectiveness statements were aggregated into five mentor domains based on a study by Anderson et al. (2012), the mean perception of effectiveness in each
mentor domain was higher for interns who chose their mentor than for interns who were assigned their mentor. Interestingly, both mentor selection categories, mentor chosen and mentor assigned, ranked the five mentor domains in the same order of effectiveness with meetings & communications being most effective followed by psychosocial support, expectations & feedback, career development, and educational support. This finding indicates that the mentors in the study were best skilled at communicating with their interns and least skilled in educational support independent of how the mentor was selected.

Fifteen out of the 31 participants were assigned their current principal as their mentor due to suggestions from research (Bultinck, 2013) or due to convenience (Geismar et al., 2000). Since the relationship between intern and mentor is very important during the internship phase of a principal preparation program, then the relationship between an intern and their current principal, soon to be their mentor, is important, too. According to Dunaway et al. (2010), studies should be conducted to monitor the intern-mentor relationship from the beginning of the internship to the end of it. Participants who were assigned their current principal were asked to complete an additional Likert statement that asked them to rate the quality of their relationship with their principal prior to the internship as very poor, poor, average, good, or excellent. The assumption of this research is that an intern who can choose their mentor will select someone with whom they have a high-quality, rated as good or excellent, relationship. The additional Likert statement was added to compare the effectiveness of mentors who were chosen with mentors who were assigned by their relationship status prior to the internship. This will assist in confirming that the relationship between the intern and mentor is always critical.
to the success of the internship from the intern’s perspective. Concerns by Malone (2001) state that mentors assigned by convenience may result in a poor match in which the intern and mentor fail to connect.

Rubens (2019) showed that the intern-mentor relationship was found to be a critical determinant of intern growth. In keeping with the purpose of this study, data were collected to determine if an intern’s relationship with their mentor prior to the internship made a difference in how they felt about their experiences during the internship. It was assumed that interns who chose their mentor would rate the quality of their internship higher than those who were assigned their mentor. However, this assumes that the relationship between the intern and their assigned mentor, their current principal, may be negative and would affect their experiences during the internship. To mitigate this possible confounding variable, an additional Likert statement was added to the survey which asked the intern to rate the quality of their relationship with their current principal prior to the internship. The findings of this part of the study follow.

There is only one participant who rated their relationship with their principal as poor prior to their internship. In all but one of the 13 effectiveness statements, interns who chose their mentor rated their mentors much higher than the participant with the poor relationship. With only one participant in the poor category, statistical significance could not be determined. However, descriptive statistics clearly show in this case that a poor relationship with a mentor will negatively impact the rating given by an intern.

The data for interns who rated their relationship with their principal as average prior to the internship show that for all 13 effectiveness statements, they rated their mentor lower than interns who chose their mentor. Once again indicating that the
relationship prior to the internship impacts the relationship during the internship. The difference between the ratings for each statement were greater than two standard deviations apart which may indicate significance, but descriptive statistics clearly shows that having an average relationship with a mentor prior to the internship results in lower effectiveness ratings.

The data for interns who rated their relationship with their principal as good prior to the internship show that for all 13 effectiveness statements, they rated their mentor lower than interns who chose their mentor. However, the ratings were within two standard deviations which indicates that the difference is not significant. Using descriptive statistics, the data show that interns who have a good relationship with their mentor prior to the internship are likely to rate their effectiveness the same as if they had been able to choose their mentor.

The data for interns who rated their relationship with their principal as excellent prior to the internship show that for seven out of the 13 effectiveness statements, they rated their mentor higher than interns who chose their mentor. All 13 effectiveness ratings were within two standard deviations which indicates that the differences are not significant. Using descriptive statistics, the data show that interns who have an excellent relationship with their mentor prior to the internship are likely to rate their effectiveness the same or higher than if they had been able to choose their mentor.

The second research question addressed in this study asks if the mentor selection process has an impact on how principal preparation program interns rate their satisfaction with their mentor during their field-based internship. The data show that interns who were able to choose their own mentor rated satisfaction level as higher than interns who
were assigned their mentor. This rating was statement 14 on the survey and was a Likert scale. Satisfaction level for this study is considered to be the feeling one has when a want or need is fulfilled. This rating is more about how an intern feels about their mentor and is likely not based in evidence. Whereas mentor effectiveness measures if a mentor accomplished what they set out to do and is more evidence based.

Conclusions

This quantitative study found that the quality of the relationship between an intern and their mentor during the internship phase of a principal preparation program is directly related to the quality of their relationship prior to the internship. This study sought to find differences in the internship experiences between an intern who chose their own mentor and an intern who was assigned their mentor. The study found that interns who chose their mentor were more satisfied with their mentor and rated their mentor’s effectiveness higher than interns who were assigned their mentor. Additionally, when disaggregating the data collected from intern’s who were assigned their mentor, the better the intern rated their mentor prior to the internship, the better the intern rated their mentor after the internship. This shows a direct relationship between the two but it was not found to be statistically significant.

The literature suggests that strong principal preparation programs require a competency-based internship and collaborative support from mentor principals (Bultinck, 2013; White et al., 2016). Additionally, there is a dearth of information in the literature regarding how mentors are selected and paired with an intern. The Wallace Foundation (2016) supports the idea that the internship phase is critically important to principal preparation programs, but also states concerns regarding the ability to secure high-quality
mentors. The addition of the Likert statement given only to interns who were assigned their mentor has revealed the most pertinent finding of this study: if the relationship between the intern and the mentor is rated as good or excellent prior to the internship, the effectiveness ratings for the mentor will be high independent of the selection process. In other words, the term ‘high-quality mentor’ (Wallace Foundation, 2016) is defined by the intern’s perceptions of their relationship with the mentor.

The findings of this study support the literature that collaborative support from mentors had an impact on the intern’s views regarding their internship. The adult learning theory framework mentioned in the literature (Mezirow, 1997; Merriam, 2004; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011) states that experiential learning is best for adult education programs. Anderson et al. (2012) used adult learning theory to categorize measures of mentors’ effectiveness into five mentor domains in order to provide interns a focused way to evaluate their mentor. This study found that the mentor selection process had an impact on how interns rated their mentor based on the five mentor domains. Interns who were able to choose their mentor rated their mentor higher in all five mentor domains showing a relationship between the mentor selection process and effective mentor evaluation. This study adds to the research regarding the importance of the intern-mentor relationship during the internship phase of a principal preparation program.

The best part of this research was the surprising conclusion that the relationship between an intern and their mentor could be more critical to the success of an internship than the skills and knowledge of the mentor. My journey of research began with an understanding of a problem space, and I set off on a straight path toward a solution. The twists and turns that I encountered never let me astray but moved me closer to my
solution while narrowing my focus. I found that even though my knowledge about principal preparation programs increased greatly, my eyes have been opened as to how much more there is to learn. This process taught me how to research a topic thoroughly and provide answers for questions, but I have found more than anything, it has shown me that seeking out the questions is the most valuable part of research.

**Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the study was limited by the online survey being sent to only one university in the Chicago, Illinois area. This limits the number of potential participants as well as limits the pool of participants to a small region geographically. The email addresses used by the university to disseminate the survey may have been old and outdated limiting the number of potential participants. The study was limited to graduates of principal preparation programs who are still working in K-12 institutions which may have limited the number of potential participants. The coursework taken by my interns during their internship was not studied and was assumed to not be relevant to the research questions of the study.

**Implications**

**Theoretical Implications**

Adult learning theory incorporates various theories developed to describe how adults learn and how best to instruct adults in an educational setting. Malcolm Knowles developed the concept of andragogy, Jack Mezirow developed transformative learning theory, and David Kolb developed experiential learning theory using theories developed by John Dewey and Kurt Lewin (Kolb, 2005). The common theme in adult learning theory is that adults use their experiences to learn, incorporating past experiences, current
experiences, and even the idea of future experiences. Principal preparation programs provide their students with experiences within a classroom setting, but research shows that the experiences found to be the most beneficial to building strong leadership skills are during the internship phase of the program. The concept of andragogy states that adults are intrinsically motivated and desire to direct their own learning (Merriam, 2004). The findings of this study show that when interns are given the opportunity to be self-directed and are allowed to choose their own mentor, they rate their mentors higher in effectiveness and overall satisfaction. This confirms the benefits of allowing interns to select their mentor for the most critical component of their experience within their principal preparation program.

**Practical Implications**

The literature shows that “principals are a critical force in school improvement” (Briggs et al., 2013) due to the various important roles they fulfill within their schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2007). In an attempt to look at the state-by-state policies and requirements for principal preparation programs, Briggs et al. (2007) found that states are not effectively overseeing the programs being offered by colleges and universities within their state. The Wallace Foundation (2016) stated that although states have the authority to improve principal preparation programs within their states, they are not using this power to good effect.

This study may provide helpful information regarding mentor selection to state superintendents or school boards as well as to colleges and universities who administer principal preparation programs. State policymakers could incorporate the mentor
selection process into their requirements for these programs while colleges and universities can effect this change more immediately in their curriculum.

**Future Research Implications**

The methodology used in this research used a measurement tool developed by other researchers (Yukawa et al., 2020) which was intended to be used to quantify the study participants’ ratings of their mentor during their internship. Upon reflection, I realized that I assumed that interns who choose their mentor would select someone with whom they gave a good relationship. I also realized that although I was assigned my principal as my mentor, knowing that she and I had an excellent relationship, I would have selected her if given the opportunity. This presented me with a possible confounding variable in my survey, and I added the additional Likert statement that asked interns who were assigned their mentor to rate their relationship prior to their internship. If further research were to be done, the researcher should include a way to measure the relationship between the intern and the mentor prior to the internship for all interns.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study**

The mentor selection process has not been widely studied in educational leadership literature. The findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population due to the small sample size of the data set. However, the analysis of the data using statistically valid tests and descriptive statistics leads one to see that more study needs to be done in this area of educational leadership. A strength of this study is the indication that a larger and more comprehensive study needs to be undertaken to confirm and generalize the finding that interns will experience a more fulfilling and satisfactory internship experience if they are given the opportunity to choose their own mentor.
If I were to repeat this study, I would either look for a different survey or create one of my own that better suits my research problem space. I would also change my hypotheses to incorporate studying the relationship between the intern and mentor prior to the internship for all interns.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, I have three recommendations for future research and two recommendations for future practice.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation #1.

The findings of this study clearly indicate the importance of determining the quality of the relationship between a principal preparation intern and their mentor prior to the forthcoming internship. In some instances, interns will be assigned their current principal as their mentor, and the quality of their current relationship is a determining factor in the effectiveness of the mentor and the satisfaction levels of the intern. In other instances, interns will be able to select their own mentor, and it is assumed they will choose someone with whom they have a high-quality relationship.

Future research should study using a compatibility survey prior to the internship to evaluate the interns’ perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their mentor in both instances of choosing one’s own mentor or being assigned their current principal as mentor. Additionally, a control group in this study could be used to collect data on participants who were not given the compatibility survey to determine the effectiveness of the survey. Colleges and universities administrators of principal preparation programs could benefit from these studies by implementing a compatibility survey into their
program. There is always the chance that an intern allowed to choose their own mentor may not be the best judge of the current relationship they have with their selected mentor. The program administrators would then be able to make adjustments in their mentor selection process as needed based on the results of the surveys for each pairing.

**Recommendation #2.**

Research shows that the relationship between an intern and their mentor is a key determinant of intern growth (Rubens, 2019). Future research should study how the quality of the relationship between an intern and their mentor impacts the efficacy of the intern once they assume a school leadership role. The goal of the internship phase of a principal preparation program is to provide real-world experiential learning opportunities that will prepare the intern to assume the role of principal with the knowledge and abilities to be successful. Prior research has studied many facets of principal preparation programs but there is a gap in the literature relating the intern-mentor relationship with the eventual outcomes of the program as evidenced by the efficacy of the intern when in a leadership role. This research will provide administrators of principal preparation programs with research-based best practices for creating a mentor selection process that will result in high principal efficacy for their graduates.

**Recommendation #3.**

This study used the Mentor Evaluation Tool created by Yukawa et al. (2020) to collect data. Yukawa et al. (2020) developed the tool to evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring with regard to new faculty members in health sciences in higher education. Using the five mentor domains developed by Anderson et al. (2012), they aggregated their 13 effectiveness statements into the five domains. Additional research should be
conducted that would align the five domains to educational leadership standards used within states in order to better assess effectiveness between interns and mentors in principal preparation programs.

**Recommendations for Future Practice**

**Recommendation #1.**

Colleges and universities that offer principal preparation programs should perform program evaluations that assess the effectiveness of the internship phase of their program. This should include an emphasis on the mentor selection process, mentor training, and intern-mentor compatibility.

**Recommendation #2.**

Principal preparation programs should align their programs with the research-based national framework NELP standards paying particular attention to Standard 8: Internship, component 8.3. “Candidates are provided a mentor who has demonstrated effectiveness as an educational leader within a building setting; is present for a significant portion of the internship; is selected collaboratively by the intern, a representative of the school and/or district, and program faculty; and has received training from the supervising institution” (NPBEA, 2018, p. 30).

**Conclusions**

According to Malone (2001), a mentor must create a “unique relationship with his or her protégé and fulfill a need unmet by any other relationship” (p. 2). This research study affirms the findings of many other studies in the literature on the internship phase of a principal preparation program by showing that the relationship between the intern and the mentor is paramount to a successful internship and, thereby, provides the needed
knowledge and skills to prepare interns for the rigors of being a successful leader in the field of education. This study contributes the beginning steps toward analyzing and creating best practices for finding and pairing an intern with their mentor. The primary takeaway from this study shows that it takes more than a qualified mentor to provide the best possible internship for aspiring leaders. It takes a strong working relationship between the intern and the mentor that the intern views as a high-quality relationship prior to the commencement of the internship. Compatibility between the intern and the mentor may well be more important than mentor qualifications.

With the current teacher shortage (Eferighe et al., 2022) causing the principal pipeline to dry up (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2022), it is vitally important to produce qualified and capable principals over the next few years. This research study provides an extra layer of support for principal preparation programs to implement quickly that will enhance their program outcomes by graduating better-qualified principals who have had positive field experiences. Better programs produce better principals.
REFERENCES


Appendix A.

IRB Approval

Exemption Verified - IRB ID: 759

Date: 10/17/2022
To: Christina Bennett
From: Marymount University IRB

Submission Type: Initial: Exemption
Action: EXEMPT
Category: (2) Tests, Surveys, Interviews
Determination Date: 10/17/2022
Study Status Report Due Date: 10/16/2023

The materials submitted for the above-referenced study have been reviewed and determined to qualify for exemption from federal regulations. However, if you plan on amending your research in any way, you must first submit a modification to the Marymount University IRB for a determination of whether or not the exemption referenced above is still met, unless the change is necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to a subject(s), in which case it must be immediately reported. Annual Check-In: You will be asked to complete a Study Status Report to satisfy Marymount University institutional requirements. Once your study has concluded, please submit the final status report and set the continuation status to "Study Closed" and complete the study closure form.

Based on the information provided, this research is subject to the following requirements:
• The policies and procedures of Marymount University IRB and Marymount University
• State law, as applicable

As the Principal Investigator you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations and requirements.

If you have any questions or comments about this correspondence, please contact the IRB Office at swarna.pothur@marymount.edu.

In addition to the IRB Application form, the following documents were submitted:

Consent Form 10/12/2022 Consent Form.pdf
Data Collection Instruments 10/12/2022 MET Qualitics Survey.pdf

If you have any questions, please contact us at irb@marymount.edu.
Appendix B.

Email Solicitation for Survey

Online survey for a research study of the Mentor Selection Process used by principal preparation programs
1 message

Bennett, Christina <c-bennett7@neiu.edu>  Mon, Dec 5, 2022 at 8:22 PM
To: Noreen Powers <n-powers@neiu.edu>

Dear Dr. Powers,

My name is Christina Bennett, and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership & Organizational Innovation at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.

My faculty sponsor is Dr. Joseph Pisani, who can be contacted at jpisani@marymount.edu, and the Marymount University Institutional Review Board have accepted my request to perform this research.

I am respectfully requesting to survey graduates of your principal preparation program regarding their perceptions of their field-based mentor’s effectiveness during the internship phase of the program. According to research, the greatest impact on an aspiring principal’s internship is the relationship with their mentor, therefore, the selection process that is used to find and pair the intern and mentor needs to be investigated. The findings of this research may prove important to universities as they develop best practices for the mentor selection process.

The survey should take at most 4-5 minutes to complete.

Your permission, cooperation, and support are very important to this study and are greatly appreciated. I am requesting that you forward the following description and survey link to graduates of your program.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christina Bennett
Doctoral Candidate
Marymount University

Dear Prospective Survey Participant,

I am a doctoral candidate at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, and I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral degree requirements.

This email invites you to participate in a short online survey regarding your perceptions of your mentor’s effectiveness during your principal preparation program internship.

The survey will take no more than 4-5 minutes. Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the survey at any time and all survey responses will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement.

Link to survey

A link to an informed consent agreement will appear on the first screen page of the survey. There will be no individually identifiable information, remarks, comments, or other identification of you as an individual participant. All results will be
presented as aggregate, summary data.

If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by emailing me at c0b57558@marymount.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christina Bennett
Doctoral Candidate
Marymount University
Appendix C.

Site Authorization

Dear Christina,
Thank you for your survey. We have sent your survey out to our Alumni. Please let me know if you need any additional information or support.

Sincerely,
Dr. Powers

[Quote text hidden]

Dr. Powers

Noreen A. Powers, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor & Coordinator
Literacy, Leadership & Development

Daniel L. Goodwin College of Education
Northeastern Illinois University
2063 Lech Walesa Hall, Office 3009
Chicago, IL 60625
Office: 773-442-5395
Cell: 312-335-2739
Email: npowers@neiu.edu
Appendix D.

Marymount University Informed Consent for Participation in Research

Research Study Title: The Principal Preparation Program Internship: The Mentor Selection Process

Researcher(s): This research is being carried out by Christina Bennett, EdD Candidate, at Marymount University.

Research Purpose: The purpose of this quantitative methods research study is to describe the effect of the mentor selection process on the quality of the intern-mentor relationship during the internship phase of a principal preparation program. There is ample evidence that the internship phase of a principal preparation program must provide the intern with a meaningful field experience in order to truly experience real-world situations while learning to become a school leader.

The objectives of this study are to 1) relate the interns’ satisfaction with their field experience mentor and the process used to select their mentor and 2) explore how this relationship impacted the interns’ perceptions of their field-based mentor. Quantitative data will be collected from individuals who have completed a principal preparation program at an institute of higher education or within a school district. Data will be analyzed to establish if correlation points exist between how a mentor is selected, mentor being selected by the intern or mentor being assigned to an intern, and the satisfaction levels of the intern.

The anticipated outcomes of this research study may inform universities, colleges, and school districts who administer principal preparation programs as to how best to select mentors for their students during their internship phase of the program.

Study Expectations: If you agree to participate in this study, here is what will be asked of you:
1. Participants will complete an anonymous online survey.
2. Participants will be individuals who have completed a principal preparation program at an institute of higher education or within a school district and have attained principal certification in their state.

Risks: We do not anticipate that participating in this study poses any risks greater than those encountered in day-to-day life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you; however, the results of this study will provide researchers with a better understanding of the mentor selection process and its effect on the quality of the intern-mentor relationship for future students in principal preparation programs.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participation in this study.
**Privacy and Confidentiality:** Because of the anonymous nature of this study, there are no privacy or confidentiality concerns. No one, including the research team, will know who does or does not participate in this study.

Participants will be anonymous with only the IP address of the computer used for the online survey as an identifier. Data will be used in the aggregate in the research findings and will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

**Sharing Study Findings:** The results of this study will be used to attain a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

**Voluntary Participation:** Taking part in this study is completely your choice. If you decide to participate, you are free to skip parts or stop participating at any time for any reason. Your participation or lack of participation will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher(s) or with Marymount University.

**Questions:** Please ask any questions you have now before signing the consent form. If you have questions later, you may contact Christina Bennett at c0b57558@marymount.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact Marymount University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) via email, irb@marymount.edu, or phone, (703) 526-6898.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I understand the above statements and all of my questions have been answered. I am at least 18, and freely consent to participate in the research as it has been explained to me.

I understand that by continuing with this survey, I am providing consent to participate in this research.

_____ YES  _____NO

This study was approved by the Marymount University IRB on ____________.

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the Marymount IRB on ____________.
Appendix E.

Mentor Evaluation Tool

1. Please answer each question as honestly and accurately as possible. This survey is completely anonymous. Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your job status. You acknowledge that you understand that by continuing with this survey, you are providing consent to participate in this research. To view the full participant consent form, click view consent form. Otherwise, click Skip to continue the survey.
   - View Consent Form
   - Skip

2. Consent Form

3. How many years has it been since you completed your principal preparation program?
   - Less than 5 years
   - 5 years or more

4. Where did you complete your principal preparation program?
   - University graduate program
   - School District principal preparation program

5. Did you attain a principal endorsement/license in your state?
   - Yes
   - No

6. Which description best describes your current academic position?
   - K-12 teacher
   - K-12 administrator

7. How were you originally matched to your mentor?
   - I chose my mentor.
   - I was assigned the principal at my school as my mentor by default.

8. If your school principal was assigned as your mentor by default, please rate the quality of your relationship with this individual prior to your internship.
   - Very Poor
   - Poor
   - Average
   - Good
   - Excellent

Likert Scale statements
   - Disagree
   - Slightly agree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

1. My mentor was accessible.
2. My mentor was an active listener.
3. My mentor demonstrated professional expertise.
4. My mentor encouraged me to establish an independent career.
5. My mentor provided useful critiques of my work.
6. My mentor motivated me to improve my work.
7. My mentor was helpful in providing direction and guidance on professional issues.
8. My mentor acknowledged my contributions appropriately.
9. My mentor took a sincere interest in my career.
10. My mentor helped me to formulate clear goals.
11. My mentor facilitated building my professional network.
12. My mentor provided thoughtful advice on my scholarly work.
13. My mentor was supportive of work-life balance.
14. Overall, I was satisfied with my mentor.
Appendix F.

Mentor Evaluation Tool Permission for Use

Christina Bennett <c0b57558@marymount.edu>  Thu, Apr 7, 2022 at 10:49 PM
To: Michi.Yukawa@ucsf.edu

Dear Dr. Yukawa,

I am a doctoral student at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia and I am requesting permission to use the Mentor Evaluation Tool that you and your colleagues developed. I wish to use the 14 statements in which the mentee indicates their strength of agreement or disagreement with the listed statements.

The purpose of my research is to describe the effect of the mentor selection process on the quality of the intern-mentor relationship during the internship of a principal preparation program administered at institutes of higher education. There is ample evidence that the internship phase of a principal preparation program must provide the intern with a meaningful field experience in order to truly experience real-world situations while learning to become a school leader.

The objectives of this study are to 1) relate the interns' satisfaction with their field experience mentor and the process used to select their mentor and 2) explore how this relationship impacted the quality of the interns' field experience.

The anticipated outcomes of this research study may inform universities, colleges, and school districts that administer principal preparation programs as to how best to select mentors for their students during their internship phase of the program.

Thank you very much for your consideration,

Christina Bennett
c0b57558@marymount.edu
Doctoral student
Marymount University

Yukawa, Michi <Michi.Yukawa@ucsf.edu>  Fri, Apr 8, 2022 at 11:10 AM
To: Christina Bennett <c0b57558@marymount.edu>

Hi Christina

Please feel free to use the instrument and I hope it is helpful. If you don't mind, please reference our work on your future publication.

Best of luck.

Michi

Michi Yukawa MD, MPH
Professor of Medicine
Pronouns: she/her/hers
University of California San Francisco/ Division of Geriatrics
490 Illinois Street, Floor 8, UCSF BOX 1265, San Francisco, CA 94143

San Francisco Campus for Jewish Living
Medical Director, Short Stay Rehabilitation Unit
302 Silver Avenue, San Francisco
(415) 406-1417
Michi.Yukawa@ucsf.edu