A Case Study Identifying Leadership Behaviors Present in Directors of

Private High-Quality Preschool Programs in Central Florida

by

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Abstract

Federal and state governments invest in childcare programs as a way to improve school readiness skills for children. The problem facing early childhood education, and one that is negatively impacting children entering kindergarten, is that within the preschool setting the children are not learning the necessary readiness skills needed to be successful in kindergarten. Since the early 1980s, it has been shown that a child's development can be improved by receiving a high-quality early childhood education (Ishimine and Tayler, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how leadership influences the quality of the preschool program and what behaviors those leaders possess.

A qualitative multiple case design was utilized because the data collected was open for interpretation by the researcher and used to construct a meaningful explanation of a complex situation by deeply exploring personal interviews. The results and evaluation of the findings were done by using cross-analysis of the data from an interview and an MLQ survey to answer two research questions. What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program that does not accept federal/state funding? The data analysis revealed that the leaders that participated in the current study did lead with mostly transformational leadership behaviors. They also used little to no leadership behaviors found within passive leadership. It was also determined that there are more similarities in their leadership behaviors than differences.

Key words: early childhood education, transactional, transformational

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

"Children typically spend many hours in childcare settings during early childhood and the quality of those settings is an important factor in a young child's development" (Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Weilin, and Ruzek, 2013, p. 1171). Federal and state governments invest in childcare programs as a way to ensure all children receive the school readiness skills needed. While the literature is sparse, experimental literature available suggests that higher quality care is linked to having an impact on educational development for many years when that care starts in early childhood (Keys, et al., 2013). Past research has shown that the quality of care in the early years can be linked to the quality of leadership within the early childhood center. This research also shows that the quality of these preschool settings are known for strong leadership, where leaders and staff share a clear vision of the settings' practices (Ang, 2011). When referring to transformational leadership, Jean Brown noted that schools needed leadership with visions that evolved from the work of all (Taylor, 1994). One study indicated that trained and skilled leaders who communicated and provided a vison for the preschool setting had a direct impact on the program's overall quality (Ang, 2011).

The research supports the fact that children who attend preschool are more likely to be successful in kindergarten than their peers who do not attend any type of early childhood program. Participating in an early childhood education program can also provide academic and social benefits that last after kindergarten (Espinosa, 2002). Past research also indicates that for children, especially ones from lower income backgrounds, to have positive gains from preschool it must be high-quality (Espinosa, 2002). "Strong leadership is a vital component of any thriving organization" (Talan, Bloom, and Kelton, 2014, p. 1). "Early childhood administrators must be

able to envision goals, affirm values, motivate staff, achieve unity towards a common purpose, and foster continuous improvement" (Talan, Bloom, and Kelton, 2014, p. 1).

The Problem

The problem facing early childhood education, and one that is negatively impacting children entering kindergarten, is that within the preschool setting, children are not learning the necessary readiness skills needed to be successful in kindergarten. A possible factor is that early childhood directors/leaders are not prepared or adequately trained to lead a quality preschool program. "Many of our most vulnerable children attend the lowest quality programs, and children who are at risk for failing in school are more strongly influenced by the quality of the preschool program" (Espinosa, 2002, p. 2). Espinosa (2002) stresses that past research has shown that "three and four year-olds who attend a high-quality preschool are more successful in kindergarten and throughout their academic careers" (p. 2).

The 2013 and 2014 State of the Union addresses by President Barack Obama stressed the significance of early childhood education and the lack of high-quality, affordable programs (Bassok and Galdo, 2016). Since the early 1980s, it has been shown that a child's development can be improved by receiving a high-quality early childhood education (Ishimine and Tayler, 2014). In order for the next generation to remain academically competitive globally, they must be provided a strong early foundation for learning that is critical to their success later on in school and society (DellaMattera, 2010). "Current research is indicating that preschoolers are not receiving the quality early educational experiences needed in order to lay that critical foundation" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 35). One study suggests that preschoolers are entering kindergarten without the essential skills that are needed to be successful in school and society in the future (DellaMattera, 2010). Experimental literature suggests that when high quality care

begins during early childhood it can have a lasting impact on child's development (Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li, and Ruzek, 2013). A recent analysis of results from five early child-care studies showed that children placed in centers with lower quality care had lower outcomes, in regard to kindergarten readiness, than their peers who attended a high-quality early childhood center (Keys, et al., 2013).

Purpose of the Study

Children who attend a high-quality preschool program.do better when they enter kindergarten as opposed to those children who did not attend an early childhood program (Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, 2017). Leadership within early childhood programs is one variable that needs to be examined (Patton, 2009). One study showed that quality preschool settings are almost always characterized by leaders that are strong and share a clear vison of the center's practices with their staff (Ang, 2011). In 2013 U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said the one area he thinks the U.S. Department of Education did not do enough of in President Obama's first term was to invest in principal leadership. He goes on to say that he has yet to meet an amazing school that did not have an amazing principal (Connelly, 2013).

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how leadership influences the quality of the preschool program and what behaviors those leaders possess. "Precise, consistent, and valid definitions of quality have been elusive" (Pianta, Downer, and Hamre, 2016, p. 120). Pianta and colleagues state that definitions of quality in early education usually include four aspects: a program's structural elements, classrooms environment, teacher-student interactions, and quality rating systems. While all 50 states within the U.S. have childcare standards and regulations, they vary greatly as to how the childcare program is state regulated. They also stress

that few states implement the rating systems. In another article, Espinosa stresses that "it is

crucial to have a clear vision of what high-quality preschool programs look like" (2002, p. 3).

For the purpose of this study, a high-quality early childhood program can be defined as an "early

childhood program that provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical,

social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children" (U.S. Department of State,

2016, Section two, para. 1). Within this study the terms early childhood education and preschool

programs will be used interchangeably.

Rationale

"The influence of the leader behavior paradigm can be seen across leadership theories"

(Derue, et al., 2011, p. 8). The research contained within this case study will be framed using

Derue's Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness (Derue, et al., 2011).

This research relies heavily on the leader behaviors represented within the Derue's model (see

appendix A). According to the research by Derue and colleagues (2011), when discussing leader

behaviors, they are described in terms of whether the behavior is task oriented, relational

dynamic, or a change. The three main types of leader behaviors on the chart are: task-oriented,

relational-oriented, and change-oriented. "Initiating structure and select transactional leader

behaviors represent task-oriented behaviors and include, defining task roles, coordinating group

members' actions, determining standards of task performance, and ensuring those standards are

met" (Derue, et al., 2011, p. 16). Transactional leaders set clear expectations in terms of task

performance and reward that performance. "Relational-oriented behaviors are seen in leaders that

are high on consideration, show concern and respect for individual group members, friendly and

approachable, open to input, and treat all members as equal" (Derue, et al., 2011, p. 16) Lastly,

"leader behaviors oriented toward facilitating and driving change in groups and organizations

represent the third category of leader behaviors and are distinct from the task and relational-oriented behaviors" (Derue, et al., 2011, p. 16). These leaders take action to develop and communicate a vision that involves change for the future. They also challenge assumptions and are willing to take risks. Many of the behaviors listed within the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness can be found within leaders that tend to have a transformational, situational, or transactional style of leadership.

The functions set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) include: pedagogy, organizational development and systems, human resources, collaboration, and advocacy (NAEYC, 2007). These five areas fit into the leader behaviors of task-oriented, relational-oriented, and change oriented within the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness.

Research Questions

1. What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program?
2. What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program that does not accept federal/state funding?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this case study was to determine which leadership behaviors are most prevalent in quality private preschool programs. This case study added to a small, narrow body of research focusing on early childhood directors/leaders and determining high-quality within preschool programs. The quality of the program decides if the child's experience will be positive or negative (Patton, 2009). A study by the National Institute of Child and Human Development

(NICHD) indicated that children, 54 months of age, who experienced high quality childcare, scored higher on language, memory, and cognitive and social development assessments (Patton, 2009). Children who receive care in high quality programs also appear less anxious and make an easier transition. In just nine months a successful high-quality program can make a difference in a child's development and close achievement gaps (Pianta, et al., 2016).

Over time the role of the preschool director/leader has evolved. Rapid changes in early childhood education have increased the duties of early childhood leaders and therefore caused new challenges for them (Stamopoulos, 2012). Political leaders are gambling that early education will close the achievement gap between children from high socio-economic backgrounds and those from low socio-economic backgrounds. Every day millions of preschool aged children attend a non-parental childcare program (Patton, 2009). All members in society have a stake in the issue of high-quality early childhood education because it lays the foundation for future academic success. Therefore, it was necessary to research and determine which leadership behaviors were found within high-quality private early childhood education programs because of its potential to lay a stronger foundation in regard to readiness skills, allowing for children to be kindergarten ready. The study provided insight into the leadership phenomenon for those who wish to improve their leadership skills and for teacher educators who teach pre-service teachers and directors in early childhood education programs.

Definition of Terms

High-quality Early Childhood Program

For the purpose of this study a high-quality early childhood program can be defined as an "early childhood program that provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the

physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children" (US Department of State, 2016, section two, para. 1).

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK)

"Prepares early learners for success in kindergarten and beyond and helps build a strong foundation for school using educational material corresponding to various stages in a child's development" (Florida Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, 2017, VPK, para. 1). This type of program accepts federal/state funding.

Private Early Childhood Programs

Parents pay fees. Some working families can receive subsidies that pay some of the costs or they can receive financial help through tax provisions (Pianta, et al., 2016). This type of program does not accept federal/state funding.

Preschool

A center based program that provides educational and social experiences for children prior to kindergarten and can be located in an early childhood center, state public school, or a private preschool (Espinosa, 2002).

Transactional Leadership

Relationships with stakeholders that are based on staff members receiving rewards in exchange for meeting the expectations (Bush, 2011). A limitation is that this is often a short-term model and does not always bring long-term benefits.

Situational Leadership

This leadership style requires the leader to understand the diverse natures of schools and be able to adapt the leadership style to the particular situation rather than adopting a one size fits all model. Leaders need to be able to read the situation and respond accordingly (Bush, 2011).

Transformational Leadership

Leaders engage with staff and other stakeholders to create a high level of commitment in order to reach the organizational goals set by the group's vision. The motives of the leader and the followers merge together.

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Summary

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Past research indicates that quality care is the most consistent predictor of children's growth and positive development (Patton, 2009). Preschool leadership appears to be a topic that researchers pay little attention to in regard to quality since the literature is limited and what is available is not the most current. Patton states that this lack of research could be due to the fact that some educational institutions do not view early childhood programs as an extension of education (2009). Regardless of the title or name of the early childhood center, it represents a place where young children receive an education, and the quality of that center dictates whether the experience is negative or positive (Patton, 2009).

Based on the theoretical framework, transactional, transformational, and situational leadership styles were examined in order to see what behaviors leaders exhibited when leading an early childhood center. Transactional leadership implies a mutual agreement in which the followers will work for the leader as long as their work is rewarded. Transformational leadership is evidenced when the leaders work with their followers to achieve a group purpose by working together to reach a common goal (Patton, 2009). On the other hand, situational leadership implies that no one style works in all situations, at all times, or with all followers.

All members of society have a stake in the issue of high-quality early childhood education since past research indicates that it lays the foundation for future success (Patton, 2009). Often the early childhood programs with the lowest quality are attended by the most

vulnerable group of children. This is the group of children who are at high risk for school failure,

yet are most influenced by the quality of the early childhood program (Espinosa, 2002).

Therefore, it is vital for stakeholders to have a clear vision of what high-quality preschool

programs consist of and how the director's leadership behaviors affect program quality.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

"It is apparent in the literature that no one definition, list of descriptors, or theoretical model provides a complete portrait of either the theory or practice of leadership in education" (Taylor, 1994, p. 1). "Research has indicated specific leadership practices positively influence academic achievement" (Quinn, Deris, Bischoff, and Johnson, 2015, p. 73). Empirical research suggests that in order for success to be achieved in school reform efforts, leaders that are effective and capable transformational leaders are a necessity (Quinn, et al., 2015). In the past 20 years more attention continues to be given to the impact educational leadership has on student outcomes (Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger, 2003). "An effective principal is an instructional or educational leader who affects school climate and student achievement" (Witziers, et al., 2003, p. 398).

"Strong leadership is a vital component of any thriving organization" (Talan, Bloom, and Kelton, 2014, p.1). "Research suggests that professional development makes a difference in the level of the administrators' self-efficacy" (Talan, et al., 2014, p. 2). After completing administrative training, directors who received more training reported higher gains in regard to their competency. Their staff perceived the environment at these programs to be more positive and productive (Talan, et al., 2014). Building leadership capacity has reappeared as a key concern as the early childhood profession responds to changing demands (Campbell-Evans, Stamopolous, and Malone, 2014).

Children spend many hours in a non-custodial setting during the early years, and the quality of that setting can impact their development (Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li, Ruzek, and Howes, 2013). According to Keys and his colleagues, experimental literature

indicates that the higher the quality of care, the greater the impact will be on the child's development when that care begins during early childhood (2013). Research evidence indicates that higher quality childcare is related to an improvement in the cognitive and social development of the children who attend these centers (Keys, et al., 2013).

"Early learning is woven throughout the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) as a means of addressing education equity in order to eliminate disparities in student achievement and support students' school success" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4). Due to reauthorization, the ESEA has been changed from K-12 education law to Preschool-12 law (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). "In order to stay competitive, the next generation must be given a strong, early foundation for learning, which is crucial to children's later school and societal success" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 35). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was the federal government's answer to helping children become school-ready by holding all levels of education accountable, including preschool (DellaMattera, 2010). These preschool policy guidelines are designed to hold early educators accountable for quality teaching, as seen within the K-12 system.

Effective Leadership Practices

"According to literature written by Galton and Eysenck in 1869, research on leadership began with a search for heritable attributes that differentiated leaders from non-leaders and explained the individuals' effectiveness as leaders" (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, and Humphrey, 2011, p. 7). In order to explain what it is to be an effective leader, first, leadership effectiveness domain must be defined. Among scholars, the definition of leadership effectiveness often varies (Derue, et al., 2011). "Based on the literature reviews, leadership effectiveness criteria can be conceptualized along three dimensions: content, level of analysis, and target of evaluation"

(Derue, et al., 2011, p. 9). Content relates to task performance and satisfaction with the leader. The level of analysis addresses whether the effectiveness of the leader is noted at an individual, dyadic, group, or organizational level. Target of evaluation refers to whether the leader is the center of the evaluation, which is related to leader effectiveness and satisfaction with the leader (Derue, et al., 2011).

Overall, the research done by Derue and colleagues (2011), found that passive leader behaviors are negatively related to leader effectiveness. They also found that within the behavioral paradigm, "transformational leadership was the most consistent predictor of leadership effectiveness" (2011, p. 37). Also, it was noted within the study that situational factors could have an impact on the effectiveness of leader traits and behaviors, as seen within situational leadership.

"School leadership is essential to the success of school organizations" (Quinn, Deris, Bischoff, and Johnson, 2015, p. 72). Principals are right behind teachers when it comes to the improvement of student achievement (Quinn, et al., 2015). It was reported that in effective schools, principals felt strongly about instruction, and teacher performance was regularly reviewed.

But as of late, there is a shift in thinking regarding leadership in education, which is from an instructional to a transformational model (Taylor, 1994). According to Taylor, transformational leadership is a mixture of older and newer ideas. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, transformational leadership began to grow. Bass describes four styles of transformational leaders which are: charismatic, intellectual, inspirational, and individualized (Taylor, 1994). Later, Lesourd, Tracz, and Grady added the category visionary and explain that in the visionary interpretations one would see evidence of strong personal convictions, vigorous work ethic,

innovative practice and a personal image of the school and institution in the future (Taylor, 1994). Transformational leaders work with others in the organization and create collegiality.

Studies were organized in order to create the most frequently employed leadership practices and skills of effective leaders (Quinn, et al., 2015). "The leadership practices included setting directions, developing the capacity of staff, redesigning the educational institution, and managing the instructional program" (Quinn, et al., 2015, p. 73). Transformational leaders, according to research, are able to transform the people and culture within an organization. "Empirical research suggests that effective and capable transformational leaders are essential in order for success in reform efforts" (Quinn, et al., 2015, p. 73). According to the study conducted by Quinn and associates, high preforming schools had principals that used transformational leadership practices more consistently and adequately over leaders in institutions that were low performing (2015). "The five transformational practices are: inspiring a shared vision, modeling the way, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart" (Quinn, et al., 2015, p. 74). The research conducted by Quinn reinforces the notion that transformational leadership had a positive effect on school achievement.

In the past 20 years a substantial amount of attention has been given to how student outcomes are impacted by educational leadership (Witziers, Bosker, and Kruger, 2003). An effective principal is one who impacts school climate and student achievement. The authors examined research and conducted a meta-analysis to answer the question: "To what extent does educational leadership directly affect student achievement?"

"Research into school effectiveness is considered the starting point for examining educational leadership and its impact on student outcomes" (Witziers, et al., 2003, p. 400). "Research suggests that principals should have high expectations of teachers and student

achievement, supervise teachers, coordinate curriculum, emphasize basic skills, and monitor

student progress" (Witziers, et al., 2003, p. 401). Desired student results is the main duty that

leadership needs to develop within the school's setting (Witziers, et al., 2003). Witziers and

colleagues define an "educational leader as someone whose actions are intentionally geared to

influence the school's primary processes: student achievement levels" (2003, p. 403). Witzier

and colleagues also mentioned Leithwood's concept of transformational leadership and how it

can be viewed as a detailed concept of educational leadership where principals represent change

agents (2003).

Education reform has been occurring in Hong Kong for the past 10 years. In order to

improve the quality of education in Hong Kong, the local government is creating new policies.

Parents are requesting quality preschool programs. Therefore, the local government is focusing

on the development of early childhood education and its quality. In order to improve the quality

of the preschool programs, policies to increase teacher qualifications, implement a quality

assurance framework, and align pre-primary education programs have been introduced (Ho,

2011).

"Interview data from research indicated that school principals and other stakeholders

regarded possessing high ethical standards and upholding professional values to be important

traits of effective leadership" (Ho, 2011, p. 47). Many stakeholders also viewed role modeling by

school principals as important. School principals were also expected to maintain a strong

commitment to having higher professional values. Participants believed that the "role model, the

school manager, and the mentor for curriculum and pedagogy were important roles for a school

principal to have within the school context" (Ho, 2011, p. 57). Worldwide, improving the quality

of early childhood education is being accomplished by a process of leadership. "The assumptions

supporting this are that highly trained early childhood professionals can inspire, mentor, model, and coach other staff to improve their practice" (Sims, Forrest, Semann, and Slattery, 2015, p. 149).

Siraj-Blatchford and Manni conducted a study in 2008 on effective leadership in early childhood education that provided empirical evidence about the role of the leader and the impact of early childhood leadership (Ang, 2011). One study suggested that successful preschool settings are frequently defined by having strong leadership with few staff turnovers where everyone shares a common and concise vision of the setting's practices, especially as it relates to pedagogy and curriculum (Ang, 2011). It also indicated that a leader that was trained, skilled, and able to engage with changing contexts while voicing the program's vision, directly impacted the overall quality of the program's setting. Siraj-Blatchford and Manni explained that it is clear that effective leadership and adequate training for a leadership role is a vital element in delivering a high-quality early childhood program (Ang, 2011). Rodd concurred that effective leadership is a crucial piece in retaining a quality program. Effective leadership in the early childhood sector is about achieving a sense of community while providing a high quality center (Ang, 2011).

The National Professional Development Framework for Leading and Managing Children's Services in England provides an outline leaders use to ensure that they are delivering services that are focused on improving the outcomes for children and families. This outline clearly frames the government's vison and expectations for early childhood leaders by stating that leaders should be strong, well-educated, and creative while possessing the skills, knowledge, and experience to provide an effective integrated program for children and their families (Ang, 2011).

Earning national accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is recognized within early childhood education as achieving excellence within the field of early childhood education. When achieving national accreditation through the NAEYC, the preschool director must meet the program administrator definition and competencies as set forth by the organization. NAEYC defines the program administrator/director as the person in charge of planning, implementing, and evaluating the child and the program (2007). The functions of the leader set forth by the NAEYC are aimed at helping the early childhood organization clarify values, set goals, voice a vision, and create a plan to achieve the vision.

"The core competencies needed for effective leadership in an early childhood program fall into two broad categories, management knowledge and early childhood knowledge, which overlap both conceptually and practically" (NAEYC, 2007, p. 1). The functions set forth by the NAEYC include: "pedagogy, organizational development and systems, human resources, collaboration, and advocacy" (NAEYC, 2007, p. 1). The areas of pedagogy, advocacy, and collaboration include behaviors such as consideration, encouraging others, empowerment, and development of relationships. Organizational development and systems is related to the establishment of ensuring smooth operations. The function of human resources relates to having a vision for the future and putting the steps in place for necessary change.

Toxic Leadership

"Leadership matters and history is full of examples of transformative leaders who lifted up their followers, inspired their vision, and harnessed their collective will to achieve common goals that otherwise would not have be reached" (Green, n.d., p. 18). But, unfortunately, "history is also full of examples of leaders who have inflicted unspeakable harm on their nations,

companies, churches, and schools" (Green, n.d, p. 18). Green explored the phenomenon of toxic leadership, "which is leadership that causes systemic harm to the health of an organization, impairing the organization from meeting it mission" (p. 18). Lipman-Blumen defined toxic leadership as a "process in which leaders, by way of their destructive behavior and dysfunctional personal characteristics generate a serious and enduring poisonous effect on the individuals, families, organizations, and communities they lead" (Green, n.d., p. 19).

According to Dr. Travis Bradberry, President at TalentSmart and the co-author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0, "being managed by someone who really is not good at leading can be hard to ignore" (Wolfe, 2016, p. 2). These managers often have turnover problems that they blame on everything and anything, while ignoring the fact that people leave due to management not because of the actual job duties (Wolfe, 2016). In Green's research it was found that 94 percent of those questioned indicated they had experience working with a toxic person at some time during their careers.

Wolfe summarized five management styles that should be avoided. While the article focuses on management styles, these styles are found within school leadership nationwide and can be applied there, too. The know-it-all manager is the leader that does not realize the value of learning from the team that works for him/her on a daily basis. The micromanager can cause a huge productivity roadblock. Managing people can be a big task and what occurs reflects directly on the manager. Therefore, a manager can be tempted to hold the hands of employees every step of the way (Wolfe, 2016). The absentee boss is one who disappears almost completely. While employees deserve a certain degree of autonomy, they also need guidance, feedback, and support from the leader (Wolfe, 2016). The boss that is a self-server will do whatever it takes to make himself shine in his boss's eye. This style of leader does not care who they use or hurt to look

good which will later cause employee resentment. Lastly, becoming best friends with someone who reports directly to you can produce a tricky situation and even make it harder for them to respect your leadership.

Toxic leaders are skilled in deception. Green asked his participants a series of open-ended questions in which they used their own words to describe interactions they had with toxic leaders. The three prominent themes to emerge were: egotism, ethical failure, and incompetence (Green, n.d.). In regard to egotism, the participants used words such as self-absorbed, prima-donna, and arrogant to describe those leaders. Green found that a pre-occupation with self seems to lead to ethical lapses. The most common occurring ethical failures were lying, abuse of power, and favoritism. Participants citing incompetence described leaders that were inept in human relations skills.

Toxic leadership is present within the field of education, and approximately 90 percent of the people in that area have reported previously or currently working with a toxic leader. "The very attributes that describe effective leaders can morph into qualities that we associate with toxic leadership" (Green, n.d.). Green's evidence suggested that toxic leadership was seductive. Those leaders were very easily able to disguise their toxic behaviors when being interviewed, and therefore, hid those behaviors until starting a leadership position.

Leadership Theory

"Transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (Barnett, 2017, Transformational Theory page). James MacGregor Burns further developed the theory by trying to link the leaders and followers. "Burns believed that effective, transforming leadership required leaders and followers to help each other to advance to a higher

level of morale and motivation" (Barnett, 2017, Transformational Theory page). He thought that transformational leadership was superior to typical transactional leadership, where followers are serving tangible needs. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, stresses supervision, organization, and performance. Transactional leaders use rewards and punishment for compliance. If a leader is able to appeal to intangible social and moral values instead, Burns believed that followers would collaborate rather than compete, thus achieving more (Burns Transformational Leadership Theory, n.d.).

Evidence from research indicates that no one style is best, but, successful leaders are those who are able to adjust their behavior to meet the needs of each changing situation. Situational Leadership Model has been developed as a result of extensive research. The model is based on the amount of direction and support the person in charge must give based on the situation and the level of willingness presented by the group (Hersey and Blanchard, 1988).

Leadership Styles

The interest in teacher leadership has gained momentum over the past 20 years and today teachers are required to take on more leadership tasks while performing more leadership functions than in prior years (Li, 2015). The years of early childhood are recognized as a vital time for children because it can determine their later learning and development potential. As with other parts of the world, high-quality early childhood education is an important policy issue in Australia. They are experiencing a lack of unity because of differing views about philosophical perspectives on leadership. "The for-profit sector is attempting to lobby and remove the requirement to have trained teachers in child care, which is at odds with research on high-quality child care" (Brownlee, Nailon, Tickle, 2010, p. 95).

Transformational leaders promote trust and respect, staff engagement, encourage staff to think, learn, and be creative, and engage with staff members individually (Brownlee, et al., 2010). "Transformational leadership refers to those whose approach is more consistent with evolving trends in educational reform, such as, empowerment, distributed leadership, and co-construction of learning" (Li, 2015, p. 435). "Transformational leaders empower participants independently from supervision and control of leadership to create an environment free from punishment so that participants feel empowered and behave in an innovative manner" (Sagnak, Kuruoz, Polat, Soylu, 2015, p. 149). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is performance-based and the leaders meet staff needs by initiating goals, defining roles, and providing rewards (Brownlee, et al., 2010).

As noted by Avolio and Bass, no matter what the organizational level is, leaders can create an ideological vision. "Transformational leadership can and should be observed at all organizational levels" (Avolio, Bass, and Jung, 1999, p. 460). According to Avolio, Bass, and Jung "transactional models of leadership simply do not go far enough in building the trust and developing the motivation to achieve the full potential of one's workforce. The level of integration and interdependence needed for the new work environment will require leadership that goes beyond the more basic transactional style to styles that are more intellectually stimulating, inspirational, and charismatic" (Avolio, et al., 1999, p. 460).

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass and Avolio measures a large number of leadership behaviors and styles. The MLQ recognizes which characteristics are identified within transformational leaders. "Past research using the MLQ does show that one consistent problem raised by many authors using the MLQ survey was whether the components of transformational leadership should be considered independent of contingent

reward leadership and whether contingent reward leadership should be viewed as a separate

factor" (Avolio, et al., 1999, p. 442). The main concern in a recent study was to review the factor

structure of the MLQ and to determine a best model for the MLQ. "Based on the results of the

study, the best model fit was the original six-factor model which held up with little shrinkage in

the terms of fit when replicated" (Avolio, et al., 1999, p. 444).

Within kindergarten in Hong Kong, one study suggested that different styles of

leadership approaches were used. Teacher leaders tended to adopt a blended approach. They had

a difficult time determining what a leader might do within different situations. So the leadership

roles appeared to be highly situational (Li, 2015). Based on this study, more than one leadership

style has been shown to produce effective ways of bringing about substantial changes in

practices (Li, 2015).

"Transformational leaders of schools encourage their teachers to question their values,

beliefs, and assumptions while improving their problem-solving ability and increasing their

intellectual stimulation" (Sagnak, et al., 2015, p. 151). These leaders have a positive impact on a

teacher's motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence (Sagnak, et al., 2015).

Transformational leaders rely on a commitment from their staff while they attempt to find ways

to transform participant values and self-concepts (Sagnak, et al., 2015). "The leadership

behaviors of principals are the most important factor in the environmental conditions needed for

innovation and creativity and transformational leadership is the most effective approach to

reaching those conditions" (Sagnak, et al., 2015, p. 156).

With more than seven million children attending childcare centers while their parents

work, the leadership program directors provide in these centers may be key to the level of quality

the programs provide to the young children enrolled (Patton, 2009). Leading an early childhood

program can be a disheartening task due to low wages, tremendous responsibility, liability,

stress, burn-out, low occupational status, high turnover of staff, and budgetary constraints. In an

occupation where there is little incentive to pursue educational credentials, it may be necessary

to focus on spiritual aspects of leadership and work in order to encourage directors to provide

sustained quality for young children (Patton, 2009). Patton's research on spiritual leadership

states that spiritual leadership involves constructing a set of values that the leader and followers

can share. These values include a sustainable vision, creating meaning by engaging followers'

hearts, coaching, training, motivating, empowering followers, and modeling ethics and integrity

(2009). Spiritual leadership involves the values, attitudes, and behaviors essential to a person's

sense of calling, membership in the organization, and spiritual survival. Many of these

characteristics are found within one's code of ethics, along with transformational leadership.

According to Wagner-Marsh and Conley, organizations that successfully incorporate spirituality

in the workplace follow five basic spiritual principles which include, leaders who are honest with

themselves, spiritual philosophy that guides the organization, mutual trust among members,

dedication to service and quality, and value to employees and their personal development

(Patton, 2009). Transformational leadership involves leaders who involve staff in a process of

achieving a set purpose of the organization and working to achieve a common goal (Patton,

2009). Central to this style is the leader's creation of the organization's vision and the leader-

follower relationship (Patton, 2009). Therefore, it is easy to see how spirituality can be linked to

transformational leadership, which is then linked to leader effectiveness.

Gender and the Influence on Leadership Styles

Studies have shown that the culture of an organization can be influenced by the

leadership. The leader's management style and beliefs also impact the organization's culture

(Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004). Specifically, the studies conducted on women and their

leadership styles show that feminine leadership not only exists due to differences in the sex of

the leader, but also because of gender traits (Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004). Women are

categorized as being submissive and passive, placing less stress on competitive success and more

stress on completing tasks well and keeping everyone happy (Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004). Men

were perceived as more forceful and independent. In 1990 Eagly and Johnson analyzed 162

studies and found that women and men have different behavior styles and values as leaders

(Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004). People are becoming the center of how organizations function

and more effective leaders tend to possess high developmental and empathetic traits. These are

traits that transformational leaders and feminine leaders tend to have in common (Kawatra and

Krishnan, 2004). "A transformational leader encourages and supports individual members of the

group" (Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004, p. 3). This is similar to women's gender traits, showing

that women generally promote harmony within the group.

"Research has suggested that masculinity-femininity is an important personality trait in

forming leadership perceptions" (Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004, p. 4). "Bass and Avolio used the

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to show that women managers have more idealized

influence, are more inspirational and individually considerate than men" (Kawatra and Krishnan,

2004, p. 4). The MLQ also indicates that men rank higher in regard to managing by exception

and a laissez-faire leadership style. Both of which are indicators of a leader that is less proactive

and produce less effective outcomes (Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004). "Overall, Bass and Avolio

showed that women leaders rate higher on transformational behaviors than men leaders"

(Kawatra and Krishnan, 2004, p. 4).

There is research that shows that men and women use similar leadership styles, but they do employ different behaviors within those styles (Kent, Blair, Rudd, and Schuele, 2010). Even though women can achieve results as effectively as men, women may use behaviors that are not necessarily within the leadership prototype that is expected by their followers and mangers to whom they report. "This disconnect, according to Leadership Categorization Theory, led to lower performance evaluations in spite of the actual results achieved by women leaders" (Kent, et al., 2010, p. 53). "Leadership Categorization Theory suggests that the followers hold personal projections or prototypes of how their leader should behave" (Kent, et al., 2010, p. 53). A 1994 study showed that followers hold different views of how leaders should behave based on whether they are a male or female leader. This could account for female leaders being rated as more transformational than male leaders (Kent, et al., 2010). In 1999, Gardiner and Tiggemann found that women who are in an industry dominated by males change their leadership behaviors in order to conform to a more masculine leadership style.

Building Leadership Capacity

Strong leadership is an important piece to any organization that thrives. "Research on leadership suggests that the most capable leaders are those who understand and address challenges from a system-wide perspective" (Talan, et.al, 2014, p. 2). Early childhood administrators need to be able to set the goals and common purpose, support staff values, motivate the staff, and promote continuous improvement of programs. "Building leadership capacity within the early childhood profession has emerged as a key concern as the profession responds to changing socio-political, educational, and contextual demands" (Campbell-Evans, Stamopolous, and Maloney, 2014, p. 42). The current expectations of what early childhood leaders are now required to do goes past the demands placed on them within their classrooms.

They are expected to build relationships with the families and communities they serve. They are also expected to lead the staff in decision making regarding services that will support children's learning (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014).

According to the NAEYC, professional development is a process where the learning is continuous and prepares individuals to work with young children and their families, while providing sustained experiences to enhance the work done with young children and their families. Professional development programs lead to improvements in the early childhood professional's knowledge, skills, and practices (NAEYC, 2017). Research suggests that professional development can impact a leader's level of self-efficacy. The United Kingdom's desire to stress early childhood leadership led to the development of training programs such as the Early Years Professional Status Award and the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Center Leadership (NPQICL). The programs help graduate students earn training that qualifies them to work in early childhood education (Ang, 2011). The program is aimed at creating a team of graduate staff that would be able to transform the early childhood workforce, therefore raising early childhood education standards and achievement (Ang, 2011). The research by Derue and colleagues suggest that professional development for leaders need to focus on the three dimensions of leadership behavior within the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness, which are: task, relational, and change (Derue, et al., 2011). These behaviors promote transformational leadership, which is a strong predictor of leadership effectiveness. The four core modules built into the United Kingdom's NPQICL include building community, research, being a reflective leader, and integrated leadership (Ang, 2011). These are behaviors that are also characteristic to transformational leadership and building leader capacity.

"After completing administrative training, directors with greater levels of administrative training report significant gains in their level of competence and the staff who work at these programs perceive the work environment to be more positive and productive" (Talan, et.al, 2014, p. 2). "Taking Charge of Change (TCC), is a ten month leadership development program that focuses on the nature of the individual, organizational, and systemic change and the program director's role as a change agent" (Talan, Bloom, Kelton, 2014, p. 2). It is created to provide a place where leaders participate in an active learning community of other professionals. "The study focused on three areas of inquiry: the impact of the training on TCC participants' perceptions of competence and on the quality of organizational practices, the participants' current job status and career decisions since completing the training, and the potential of leadership training for strengthening the early childhood profession by promoting ongoing professional development" (Talan, et al., 2014, p. 3).

The data showed statistically significant increases in perceived knowledge and skills (Talan, et.al, 2014). Knowledge of how systems theory pertains to programs in early childhood and implementing a personalized model for staff development were the two areas reported to show the most growth for leaders. "The capacity to manage change is a key to effective program leadership and is a central component of the TCC curriculum" (Talan, et.al, 2014, p. 3). After the training, participants reported feeling an increased sense of self-esteem, self- confidence, and a greater sense of self-efficacy. It also changed how they viewed themselves as leaders.

"Professionalization can develop through a top-down approach, where outside agencies, such as governments, create an accepted course of study where the social constructions of those in the field collaboratively shape an agreed course of study" (Sims, et al., 2015, p. 150). Australia appears to be taking this path, but, it is argued that while it may improve quality, it may

do it at the cost of not empowering leaders. Early childhood leaders often gain their role as a

leader by accident, and therefore, they are not prepared for the complications that come with

leading oneself and others (Sims, et al., 2015).

Western Australia is facing a growing challenge in early childhood education. "There is

the lack of early childhood professionals who hold both knowledge of leadership and knowledge

of the discipline along with the skills to apply these in practice" (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014, p.

42). "The fragmented nature of early childhood settings, the diverse qualifications that exist

across the workforce, and the complexities of leadership within family and community settings,

result in additional challenges which universities need to address in undergraduate and post-

graduate studies" (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014, p. 43).

Campbell-Evans and colleagues researched eight experienced early childhood teachers

who wanted to move into leadership positions and who had recently enrolled in post graduate

leadership study. This allowed the researchers to examine the perceptions the early childhood

teachers had about leadership and what they thought about their ability to lead change and build

partnerships. According to the data the potential leaders were able to state key leadership

components, which included, being able to monitor others, start new programs and re-asses for

changes in policy as needed, and implement practices and procedures to support children and

families. But, the results did not indicate that the participants were able to apply these elements

to their practice. "These added responsibilities will require early childhood educators to lead in

more collaborative and innovative ways" (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014, p. 44). Participants

labeled significant personal qualities of leadership as empathy, trustworthiness, and

approachability. But, again the results indicated that they could not give strategies on how they

could actually build important relationships within the early childhood community and beyond the school setting.

According to the findings, the early childhood teachers still did not see themselves as leaders, but were easily able to identify what the leader should be doing. "Becoming a leader is not an automatic process, and understanding leadership as a complex construct should be presented in pre-service training and professional development" (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014, p. 46). Universities and colleges need to provide courses that shape and develop early childhood leaders that can encompass the knowledge, skills, and processes needed for a multi-faceted role in early childhood leadership (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014).

Twenty-five years ago the NAEYC standards for degree programs in institutions of higher education were introduced. According to the NAEYC, professional preparation for early childhood teachers is more than a list of tasks to be met through assessment. "Just as children learn best from teachers who use responsive and intentional strategies, adult students learn from instructors who create a caring community of learners, teach to enhance development and learning outcomes, assess student growth, and build positive relationships with students and other stakeholders in the program" (NAEYC, 2009, p. 2). "The NAEYC cautions programs against the superficial use of the mile wide and inch deep method of teacher preparation. A key component of the NAEYC's standards is hands-on clinical experiences. Excellence in teaching requires a continuous interplay of theory, research, and practice. Supervised, clinical experiences are necessary to high-quality professional preparation" (NAEYC, 2009, p. 2).

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

During their early childhood, children spend a large amount of time in a childcare setting, and the quality of that setting can play an important part in the development of young children

(Keys, Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li, Ruzek, and Howes, 2013). Federal and state governments invest great resources into providing early childhood care as a way to help children from economically disadvantaged families be prepared with the school readiness skills needed for formal schooling. Being ready for kindergarten involves many aspects of development, including physical, cognitive, language, and behavioral (Keys, et.al, 2013). Experimental literature suggests that high quality education for young children during the early childhood years can have a lasting impact on development. The evidence consistently shows that high-quality early childhood programs are connected to improved cognitive and social development (Keys, et.al, 2013).

Definitions of quality vary. Within a preschool setting many different elements can be grouped together to define quality, such as class size ratio, staff qualifications, amount of time spent at the school, curriculum, and the interactions between the teacher and the student (Pianta, Downer, and Hamre, 2016). Pianta and associates state that definitions for quality include four aspects which include, structural elements, classroom environment, teacher-student interactions, and quality rating systems that combine elements program wide (2016). "In the United States about 76 percent of children ages three and four receive education and care from someone other than a custodial parent" (Espinosa, 2002). Of that percentage, more than half attend an early childhood education program, such as preschool, child care, Head Start, or VPK (Espinosa, 2002, p. 3). Most programs in early childhood are rated on two dimensions of quality, which include process and structural (Espinosa, 2002). Process quality focuses the actual experiences that occur in the educational setting. This can include how the teacher and child interact and what activities are provided to engage the child. They can also include health and safety measures. Process quality is usually measured by using observation of the preschool program.

"When these interactions are rated higher, children develop more advanced language and math abilities, and social skills" (Espinosa, 2002, p. 4).

Structural quality is measured by reviewing a center's class size, staff to student ratios, the qualifications and wages of the staff, and the square footage of the facility (Espinosa, 2002). State licensing regulations often control structural features. Research has found that process and structural indicators are related to, and impact the quality of the educational experience for children (Espinosa, 2002). Unfortunately, observational data shows that even when classrooms meet the definition of structural standards for quality, the teacher-student interaction can vary greatly and low-quality instruction is common (Pianta, et al., 2016).

One main purpose of the study was on childcare quality and how it was linked to student gains in several areas including language, mathematics and social skills. It then looked at the quality of the center and the impact it had on these gains (Keys, et al., 2013). These are reflective of the school readiness skills mentioned within the study. Results from the analysis suggest that the quality that is observed in the preschool classroom is only somewhat related to the student acquiring language and math skills overall (Keys, et.al, 2013).

A child's math and reading ability when entering kindergarten is a strong indicator of how he/she will succeed later on in school. A child who enters kindergarten behind often does not catch up. "Ensuring that all children are entering kindergarten with the foundational academic skills they need to succeed is a major priority for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners" (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, and Nores, 2016, p. 1). "Research suggests that participation in a high-quality early childhood education program can enhance children's development and reduce achievement gaps at kindergarten entry" (Friedman-Krauss, et al., 2016, p. 1). Unfortunately, most early childhood education programs' quality is not high enough to

make a substantial improvement in kindergarten readiness, especially for low-income children of color (Friedman-Krauss, et al., 2016). "One report considers how a universal publicly funded pre-kindergarten (UPK) program in the United States could decrease unequal access to early learning and achievement gaps at kindergarten entry" (Friedman-Krauss, et al., 2016, p. 2). The evidence used in the report suggests that implanting a high-quality UPK program would greatly improve kindergarten readiness and help to reduce achievement gaps. Data used in one report indicated that implementing a high-quality UPK would lower the achievement gap at kindergarten entry for African American Children by 45 percent in math and even higher for Hispanic children. In reading, it will almost completely close the achievement gap for all minority groups (Friedman-Krauss, et. al, 2016). Creating a high-quality UPK program is a vital action in making early education available to all and ensuring all children are kindergarten ready.

Research examining inconsistencies in access to preschool has revealed considerable differences across communities based on the racial and economic status of that area (Bassok and Galdo, 2016). Across the United States, families that lived in counties with a higher median income and education level had more preschool choices available to them. Bassok and Galdo use data from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which addresses the quality of interactions between the children and the teachers, to answer three research questions (2016). "To what extent does the availability of public preschool differ across communities by community characteristics, including racial composition and poverty? Do structural quality measures of preschool classrooms vary across communities? Does the quality of teacher-child interactions differ across communities?" (Bassok and Galdo, 2016, p. 135).

Data that was used in a study regarding a large public preschool program showed evidence of imbalances in the number of high-quality teacher-child interactions. The study

revealed that there are noticeable differences in process quality based on the characteristics of different communities. Those differences appear to support higher income communities with a majority of White students (Bassok and Galdo, 2016). The information in this study supports earlier research on the importance of access to high-quality early childhood education for all children.

"Most research on quality has been conducted by experts who believe that quality can be defined objectively and that universal ideas of quality can be applied to a wide range of programs" (Kim, 2012, p. 44). They attempt to define quality with criteria that is measurable, quantifiable, and observable. "Process quality focuses on the nature of interactions between the children and teachers with other children, teachers, and adults and on the nature of leadership and pedagogy. Process components influence the culture of the early childhood center and the quality of the children's experiences" (Ishimine and Tayler, 2014, p. 273). Currently, quality is defined by the following groups: members of federal and state agencies, professors, and experts who have the most influence in the field but are not directly involved in the children's lives (Kim, 2012). "Quality is a value-laden construct that is anchored in the researchers' and educators' philosophical and theoretical perspectives" (Ishimine and Tayler, 2014, p. 272).

It is vital that the opinions and concerns of all stakeholders are given consideration. "Parents must be viewed as responsible decision-makers who select programs initially and can monitor quality and take action if needed" (Kim, 2012, p. 44). Parents have a need for early childhood programs and they make decisions based on that, therefore, their perceptions of quality are vital.

What one study showed was that parents' view of what made a quality preschool program varied. Three previous studies showed differing perspectives on quality programs among

stakeholders. Australian parents thought that if the teacher was educated and qualified, she would provide an atmosphere similar to the home. "In England the women agreed that quality child care would meet both family needs and children's needs" (Kim, 2012, p. 45).

Among the stakeholders there was just as much variation on what constituted a quality early childhood program. Parents considered the practices of the person providing the care. Teachers focused on whether their attitudes were nurturing and how the curriculum was implemented. Policy makers highlighted the importance of the personalities of the staff, visibility, and the level of parent involvement (Kim, 2012).

Parental Perceptions

There is great importance in establishing a rapport with families and encouraging parents to be involved within the early childhood school setting. "Research has shown that strong parent-teacher relationships lead to increased parental involvement, which has been shown to have a significant and lasting impact on children's academic achievement" (Knopf and Swick, 2007. p. 291). However, many early childhood educators find it hard to encourage parents to be involved at a level that creates change. "Most parent involvement strategies take a school-centric view of parent involvement and ignore the needs and perceptions of the parents" (Knopf and Swick, 2007, 291). A study in 2006 found that parents view participation in their children's education differently than educators. This can suggest that there is a need for teachers to acknowledge the way in which they communicate with parents regarding involvement (Knopf and Swick, 2007). Early childhood educators need to establish open lines of communication.

Research has shown that the relationship between parents and teachers greatly impacts the parent's perceptions about the care and education their child is receiving. "Trust in the teacher or caregiver significantly influences parents' perceptions of the quality of care their child

is receiving" (Knopf and Swick, 2007, p. 292). When teachers maintain a positive attitude toward both parent and child and respond to the parent's and child's needs, they create a relationship with the parent based on respect. "Positive teacher-parent relations seem to promote a reoccurring pattern of teacher-parent interactions that empower the teacher and the parent" (Knopt and Swick, 2007, p. 292). But, when the opposite occurs and parents distrust the caregivers, they feel as if the care and education their child is experiencing is not high quality and often un-enroll their child.

Observation

Acquiring reliable observational data can be difficult in school and classroom settings because behavior can be impacted by numerous other factors (Bottema-Beutel, Lloyd, Carter, and Asmus, 2014). Being able to generalize allows researchers to predict the reliability of observational data. Decision studies can tell researchers how much observational time is needed to actually obtain a criterion level of reliability (Bottema-Beutel, et al., 2014). These factors are needed because social and academic behaviors in classrooms change daily simply due to the variety of day to day classroom activities. But, researchers can minimize and account for these variations. While the variations within classrooms daily can make it unlikely that a single observation will provide reliable data, there are benefits from observation. Classroom observations provide valuable data of how peer and classroom interactions transpire in these settings and how peers communicate and represent a typical school day (Bottema-Beutel, et al., 2014).

Other literature suggests that observation is only good when something of quality is happening in the classroom (Good, 1988). That view can be looked upon as narrow. An important role of observation is to explain what transpires in classrooms in order to present

issues that practitioners face in the classroom setting (Good, 1988). Observational research can

help theorists to distinguish problems more completely. Its role is not to find solutions to these

issues (Good, 1988). The basic purpose of classroom observation is to identify instructional

issues. The data that has been collected generates valuable information that has practical

applications (Good, 1988).

One study explained the development of the Classroom Observation Tool (COT) for use

in prekindergarten classrooms. It was to be used along with classroom coaches. The study found

a positive relationship between the COT scores and children's literacy scores, along with

teachers meeting 80 percent of their set goals (Crawford, Zucker, Williams, Bhavsar, and

Landry, 2013). The observational tool was based on tier I classroom instruction which is the

basic curriculum taught to all students within a general education class. The tool was created to

aid in classroom observations conducted by coaches. Traditional approaches to observation

where notes and rubrics were used with a paper and pencil method were not validated and may

have contained bias (Crawford, et al., 2013). The few tools used for observation within preschool

settings are not validated (Crawford, et al., 2013). The COT was created to provide a valid

observational tool to prekindergarten coaches and teachers. Fair and unbiased observation can

only be accomplished by well-trained staff in order to gain reliability (Crawford, et al., 2013).

Education Policy

In the United States many of the preschool programs are not labeled high quality and

many are rated below that. In a policy brief provided by Espinosa, she discusses what a high-

quality preschool program consists of and what policy recommendations are needed to ensure

improved quality. "The demand for early childhood care and education programs continues to

increase not only in response to the growing demand for out-of-home child care, but also in

recognition of the critical importance of educational experiences during the early years"
(NAEYC, 2017, p. 1). Early childhood educators that work closely with children and families,
can see what pressures some policies place on the children and families served by early
childhood programs (NAEYC, 2017). Policies that are labeled effective are rarely funded at
levels that provide enough support to the families that could benefit the most.

Structural and process features within preschool programs are necessary in order to
achieve improvements in the quality of the preschool programs (Espinosa, 2002). Therefore, the
policy recommendations made by Espinosa include the regulations that guide child-care
licensing and the educational requirements for preschool programs (2002). Recommendations to
the policies involve developing state standards that address three areas that include teacher
qualifications, group size within the classes, and teacher-student ratios. Teacher salaries and
benefits need to be raised to be comparable to K-12 teachers, as this will help attract teachers
will higher educational backgrounds. Valid measures of early educational quality need to be
developed to align with standards. Professional development and training that is continuous in
order to improve quality needs to be provided to all preschool teachers and early childhood
programs. Lastly, the federal, state, and local levels of government need to work together to
establish one high-quality preschool education system (Espinosa, 2002).

No Child Left Behind 2001 was the federal government's answer to making sure children
were ready for kindergarten. Current learning guidelines for preschool were made in response to
NCLB. These guidelines were created in response to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) focus on
several areas of human development, which are biosocial, psychosocial, and cognitive, in order
to ensure preschoolers are kindergarten ready. "The findings in one study revealed that preschool
learning guidelines have a primary focus on cognitive development which suggests that the

accountability movement has influenced preschool policy-making" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 38).
"Current policies place very little emphasis on promoting biosocial or health and psychosocial or
social/emotional development" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 38). Furthermore, a supportive and
nurturing environment is no longer the focus because specific activities to reinforce students'
cognitive development have become the priority.

"Early learning is woven throughout the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of
1965 (ESEA) as a means of addressing education equity in order to eliminate disparities in
student achievement and support students' school success" (U.S. Department of Education,
2016, p. 4). The ESEA was recently reauthorized in order to become a Preschool-12 law instead
of just a K-12 education law (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The non-regulatory
guidance document stresses that while extending more opportunities for high-quality preschool is
important, it is not the only cure. "The Department of Education's goal for early learning is to
improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through
third grade" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4). Though some research indicates that in
preschool programs the emphasis is on cognitive development and less on biosocial
development, which is an area that focuses on physical activity and nutrition (DellaMattera,
2010).

"The Department of Education states that the guidance document they created is only
intended to remind state and local decision makers about the importance of investing in early
learning, highlight the opportunities available under the law to strengthen early education, and
provide examples of how states and local communities can support young children's success in
school" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4). Some early educators, though, may not have
sufficient time to promote relational skills that advance psychosocial development due to

increased state content standards (DellaMattera, 2010). "But, narrowly focused standards could direct early educators away from other necessary areas of school-readiness. It could even limit teaching practices causing early childhood education to become rigid, superficial, and narrow" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 41).

"A robust body of research shows that high-quality early learning, starting at birth and continuing through third grade, can promote healthy social-emotional development, assist with English language acquisition, and help build a strong academic foundation" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4). Early learning programs that are labeled high-quality help to limit the achievement gaps between children from higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds. In order for the preschool program to make a significant impact on a child's learning and development, it must be high-quality. According to the U.S. Department of Education high-quality preschool programs need to include certain nationally accepted standards. At minimum these standards include: more demanding qualifications for teachers and staff, professional practice-based professional development, small class sizes with low ratios, a full-day year round program, instruction and assessment that is developmentally appropriate along with being culturally and linguistically responsive, curriculum based on research and state standards, inclusion for children with disabilities, individualized accommodations as needed, ongoing program evaluation used for continuous improvement, onsite services to address health, high-quality family engagement, health and safety standards, and teacher compensation that is comparable to K-3 teachers.

Similar to the United States, England has also created educational laws impacting early childhood programs, including Every Child Matters (ECM) in 2003. This program was further supported by the Childcare Act of 2006, a new piece of legislation created specifically to target

early childhood programs in England (Ang, 2011). The legislation on early childhood education

is in place to make sure that every child has access to high-quality education regardless of their

background (Ang, 2011). The overall strategy of the ECM was to improve the care and

educational results for all students. By working with a multiple agencies, the goal was to

empower early childhood leaders in order for them build and lead across collaborative teams.

The current demand to raise the quality of care within the education system for young children in

England has prompted a movement to evaluate leadership (Ang, 2011).

Unfortunately, according to the findings by DellaMattera, many early childhood

educators do not have the necessary training and resources needed to implement these policies

and this has caused some challenges (2010). This lack of training could lead to early childhood

educators attempting to put policies in place that are not developmentally appropriates. The

early childhood educators could become so frustrated that they quit the profession. This then

causes the preschoolers to receive very little in the way of quality instruction and developmental

support. Though England has developed some training programs to help bridge this gap, the

United States has yet to develop a structured plan universally. "Degree-trained early childhood

teachers are struggling with their role of educational leadership, and struggling to find ways to

implement the required quality standards in ways that are appropriate for the context in which

they work" (Sims, et al., 2015, p. 150).

Summary

Quality needs to be the focus in regard to research and developing programs. But,

researchers struggle to name which pieces produce the greatest impacts on children from

prekindergarten through the intermediate grades (Pianta, et al., 2016). Effective, high-quality

early childhood programs can close the achievement gap while contributing to a child's overall

development in less than one year (Pianta, et al., 2016). Unfortunately, most children do not receive nine months of exposure to a high-quality program. This lack of coherence is cause for concern. In order to rectify this problem, a clear definition of quality and consistent measurements are needed.

In the United States there are just under 10 million preschoolers aged three to five in our country. "The belief that their readiness is critical to later school success has placed early childhood education in the middle of national and scholarly debate, gaining the attention of early education advocates, organizations, and the public" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 45). "The Every Student Succeeds Act by the Department of Education notes that children who attend high-quality early learning programs, especially preschool programs targeting three and four year olds, are less likely to need special education services or be retained. They are more likely to graduate high school, go on to college and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended such programs" (DellaMattera, 2010, p. 45). Yet, research indicates that early childhood leaders and teachers do not have the training, salaries, resources, and support they need in order to meet the new standards being given to them based on current policy (DellaMattera, 2010).

Effective leadership is the topic of current debates. "Interview data from research indicated that school principals and other stakeholders regarded possessing high ethical standards and upholding professional values to be important traits of effective leadership" (Ho, 2011, p. 47). Many stakeholders also viewed role modeling by school principals as important. School principals were also expected to maintain a strong commitment to having higher professional values. Participants believed that the "role model, the school manager, and the mentor for curriculum and pedagogy were important roles for a school principal to have within the school context" (Ho, 2011, p. 57).

Worldwide, improving the quality of early childhood education is being accomplished by a process of leadership. This style of leadership would not support the more transformational styles of leadership which benefits from everyone working together in a collective and purposeful manner (Taylor, 1994). Leaders play a key role within early childhood programs. Leadership is clearly an important piece in improving the quality of the program in early childhood (Sims, et al., 2015).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Research Methods and Design

Existing literature is dated and current research on the behaviors present in early

childhood leaders/directors is limited. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case

study was to learn what leadership behaviors were present in a high-quality private preschool

program. A quantitative design was not used because the study was not interested in simply

which leadership style the leader possesses, but how the behaviors of the leader impacted the

quality outcomes of the early childhood center. A qualitative multiple case design was utilized

because this allowed the data to be open for interpretation by the researcher and used to construct

a meaningful explanation of a complex situation by deeply exploring personal interviews.

A pilot study was conducted with one early childhood program leader. This leader was

not included in the formal study conducted with six early childhood program leaders. The pilot

study data was analyzed prior to formal data collection in order to solidify the data collection

process and timeline. Based on a de-briefing with the pilot study participant, changes were made

and noted as needed. Formal data collection then began with six participants selected through

purposeful selection.

Population

The population for the study focused on six private preschool directors/leaders in charge

of private early childhood centers located within central Florida. The centers could be

participants of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK), but it was not

required. The participants had varying degrees of education, work history, and time at the center.

The sex and race of the participants did not matter.

Selection of the Sample

The sample size for this study consisted of six private preschool directors/leaders from high-quality, private early childhood centers that could have participated in the VPK program. The goal was to obtain three centers that participated in Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK), and three that did not participant in VPK. Many states offer a form of VPK. One of the first states to offer VPK was Florida. It provides free prekindergarten for all four-year-olds regardless of family income (Florida Department of Education). The purpose of VPK is to prepare children to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. It also aims to help build a strong foundation for future academic success by using educational curriculum focusing on the multiple stages in a child's development.

Purposeful sampling was utilized for this study. Using the Department of Children and Families (DCF) website, programs/program leaders were selected purposefully based on location, being labeled a private early childhood program, being labeled VPK or not, and maintaining a high-quality program. Centers were purposefully chosen based on specific criteria. Centers were screened and selected by viewing the inspection/compliance history on the DCF website. Center violations were analyzed for severity. Severe infractions such as, abuse or neglect disqualified the participant from the study.

In this study the quality of center care was assessed through structural indicators, such as "more highly educated teachers, smaller classes, and lower children-to-staff ratios" (Pianta, et al., 2016). A second way the child care quality was assessed was by noting behaviors that indicate process quality. These behaviors include staff that is warm, responsive, and sensitive along with a positive physical environment and the appropriate children's activities (Pianta, et al., 2016).

Materials and Instruments

Based on the pilot study, changes occurred that were noted within chapters four and five. The study consisted of an observation, interview, and an online leadership survey. The interview and observation were to take place at the director's center. There were preset questions (see appendix B) for the interview that were audio recorded. The interview questions were previously piloted on a former early childhood program director and a current early childhood program director. Based on that pilot only slight changes were made to the wording of question number 11 and to include if an assistant director was at the center. The questions helped to gather important demographic information and provided insight into the leadership style of the participant. Prior to the interview, the leader took a 45 question survey online provided by MindGarden, Inc., which took approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The results were discussed with the participant at the time of the interview to clarify any misconceptions and further the interview process. "Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avoilo, measures a broad range of leadership types from passive leaders, to leaders who give contingent rewards to followers, to leaders who transform their followers into becoming leaders themselves" (MindGarden.com). A license was purchased to administer the MLQ: Self-Only form online via MindGarden's Transform system. An observation was to be conducted at the center site on the same day as the interview. Information was to be recorded using a chart created to include the behaviors known to promote a more transformational style of leadership which is linked to more effective leadership.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was expected to take approximately one month with analysis of the data taking approximately three to four weeks. Participants were asked to be available for follow up

after the first meeting date in order to review data collected during the interview and survey. This process was ongoing during data analysis.

Preschool leaders were contacted via phone or email and the case study was then explained in detail. Once the leader agreed to participate in the study and all consent forms/paperwork were signed, the meeting date was finalized. In the first part of the meeting the leader was interviewed and the survey was discussed in order to learn important background information using pre-set questions (see appendix B) and to obtain needed demographic information. The interview was conducted at the leader's center in the area of his/her choice. The leader completed the online survey where he/she chose prior to the interview.

The interviews took place on a date that was agreed upon by the participant and the researcher. Audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed after the interview. Once transcribed, leaders were sent a copy via email to clarify observational and interview data. Before the interview, the leader took the MLQ survey online through MindGarden. "The MLQ identifies the behaviors of a transformational leader and helps individuals discover how they measure up in their own eyes" (MindGarden.com). The survey data collected was analyzed through the MindGarden's Transform system using raw scale scores by the participant and creating a report that was emailed to the researcher. Since the analysis was sent directly to the researcher, the researcher then sent the results to the participant and discussed them during the interview to clarify the results. Later the report created from the survey was analyzed along with the interview data. Once all data had been analyzed, it was compared for common themes and trends. The survey was used to validate and strengthen the interview process.

Once the interviews were complete, the interviews and surveys were analyzed separately. First, it was analyzed for common leadership behaviors, and then cross-checked with each other

for common themes over all in order to answer research question number one: What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? To strengthen the findings of this study, a cross-case study analysis was used to examine similarities and differences among early childhood program leaders' behaviors.

Research question number two stated: What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding? Question two was answered comparing the data analyzed from the interviews and the MLQ online survey of VPK versus non-VPK leaders for any commonality in leadership behaviors. All behaviors noted within the online survey were compared to behaviors of leaders who are transactional, situational, or transformational in style, and lastly the behaviors listed on the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness chart. These comparisons were done in order to find commonality among leaders of high- quality private preschool programs and to note any similarities and differences between leaders of VPK and non-VPK.

"Triangulation in research refers to the use of multiple techniques for gathering and handling data within a single study" (Adami, 2005, p. 19). "Triangulation contributes to the overall quality of the study to the extent that it helps to clarify a defined purpose" (Adami, 2005, p. 19). The researcher needs to be clear about the purpose of the triangulation and demonstrate how it helps make the findings complete in order to have a triangulated approach. "The combination of multiple methods, empirical stands, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation" (Adami, 2005, p. 22). The extra data collected when using triangulation for completeness purposes

contributes an extra piece to the puzzle and provides a more holistic view of the data being

studied (Adami, 2005).

"Common types of triangulation include: data, investigator, theory, method, and analysis.

Multiple triangulation occurs when more than one type of triangulation is used in the analysis of

the same event. It is defined as the combination of any two or more types of triangulation in one

study" (Adami, 2005, p. 22). Within this current study multiple methods were used to collect

data. Multiple pieces of data were analyzed several different ways in order to reach

commonality. This process was conducted in order to provide a whole view of the early

childhood program leader's behaviors and impact on program quality. The use of multiple

triangulation was used for a more thorough investigation into any differences and similarities

that may be discovered between center leaders, for both VPK and non-VPK.

Confidentiality was ensured to protect the identity of the private preschool program, the

leaders, the staff, and the families in attendance at the program. The programs were identified, as

needed by using a letter system such as Program A, Program B, etc. and the exact locations were

not revealed within the research. The leaders and staff were noted by using a pseudonym that

was reflective of gender only. Families, children, and staff were referred to only in a generic

sense and only when absolutely necessary.

Assumptions

It was assumed that all the participants' answers to the interview questions were accurate

and reliable responses. It was assumed that the participants reviewed their transcribed copies of

the interview questions and leadership survey reports in order to allow for editing to ensure

accuracy. Another assumption was that the participants answered the leadership survey

truthfully. Lastly, for the purpose of this study, the assumption was that a "high-quality early

childhood program was defined as one that provides a safe and nurturing environment while promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 4).

Limitations

The small number of participants included in this study created a limitation. Although the number of participants was sufficient for a qualitative case study, it represented a small number of high-quality private preschool programs in Central Florida. The sample size did not allow for a proportionate number of VPK leaders and non-VPK leaders in order to properly make comparisons of leadership styles and behaviors. Other limitations existed within the collection of the data. Not all participants were equally articulate and some interview responses could have been based on opinion. Since the researcher was also a director of a high-quality preschool program, there could have been bias in relation to interviewing the center directors and the response the researcher has to their answers. In general, the federal government does not provide a set of regulations to monitor preschool programs. State regulations vary widely in both strictness and enforcement. This could have been a limitation when defining what constitutes a high-quality early childhood program.

Summary

Current research on the behaviors that are present in leaders of high-quality private preschools is narrow and limited. This qualitative study grounded in theory explored the differences and similarities of leadership behaviors present within these leaders. The study also explored the similarities and differences between leaders of VPK programs and those not leading in a VPK program. "What research is available suggests that participation in a high-quality early childhood education program can enhance children's development, reduce achievement gaps at

kindergarten entry, and even have long-term benefits for child's path in school" (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, and Nores, 2016, p. 1). Unfortunately, access to high-quality preschool in the United States remains quite low (Friedman-Krauss, et al., 2016). Therefore, this study was necessary in order to help ensure that leaders of early childhood centers have the behaviors needed to run a high-quality early childhood program.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to determine what leadership behaviors were present in the directors/leaders of a private high-quality preschool program and to examine how leadership influences the quality of the preschool program and the behaviors those leaders possess. The results and evaluations in this chapter pertain to the two research questions within this case study. This chapter presents the findings derived from six directors who lead private high-quality preschool programs within Central Florida. They were interviewed by the researcher in the study using preset interview questions (Appendix B) and completed a required online survey on leadership.

The program selection process began in June 2017, with the interviews being conducted from July 2017 through early August 2017. Five of the six interviews were conducted face to face at the director's center. One interview was received via email. Face to face interviews varied in length from 20 to 60 minutes. There was variance in the time of the interviews based on what the directors wanted to share. Some directors gave very short, brief answers and others gave in-depth answers and provided detailed examples. Interview responses were transcribed and participants were able to verify responses via email. The reports produced from the online leadership survey were sent to the participants for review and to verify responses. The reports were generated through the survey website Mind Garden. The report reviews the participants' scores on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Self-Only Form. It measures leadership styles which are grouped under three broad categories: Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Passive-Avoidant Behaviors. These three areas can also be found on the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness (Appendix A). A

software program was not used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. The Mind

Garden software was used to create the reports on the leadership surveys. All data was cross-

analyzed manually by the researcher using the interview themes, Integrated Model of Leader

Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness, and the MLQ score report which was broken down for

themes and trends using a self-made instrument.

Participant Information

Table One provides the demographics for the six directors of private high-quality early

childhood programs in Central Florida who participated in this study. All of the programs were

monitored by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for the state of Florida.

Approximately 20 private, high-quality early childhood programs within central Florida were

contacted about participating in this study, which at that time included an interview, online

survey on leadership, and an observation piece. One center responded that the director may be

able to participate. No other responses were received. At that time, the observation piece was

removed and the centers were contacted a second time explaining the removal of the observation

piece. Six directors, including the one who previously responded, agreed to participate without

the observation portion. Many cited they did not have time for the observation piece and one

stated that it could be looked upon as intrusive.

The six participants were chosen because they met the criteria for being a private high-

quality early childhood program. None of the programs had severe infractions against them listed

on the DCF website, they were private/self-pay programs, maintained ratios required by law or

lower, and followed the pre-K standards set forth by the Department of Education for the State of

Florida.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Gender	VPK	Accredited	Director Experience	Assistant	Years at Current Center
Abigail	African American	Female	Yes	No	10 years	In training	3
Vicki	Caucasian	Female	Yes	No	12 years	Yes	12
Sandy	Caucasian	Female	No	No	1 year	No	10
Susie	Caucasian	Female	Yes	Yes	15 years	Yes	15
Liz	Caucasian	Female	Yes	No	10 years	Yes	10
Michelle	Caucasian	Female	Yes	Yes	10 years	Yes	10

Note. All names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

Research Instruments

The interview consisted of 13 questions. The first six were to gather demographics on the

directors and the programs, which are displayed in Table One. The other questions were asked in

order to demonstrate the leadership style of the director. Question seven asked about the

education level of the lead teaching staff. Question eight asked about the average class size and

student-to-teacher ratio. By law, the ratios set forth by DCF must be followed, but the majority

of the centers kept a lower ratio. The two early childhood centers that were accredited were

required to keep even lower ratios than what was required by DCF. This is important because

both of these areas can be linked to program quality. Center quality can be linked to structural

indicators, such as teachers with more education, small class sizes, and lower student/teacher

ratios more (Pianta, et al., 2016).

Question nine asked the directors to define a high-quality center in their own words.

Question 10 asked the directors to explain the challenges they faced as early childhood program

leaders. Question 11 contained many layers, as it asked about the duties that directors were

expected to perform. It contained eight separate questions related to duties directors may or may

not encounter. Question 12 asked the leaders to explain their leadership style in their own words.

Lastly, question 13 asked the leaders to explain how they handle conflict that arises at their

centers. Several of the directors said they would handle the conflict with respect, immediately, so

it would not escalate, by having a conversation with the involved parties. When asked question

13, all directors first answered it in regard to staff conflict with only some going back and

including students and families.

In addition to the interview, the participants were required to complete the Multifactor

Leadership Questionnaire: Self-Only survey created by Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio

and published through Mind Garden, Inc. Once the survey was complete, the researcher

requested a report to be generated that was received directly by the researcher via an email from

Mind Garden. The MLQ measured the participants' levels of Transformational Leadership,

Transactional Leadership, and Pass-Avoidant Behaviors. The MLQ also measured Outcomes of

Leadership. These were behaviors that leaders inspired in their followers and include: extra

effort, individual/unit/organizational effectiveness, and satisfaction with the leadership. Within

the report those areas were labeled as generating extra effort, is productive, and generates

satisfaction.

The first section of the report explained how the participants rated themselves on leadership behaviors on a scale of zero to four, with four being frequently, if not always. The next section of the MLQ score report explained how the participants' ratings compared with the average norms. The MLQ measured the frequency of nine styles of leadership behaviors and outcomes. Each question corresponded to an individual leadership behavior within the leadership style being surveyed. Lastly, a list of the participants' 10 highest and 10 lowest frequency behaviors were provided to help assist in knowing the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the leaders. The report explained the top 10 strengths and weaknesses for the five behaviors listed under transformational leadership styles. The five behaviors from the survey were: builds trust, acts with integrity, encourages others, encourages innovative thinking, and coaches and develops people.

An additional instrument was included initially within the methods. An observation of the director was to take place after the interview. The observation piece was going to last for approximately four hours, or half of the director's day. But, the observation portion had to be removed due to not receiving any response, but one maybe, on the first email sent to approximately 20 potential participants. The one participant that initially said maybe, did indicate time as a factor. Once she was notified that the observation portion was removed, she agreed to participate the same day she was notified of that change. Another participant said due to time, the observation piece would have not allowed her to participate. She said some people might also see it as intrusive. During the pilot study, when the observation piece was still being used, the director asked several times if I still needed to observe and when I planned to leave.

Case Study One

Abigail has been the owner/director of her center for three years with a total of 10 years director experience. Before the interview began she thanked me for coming and told me it was an honor to be chosen for my study because it meant her and her staff were doing something right. Questions one through six of the interview provided demographics which are presented in Table One. The interview with Abigail lasted close to an hour because she explained her answers in detail. Below are Abigail's answers to interview questions seven through 13.

7. What is the education level of the early childhood lead teachers? Abigail stated that her teachers all have their 40 state mandated hours through DCF and her assistant in training is taking a director's course online.

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? She never goes over the ratios required by law but works to keep smaller classes and stay below state mandated ratios.

9. How do you define a high-quality center? Abigail stated that meeting the needs and expectation of the children and their families is a top priority. Parents must be included because they entrust a director with their child during the most important years of their lives. Early childhood programs set the foundation. Abigail explained that as educators her job and the job of her staff is to teach the children how to function in society and that social skills are just as important as their education.

10. As an early childhood center leader what challenges do you face? Abigail said that one of her big challenges is keeping up with the changes in the laws that govern child care. She said that recently 98 percent of the paperwork for School Readiness had changed and it has caused more work for her when documenting that she is in compliance. She said that is her

second challenge, keeping up with all of the paperwork. She said that dealing with the children is not bad or a challenge.

11. As a program leader, how do you fulfill the following duties? How do you conduct staff evaluations? Abigail explained that staff evaluations were informal and done as a meeting with her and the staff member and that rewards were small and not necessarily monetary. Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and meeting/exceeding expectations? As small family owned center she did not have the funds for raises and bonuses. But, she did offer her staff paid days off, a staff dinner at the holidays, and paid meals. Who makes the decisions in regard to recruiting and training personnel? She explained that she was in charge of recruiting and training the staff. But, that many decisions were decided upon and mapped out collectively. When asked how she built relationships with the staff, students, and families, she replied that she was never too busy for the parents. She had an open door policy and worked with the parents even on matters of finances if possible. She kept the same open door policy with the students and staff. How do you find time to actively participate in the center? She said that last year she was the only one certified to teach the VPK program, so, she taught that every morning for three hours. Abigail said that she also visits the children in their classes throughout the day and makes it a point to check in on all teachers during the day. Ho w do you enable other staff members to pursue their Abigail encourages her staff to further their education and to go as far as they want. She also stressed that if a staff member felt that her center was not the right place for him/her, then she would not be mad if the staff member left.

12. What words describe your leadership style? In the early years of her career, Abigail stated that she tended to micro-manage people to make sure everything was done right, to her

standards. Now, she tends to pull back and allow her staff the opportunity to use their own ideas and styles to get things done.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center? When conflict arises between staff she encourages them to work it out among themselves. Everyone is an adult. But, if that does not work, then they meet together to come to a resolution.

During the course of the interview, it became apparent that Abigail was a religious person. She mentioned that she prays with the children and staff. She makes it a point to tell all children and staff daily that she loves them. They are all her family. Her vision for the future is to own and run her own private school for all ages. Her motto: "Come experience the love of God where everyone is somebody."

When analyzing Abigail's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, there were several areas where she used the behaviors found within transformational leadership. Abigail scored above the average norm in the areas of acting with integrity, encouraging others, and coaching and developing people. She scored 0.4 percent lower than the norm in the area of building trust and 0.3 percent lower in the area of encouraging innovative thinking. In regard to transactional leadership, Abigail scored slightly higher than the norm for rewarding achievement and 0.7 percent below the norm for monitoring deviations and mistakes. In the area of passive/avoidant behaviors she scored below the norms which is actually a positive because these behaviors can be linked to a laissez-faire style of leadership which is less effective. The MLQ also measured three outcomes of leadership that provided the perception of the behaviors leaders inspire in their staff. They are extra effort, productive/effectiveness, and satisfaction with the leadership. Abigail scored slightly above the norm in relation to generating extra effort in her staff. In the areas of

creating productive/effective staff and generating satisfaction with the leadership, she scored 1.1 percent lower than the norms.

The MLQ also provided the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four being the highest mark. Abigail scored herself the highest in the following areas. These statements from the survey were her strengths:

- I help others to develop their strengths.

- I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions.

- I act in ways that build others respect in me.

- I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose.

- I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.

Abigail scored herself the lowest in the following areas indicating a need for improvement. These statements indicate a weakness:

- I instill pride in others for bine associated with me.

- I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate.

- I talk about my most important values and beliefs.

- I get others to look at problems from many different angles.

Case Study Two

Participant number two, Vicki, has been the owner/director of her center for the past 12 years. Due to time restraints, Vicki did not have time to meet in person for the interview, so her interview was conducted via email. The answers to questions one through six in the interview are represented in Table One for demographics. Below are Vicki's answers for questions seven through 13.

7. What is the educational level of the early childhood lead teachers? All lead teachers are required to earn a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) within the first two years of employment. A CDA is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education and can lead to career advancement in early childhood education. It is based on a core set of competency standards, which guide early care professionals as they work toward becoming qualified teachers in the area of early childhood education.

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? Ratios mandated by DCF are followed.

9. How do you define a high-quality center? A program in which families and staff work together to ensure a safe, positive and nurturing environment so that children are free and encouraged to be brilliant individuals. Learning is balanced around play, experimentation and exploration. Children are respected for their uniqueness and curriculum is developed and implemented around the individual needs and learning styles of each child. The focus is on the process rather than the product and children are taught to be "self/independent-thinkers." A high-quality program knows that no program is perfect and strives to be better each day and is open to new ideas and policies.

10. As an early childhood center leader what challenges do you face? The main challenge that we face is the ever changing expectations of the performance of young children. Standards from the state are high and getting higher. It is difficult to make sure that by the time the children finish Pre-K they are performing to standards without losing site of the importance of play and socialization. Another challenge is the financial aspect of running a "quality" program. We want to invest in our staff and provide a safe environment with a variety of materials however we do not want to make our rates so high that parents cannot afford child care.

11. As a program leader, how do you fulfill the following duties: How do you conduct

staff evaluations? Staff evaluations are done annually. Throughout the year each staff member is

given the opportunity to assess herself and set goals for improvement with the help of the

owner/director. Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and

meeting/exceeding expectations? We have incentives for staff members within our program.

Being on time and present for each shift earns comp time. We have a "catch a star" program in

which parents or management "catch" a staff member going above and beyond typical duties. A

form is then completed and displayed by the classroom door. Each form earns the staff member a

ticket for a drawing held at the end of each month for a prize. We participate in staff lunches or

dinners as a "social gathering" and we celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and training

accomplishments. This helps to keep employee morale positive, makes individuals feel

recognized and special. It encourages them to keep up the good work. Who makes the decisions

in regard to recruiting and training personnel? My assistant director and I work together to

maintain staff morale and to recruit and train personnel. Who is in charge of making daily

decisions that affect the center and managing the center budget? My assistant and I also make

daily decisions that affect the center together on all subjects except finances. Although I have the

final say, I feel that by making decisions together I can guide and train my assistant to handle the

program in the same way that I would. She tends to treat the business as her own because she

feels directly responsible and valued. How do you build relationships with staff, students, and

families? In order to build positive relationships with staff, children, and families I should first

be present. Face to face contact is extremely important. They need to know that I care and value

their concerns. I praise way more than I correct or complain. I try my best to let staff, children,

and families see me as a part of the team and not just the owner or director. How do you find

time to actively participate in the center? I hold staff members and families to certain standards and I am available to hold them accountable in order to keep them consistent. This goes back to being "present" and being on the floor in the classrooms. When a director is in and out of the classrooms daily things tend to go better, including less parent concerns and less staff concerns. I delegate some of the office duties to my assistant director. There are many times that I work from home before the center opens or after it closes so that during the time that the facility is opened I can be available as much as possible and not stuck in the office. Lastly as part of number 11: How do you enable other staff members to pursue their goals? I keep track of training and help my staff set goals throughout the year. Therefore, staff members have a vision of where they need to be and how to get there. We participate in the T.E.A.C.H program so that there are financial incentives for earning a CDA, Associates, or Bachelor degree.

12. What words describe your leadership style? My leadership style would best be described as cooperative/participative. I lead by example and do not expect my team members to do anything that I do not already or would ever do. We learn together and from each other.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center? Conflict whether it involves staff, parents, or children, is best settled by open respectful discussions within a comfortable environment. If a person/child is visibly upset I calm the situation by listening, repeating what was said to help avoid any misunderstandings and I sympathize with him/her as well. I try my best to include his/her opinions when working on the best solution for everyone involved. The goal is that once the conflict has been resolved each person/child feels valued and respected.

Vicki's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire revealed that she exhibited all five of the behaviors associated with transformational leadership as much as the norm or above the norm. Acting with integrity she exhibited as much as the norm. Building trust, encouraging others,

encouraging innovative thinking, and coaching/developing others she exhibited more than the norm. In relation to transactional leadership, Vicki scored 0.9 percent higher than the norm on rewards achievement and 0.9 percent below the average for monitoring deviations and mistakes. Under passive/avoidant behaviors, Vicki scored 0.5 percent lower than the norm and 0.4 percent lower than the norm for avoids involvement. Being below the norm in this area was an indicator that the leader does not strongly exhibit qualities associated with a laissez-faire style of leadership which is thought to be less effective. The MLQ also measured three outcomes of leadership which tells the perception of the behaviors leaders inspire in their staff. They were extra effort, productive/effectiveness, and satisfaction with the leadership. Vicki scored above the norm in all three areas.

The MLQ also provided the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four being the highest mark. Vicki scored herself with the highest marks in ten areas and needed to develop in only one area. These statements from the survey represented her strengths:

- I express confidence that goals will be achieved.

- I help others to develop their strengths.

- I articulate a compelling vision of the future.

- I spend time teaching and coaching.

This statement from the survey represented an area to improve:

- I talk about my most important values and beliefs.

Case Study Three

Sandy holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate of Psychology. Sandy has been the director for only one year, but has 10 years of experience as an assistant director. All of these

years have been at the current center. The demographic information gathered from questions one

to six from the interview are compiled in Table One above. Sandy's interview lasted about two

hours. But, there were several interruptions and she expanded on the majority of her answers.

Below are Sandy's answers to questions seven through 13.

       7. What is the education level of the early childhood lead teachers? They either have their

CDA or a bachelor's degree.

       8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? We go by the state ratios,

but we usually don't fill up to that. It's like our last shot for developmentally appropriate

practices. We can afford to do it. We have been here long enough. We are a private center.

Because I'm a psychologist, we do a lot of social/emotional components in our classrooms, and

if your classrooms are too full, then you can't teach the kids to self-regulate. So, we keep a

couple under the state numbers.

       9. How do you define a high-quality center? A high-quality center, for me: It's first and

foremost safe. The facility has to be safe and the children have to be safe. To me, safe means

they have to have a secure relationship with their teachers. We don't flip-flop teachers in and out.

We have a teacher per class and maybe an afternoon girl. We keep the students in the class for a

year. We don't bump them up the minute they turn three or four. We expect good behavior from

our students. They have to be able to keep each other safe. For me a high quality center focuses

more on the social aspect than pure academics. You need structure. You need to have the

academic piece, but a lot of centers have the academic piece, but the kids are way out of control.

That's what makes the difference between a quality preschool and a run-of-the-mill preschool.

       10. As an early childhood center leader what challenges do you face? That's a hard

question. I think the hardest part for me is when you have children not functioning adequately in

the classroom and the parents won't work with you. We call and say that we need to meet. I go over behavior systems with them. We even set it up for the home. But, we get parents who won't put in the time. That's the hardest part for me.

11. How do you fulfill the following duties: How do you conduct staff evaluations? We don't do a formal staff evaluation because we have only three classroom teachers. I am constantly in the classrooms. We do more informal observations throughout the day. I always make sure I am visiting classrooms at different time periods. I will give feedback as we go. I think the teachers find there is less anxiety doing things that way. They have self-evaluations they fill out throughout the year that goes through the things we expect. They have a self-evaluation they do, which is great. It is a reminder of all the things that are important and that we expect our staff to do, but, without saying "I'm going to come and judge you on these." Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and meeting/exceeding expectations? Not really. Bonuses. Gifts for Christmas. It's kind of like a family. Who makes decisions in regard to recruiting and training personnel? Who is in charge of managing the Center's budget? Who makes daily decisions that affect the Center? The director is in charge of these tasks. It is a top down approach. How do you build relationships with the staff, students, and families? You have to have a good relationship with staff. Working with staff is probably one of my least favorite things. I love working with staff when everybody is doing what they are supposed to be doing. If you have right staff and everybody is doing what they are supposed to do without having to ask them, and enjoys doing it, then preschool is fun. You know you have to have a good relationship with staff so that if you have to correct them or ask them to change behaviors or change what they are doing, they accept it. It's a fine balance. You have to have a friendly environment but still be able to have expectations. The way we establish relationships with the families is that we

tell them you have to come for a tour and for one or two visits prior to beginning the program.

We want them to be comfortable the first day. We don't just do a drop off and let them cry it out.

I hate the parents you see just in the morning and in the evening. We have an open door policy. If

they have a concern, they can just come in. They don't have to call. As a preschool director you

have to be sociable and approachable. How do you find time to actively participate in the center?

I actually have a harder time getting to my office because I do get stuck in the classrooms. How

do you enable staff members to pursue their goals? We have a variety of working hours. It's not

like you work full time or just certain hours. Our afternoon girls are mostly college students. We

have afternoon positions where they go to school and then come here.

12. What words describe your leadership style? I lead by example. A lot of that comes

from psychology. If there's someone in the class too gruff with their voice, then I'm in the

classroom using a calmer voice. As a leader, I tend to lead a lot by just getting in there and

discretely modeling. I have a very top down approach. I always frame it as a supportive role.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center? I think because I am a

psychologist, you just do the best you can. If there is conflict, it has to be addressed. If it's a

child, I tell the parents they need to meet with me. If it's a parent, it's the same thing. Nobody

likes to be told to change their behavior. You just can't avoid it because then you're not a quality

center. It will only fester if you avoid it. It doesn't get better if you avoid it, even though when it

arises, I would love to avoid it and hope it will change. Also, I think we need to give people time

to stabilize. You don't jump on everything right away. You don't want to make people feel they

are being criticized all the time. It's important to give them a little space as long as it's not

detrimental. Try a little redirection first. But, if that doesn't work, you have to have the "talk."

Sandy's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, revealed that she exhibited four of the five behaviors associated with transformational leadership greater than the norm and one behavior slightly below the norm. Builds trust, acts with integrity, encourages innovative thinking, and coaches/develops people were above the norm. Encourages others was slightly below the norm. In relation to transactional leadership, Sandy scored 0.1 percent higher than the norm for rewards achievement and 0.7 percent below the average for monitors deviations and mistakes. Sandy scored below the norm for fights fires and avoids involvements under passive/avoidant behaviors. Lower scored in this area were a positive since these behaviors are linked to a laissez-faire style of leadership. In regard to the outcomes Sandy inspires in staff, she scored 0.4 percent lower than the norm in generating extra effort, but above the norm for productive staff and generating satisfaction.

The MLQ also provides the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four being the highest mark. Sandy scored herself the highest in the areas of coaches/develops people, acts with integrity, builds trust, and encourages innovative thinking. These statements from the survey represented her strengths:

- I consider each individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.

- I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions.

- I act in ways that build others' respect for me.

- I spend time teaching and coaching.

- I seek different perspectives when solving problems.

Sandy had one area of weakness within encourages others:

- I articulate a compelling vision of the future.

Case Study Four

Susie has been a director for 15 years and all of those years have been at the same center. The demographic information gathered from questions one to six from the interview are compiled in Table One above. Susie's interview lasted about 45 minutes which included a tour of the center. Below are the answers to questions seven through 13.

7. What is the education level of the early childhood lead teachers: It varies from only having a high school diploma to having a bachelor's degree.

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? VPK is mandated at 11 students per class but in all other areas we are below the state mandated ratios. Well below what is required.

9. How do you define a high-quality center? Being below the mandated ratios. Being accredited holds us to a higher standard. For teacher training and continuing education our teachers have to meet 20 annual hours instead of only 10 hours. Individualizing education for students is another characteristic of a quality center. There are many other ways.

10. As an early childhood center leader what challenges do you face? I think the family dynamics are changing and children have too much technology. They want to be on their iPad all day. We are having to really teach children how to play and interact socially with each other. I think that has been a new challenge socially in the past couple of years. We have had to take them out of the classrooms because that is all some kids want to do. They are not interacting. Another challenge is keeping the parents involved in their child's education. They are even dropping off children when they are on their own cell phone. So that is a big change from years past.

11. As a program leader, how do you fulfill the following duties? How do you conduct

staff evaluations? Yes we do. We have informal observations throughout the year and provide

immediate feedback as needed. Then at the end of the year we do a self-evaluation where they

can evaluate how they feel they have done that year. Then I compare that with how I feel they

have done. That is used for goal-setting for the upcoming year. It helps to transition us to the

next year. It brings closure to the year and sets up the new year with the goals they want to meet

and achieve. Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and

meeting/exceeding expectations? They are not financially rewarded but we do incentives at

meetings. We share something really neat that they did for recognition. Sometimes we have

giveaways. For example, one year we were having an attendance problem. So for every month

the teacher was there, her name was placed into a bucket for a drawing. It was usually for a gift

certificate for food or a teacher supply store. There are those types of rewards and a lot of praise.

They love to share with their peers what they are doing. Who makes the decisions in regard to

recruiting and training personnel? I guess it's myself. A lot of our hiring is through word-of-

mouth. We do not post a lot on job websites. Hiring is a big part of being a quality leader. If you

hire a quality individual to start with, you are not going to have the problems. So, I think as you

are in the hiring and recruiting process, let them know straight-forward what the expectations are

for the center. I kind of let them know the atmosphere we have here and the expectations we

have, as they will represent a church. They have to fill out a statement of faith that they are

Christians and that there is a family lifestyle, and marriage is between a man and a woman. All

of those things we can do because we are faith-based. So I would say I am responsible for that.

Who is in charge of making the daily decisions that affect the center? I have the overall decision

making responsibility. But, as a leader I get input from all of the staff and take their input into

consideration. I do ultimately make the decisions. Who is in charge of managing the center

budget? I do the budget with the assistant director. Then we submit it to the church which has a

financial secretary and a finance committee. They let me know if I need to make any changes in

the budget. How do you build relationships with your staff, students, and family? I take the time

to talk to them on a personal level. Sometimes this is hard for me because I want to get in and get

to the tasks. But, I think when you do take the time to talk to your teachers and find out how their

family is doing or how their vacation was, you get to know what is going on in their lives. I also

let them into my life. Also, every teacher knows every student by name. I try to know all the

parents by name. Sometimes I am looking in the book for their name just so I can call them by

their name. I just try my best to connect on a personal level rather than just being their child's

school. We want to minister to the families as well. How do you find the time to actively

participate in the center? Well, my office is right in the front. We have talked about moving my

office to the second floor, but we have kept it out front. We have it connected to the center. I

greet all the parents and kids as they come in. I see the teachers as they come in, too. I think the

location helps to connect with the day to day. I try to model that everyone's job is everyone's

job. So, if I see trash in the parking lot, I will pick it up. If the toilet needs to be plunged, I will

do it if I can before we call custodial. If I need to change a diaper, I will change a diaper. I don't

like the term boss. I don't want to be viewed as above them. I just want them to know that I am

their co-worker and want them to know that we are all professionals in whatever we do. I tell our

teachers I am not a micro-manager. I tell them they are the professionals in their classrooms.

While there are guidelines that have they have to follow for curriculum, they do have freedom on

how they teach. How do you enable other staff members to pursue their goals? Based on the

evaluations, I help them reach those goals. Last summer I had a teacher that wanted to earn her

CDA. I told her that we could help her with the money and sign her up. I walk alongside them, giving them that extra push, building their confidence, and letting them know that they can do it. The goal setting at the end of the year allows me to touch base with them throughout the year.

12. What words describe your leadership style? Describing yourself is hard! I want to be a servant leader. I want to help my staff in any way I can. I want to be a leader, but at the same time be a co-worker, a helper working alongside them. Not an authoritarian at all. I think that was the hard thing when I started. The previous director was extremely authoritarian and so I thought I had to be that way because I had never been in charge. But, that wasn't my style. I just want to empower them. The term director is more directing instead of authoritative.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises in the center? I always go to the course, directly to that person. I think we have been very successful in not having gossip and a lot disputes. My teachers have learned that if they hear anything they need to come straight to me. Then I'll go straight to that person, not letting it escalate, but dealing with it immediately. I think getting the whole story is big because many times there is a reason behind the conflict that is easy to solve. We do a lot of prayer around here, figuring out how I can help them by praying about it. It it's a conflict between two or more individuals I pull them into the office and talk with them, and I use a lot of humor. I never raise my voice. It is just talking it out and praying with them. Even when I have had to fire someone or let them go for some reason, the Lord has been able to help me do it in a way that allows them to see they are not a good fit here.

Susie's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, revealed that she exhibited four of the five behaviors associated with transformational leadership greater than the norm and one behavior slightly below the norm. Susie scored above the norm in regard to acts with integrity, encourages others, encourages innovative thinking, and coaches/develops people. She scored slightly below

the norm in regard to builds trust. In the area of transactional leadership, Susie scored above the

norm for rewards achievement and 0.9 percent below the norm for monitors deviations/mistakes.

Passive/avoidant behaviors can indicate a more laissez-faire style of leadership which is not

strongly linked to effective leadership. Susie scored the norm in the area of fights fires but scored

herself a zero for avoids involvement. Overall, she did not score herself high in these areas,

which would then indicate a lower level of laissez-faire style leadership. In regard to behaviors

that Susie helps her staff exhibit, her scores varied. She scored the norm in generates effort in

staff, slightly below the norm for having a staff that is productive, and 0.9 percent above the

norm for generating satisfaction in her staff.

The MLQ also provided the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in

the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four

being the highest mark. The statements below from the survey represented Susie's strengths:

- I express confidence that goals will be achieved.

- I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission.

- I consider each individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.

- I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group.

Susie scored herself as needing improvement in several areas. These statements from the survey

were areas for development:

- I consider the moral and ethical consequence of decisions.

- I display a sense of power and confidence.

- I treat others as individuals rather than just as members of the group.

Case Study Five

Liz has 10 years of experience as a director and all of those years have been at the same center. Liz's interview lasted about 30 minutes. She answered the questions, but did not expand her answers for most of the questions. Questions one through six of the interview are represented in Table One above, demographics. Below are Liz's answers for interview questions seven through 13.

7. What is the education level of the early childhood lead teachers? CDA.

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? We try to stay on the lower end of the DCF mandated ratios. VPK maxes out at 18 students per class.

9. How do you define a high-quality center? A center that doesn't give up on a child or the parents. Leaders must have compassion and understanding while being fair and firm with staff and families. In the past I noticed at some centers that money/profits came first. Here the kids, staff, and parents come first, not the money. If you take care of your staff and children, you will have a high-quality center.

10. As an early childhood center leader what challenges to you face? Keeping up with and implementing the new rules and regulations. It is ridiculous what needs to be done. Many leaders have never been in a classroom, yet they set unreal expectations for classrooms. VPK has so many rules, guidelines, and expectations. The standards for VPK are really rigid and structured. We are monitored by two departments here: DCF and VPK.

11. As a program leader, how do you fulfill the following duties? How do you conduct staff evaluations? There are no staff evaluations. Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and meeting/exceeding expectations? There is no set standard. But they receive raises when possible and bonuses at Christmas. I try to reward on a personal level with tokens of

gratitude, such as doughnuts and lunch. It is not always monetary. Who makes the decisions in regard to recruiting and training personnel? The director and the pastor has a small portion of interest in this. Who is in charge of making daily decisions that affect the center? The director and assistant director. Who is in charge of managing the center budget? The director and the pastor. How do you build relationships with staff, student to staff I go into the classrooms, sit, watch, and help them. I am a leader not a boss. I will only ask of them what I do and I understand their limitations and needs. I work with them. For the parents, it is about getting to know them and understanding their life situations. Some I need to be stern with, while others just need kind words. I build relationships with the children by not giving up on them. We must help children to succeed. Put them in situations where they can succeed. A leader must have open communications with everyone otherwise the program will crumble. Priorities: staff and children first. How do you enable other staff members to pursue their goals? I encourage them to reach their goals, even if it ends up not being in childcare. If they feel they need to move on from here, I encourage them. Very important to realize that a good work ethic promotes your business.

12. What words describe your leadership style? I am human and directors need to be human. DCF can be put on the back burner if needed. I lead by examples. I am fair and understanding, and maybe too lenient. I am not mean. Life is out there and a leader has to be understanding of that by having compassion and empathy. I will fight for good teachers.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center? I talk it out. We work it out among each other. I will often mediate with a non-biased view. I help them to listen and understand each other. I look at both sides. If parents see conflict that effects the center, I will address it specifically. There needs to be compromise. It cannot only be one way.

Liz's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire revealed that she exhibited all five of the five behaviors linked to transformational leadership greater than the norm. Liz scored herself as having a four in the areas of encourages others and coaches/develops others. In the area of transactional leadership, Liz scored above average for rewards achievement and 0.2 percent below the average for monitors deviations/mistakes. Liz scored higher than the norm in both areas of passive/avoidant behaviors. She scored 0.3 percent higher than the norm for fights fires and avoids involvement. This could indicate some laissez-faire style behaviors in her leadership style. While this is above the average norm, it is still low on the evaluation scale. Laissez-faire style behaviors are often not linked to effective leadership. In regard to behaviors that Liz helps her staff exhibit, her scores varied. She scored the norm for generates extra behavior. She was 0.2 percent higher than the norm for having a productive staff and 0.1 percent lower than the norm for generating satisfaction within her staff.

The MLQ also provided the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four being the highest mark. These statements from the survey demonstrated Liz's strengths:

- I express confidence that the goals will be achieved.

- I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments.

- I help others to develop their strengths.

- I act in ways that build other's respect for me.

- I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group.

This statement from the survey was an area for development:

- I display a sense of power and confidence.

Case Study Six

Michelle has been a center director for 10 years and all of her years have been at the same center. Her interview took about 20 minutes. She answered the questions but did not elaborate on most answers even when encouraged to do so. Questions one through six provided demographics information and are in Table One above. Below are the answers to questions seven through 13.

7. What is the education level of the early childhood lead teachers? We have everyone from bachelor's degrees, certified teachers, to brand new staff just starting to work on their 40 hours for DCF.

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio? It depends on the age. We go with the accreditation ratios mandated. There are slightly less than the DCF mandated ratios.

9. How do you define a high-quality center? I think a center that had accreditation versus minimum standards. Whatever the standards, the center must abide by them.

10. As an early childhood center leader, what challenges do you face? DCF rules and regulations.

11. As a program leader, how do you fulfill the following duties? Do you perform staff evaluations? They are done annually. I do everyone in January so it is easier to keep track of them. I have a staff of 40 so I just do all evaluations in January. They all receive their annual increase in January as well. Do you reward staff who comply with rules and regulations and meet/exceed expectations? We do an annual bonus. It is not black and white criteria, but we do use that as a reward. Who is in charge of recruiting and training personnel, making daily decisions for the center, and managing the center's budget? The director. How do you build relationships with staff, students, and families? By greeting everyone in the morning. I also rely highly on my assistant director. Because I am super busy with paperwork, the budget, and tasks

on that end, my assistant does a lot more of the mentoring staff. She will spend time in the

classrooms and check in on the staff every day to see who they are doing and if they need

anything. I rely heavily on her help for that. I do a lot of paperwork and it is hard to find a

balance. I will be here on Saturdays doing paperwork because I didn't get it done during the

week.

12. What words would you use to describe your leadership style? I try to be flexible and

be a good listener. I do try to accommodate the staff's personal needs, like scheduling for

example. Even though we can't offer a high salary, we can do other things for staff retention. We

offer free lunch and try to meet their family needs. If they bring their children with them, they

can have a discount on childcare. We try to make it a happy place for them to work.

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center? Usually by talking and trying

to meet it head on. I don't let it go. I address it and follow through with whatever it is as soon as

possible.

Michelle's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire revealed that she met or exceeded the

norm in three out of the five behaviors associated with transformational leadership. She scored

below the norm in the other two behaviors. Michelle was slightly above the norm in the areas of

builds trust, acts with integrity, and encourages others. She scored 0.3 percent lower than the

norm for encourages innovative thinking and 0.4 percent lower for coaches/develops people. In

the area of transactional leadership, Michelle scored slightly above the norm for rewards

achievement and 0.4 percent lower than the norm on monitors deviations/mistakes. Michelle

scored the norm in relation to fights fires for passive/avoidant behavior and 0.4 percent below the

norm for avoids involvement. Lower scores in this area were a positive because passive/avoidant

behaviors can be linked to a less effective style of leadership. In regard to behaviors that

Michelle helps her staff exhibit, She scored above the norm for generates effort, but below the norms for productive staff and generates satisfaction in staff.

The MLQ also provided the participant's 10 strengths and 10 areas for development in the area of transformational leadership. The scoring was based on a zero to four scale with four being the highest mark. Michelle only scored herself a four in one area. This statement from the survey was a strength:

- I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions.

Michelle scored herself low in three areas. These statements from the survey represented areas for development:

- I spend time teaching and coaching.

- I seek differing perspectives when solving problems.

- I get others to look at problems from any different angles.

Evaluations of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to determine what leadership behaviors were present in the directors/leaders of a private high-quality preschool program and to examine how leadership influences the quality of the preschool program and what behaviors those leaders possess. The case study aimed to answer two research questions. What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding?

Themes and trends unfolded in the analysis of the data collected in regard to this study. "Triangulation contributes to the overall quality of the study to the extent that it facilitates the

achievement of some clearly defined purpose" (Adami, 2005, p. 20). Triangulation was

accomplished through comparing the interview data, MLQ survey data, and utilizing the

Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness (Appendix A).

The research contained within this case study was framed using Derue's Integrated

Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness (Derue, et al., 2011). The data analysis

relied heavily on the leader behaviors represented within Derue's model (see appendix A).

According to the research by Derue and colleagues (2011), when leader behaviors are discussed

it is usually in terms of whether the behavior is oriented toward a task process, relational

dynamic, or a change. When analyzing both the interviews and MLQ survey, the Integrated

Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness was utilized in order to answer research

question number one. What are the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private

preschool program?

Table 2

MLQ Leadership Survey Results of Leadership Styles

Leadership Behavior	0-0.4	0.5-0.9	1-1.4	1.5-1.9	2-2.4	2.5-2.9	3-3.4	3.5-3.9	4
Transformational Leadership- 5 I's							III	III	
Rewards achievement- **Transactional**							III	III	
Monitors Deviations and mistakes – **Transactional**		I	IIII	I					
Fights Fires- **Passive/Avoidant**		I	IIIII						
Avoids Involvement – **Passive/Avoidant**	IIIII		I						

When comparing the data using the integrated model, the contingent reward behavior under task-oriented was present in both the interviews and the MLQ survey results. On the MLQ survey, rewards achievement was ranked as occurring fairly often or frequently under transactional leadership style behaviors. The participants' scores ranged from 3.0-4.0, as show in Table Two. When analyzing the data from the interview about staff rewards for compliance, the results support the data from the survey. The participants listed more than 10 different types of rewards/incentives given to their staff when compliance was met. Sandy, who is the director of the non-VPK program, was the only participant to answer that she really did not provide rewards for staff. She stated she provides a Christmas bonus, but that was all. The other five participants who ran VPK programs listed many ways to reward staff since higher salaries were not always feasible. Vicki, who is the director of one of the VPK programs, stated that they had a staff rewards system in place for helping staff to meet and succeed center expectations. Part of that incentive was earning tickets for a monthly drawing. Another VPK program director, Susie, said that she, too, used incentives at meetings, like a drawing or a give-away. She said she used the rewards to help control problem areas. One year attendance was an issue, so the staff earned an entry into a monthly drawing for being there the whole month.

Table 3

Passive/Avoidant Behaviors

Behavior	0-0.4	0.5-0.9	1-1.4	1.5-1.9	2-2.4	2.5-2.9	3-3.4	3.5-3.9	4
Fights Fires		III	III						
Avoids Involvement	IIIII		I						

When comparing the MLQ data to the passive leadership behaviors and laissez-faire style behaviors listed on the integrated model, the participants scored very low, indicating that these

behaviors did not occur at all or only once in a while. In Table Three above, those areas are fights fires and avoids involvement, which the participants scored themselves between 0-1.4. In this area it is better for the participants to score low because it indicates less of a laissez-faire style of leadership which, based on research, is known to be less effective style of leadership.

When the data from the interviews and MLQ surveys were compared to the integrated model's relational oriented behaviors, three themes were dominant. The survey results indicated that encouraging others, encouraging innovative thinking, and coaching and developing people occurred fairly often, if not always. These three areas support the rational-oriented behaviors for empowerment, developing, and enabling. When analyzing the interview data for relational-oriented behaviors, the behavior of servant leadership was mentioned. Susie stated as her answer for question 12 on her leadership style that she wants to be a servant leader. Abigail stated that she tells every child and staff member that she loves them every day because they are family. Her motto is, "Come and experience the love of God where everyone is somebody." Her goal was to build up the staff and children of the program. This is an example of empowerment under the rational-oriented behaviors.

Table 4

Self-Scores for Transformational Leadership

Behavior	0-0.4	0.5-0.9	1-1.4	1.5-1.9	2-2.4	2.5-2.9	3-3.4	3.5-3.9	4
Builds Trust						II	II	II	
Acts with Integrity						I	IIIII		
Encourages Others						I	II	I	II
Encourages Innovative Thinking						II	I	II	I
Coaches and Develops People						I	II	II	I

Based on the data from the MLQ survey, the majority of the behaviors occurred from the change-oriented category on the integrated model, Appendix A, which indicates a high level of transformational behaviors. These behaviors included inspiring others through encouragement, innovative thinking, and coaching and developing. This category also overlapped with the relational-oriented areas of developing, empowering, and enabling. Within the change-oriented behaviors, the participants also indicated that they sometimes or fairly often build trust with staff and act with integrity. When analyzing the interview data from question eleven which asked about building relationships with staff, the above findings were supported. Abigail stated that she had an open-door policy in order to build a relationship with her staff. Vicki stated that in order to build a relationship with her staff she is present for them. She achieved this by praising them more than correcting or complaining and letting them know she values their concerns. Susie stated that she builds a relationship with her staff by taking the time to talk to them on a personal level. She also lets them into her life.

Research Question One

Research question number one asked: What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? The data indicated a high level of behaviors that reflect transactional and transformational leadership and low levels of a passive/laissez-faire style of leadership. Overall, the research done by Derue and colleagues, found that passive leader behaviors can negatively impact leader effectiveness. They also found that within the "behavioral paradigm, transformational leadership was the most consistent predictor of leadership effectiveness" (2011, p. 37). Leadership effectiveness is linked to a high-quality early childhood program.

According to the interview data, the participants' personal definition of what created a high-quality early childhood program included behaviors found within transformational leadership. Abigail stated that meeting the needs and expectations of the children and their families is a top priority. Sandy said that a high-quality center is one in which safety and making the children feel safe is a top priority. Liz stated that the kids, staff, and parents come first, before money. These answers supported the transformational leadership behavior of building trust. Abigail stated that early childhood programs teach the children how to function in society. Susie explained that because of her accreditation, she has to help support her teachers by providing double the amount of training and continuing education than non-accredited programs. This data supported the transformational behavior of coaching and developing people. Vicki stated that high-quality early childhood programs focus on the process rather than just the product and the children taught to be "self/independent thinkers." Vicki also said that in high-quality centers, children are respected for their uniqueness. Both can be applied to coaching and developing people and encouraging innovative thinking.

Table 5

Leadership Profile Self Scores

Behavior	0-0.4	0.5-0.9	1-1.4	1.5-1.9	2-2.4	2.5-2.9	3-3.4	3.5-3.9	4	Leadership Style
Builds Trust						II	II	II		Transformational
Acts with Integrity						I	IIIII			Transformational
Encourages Others						I	II	I	II	Transformational
Encourages Innovative Thinking						II	I	II	I	Transformational
Coaches and Develops People						I	II	II	I	Transformational
Rewards Achievements							IIII	II		Transactional

Monitors Deviations/ Mistakes				Transactional
Fights Fires	III	III		Passive/ Avoidant
Avoids Involvement	IIIII	I		Passive/ Avoidant

Table Five above, the MLQ Leadership Survey Results of Leadership Styles, shows that the participants scored themselves higher on behaviors that are reflective of transformational leadership. They also scored themselves higher on the transactional leadership behavior of rewarding achievement. They scored themselves lower on leadership behaviors that were passive/avoidant.

Table 6

Transformational Leadership Styles: Strengths

Behavior	Items Reported as Strengths
Builds Trust	I act in ways that build others' respect for me. I go beyond self-interest for the good of the group.
Acts with Integrity	I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions.
Encourages Others	I express confidence that goals will be achieved.
Encourages Innovative Thinking	I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments
Coaches and Develops People	I consider each individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others. I help others develop their strengths.

The MLQ provided the participants' strengths in five areas of transformational leadership behaviors: builds trust, acts with integrity, encourages others, encourages innovative thinking and coaching/developing people. Table Six shows the strengths the majority of the five leaders

exhibited. The data from the table supported the interview data and showed that the participants exhibited behaviors typical of a transformational leader.

Research Question Two

Research question number two asked: What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding? Based on the MLQ survey there were more similarities between the directors of VPK and non-VPK programs than differences. Based on the interviews two differences emerged. The first difference through the interviews was in reference to leadership style. Sandy, the non-VPK leader, stated her approach was definitely top down and she frames it as a supportive role. Based on interview answers from the leaders of the VPK programs, their leadership style tended to be more bottom up. They mentioned being like a family and everyone having a voice regarding the decision making process. Abigail made it clear that her staff is her family. She also indicated that decisions were decided upon and mapped out collectively. Susie stated that she is a servant leader and wants to help her staff in any way by being a co-worker alongside them. Michelle explained that she tries to accommodate staff members' personal needs and help them meet their own family's needs. The second difference reported was that the non-VPK leader, Sandy, did not really provide many rewards or incentives to staff for compliance and meeting expectations. She mentioned a bonus at Christmas, but that was all. While the other center leaders listed many ways they provided rewards, incentives, and positive reinforcement to meet expectations and maintain compliance. Abigail stated that she provided paid days off, holiday dinners, and other paid meals. Vicki explained that her staff can earn time off and tickets for the monthly drawing where they can win different prizes. Susie also

mentioned drawings and giveaways at her center for monthly incentives. Liz mentioned that she

would bring in doughnuts on occasion as a token of gratitude towards her staff.

Interview Themes

Table 7

Common Interview Themes

Interview Question	Themes
7. Education level of lead teachers	Varied, there was no one education level that dominated
8. Class ratios	All centers stayed below the mandated requirements
10. Challenges faced	Keeping up-to-date on constant changing laws and policies, teaching to changing state standards
11. Staff evaluations	Annually and they are informal
11. Staff rewards	Raises are rare, most rewards consisted of praise, monthly drawings, and small tokens of gratitude such as food
11. Decisions made for the center	Staff was consulted but director had final say
11. Building relationships	Open door policy, must make time for the families
12. Leadership style	One who models and does not expect anything from the staff that isn't also done by the director-
13. Handling conflict	Open discussion, mediator, address it immediately

Just as the MLQ provided rich data where common themes emerged, the interviews

provided equally as rich data. Table Seven above highlights the themes that emerged during the

analysis of the interviews. These themes represented behaviors that promoted transformational

leadership. Transformational leadership has been linked to higher leader effectiveness. Behaviors

found within transformational leadership tend to be found in directors of high-quality early childhood education programs. These behaviors are also areas in which the directors scored highest in the MLQ survey.

Summary

This chapter presented the results and evaluation of the findings by using cross-analysis of the data from both the interview and MLQ survey for the current qualitative multi-case study to answer the two research questions. What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding? Pre-set interview questions along with an online leadership survey provided the data to be analyzed in order to answer the research questions that guided the study.

"Transformational leadership refers to those whose approach is more consistent with evolving trends in educational reform, such as, empowerment, distributed leadership, and co-construction of learning" (Li, 2015, p. 435). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is performance- based and the leaders meet staff needs by initiating goals, defining roles, and providing rewards (Brownlee, et al., 2010). Based on the data analyzed from both the interviews and the online surveys and utilizing the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness, question number one was answered. There was very little trace of passive leadership found within the participants in the current study. Transformational leadership behaviors were prevalent. Some transactional leadership behaviors were present, too. Rewarding compliance under relational-oriented behaviors on the integrated model was the most noticeable

trend based on the data collected in the interviews and online surveys for transactional leadership behaviors.

Question number two was answered by separating the current data analyzed to answer question one from those leaders who had a VPK program and those leaders who did not have a VPK program. Overall, there were more similarities between the leaders than differences. Based on the interviews two differences emerged. The first difference through the interviews was in reference to leadership style. Sandy, the non-VPK leader, stated her approach was definitely top down and she frames it as a supportive role. Based on interview answers from the leaders of the VPK programs, their leadership style tended to be more bottom up. The second difference reported was that the non-VPK leader, Sandy, did not really provide many rewards or incentives to staff for compliance and meeting expectations. Similarities and differences between VPK and non-VPK leaders did not emerge clearly when analyzing the data from the MLQ survey, but were easier to find when analyzing the interview data.

With more than seven million children attending childcare centers while their parents work, the leadership program directors provide in these centers may be key to the level of quality the programs provide to the young children enrolled (Patton, 2009). "Empirical research suggests that effective and capable transformational leaders are essential in order for success in reform efforts" (Quinn, et. al, 2015, p. 73). Based on the data collected for this current qualitative multiple case study, the six leaders of private high-quality early childhood programs who participated in this study exhibited the behaviors of transformational leadership consistently.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter reviews the problem and purpose of the research. The limitations are reviewed and discussed to reflect changes made to the research methods. The chapter also discusses the impact of the research, implications resulting from analysis of the data, and recommendations based on the research findings. Suggestions for future research will also be addressed in this chapter.

The problem facing early childhood education, and one that is negatively impacting children entering kindergarten, is that they are not receiving the necessary readiness skills needed to succeed in kindergarten. Espinosa stresses that past "research has shown that three and four year-olds who attend a high-quality preschool are more successful in kindergarten and beyond" (2002). Leadership within early childhood programs is one variable that needs to be examined (Patton, 2009). Based on one study, quality preschool settings have strong leaders who present a clear vision of the center with the staff (Ang, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how leadership related to the quality of the preschool program and what behaviors those leaders possess.

Limitations

The small number of participants included in this study created a limitation. Although the number of participants was sufficient for a qualitative case study, it represented a small number of high-quality private preschool programs in Central Florida. Approximately 20 early childhood education leaders were contacted, of which one said maybe but did not respond after that and none of the others agreed to participate. Once the observation portion was removed, six leaders agreed to participate in the interview and online survey on leadership styles. Due to the limitation

of the small sample size, it was also not possible to achieve an equal number of leaders with

VPK at their center and leaders without VPK at their center. This sample size was not

proportionate and impacted the ability to properly make comparisons of leadership styles and

behaviors between leaders with VPK programs and those without a VPK program in order to

answer research question number two.

An additional limitation existed in the collection of data. As mentioned above the

observation portion had to be removed due to participants not agreeing to the study. The one

participant that initially said maybe, did indicate time as a factor. Once she was notified that the

observation portion was removed, she agreed the same day she was notified. Another participant

said due to time, the observation piece would have not allowed her to participate. She said some

people might also see it as intrusive. During the pilot study, when the observation piece was still

being used, the director asked several times if I still needed to observe and when I planned to

leave. The six that did agree after the observation piece was removed, agreed within two days of

being notified that the observation piece was removed from the study.

Behavior of those being observed can vary greatly from day to day based on contextual

factors such as instructional practices taking place, student groups, and classroom activities

(Bottema-Beutel, Lloyd, Carter, and Asmus, 2014). Researchers work to limit or at least account

for variations due to outlying factors (Bottema-Beutel, et al., 2014). "Contextual differences

from one observation session to the next makes it unlikely that a single measurement opportunity

will yield a reliable index of social behavior" (Bottema-Beutel, et al., 2014, p. 590). While the

observational data would have supported the interview questions and online survey, it was only

going to give a small glimpse into the directors' daily activities.

Lastly, while triangulation of the data was used, it was limited. The data collected was all self-reported by the participants. Data was gathered in multiple ways, but was not reported by others. There was no triangulation of data with the participant's staff or families. This could be viewed as limitation.

Impacts

This case study was designed to determine which leadership behaviors were most prevalent in quality private preschool programs. In addition it added to a small, narrow body of research focusing on early childhood directors/leaders and determining high-quality within preschool programs. Whether a child has a positive or negative experience in early childhood education depends on the quality of that program (Patton, 2009). Children who receive care in high quality programs also appear less anxious and make an easier transition into formalized school.

This qualitative case study was necessary in order to research and determine which leadership behaviors were found within high-quality private early childhood education programs. This study provided insight into the leadership phenomenon for those who wish to improve their leadership skills and for teacher educators who teach pre-service teachers and directors in early childhood education programs. All members in society have a stake in the issue of high-quality early childhood education because it lays the foundation for a child's future academic success. Either directly or indirectly, each of these stake holders makes decisions that impact a child's ability to attend high-quality early childhood centers.

Pre-service Teachers

Pre-service teachers need to know what characteristics make a high-quality early childhood center in order to ensure they provide those pieces to their students. They also need to

know what behaviors are found in effective leaders. Pre-service teachers need to be able to recognize what effective leaders do in order to support them once they become teachers in the field, and in case they transition to a leadership role themselves.

College Education Professors

College education professors who teach pre-service early childhood teachers need to stress the importance of how to recognize a high-quality early childhood education program from one that is not. If that center is not high-quality, what steps can be taken to improve the quality, even just within their classrooms? These pre-service teachers need to realize that most directors take a leadership position within an early childhood education center without specific training. Therefore, knowing what effective leaders do at high-quality centers is important to teachers, as well, because one day they may become the leader.

Early Childhood Leaders/Directors

Early childhood leaders/director need to be aware of the behaviors associated with effective leadership and high-quality early childhood centers. Early childhood leaders/directors should engage in professional development to strengthen leadership skills that are weak. By strengthening weak areas, the leaders could impact the center's quality for the better.

Legislators

By being aware of the behaviors that effective leaders exhibit, legislators can make the requirements for teaching and directing an early childhood education program more consistent from center to center. Currently state laws vary and there is not a mandating level of education that an early childhood leader must possess. Unlike K-12 public education, early childhood center leaders do not have to hold a valid teaching certificate.

Communities and Parents

The communities, especially those located in lower socio-economic areas, need to work with the parents to help them understand what makes a center high-quality. Communities can provide workshops for families to educate them on how to choose a quality center for their child. Therefore, allowing parents to make informed decisions about the center their child attends prior to kindergarten. A 2006 study found that parents view involvement in their child's education differently than how educators perceive that involvement (Kim, 2012). Another study showed that parents' views of what made a quality preschool program varied. If the community worked with the parents and explained to them what characteristics high-quality centers and leaders need to have, then parents would be more empowered when choosing an early childhood center.

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Implications

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This qualitative multiple case study was driven by two research questions pertaining to early childhood education. What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding? These questions were answered by utilizing the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness as the framework (Derue, et al., 2011). This framework was the basis for analyzing the data provided by six early childhood leaders that participated in the study.

The data supports the notion that leaders of high-quality early childhood programs exhibited more behaviors associated with transformational leadership and some behaviors associated with transactional leadership. According to the data, the leaders exhibited very few

behaviors associated with passive /laissez-faire leadership. Overall, the research done by Derue and colleagues (2011), found that passive leader behaviors are negatively related to leader effectiveness. In management by exception, which is listed as a behavior trait under Derue and colleagues passive leadership, leaders use a laissez-faire style to manage others and therefore are unable to initiate change (Brownlee, Nailon, and Tickle, 2010). Change-oriented behaviors are linked to transformational leadership.

Leaders who exhibit behaviors related to transformational leadership tend to have an approach that is consistent with promoting empowerment (Li, 2015). The interview data indicated that the participants helped to empower their staff. Abigail encouraged her staff to pursue their goals and further their education if they wanted. Vicki's program participates in T.E.A.C.H., which helps her teachers to further their education. Susie stated that when one of her staff needs help to reach a goal, she will walk alongside them, giving them an extra push and building their confidence. The participants in the study exhibited behaviors that are found within transformational leaders. These behaviors are linked to high-quality early childhood centers. Early childhood education's quality is being improved through leadership (Sims, Forrest, Semann and Slattery, 2015). In order to improve program practices, these leaders inspire, mentor, model, and coach staff (Sims, et al., 2015). According to the MLQ survey the participants in this study scored at 2.5 percent or higher for coaching and developing people.

Based on the analysis of the MLQ data and those themes, question number two was answered. The data and themes indicated that there were more similarities in leadership behaviors between directors who ran a VPK program and the director that did not have a VPK program at her center. When analyzing the interview data, though, two differences were noted

between the directors that ran a VPK program and the one leader that did not have a VPK program.

The first difference was that the leader of the program that did not participate in VPK said that her leadership style was definitely top-down. The VPK directors did not indicate that same approach when asked about leadership style during the interview portion. The second difference noted based on the interview was that the non-VPK leader did not stress rewards and incentives as much as the VPK leaders did within their centers.

Based on this current qualitative case study, it can be implied that leaders of high-quality early childhood programs demonstrated the behaviors that fit the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness as framed by Derue and colleagues (2011). The majority of the behaviors demonstrated are linked to transformational and transactional leadership which implies being an effective leader. "The most successful leader of all is one who sees another picture not yet actualized. He sees the things which belong to his present picture but which are not yet part of it" (Taylor, 1994, p. 4). Based on data collected from the MLQ survey, the participants' strengths within transformational leadership support this way of thinking.

Strengths:

- I talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished.

- I suggest new ways of looking at how to complete assignments.

- I articulate a compelling vision for the future.

- I talk optimistically about the future.

- I get others to look at problems from many different angles.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this research study provided an in-depth look into the leadership behaviors exhibited by directors of private high-quality private preschool programs. Future research should use a sample size that has a more proportionate number of VPK programs to non-VPK programs in order to further investigate the similarities and differences of the leaders' behaviors. Other impacts that leading a VPK program could have on the quality of the early childhood center should also be explored. Future research can also look into whether gender has an impact on leadership behaviors since all of the six directors in the current study were female. Future research could also examine what impact, if any, consistency of leadership had on the center quality since the majority of the center leaders held a director's positon at the same center for an extended period of time.

Recommendations

Past research has shown that the quality of care in the early years can be linked to the quality of leadership within the early childhood center. Research also shows that the quality of the preschool settings are linked to leaders who have strong leadership and share a clear vision of the center's practices with staff (Ang, 2011). One study indicated that a trained and skilled leader that was able to effectively communicate and provide the vision of the center, directly impacted the quality of the preschool (Ang, 2011).

Therefore, it can be recommended that all stakeholders within early childhood education realize the importance leadership has on the quality of the early childhood program. Those stakeholders include: pre-service teachers, college education professors, early childhood education leaders/directors, legislators/lobbyists, the community, and parents. All stakeholders must take an active role in ensuring that early childhood education programs are high-quality.

College professors who teach pre-service teachers need to provide their students with the skills they need to actively display behaviors found within transformational leadership. Many teachers crossover from teacher to early childhood leader without any formalized training. Early childhood leaders often gain their role as a leader by accident, and therefore, they are not prepared for the complications that come with leading oneself and others (Sims, et al., 2015). There are not enough early childhood professionals that have both leadership knowledge and content knowledge along with the ability to apply those skills. "The fragmented nature of early childhood settings, the diverse qualifications that exist across the workforce, and the complexities of leadership within family and community settings, result in additional challenges which universities need to address in undergraduate and post-graduate studies" (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014).

The current expectations of early childhood educators are to build relationships with the families and communities they serve, along with leading a staff that will make decisions in regard to services that will support learning in the classrooms (Campbell-Evans, et al., 2014). Strong leadership is an important piece to any thriving organization (Talan, et al., 2014). According to Derue and colleagues (2011), transformational leadership typically predicts the effectiveness of a leader. According to a study conducted by Quinn and associates (2015), high performing schools had leaders that used transformational practices to lead more often than leaders in institutions that were low performing. Directors should be evaluated on their leadership skills as part of their annual evaluation as one step to ensure a high-quality center. Teachers need to have input into the director's annual evaluation because they are the ones working with them on a daily basis and are directly impacted by the style of leadership.

Federal and state governments invest great resources into providing early childhood care as a way to help children, especially from economically disadvantaged families, be prepared with the readiness skills needed to start kindergarten (Keys, et al., 2013). But, policies that are known to be effective are rarely funded at levels that provide adequate support to the families that would benefit the most (NAEYC, 2017). In the United States many of the preschool programs are not labeled high quality and many are rated below that. Legislation, along with the lobbyists that impact early childhood education, need to work together to establish one high-quality preschool education system (Espinosa, 2002). In that process they need to clearly define the role of the early childhood program leader and provide a clear system for evaluating leader effectiveness.

The communities, especially those located in lower socio-economic areas, need to work with the parents to help them understand what makes a center high-quality. Communities can provide workshops for families to educate them on how to choose a quality center for their child. Therefore, allowing parents to make informed decisions about the center their child attends prior to kindergarten. A 2006 study found that parents view involvement in their child's education differently than how educators perceive that involvement (Kim, 2012). Another study showed that parents' views of what made a quality preschool program varied. If the community worked with the parents and explained to them what characteristics high-quality centers and leaders need to have, then parents would be more empowered when choosing an early childhood center.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to determine what leadership behaviors were present in the directors/leaders of a private high-quality preschool program and to examine how leadership influences the quality of the preschool program and what behaviors those leaders possess. The study was conducted using six directors from private high-quality

preschool programs located within central Florida. The results of this study contributed to a small body of research on early childhood leadership behaviors. Existing literature was dated and current research on the behaviors present in early childhood leaders/directors was limited.

There were some limitations to the study. The minimal number of participants created a limitation for this study. It was also not possible to achieve an equal number of leaders with VPK at their center and leaders without VPK at their center. This sample size was not proportionate and impacted the ability to properly answer research question number two. An additional limitation existed due to the removal of the observation portion of the study.

This qualitative study attempted to answer two research questions in regard to early childhood leaders/directors. Research question one asked: What were the leadership behaviors present in a high-quality private preschool program? The data analysis revealed that the leaders that participated in the current study did lead with mostly transformational leadership behaviors. They also used little to no leadership behaviors found within passive leadership. According to the interview data, the participants' personal definition of what created a high-quality early childhood program included behaviors found within transformational leadership.

Research question two asked: What similarities and differences in the directors' leadership behaviors were reported between a private Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, which accepts federal/state funding, and a private Prekindergarten Education Program, that does not accept federal/state funding? By comparing the interview data and online survey data of both VPK leaders and non-VPK leaders, it was determined that there were more similarities in their leadership behaviors than differences. Through the interview process only two differences were noted. One was in regard to the directors with leadership style, and the other addressed rewards and incentives for staff. These were two areas where differences were

clearly noted during data analysis between the directors with VPK programs and the director without a VPK program.

This qualitative case study was necessary in order to research and determine which leadership behaviors were found within high-quality private early childhood education programs. This study provided insight into the leadership phenomenon for those who wish to improve their leadership skills and for teacher educators who teach pre-service teachers and directors in early childhood education programs. All members in society have a stake in the issue of high-quality early childhood education because it lays the foundation for a child's future academic success. Either directly or indirectly, stake holders make decisions that impact a child's ability to attend high-quality early childhood centers.

The data supported the notion that leaders of high-quality early childhood programs exhibit more behaviors associated with transformational leadership and some behaviors associated with transactional leadership. Past research has shown that the quality of care in the early years can be linked to the quality of leadership within the early childhood center. Therefore, it is recommended that all stakeholders within early childhood education realize the importance leadership has on the quality of the early childhood program.

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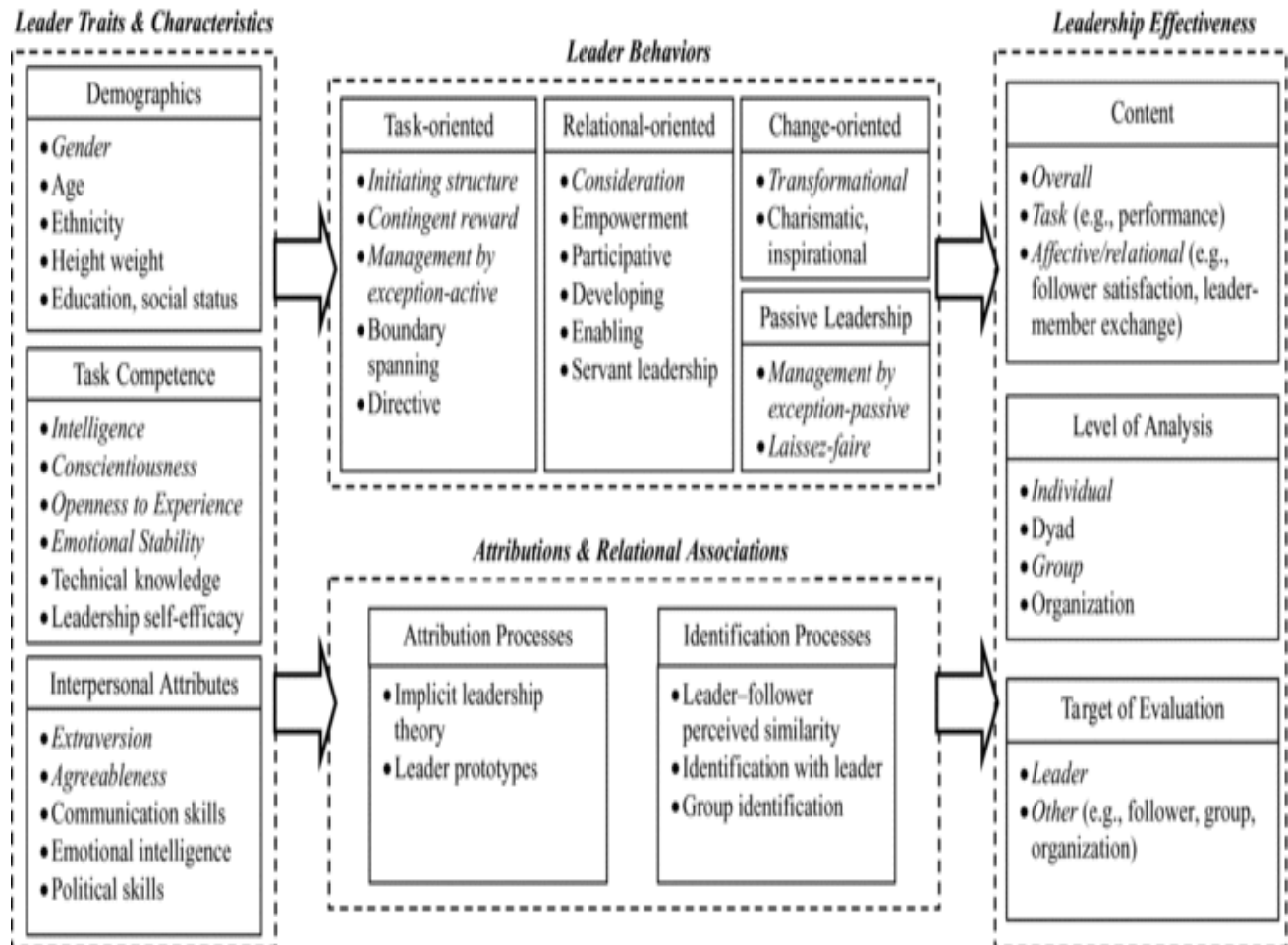
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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviors, and Effectiveness

Leader Traits & Characteristics

Leader Behaviors

Leadership Effectiveness

Demographics
- *Gender*
- *Age*
- Ethnicity
- Height weight
- Education, social status

Task Competence
- *Intelligence*
- *Conscientiousness*
- *Openness to Experience*
- *Emotional Stability*
- Technical knowledge
- Leadership self-efficacy

Interpersonal Attributes
- *Extraversion*
- *Agreeableness*
- Communication skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Political skills

Task-oriented
- *Initiating structure*
- *Contingent reward*
- *Management by exception-active*
- Boundary spanning
- Directive

Relational-oriented
- *Consideration*
- Empowerment
- Participative
- Developing
- Enabling
- Servant leadership

Change-oriented
- *Transformational*
- Charismatic, inspirational

Passive Leadership
- *Management by exception-passive*
- *Laissez-faire*

Attributions & Relational Associations

Attribution Processes
- Implicit leadership theory
- Leader prototypes

Identification Processes
- Leader–follower perceived similarity
- Identification with leader
- Group identification

Content
- *Overall*
- *Task* (e.g., performance)
- *Affective/relational* (e.g., follower satisfaction, leader-member exchange)

Level of Analysis
- *Individual*
- Dyad
- *Group*
- Organization

Target of Evaluation
- *Leader*
- *Other* (e.g., follower, group, organization)

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Appendix B. Interview Questions

1. Name:_____

2. Name of Early Childhood Center: _____

3. Assistant director (if applicable):_____

4. Years of experience as a preschool director: _____

5. Year at current center:_____

6. VPK participant: _____

7. What is the education level of early childhood lead teachers?

8. What is the average class size and student-to-teacher ratio?

9. Early childhood education leaders must maintain a quality program in order to help
   close the achievement gap. How do you define a high-quality center?

10. Rapid changes in education have heightened the role of early childhood leaders and
    led to unprecedented challenges (Stamopoulos, 2012). As an early childhood center
    leader what challenges do you face?

11. A leader at an early childhood center has many duties to perform. As a program
    leader, how did you fulfill the following duties?

    - How do you conduct staff evaluations?

    - Is staff rewarded for complying with the rules and regulations and meeting or
      exceeded expectations? If so how, or it not why?

    - Who makes decisions in regard to recruiting and training personnel?

    - Who is in charge of making daily decisions that affect the center?

    - Who is in charge of managing the center budget?

    - How do you build relationships with the staff, students, and families?

- How do you find time to actively participate in the center and not get "stuck" in the office?

- How do you enable other staff members to pursue their goals?

12. What words describe your leadership style?

13. How do you handle conflict when it arises at the center?