

**Examining Partnerships between K-12 District Schools and College of Education  
Leadership Preparation Programs**

by

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## Abstract

In response to ongoing criticisms of the educational leadership preparation programs, the state of Alabama supported a redesign of educational leadership preparation programs which required a partnership between K-12 district schools and universities to better prepare instructional leaders. With the increasing responsibilities and high stakes assessment for school accountability, instructional leaders needed to be prepared on day one of their appointment to effectively lead schools. This study sought to understand the partnerships redesign between K-12 district schools and an Alabama College of Education preparation program. Three guiding questions were investigated: 1) What were the perceived facilitating factors; 2) What were the perceived hindrances; and, 3) What were the outcomes of the partnership? The major perceived facilitating factors and hindrances revealed in this study were consistent to those from existing research on the topic, however; an additional outcome was an 18 week residency where candidates were able to experience leadership at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Subsequently, changes with many of the facilitating factors resulted in the loss of the 18 week residency and a return to a shortened internship. Using a typology developed by researchers Barnett et al, (2010), this study analyzed the benefits, barriers and outcomes of the partnership.

Keywords: partnerships, instructional leadership; redesign; K-12 district schools; university partnerships; professional development schools; typology promoting innovation.

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## Chapter I: Background

Accountability that leads to student achievement has been the focus of educational reform at both the national and state levels for over fifty years (Dewey, 1956; Hess & Kelly, 2005). In the 1950's when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, Americans were faced with a powerful conclusion that our country lagged behind others in both science and technology (McCluskey, 2004). This awareness sparked efforts to improve the education of our children and to develop a more competitive global presence educationally (McCluskey, 2004).

From 1983 and continuing across several decades, education reform underwent scrutiny from political and social arenas. Emphasis was always on global competition in science and math (Rutherford, 1997; Bybee, 1997; Deboer, 2000). In the 1980's during President Reagan's administration, the public's perception was that the U.S. lacked a competitive educational system. President Reagan launched an investigation about problems within the U. S. educational system, which resulted in the formation of the Commission for Educational Excellence. The Commission for Educational Excellence published a report entitled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform* (1983). This report was a passionate plea for immediate change in how children should be educated in the U.S. *A Nation at Risk* would be the first of what would later become several reform efforts that aimed to improve student achievement across the curricula and extend the reform reach to those who provide education to children (US Department of Education, 1983).

The charge from *A Nation at Risk* was clear: assess the quality of teaching and learning, compare American schools and colleges with other advanced nations, study relationships between college admissions requirements and student achievement in high school, identify educational programs which resulted in student success, assess the degree to which major social

and educational changes in the last quarter century have affected student achievement, and define problems which must be faced and overcome in order to be successful in pursuing the course of excellence in education (US Department of Education, 2003). *A Nation at Risk* (1983) also emphasized higher graduation requirements, standardized curriculum, increased teacher and student testing, and higher certification requirements (Goodlad,1990; Sizer 1992).

*A Nation at Risk* (1983) was a clarion call for improvement in education; however, it was not without flaws. Major concerns of this reform effort included the lack of actual data to support the claims and the political tactics used to push this educational reform. After relentless criticisms, another call was made for additional educational reform efforts. It was named No Child Left Behind.

On January 8, 2002, President Bush signed into law the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and renamed it the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), 2001. NCLB gained bipartisan support and public favor with its demand for an increase in the quality of education in American's public schools as determined by yearly assessments of student progress (Collins et al., 2005; Lynch, 2012; Thomas, 2005). This law was thought to be the landmark that would hold schools accountable, empower parents, and help to close achievement gap between whites and minorities in American schools. However, like the other laws before it, there were many who criticized it. Of those criticisms was the lack of funding provided to support the many demands and initiatives included in NCLB. This national legislation placed responsibility on states without providing schools with needed federal resources (Pinder, 2008; Berry & Herrington, 2011). There were major concerns that states expressed: 1) the need to reconfigure timetables and consequences; 2) the availability of time as a variable needing differentiation; 3) the need for greater consistency and alignment with state-

led accountability measures, 4) requirements for use of Socio-Economic Status remedies and choice under NCLB; 5) greater accountability and transparency; 6) greater differentiation in categorization and intervention; and, 7) crafting and enforcing interventions (Berry & Herrington, 2011).

In addition to federal regulations and legislation, states joined efforts to improve the quality of education. Under the NCLB legislation, State Departments of Education were rated and assigned a grade based on the performance of certain groups of students. Later this would also mean that a school might be identified as failing in the event that a certain percentage of students did not graduate and/or perform at a certain level on high stakes tests. In 2009, President Obama officially assumed office and his administration released his report, *A Blueprint for Reform* (Berry & Herrington, 2011). The report acknowledged flaws of the ESEA “and promised to reward success instead of labeling failure” (Berry & Herrington, 2011, p.2). Like presidential administrations before, the Obama administration recognized the importance of exemplary leadership practices in our nation’s schools.

In May 2003, The Broad Foundation with The Fordham Institute published *A Manifesto: Better Leaders for America’s Schools*, and made the argument that school success was related to school leadership and that the way school leaders are prepared and the way they operate in schools must change. Authors Finn and Meyer (2003) stressed that rather than performing the tasks of management of students, parents, and teachers, educational leaders have to become “CEO’s of small public businesses whose chief product is learning” (Better Leaders, p. 17). The authors of this document were not alone in their criticisms. College of Education programs which were designed to prepare educational leaders were under scrutiny and criticized for not producing quality leaders who could positively affect student learning (Levine, 2005). Research

by Leithwood and Mascall (2008) emphasized the importance of school leadership and stated that it had an effect on student achievement. Policy makers and educational leadership programs agreed that there was a need to change how leaders were prepared (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen 2007; Kochan, 2010; Reames, 2010). In recent years, as this conversation has moved forward, school leadership studies have linked school leadership to student learning, while acknowledging that the leadership influence is mainly indirect in nature, as leaders influence teachers (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, Wahlstrom, Mascall, Gordon, Thomas, & Jantzi, 2012).

The idea of changing the way leaders are prepared was being discussed by those within the professoriate a decade earlier. In 1982, President Reagan's appointee as Secretary of Education, Terrell H. Bell, created the National Blue Ribbon Program in response to *A Nation at Risk*. This program was an award that brought public attention to exemplary schools. During the same period, when looking at the issue of improving teachers' quality and improving schools, the Holmes Group (1990) suggested that partnerships may be the effective link to change in preparing teachers and improving schools. Professional Development Schools (PDS) were introduced as collaborative relationships between two organizations (1986). Breault and Breault (2001) defined a PDS partnership as a "collaborative relationship between a university and a school and/or district designed to simultaneously renew schools and teacher education programs" (p. 439). Most PDS partnerships supported the following broad aims:

- Preparation of pre-service teachers in deliberate field based experiences
- Professional development of in-service teachers within partnering schools
- Teacher education reform based upon collaboration with K-12 practitioners



- Improved student achievement based upon inquiry-based collaboration in schools (Holmes Group 1990)

An example of a popular partnership is “Adopt-a-School” that dates to the 1980s—an era of reform where partnerships seemed to flourish. Adopt-a-School was a concept of businesses, organizations and volunteers who provided financial support for specific groups of students or an entire school. This partnership was thought to advance interest and support that would link students’ school experiences to the real-world experiences in hopes of providing a benefit to both the business and/or organization as well as for the school and its students (Ozman, 1982).

School partnerships extended beyond partnerships with businesses to include university partnerships (Epstein and Sanders, 2009). These partnerships were collaborative relationships, unlike the business-education partnerships. These partnership entities shared human resources, technology, and expertise. Professional Development Schools (PDS) emerged through this design to provide clinical, practical expertise to both the pre-service teacher and the practicing professional.

Educators were interested in understanding factors that were related to the implementation of successful collaborative relationships and how to sustain them over time. Barnett, Hall, Berg, and Camarena (2010) used information from what they found to be “major partnership initiatives” (p. 22) about the partnerships that set trends in the “partnership movement” (p. 22). Barnett et al. (2010) noted that some partnerships featured interagency delivery of services. This type of partnership involves other agencies such as health services, social services, juvenile probation officers, etc., that link with schools to meet the needs of students. Schools serve as a “hub” where other agencies “link” to provide the needed services (Barnett et al., 2010, p. 23).

## **Alabama Reform of School Leadership Preparation**

In 2004, as part of the national movement to change the way educational leaders are trained, Governor Bob Riley of Alabama and State Superintendent of Schools, Joseph B. Morton, convened the Governor's Congress on School Leadership. The Governors' Congress on School Leadership (GCOSL) formed five task forces, each composed of twenty to twenty-two members who represented various stakeholder groups, including having a school district superintendent as a co-chair and one acting school principal with each task force. The task forces were as follows:

Task Force One: Standards for Preparing and Developing Principals and Instructional Leaders

Task Force Two: Selection and Preparation of School Leaders

Task Force Three: Certification Standards of School Leaders

Task Force Four: Professional Development

Task Force Five: Working Conditions and Incentives (High Schools that Work, p.1).

The priority of Task Force One was to first address the need for effective, high yielding standards for instructional leaders. Cox (2007) identified three goals: 1) to understand what school leaders should know and be able to do; 2) collect and analyze current research-based best practices on national, state and local standards; and 3) draft standards for approval by the State Board of Education (p. 20). In 2005, the Governor's Congress recommended and the Alabama legislature approved the creation of new instructional leadership standards and policies. In 2005-2006, the Governor's Congress on School Leadership Task Force One created guidelines and expectations for the redesign of the educational/administrative and leadership programs to become Instructional Leadership Programs. A time-line that outlined expectations was shared with each college and university. This timeline outlined the process of the redesign.

This change required the creation of partnerships between K-12 District Schools and university Instructional Leadership preparation programs. Together K-12/LEA's and universities were charged with redesigning the leadership programs to be aligned with the new standards, policies and best practices. The universities were mandated to change the names of their Educational Administration programs to Instructional Leadership programs. As summarized, "Before we can redesign schools, we must redesign the programs that prepare school leaders. We cannot have one without the other" Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), 2001, p.7). Funds were allocated to initiate four pilot programs in the Alabama university system. These four would serve as models for the remaining educational leadership programs in Alabama. Once the new standards were approved, universities in Alabama were notified and offered opportunities to apply to pilot the redesigned structure.

Thirteen universities applied to be pilot universities, but only four universities were selected. Each of the lead/pilot universities partnered with K-12/LEA's within their region to implement the redesign.

Alabama's redesign of College of Education leadership programs required the four pilot schools to be prepared to launch their redesign programs by 2007 and share their findings with the other universities during this initial year. The other universities were expected to follow suit and be ready to implement their programs by fall, 2009. In 2008-2009, all programs were required to submit their plans for redesigning their programs for review to the State Department of Education. Each program was visited by a team composed of State Department personnel, SREB, other leadership experts and had to be approved before the program could be initiated. All programs received approval and have been operating since that time. A second visit to monitor progress and program fidelity was conducted in 2012.

## **Statement of Problem**

Young et al., (2002) and Restine (1997) agree that K-12 and university partnerships are essential to improving university preparation of leaders and to enhancing student improvement. Yet, there is a small body of research that examines the development and implementation of these partnerships and their outcomes in educational leadership programs (Breault & Breault, 2010; Young, 2005). Tschannen-Moran and DiPaola (2003) concurred, stating that empirical inquiry regarding preparation programs has been limited. The College of Education Educational Leadership program redesign in Alabama's pilot programs was very extensive and was based on research that indicated certain elements must be in place for these programs to succeed. The element of school/university partnerships was considered as one of the critical points in the redesign process. The partnerships that were created between the university Educational Leadership programs and local school districts in Alabama have now been in existence for ten years. However, the processes of creating and sustaining these partnerships has never been systematically studied. It is imperative that Educational Leadership program personnel in Alabama universities and administrators at the Alabama State Department of Education understand what the benefits, barriers, and outcomes of these partnerships have been.

## **Purpose of the Study**

After ten years of the implementation of the Educational Leadership redesigned programs in the state of Alabama, little research has been conducted to evaluate the partnership phenomena of universities and K-12 LEA partner districts. Breault and Breault (2010) made the argument that it is logical to extract information on leadership preparation from previous studies on PDS teacher preparation—which is a partnership-based model—to inform the preparation of school leaders. The purpose of this study was to conduct a case study of partnerships between one

Alabama University's Educational Leadership program and its K12 district school partners to determine the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of those partnerships.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher aimed to answer the following central research question: What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership between one Alabama university leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners?

Research sub-questions included the following:

- What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?
- What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?
- What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

### **Conceptual Framework**

A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation (Barnett, 1999) was used as the conceptual framework for this research. The research conducted by Barnett et al (1998) sought to contextualize a background for partnerships by first identifying the various types of partnerships and then examining the underpinning beliefs and behaviors of each type of partnerships. This conceptual framework takes into account the vulnerability of partnerships and the ongoing process of relationship development. Many factors which include, complexity, length, structure, purpose, resources, and impact may cause change for partnerships at different times, levels, and to varying degrees.

Partnership development may be categorized by three aspects: 1) Level of involvement; 2) Formation of structure; and 3) Level of impact (Human Resources, 1992). These categories are designed to help distinguish among the various types of partnerships that the typology conveys (Barnett et al., 2010). Using this typology, researchers may identify and distinguish four specific partnership models that create a continuum of development, to include the 1) Vendor model; 2) Collaborative model; 3) Symbiotic model; and 4) Spin-off model. Each of these models increase in complexity respectively and are easily identifiable on the continuum (from cooperative to coordinate to collaborative). The characteristics of each of these levels of partnership are fully described in Chapter Two.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher made the following assumptions in regard to this study:

1. The study participants at each site would have direct experiences with formal and/or informal partnerships and therefore would be the best informants of the central concept or partnerships.
2. An ethical and trustworthy rapport between the researcher and study participants would produce accurate findings in regards to the partnership process.
3. Qualitative methods were the best methods to use to answer the questions that guide this research.
4. Respondents would answer the interview questions honestly.

### **Delimitations**

1. The study was delimited to one university and its school partner participants who had direct experience in partnerships.

2. This study focused on the perceptions and experiences of the faculty at one university and the K-12 district schools' faculty and leaders in one specific geographic area of South Alabama. Faculty and leaders included both active and retired personnel. In addition, other participants included Alabama State Department of Education administrators both active and retired, and students who either were educated at the university or assigned the role of a mentor principal for the university intern students. Experiences and perceptions of educators not directly participating in this specific partnership are beyond the scope of this study.

### **Limitations**

1. Data collection was limited to interviews and documents from participants at only one university and two of its K-12 partner schools, both purposefully selected sites.
2. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the concept of partnerships between one Alabama university and two of its K-12 district school partners, and therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all university/ school district partnerships.

### **Definitions of Terms**

1. Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) – the agency of state government which is responsible for all matters pertaining to education at all levels of schooling in Alabama. It is located in the state capital -Montgomery, Al.
2. Alabama Instructional Leadership Re-design – Begun in 2005, this reform was the result of the efforts of the local government and educational experts collaborating under the Governor's Congress on Schools to restructure how school leaders would be educated

state-wide. Without meeting the requirements of the new state mandates, educational leadership programs could not continue to educate future school leaders.

3. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) -an evaluation system based on student proficiency on standardized assessment performance (Collins et al., 2005).
4. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) –the act which established the federal government’s aid to schools for disadvantaged children. This legislation was passed during President Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” It emphasized equal access to education for all and required high standards and accountability for public schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).
5. Holmes Group (1980) - a consortium of education school deans and major universities who were concerned about accreditation standards and the low status of education programs at their institutions (Bradley, 1996).
6. Instructional Leadership -“encourages a focus on improving classroom practices of teachers as the directors for the school” (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlston, 2004, p.8).
7. Internships/Residencies - the format for providing students in Instructional Leadership preparation programs opportunity to get practical, field-based experiences in efforts to provide a critical link of leadership theory to practice.
8. LEAs - local educational agencies, also known as local school districts.
9. Leadership preparation programs -state certified programs which are designed to prepare future school leaders.
10. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 - a mandate signed into law by President Bush. It was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This



legislation expanded the federal role in education in efforts to improve the education of disadvantaged students by measuring schools progress and sanctioning non-performing schools. A measurement was used to scale student performance, teacher quality, and school performance—with an emphasis on reading initiatives. (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

11. Professional Development School- the collaboration of a university-based, teacher education program and one or more K-12 partner schools (Harris & Van Tasell, 2005).
12. Typology of Partnerships - a conceptual framework used to identify the level of partnership development on a continuum. The different levels include the following: 1) The level of involvement; 2) Formation and structure, and, 3) Level of Impact (Barnett et al., 2010).

## **Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

“When professors, teachers-interns, and teachers come together in professional development schools to improve practice, everybody learns” (McBee & Moss, 2002, p.61). The purpose of this chapter is to provide readers with a review of existing literature on partnerships between K-12 district schools and universities educational leadership preparation programs. In order to understand the phenomena of partnerships between K-12 district schools and college of education leadership preparation programs, it is important to explore the background of educational leadership reform which led to K-12 and university partnerships as well as to understand the various components needed to develop and sustain a partnership. For this study, partnerships were researched using a contextual framework, A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation (Barnett, 1999).

### **Historical Background**

Marzano (2003) reported that cynicism and the challenge of the quality of American education and how it impacted student learning was the result of court cases and legislation during the Sputnik Era. In addition to the Sputnik educational challenge, Americans were beginning to challenge how diverse groups would be educated. The Civil Rights Movement and landmark Supreme Court cases such as *Brown v Topeka* determined “separate but equal” was not equal (Wiles, 2005). This case became the impetus for other civil right legislation (Rippa, 1984). Three years later in 1957, when Soviet Union launched Sputnik, Americans were faced with a powerful conclusion that our country lagged behind others in both science and technology (McCluskey, 2004). The major concern with regards to school improvement shared by most Americans was that American students did not have the academic rigor in subject matter to think critically and apply information as some less developed countries. More governmental funding

was introduced to schools which led to governmental oversight to ensure educational quality. The Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted in 1965 which placed oversight and power of American education in federal government hands (McCluskey, 2004). The purpose of the ESEA was to supplement the efforts of the state educational systems and address Civil rights issues—which prevailed at the time. Education was dubbed as a social and civil right for everyone (Rippa, 1984).

### **Education Reform Efforts**

Decades of criticism have marked our nation’s education reform efforts. Inquiry and reports on the success of our schools as evidenced by test scores in comparison to other countries have led to accountability dialogue that evolved from teacher preparation programs to school leaders’ preparation and the college of education programs that prepare them (SREB, 2010). *Leaders in America’s Schools*, a report produced by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) identified several problems, including:

1. The lack of definition of good educational leadership;
2. An absence of collaboration between school districts and colleges and universities
3. The low number of minorities and females in the field;
4. A lack of systematic professional development;
5. The poor quality of candidates for preparation programs;
6. The irrelevance of preparation programs; programs devoid of sequence, modern content in clinical experiences;
7. The need for licensure systems that promote excellence, and

8. An absence of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders (Hale and Moorman, 2003, pg.2; The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 1987, pp. 20-21).

In addition, The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute report provided three specific suggestions: 1. A partnership between K12 and universities for preparation of school leaders, 2. Universities unable to support the report should discontinue preparing school leaders, and 3. State policy makers should begin licensure procedures that are defining claims about what equips an individual to effectively lead a school (Hale and Moorman, 2003, pg. 2; The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 1987, pp. 20-21.) Whereas the study did not produce all of the results it aimed, it did, however, foster the development of a set of standards for school leaders by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC).

In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium was adopted by full consortium on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Each of the six standards shared common language that introduces each standard as follows “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:” Standard one, facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision that is shared and supported by the school community; standard two, advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; standard three, ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; standard four, collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; standard five, acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner; and, standard six, understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, and legal

and cultural context. Each standard contained explicit knowledge, disposition and performance expectations that clearly defined what leaders should know and be able to do (Council of Chief of State School Officers, 1996; Hale and Moorman, 2003). At least forty-five states have since adopted these standards and use them to guide policy and practice related to principal preparation (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Although high standards and test scores are important, they alone do not guarantee student success (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). While the word partnership is not explicitly mentioned, it is; however, alluded to as the vehicle throughout which standards would be constructed, implemented and evaluated.

Brooks, Havard, Tatum and Patrick (2010) explained that the “reality gap” (p.420) is about how to provide the type of preparation that administrators would face in the field of practice. These authors questioned if there is a best practice that works “in terms of both practice and preparation” (p. 420). The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute Report encouraged partnerships between K12 district schools and university education preparation programs because there were a promising avenue for change.

### **Conceptual Framework**

A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation (Barnett, 1999) was used as a conceptual framework for this research. Partnerships have been widely accepted by many educators as positive solutions for many educational reform initiatives. Partnership has been well regarded that the word spoken concerning education garners an expectation of solution, in addition, many educators even extend thoughts of partnership to being a mandate in federal statues such as the Higher Education Act (1998) and the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Barnett et al (1998, 2010) explained that mutual benefits, shared resources, and shared expected outcomes are among the descriptors of a successful partnership. Partners are mutually benefited in ways that would not be possible without the partnership. The conceptual framework presented by Barnett et al presents a typology of different kinds of partnerships. Often the term partnership and collaboration are used synonymously by researchers (Stoloff, 1989; Barnett et al., 2010) contend that collaboration is a type partnership. This conceptual framework takes into account the vulnerability partnerships have to ongoing evolving and the ongoing process of relationship development. Many factors which include, but not limited to, complexity, length, structure, purpose, resources, and impact may cause change for partnerships at different times, levels, and/or degrees.

Partnerships development may be categorized by three aspects, which may include the following: 1. The level of involvement, 2. Formation of structure, and 3. Level of impact (Human Resources, 1992). These categories are designed to help distinguish among the various types of partnerships that the typology conveys, Barnett et al (2010). The typologies created are designed to represent the possible life cycle of partnerships with representation of cooperative, coordinate, and collaborative inter-organizational efforts. The authors note the difference between each level, describing cooperation as simple and independent; coordinate is described as the “middle ground,” while collaborative is defined as complex and interdependent, Barnett et al 2010.

Barnett et al 2010, constructed a visual (figure 1) to represent the types of partnerships that represent the basic of their conceptual framework. It captures the dynamics of partnerships between a school and an external organization. Because of the authors’ consideration to the ever changing nature of partnerships, this framework supports a variety of partnerships indicating

various levels of involvement, formation of structure, and level of impact. It shows a range from simple to complex relationships.

Barnett et al (2010) identified and distinguished among four specific partnership models to include the 1. Vendor model, 2. Collaborative model, 3. Symbiotic model, and 4. Spin-off model. Each of these models increase in complexity respectively and are easily identifiable on the continuum (from cooperative to coordinate to collaborative). The first model is the vendor model. As its order suggests, it is the least complex model. This model represents a partnership that may be very narrow and short in nature. To differentiate this model from the others is to understand that this model is similar to a contract to client agreement. The terms are usually given up front for a service or benefit in exchange for another. This relationship may develop to the next level, but is often quickly terminated once the benefits are gained. On the continuum, this model is simple and independent and may move from cooperative to coordinate levels. Each organization is very independent of the other and only connects to exchange a service.

The second model is the collaborative model. It is described as more complex than the vendor model. It presents more difficulty to form and sustain—which is different than the vendor model. The collaborative model is more than a short term agreement; it requires more time to develop and requires more involvement from partners. On the continuum, this model may evolve from high coordinate to the collaboration end of the pendulum. If designed at best, this model may prove most beneficial for mutual benefits. Desired goals are often not as clear as in the vendor model because this relationship is often more “ambitious” in nature and it makes the benefits less evident in short terms.

Third is the symbiotic model. This model is an even more complex partnership model that not only enjoys mutual benefit, but is extended to “compounding benefits through joint

efforts,” (Barnett et al, 2010, p. 26). On the continuum, this model is high on the collaborative end. There is a lot of interdependency. Organizations understand that the level of impact is mutual. The relationship evolves so that each organization is intertwined and share successes or failures. The joint ventures are uniquely positioned that accomplishments of either cannot be attained without the participation of the other.

Fourth is the spin-off model. As the name suggests, this partnership evolves into a completely different organization and no longer exists as it had begun. The level of complexity is highest. The two or more organizations merged to such a degree that they morphed into a new organization that is different than its original partnership identity where two or more organizations clearly existed. On the continuum, this is the absolute highest level of involvement. A new life cycle may replace the former existence of the partnership and start a completely new identity depending on the nature and purpose of the partnership.

Each of the models represents different ways partnerships may evolve when promoting innovation between a school and an external entity. The continuum helps to identify to which level of involvement, formation of structure, and impact the different partnerships may have. Barnett et al explains that the purpose of knowing this is to help potential partnerships understand prior to developing a partnership what each type looks like and requires to be successful.

In addition to different types, there exists life spans of partnerships which implies the real possibility of termination of partnerships. Hord (1985) insists that many people entering partnerships do not consider the possibility of ending a partnership—which may be as natural as starting a partnership.



According to Barnett et al (2010) there are six phases to a life cycle of partnerships that organizations should also consider. These phases include:

1. Steps needed to start a partnership (planning)
2. Developing a common language and common understanding
3. Identifying resources and commitment to the partnership
4. Clear expectations for the partnership
5. Directions, roles, and protocols for the partnership
6. Celebrations points—measures of success

### **K-12 University Partnerships as Part of Reform**

Research is replete of school-business partnerships. The extensive history of school-business partnerships list includes, but is not limited to cooperative programs. Although popular in research to restructure schools, particularly schools that had large numbers of at-risk students, these partnerships were thought to assist in increasing student achievement (Rigden, 1991). The existence of K-12-university partnerships is dated beyond twenty years; however, school-business partnerships served a different purpose and were a different type of partnership. “Traditionally, public school and university relationships were structured according to the needs of the university; the public school served as site for student-teacher placements or university course led field studies”(Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007, 24). However, the recommendation for partnership between K12 district schools and college of education preparation programs required a collaborative approach whereas the Local Education Agency (LEA) from district schools would be involved with the university during the development, implementation and assessment of the redesign process. Research about K12 district schools and college of education preparation program is descriptive with little empirical data to support all of

the claims advocates for K12-university partnerships often make (Amrien-Beardsley & Barnett, 2012). The descriptive data collected, analyzed, and reported has a focus on one partnership and offers descriptions about the functionality of that particular partnership (Breault & Breault, 2010; McLaughlin & Black-Hawkins, 2007). Nonetheless, partnerships between K12 and universities continue to grow in popularity. Supporters of these partnerships insist that such relationships can “transform education,” (Amreiu-Beardsley & Barnett, 2012, pg. 103). Proof of partnerships having this huge effect on student and teacher learning, quality of teaching and leadership among other things is still at question (Breault & Breault, 2010; Butcher et al., 2011; McLaughlin & Black-Hawkins, 2007).

Partnership development has been a goal supported by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2001). Universities and K-12 LEAs have been described as “strategic alliance for partnerships.” In PDS schools, four distinct goals related to partnership development with universities were addressed:

- A. United front for the development of best practices between research and practice to close the “gap” that exists between theory and application
- B. Help strengthen the pool of teachers by providing ongoing support for pre-service, in-service and potential candidates into the teacher profession rather an occupation
- C. Offering ongoing professional development for those practicing in the field
- D. Ongoing research about the practice (Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007).

According to Hale and Moorman (2003) “...principal preparation programs are too theoretical and totally unrelated to the daily demands on contemporary principals” (p.) contending that because of the lack of relevance in the college of education for leadership preparation, principals are not able to lead a 21<sup>st</sup> century school effectively. Brooks, Havard,

Tatum, and Patrick (2010) regarded this disconnection as a crisis and questioned how this might be a “reality gap between preparation programs and problems of practice” (p. 420). Many universities and colleges that prepare school leaders have also noted leadership preparation as being out of touch with contemporary issues in a data driven world (SREB, 2001).

Although many factors including researchers and politicians may have a role in education reform, it is without doubt that continuous efforts have evolved into what is now considered a shift in leadership preparation that demands a partnership between the K-12 school districts and universities. “Research and practice confirm that there is slim chance of creating and sustaining high-quality learning environments without a skilled and committed leader to help shape teaching and learning” (Abdi and Juniu, 2014, p. 2728).

One of the areas where partnerships in education has gained momentum was the PDS school movement (Holmes 1986, 1990). The Holmes Group, a consortium of 96 research universities with professional educational programs responded to three disturbing concerns from a Nation at Risk climate:

1. Several universities were collapsing education programs to support other schools
2. Of these universities, few to none held the belief that school of education should be a part of a prestigious university, rather, a college of lesser rank
3. No one outside of the college of education was confident that the college of education had lived up to its promises (The Wallace Foundation, 2009, p.1).

As a response to these perceptions, the Holmes Group sought to remedy the perceptions before they were irreversible. The Holmes Group wanted to create a genuine profession of education.

Their strategy was simple:

1. Strengthen the connection between the education school to the rest of the university, particularly colleges of arts and sciences,
2. Strengthen the links with allies and partners in the profession itself—teachers, specialists, administrators, et al., and their representatives.

The aims of the group were: change the way teachers are educated, help construct a true profession of teaching, cooperate with school people in inquiry that transforms the schools, and restructure colleges of education to achieve these goals (Holmes, p.1).

In 1986, The Carnegie Forum on Education and the economy released *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The report of the Task Force on teaching as a profession found the need for fundamental restructuring in teacher education, the need to raise standards for teachers entering the profession, and strengthen the education preparatory program.

In 1996, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 1996) reported that many schools were still practicing antiquated methods of teaching even after many reports and an urgent public cry for change in 1983, *A Nation at Risk*. PDS was thought to be the “link” to strengthen school reform (Burton & Greher, 2007, p. 14). The development of K12-university partnerships in which in-service and pre-service teachers may participate in partnership was one way to deepen the contextual expertise and content knowledge of teachers (Burton, 2005; Holmes Group, 1980). Because of the serious state of the teaching profession, NCTAF Commission suggested that professional development was to be deeply integrated in school routine. Their goal was to put a quality teacher in every classroom by 2006 (NCTAF).

In the wake of education reform, during the NCLB era, The Holmes Group (1990) identified and described Professional Development Schools (PDS) as a partnership between university and K-12—collaborative in nature with shared goals. Holmes Group (1990)

recognized a need for all parties to link in thought, practice, and approaches to education for mutual benefit and improved student learning (Burton & Greher, 2007). A PDS is based on a collaborative medical model. It may have a variety of names but ultimately based on the ideal that the newly formed relationship will attain a goal that neither could alone (Partnerships and collaborations, 2011, p. 34). It uses resources, shared visions, time, and collaborative relationships between two different organizations or systems to form a unique relationship that has new but shared goals and expected outcomes for the relationship itself where both the university and K12 school personnel are key stakeholders. Partnerships is also defined as “an educational collaboration that uses resources, power, authority, interests, and people from separate organizational entity for the purpose of achieving common goals” (Rice, 2002, p. 58). This relationship is expected to yield a mutual benefit (Rice 2002; Abdal-Haqq 1989; Clark 1999). This is part of what some consider a “seamless educational system” (Palmer, 2002, p. 5). This is not a random project or experiment, rather, it is should be embraced as a way of life that is equitable, intentional and purposeful (Goodlad, 1991a).

Educational reform has resulted in a series of reports and publications that concluded that American Education was failing. Much of this concern not only challenged student performance, but also teacher performance. Research states that much of learning occurs in the classroom in a social context. The way we organize and operate the way we do school has a profound effect on student achievement; therefore, “...schools are only as good as the quality of their faculty (teachers and administrators)... (Bryk, 2010, p.29). “When professors, teachers-interns, and teachers come together in professional develop schools to improve practice, everybody learns” (McBee & Moss, 2002, p. 61). During contemporary debates about education reform, a lot of emphasis has been placed on teacher selection, qualification status, and

recruitment efforts have undergone much scrutiny. “We will not have a large pool of quality principals until we have a large pool of quality teachers because quality teachers form the ranks of quality principal pipeline” (Fullan, 2002, p. 20). It seemed natural to develop partnerships between school and university. In the past, the relationship between university and school has been one of pre-service for teachers. Any additional interaction was limited to an in-service or perhaps sporadic professional development; however, there was not a true collaborative relationship between the two entities. There was a gap between the practitioners, the practice, and pedagogy. This gap was mainly due to the non-alignment between the two organizations. The need for “parity” (p. 308) was clear. Parity in both key decisions about what the partnership should look like, agreed upon outcomes, and who should do what. (Hough, 1975).

As schools change, school leaders and the programs that prepare school leaders must also evolve to meet, if not stir, change at the school level (Ishler, 1995). The Holmes Group (1990) is the organization that provided structural lens to ensure changes with the school were being supported by change in school leadership and school leadership program. The Holmes Group comprised of a consortium of several researchers and practitioners in education. The goal of this team of leaders was to combat the idea of a failing school system through reform movement for teachers and the teacher profession (Titler, 1995). Over the course of several years, The Holmes Group produced three reports, 1986, 1990, and 1995 respectively. The first of the three reports were based on the belief that school reform rested on the shoulders of the teachers’ ability and competencies and practices. This was the major theme for *Tomorrow’s Teachers*, their first publication. In 1990. The Holmes Group published another document entitled, *Tomorrow’s Schools: Principles for the Design of Professional Development Schools*. The Holmes Group concluded that in order to truly accomplish a “Tomorrow School,” there must be a transition to

professional development schools. This transition would serve to fill the gap between practice and research. A professional development school as an ongoing learning community---pre-service, in-service, professionals, practitioners, and researchers alike---for the betterment of the teaching profession and teacher practices. Where ultimately kids are benefited by best practices through professional development. In 1995, The Holmes Group published *Tomorrow's Schools of Education*. This publication spelled out inconsistencies of preparatory programs that prepared school leaders. This publication advocated institution of higher learning to increase and improve their school leadership programs to provide equity for quality. The report acknowledged the difficulty of changing the quality of teaching without changing the quality of the program that prepare the teachers. Several standards were addressed, to include:

- 1) A new curriculum to allow for relevant experiences,
- 2) Develop new faculty,
- 3) Recruit a new student body,
- 4) Create a new location for much of their work, and
- 5) Build a new set of connections (Ishler, 1995).

Shortly thereafter, the Holmes Group concluded that in order to achieve more, it would require a widened spectrum of participants. Education reform must consist of a newly developed entity comprised of a network between K-12-university partnerships that forms its own existence. Neither institution can be independent of the other (Bradley, 1996).

In order to accomplish this task, the availability of varied resources was of great consideration. People, time, & money are the basic resources that many school leaders have to work with. Of the three, people are the most valued. School leaders must have skills to change practices and beliefs of teachers (City, 2013).

The idea of clinical schools have roots as far as John Dewey's laboratory schools in the 1970's. After twenty years, these schools closed because of their expense and limited impact to the general population (Stallings & Kowalski, 1990). A similar idea emerged in 1980 called Schools of Pedagogy. B.O. Smith and colleagues published in *A Design for a School of Pedagogy* that teachers should spend two years beyond receiving their B.S. Degree to learn how to teach and to practice within their field without entering into the professional practice. The beliefs were that school reform can be accomplished through school-university partnerships within a clinical setting.

A Professional Development School (PDS) is a collaborative model (Burton & Greher, 2004; Colburn, 1993). One of the three important goals for the PDS design was to combat the lack of sustained interaction between school and universities (Zimpher, 2001). School-university partnerships are impossible to attain in the absence of collaboration between the two entities. The primary stakeholders in PDS are school and university (Holmes Partnership, 2006; Burton & Greher, 2007). A true collaboration has certain elements that makes it possible to thrive and be sustained. For teachers, partnership seems a natural relationship between college and school; however, the advantage of the partnership is only developed as a new sense of entity is formed through a collaborative relationship. Collaborative relationships may pose a challenge for k12-univeristy partnerships because of the nature of the development of a true collaborative stance. Collaboration requires hard work and time, and it proves difficult to get resources from both college and school in the most 'efficacious' way (Hough, 1975). However, this was a catalyst for change that was needed to improve learning.



## **Importance of K-12 University Partnership**

Extant literature dated 2000 to current is considered contemporary literature for school reform. Researchers published studies that linked school leadership to school improvement. This ushered a paradigm shift in education reform. Accountability for school improvement expanded from the shoulders of initiatives, funding, and school teachers and placed on the shoulders of school leadership. For the first time in the history of education reform, school leadership was thought to be impetus to school improvement, hence the preparation of school leaders had to shift to provide needed skills and competencies for school leaders (Lockwood, 1996; Fink & Resnick, 2001; DuFour, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

Barnett (2004) recognized a readiness gap of administrators between instructional leadership and the accountability requirements of school leaders; he concluded that leadership preparation programs were not adequately preparing school leaders. In his study, he measured readiness of school leaders using a survey of leadership practices of ISSLC standards. Implications of this study found that while the standards may provide information and guidance for school leaders, the standards must be reconciled with the actual practices of school leaders to get the intended results. Other researchers agreed that school leaders were ill prepared to lead schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century era of high demands and accountability (Levine, 2005; Mazzeo, 2003).

Although the term partnership is not new, the involvedness of the nature of partnerships that intertwines with the intricacy of human nature during the development and sustainability of partnership is an ongoing challenge. Researchers have found that partnerships vary in size, length, purpose, scope, among other elements. Partnerships are as vulnerable to difference as the

people and organizations involved. Each partnership may look, form, and interact differently than another. No partnership may be exactly the same.

Educators are interested in understanding the factors that are involved in creating and sustaining a successful partnership between district personnel and universities. They also seek to understand the dilemmas associated with the process of creating and sustaining partnerships. The purpose of the Typology for Partnerships for Promoting Innovation framework (Barnett, 1999) was used to help understand and distinguish various types of partnerships. The authors re-reviewed literature on various partnerships to construct a design that both organizes and synthesizes the research findings.

For more than two decades, partnerships were established, especially those between businesses and education. However, a definition as to what a partnership meant was not as clear. The research conducted by Barnett et al (1998) sought to “contextualize a background” (p. 52) for partnership by first identifying the various types of partnerships and then examining the underpinning beliefs and behaviors of the partnerships.

Over the years, researchers have found many partnership trends. One trend noted in this research is a collaboration between business and education. Business-education partnerships have existed for more than two decades as schools sought assistance. These relationships required educators and business partnerships to consider how to develop and maintain successful collaborative relationships between the two organizations. Barnett et al researched efforts provided “contextual background” for what they term the “partnership movement” as new trends emerged over time.

School partnerships may be traced back to the 1970s. An example of a popular partnership is “Adopt-a-School” that dates to the 1980s—an era of reform where partnerships

seemed to flourish. School partnerships extended beyond partnerships with business to include university partnerships. These partnerships were collaborative relationships unlike business-education partnerships. These partnership shared human resources, technology, and expertise. Professional Development Schools (PDS) emerged through this design to provide clinical, practical expertise to both the pre-service teacher and the practicing professional.

Another trend that emerged was a collaborative relationship between school districts and universities. Educators were interested in understanding factors that were related to the successful implementation of successful collaborative relationships and how to sustain them over time. Barnett et al used information from what they found to be major partnership initiative about the partnerships that set trends in the partnership movement.

A third trend noted is referred by Barnett et al as interagency delivery of services. This partnership involves other agencies such as health services, social services, juvenile probation officers, etc., that “link” with schools to meet the needs of students. Schools serve as a “hub” where other agencies “link” to provide the needed services.

### **Benefits/Barriers of a K-12-University Partnership**

While partnerships are “messy and complex” (Barnett et al, 2010, p.12), reported benefits include streamlining services and processes (Lesles, 2006), leveraging resources (Russell & Flynn, 2000; McCord, 2002; Sink, Jackson, Boham and Shockley, 2004) and joint ventures and alliances. Many policy makers’ perspective of partnership is that it is the answer to both the economic and educational dilemma (Amey, Eddy & Ozaki, 2007). Other benefits included effectiveness, more opportunities for guided reflective experiences in field, a stronger association between theory and practice and efficacy (Barnett et al, 2010).

The United States Department of Education (1995) suggested that many of the studies to investigate partnership effectiveness and/or benefits have been focused primarily on individualized partnerships due to the dynamic nature of partnerships and because no two partnerships are the same—there exists a lack of generalizable evidence for such partnerships (Barnett et al, 2010). However, many researchers have identified what successful partnership qualities entail (Grobe, 1990).

Researchers agree that a major benefit of partnership is shared resources (McCord, 2002). Limited resources and economic crisis present opportunities for partnerships to forge (Russell and Flynn, 2000). Resources may be in the form of expertise—shared knowledge and common interests where the success of one is dependent upon the other (Gray, 1998). It is viewed as a way to meet educational demands with the flexibility to change to meet ever evolving needs (Amey, Eddy & Ozaki, 2007).

Not only in the United States, but also in other countries such as the United Kingdom, partnerships are viewed as fix for educational and economic hardships (Haynes & Lynch, 2013). While pushing the new Diploma for 14-19 year olds in the UK, Labour also pushed hard for partnerships (Haynes and Lynch, 2007). Education policy under the Labour government of 1997-2010 discourse concluded that the benefits of partnerships included extending academic standards with increased rigor, building leadership capacity at the local school level as well as meeting local school needs (Billett et al., 2007). As a result, monies were invested to encourage the development of K-12-university partnerships (Balloch & Taylor, 2001) and to support competition for such partnerships to form (Hogdson and Spours, 2006).

Benefits enjoyed by most educational partnerships include: trust (Cardini,2006; Billett et al, 2007), clearly defined and mutually agreed upon goals (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Dhillon,

2005), clearly defined and mutually agreed upon roles and responsibilities with a common language (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Rudd et al, 2003) and strong commitment to the partnership (Hudson et al, 1999; Higham & Yeomans, 2006).

Haynes and Lynch, 2007 concluded in a longitudinal study that partnerships are most beneficial when initiated from the local level versus from national or state level of education. They argue that allowing a partnership to naturally develop through mutual agreement and mutual benefit ensures the likelihood of being sustained (p.443).

Not all partnerships are collaborative (Barnett et al., 2010). Kirscher, Dickinson & Blossar (1996) discovered through the process of transforming a partnership between Ohio University and three elementary district schools from cooperative to collaborative partnerships is not an easy process. Although a former cooperative relationship existed, it only provided a “foundation upon which to develop a collaborative partnership” (pg. 207). The transformation process face common challenges in any other developmental process of a partnership: establishing shared beliefs, common language and mutually agreed upon purpose and outcome (Darling-Hammond, 1994). A “privileged” knowledge may become a facilitative barrier to hinder the progress from cooperative to collaborative (Whitfield, 1994). Traditionally, university faculty members have been perceived as the experts, but in a collaborative partnership, mutual respect, mutual voice, shared intellect and power must exist for the partnership to shift from cooperative to collaborative (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996).

Stephens and Boldt, 2009 concluded that one problem was having time to work through the unknowns of partnership as a challenge. New partnerships going through developmental process may not have enough trust established for transparency or to make negotiations about the

purpose, structure and roles of the partnership where all participants are equally committed to partnership.

Partnerships between K-12-universities is not new nor is it limited to the USA. In Great Britain and Australia, government and other regulatory agencies have endorsed partnerships in education (Bullough and Kauchak, 1997). There has been claims of success, but few studies to verify (Goodlad, 1994), rather it is has been “evolving works in progress,” particularly in the USA (Pugach & Pasch, 1992, p. 32).

Researchers have noted several barriers that continues to be identified as challenges to the formation of an effective K-12-university partnerships. These barriers include: financial limitations, faculty and staff resistance to changing roles, and communication. These obstacles were noted in a study conducted to understand the factors that influence the effectiveness of partnerships is examined through three case studies (Bullough and Kachak, 1997).

National policy changes have also had an effect on partnerships between K12-universities (Haynes and Lynch, 2013). National policy influences are “direct funding, performance indicators tables and inspection regimes” (Edward & Coffield, 427, 2007; Coffield et al, 2007). One policy under the Labour government in England (1997-2010) was considered to be more of a competitive policy that was contradictory in words. Having a similar focus as other countries, partnerships were herald as a tool that could improve the delivery of teaching and learning, among other activities beyond educational partnerships (Balloch & Taylor, 2001). As the expectation grew, pressure from the government continued to drive change by way of partnerships. It was thought to be able to help with a variety of complex issues (Whitty, 2002). A series of initiatives were funded including Education Action Zones, the Beacon Schools programme, Excellence in Cities, the Increased Flexibility Programme, the Pathfinder

Programme, and the Schools Federation Programme. It appeared that the pressure from government was more towards competition than collaboration (Haynes & Lynch, 2013).

From a national perspective, commonly recognized features of a successful partnership includes: trust (Cardini, 2006; Dhillon, 2007), shared goals—clearly defined (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Dhillon, 2005), quality leadership and well defined roles (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Rudd et al, 2003), and effective communication (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Rudd et al, 2003), commitment from parties (Hudson et al, 1999; Higham & Yeomans, 2006). However, researchers have noted that lists, though helpful, are not dynamic enough to capture an ever changing relationship as a partnership and therefore may prove insufficient (Haynes & Lynch, 2012).

Other researchers have identified “power inequities amongst partners and the time required to establish and sustain partnerships working” (p. 387) as challenges. Researchers Haynes & Lynch, (2012) shared that challenges to partnerships are “multilayered and cannot be overstated” (p. 439). Reference throughout their case study is made about the contextual factors of partnerships and the dynamics of a working partnership (Haynes & Lynch, 2012). They concluded that of all the factors, their longitudinal study found that national policy had the greatest influence on a partnership working (Haynes & Lynch, 440, 2012). However, a shift in policy and partnerships has taken and now governmental agencies are now promoting decision making ability about partnerships to be placed at the local school and university level, under the Coalition government (Haynes & Lynch, 2012). Wolf (2011) agrees that in order for partnerships to work, it should be initiated from the local level between K12 schools-universities (p. 21).

Researchers Goduto, Doolittle, & Leake, (2008) argued that the problem was the isolation of K-12 schools and universities and the need to develop partnership to improve the preparation of school leadership candidates. Levine (2005) argued that universities placed

priority on numbers of candidates admitted into the program than quality of the program. He maintained that the university faculty “waters down” curriculum, “lowers admission requirements,” among other unethical behaviors to recruit candidates (p. 3). Murphy and Hawly (2003) also contended that something was wrong with the foundation of school administration, citing three areas. However, Goduto, Doolittle, & Leak (2008) wrote that the lack of opportunity for university professionals to have meaningful dialogue and sharing on various national, state, and local level was the culprit to problems with partnerships.

Because the role of administrators have changed, some basic skills are needed to match the dynamic needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools (Sarason, 2004). Most traditional leadership preparation programs centered around traditional coursework, i.e., school finance (Levine, 2003). However, researchers found the need for a more dynamic school experience that is imbedded in field-based practice (SREB, 2005).

Trust may be as much of a barrier as its potential to be benefit. In order to make a difference in leadership preparation, partners need to have a mutual or common ground (Young et al, 2002) and a mutual respect (Galassi et al, 2001). Without trust, collaboration is delayed or absent. Collaboration is not always successful (Reed, Cooper, & Young, 2007). Partnerships are “messy and complex” (Hornig & Loeb, 2010).

In addition, change is inevitable when applying a new approach or a new way of doing things. Change includes culture, dispositions, attitudes, and sometimes relationship dynamics, especially in a collaborative model such as a PDS (Breault & Breault, 2010). However, change does not always occur which may compromise the goals of the PDS. Galassi (2001) found in his study that K12 teachers were more likely to experience change with a higher capacity for change than their university counterparts. Change may result in the nature of the relationships or not.



Not everyone experience change in either a positive or negative direction. Mebane and Galassi (2003) explained that when both entities truly work collaboratively together toward a common goal, transformative outcomes occur.

While the idea of partnership is appealing, it has inherent challenges. Many use the word partnership as a noun---something to attain, versus a gerund---something in which to go after (Huber and Williams, 2009). The truth is forming partnerships is harder than it appears; it requires work (Burton and Greher, 2007). Such collaborations require shared decision making all stages of the processes, including planning, implementation, and evaluation (Burton and Greher, 2007). They are often challenged by cultural and interpersonal differences that are so disparate that they fail to conjugate meaning outside of each individual's set of needs and description (Huber & Williams, 2009; Peters, 2002). Such differences between school and university along with different hierarchical structures may also limit the ability of the partnership to develop (Burton & Williams, 2002). The idea of joining forces to share resources and achieve a common purpose seems to have a welcoming sound that many seek. However, evidence now shows that true partnerships are now needed in order to attain the outcomes set out to accomplish. This means that partners must now provide evidence of shared decision-making processes, and sustainability, if they intend to receive grants or funding to help achieve goals identified through the development of the partnership (Huber & Williams, 2009). Traditionally, universities have sought after their own agenda, not necessarily what is best for the student; consequently, university standards for pre-service students were inconsistent with their reported experiences (Johnston et al., 2002). This is a challenge that must be addressed in the development of the partnership to ensure all parties agree on clearly defined roles, purposes, etc., (Shinners, 2001).

Many universities are committed to providing civic engagement which may include the creation of partnerships aimed to fulfill a democratic mission. Land grant universities, research universities and US Colonial universities require serve to the community as part of their school's mission. Historically these social services are referred to as civic engagements. The idea has been that pre-service teachers attend college classes to gain content to hone skills as classroom teacher. While practical experience has benefit to students, there are some major challenges to all participating parties. Pitfalls include expectations, time on task, negative consequences of candidates' behaviors, negative modeling by partner school, curricular, dispositional oasis (Ledoux, McHenry, 2008). Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) reported the implication for not only re-thinking how instructional leadership programs are designed, but also the need to build durable partnerships between K-12 and universities to ensure the sustainability of the program. If this link is weakened, evidence showed that its ability to last in a challenging school context is also weakened and likely to dissolve over time, regardless to how effective the leadership program might be (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007).

An example of this is noted in a comparative study of relationships between two elementary schools and a university (Lefever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007). The results revealed that certain barriers may prevent a strong, lasting relationship between K-12 schools and university. For leaders to make real change in schools, he/she must be able to change practices and beliefs about what could happen in schools. This skill requires school leaders to be able to know what, how, when, and why to best manage resources. The greatest of the resources is human resources (City, 2013).

In the comparative study, Lefever-Davis, Johnson, and Pearman (2007) found that a “historical relationship stance” (p. 219) existed prior to formalizing a partnership. This perspective is a barrier because it perceives university personnel as holders of information and K-12 personnel as students who have come to learn and passively participate in a process (Dallmer, 2004). There was no clear understanding of ownership of a simultaneous renewal. In addition, there was a narrowly defined focus for the partnership, exclusion of key players, instability of key participants at critical times and a decrease value of the school’s voice at the university level. A symbiotic relationship was never completely formed.

In contrast, another elementary school that was new in facilities and leadership took a more proactive approach with a very clear voice and buy-in from teachers was able to maintain their relations with the university as a PDS after the school leader transitioned to another appointment (Lefever-Davis, Johnson & Pearman, 2007).

Ledoux and McHenry (2008) disclosed challenges they have identified in their article *Pitfalls of School-University Partnerships*. Along with the noted pitfalls, they provide commentary of the information gained from these experiences. They point out that the ongoing rhetoric about school reform and the pressures placed on high stakes testing is the culprit of abuse by both parties, especially in distressed areas where there is such a shortage of resources. However, they also recognize the benefit of having such a partnership and how it results in benefit for children.

The progressiveness of education reform and the questions of teacher quality and quality of preparatory programs for school leaders have been the catalyst for the growth of professional development schools (Goodlad, 1991; Holmes Group, 1986, 1990). In order for a true professional development school to exist, a paradigm shift is needed for both the university and

school personnel. No longer can relationships be university centered---a newly developed existence must emerge that brings all parties together. The partnership communicative stance by both parties must shift to give careful consideration to all voices. There must be an egalitarianism with mutual benefits. Without such, a true collaboration is prohibited (LeFever-Davis, Johnson, & Pearman, 2007).

While many schools use language such a “academic based community service,” the conversation is usually greater than the actual delivery of services in many higher education institutions (Harkavy, 1999, p. 26). The idea of partnership espouses the belief that more is gained by working together than individually. This is often referred to as ‘value-added,’ (Dhillon, 2009).

### **School Leaders and their role in Partnership Development**

A Typology of Partnerships for Promoting Innovation (Barnett, 1999) was used as a conceptual framework for this research. Partnerships have been widely accepted by many educators as positive solutions for many educational reform initiatives. Partnership has be so well regarded that the word spoken concerning education garners an expectation of solution, in addition, many educators even extend thoughts of partnership to being a mandate in federal statues such as the Higher Education Act (1998) and the re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

“School leaders matter for school success” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p.66). The role of school principals has expanded beyond a managerial one to include instructional leadership qualities and skills (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Porten 2009; Brown, 2006; Cooner, Tochterman, & Garrison-Wade, 2005; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). This transition is coupled with the ever changing state and federal school accountability measures. Recent reform efforts including

No Child Left Behind (2002) and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004) placed significant expectations for school leaders to be instructional leaders (Lynch, 2012). An emphasis in instructional leadership is driven by decades of the effective school movement of the 1970's-80's and has since been renewed and reauthorized with even greater momentum after increasing demands for school accountability (Hallinger, 2005). A school leaders' effectiveness is now measured by academic performance of his/her school. Such responsibility on the school leader implies the need for both the responsibilities and authority of the school leader to also change so that the principal may have more autonomy in decision making that effects teaching and learning. Hence, to ensure that effective leaders who are ready to lead schools are well prepared, the programs that prepare school leaders must also change to match the contemporary needs of schooling (Shelton, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2009; Lynch, 2009). Subsequently, programs that prepare school leaders for the daunting tasks of leading contemporary schools were found ineffective with regards to student achievement, especially achievement for rural children with disabilities (Lynch, 2010).

There is no doubt that the role of an instructional leader is critical to student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNuffy, 2004; Mendels and Mitgang, 2013; Boscardin, 2005; Herrington & Willis, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). Researchers have found that outside of the classroom teacher, the principal is the most influential factor that affects academic performance (Leithwood et al., 2004; Rooney, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstroom, & Anderson, 2010). "Research shows that effective school leadership can substantially boost student achievement" (Waters, Marzano, & McNuffy, 2004, p. 32). NCLB (2002) and the IDEA were driving forces that precipitated an expanded role for principals as instructional leaders (Collins et al , 2005; IDEA, 2004) by ensuring all students, including those was disabilities, received free an appropriate

education. (US DOE, 2006). Current state accountability has increased pressure for students to reach proficiency which links the school's performance to the principal's effectiveness; hence, the principal is responsible for teachers providing research-based instructional strategies to ensure academic growth and performance (Supovitz & Sirinide, 2010). The United States Department of Education (2010) has proposed additional measures to ensure students' academic progress. These measures affect the principal and hold the principal accountable for school performance. These measures are revealed in a blueprint for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA; USDOE 2010). Its goal is to improve the earlier ESEA to acknowledge schools that were meeting requirements rather than to identify schools as failing and implement a variety of assessments to measure skills of schools and students.

School leaders and teachers are the two most significant agents of change for students relative to school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Rooney, 2008; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). The need for programs to prepare school leaders for such a large task becomes very clear when comparing disabled peers to non-disabled peers' performance in the same school (Lynch, 2012). The school leader not only has an impact on student learning, but also on teachers and the learning process in the building—making the principal dually responsible to all. Researchers suggest that every school that has been 'turned around' has not been changed in the absence of an effective school leader. Thus, effective school leadership is deemed not only absolute, but also fundamental for school improvement (Shelton, 2010). "...strong leadership is essential for strong teaching" (Darling-Hammond, 2007 p. 3).

Effective school leadership is credited by research for high-quality learning environments. The school leader must possess skills-sets and competencies to direct teaching and learning in order to close achievement gaps for all students. Whereas research supports the need for school leadership to expand from managerial to mentoring, coaching, and instructional leadership practices, professional development to prepare future principals real-world experiences and decision-making skills of a principal who can meet all requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century schools is slow to evolve in comparison to other professional arenas.

The Mid-Continent Research for Education Learning (MCREL) established a science of leadership called *School Leadership that Works*. This was a meta-analytic study of classroom, school, and leadership practices that are highly correlated to student achievement. This study found a positive relationship between effective school leadership and student achievement and an empirical definition for effective leadership. Twenty-one key areas of leadership responsibility are significantly correlated with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNuffy, 2014). Research over the recent thirty years has been able to show positive correlation between high-quality, i.e., effective leadership to positive school outcomes. “...effective school movement of the 1970’s and 1980’s was renewed accountability” (Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 6). In an era of accountability, school leaders not only need to be trained, but also assessed in a systematic way to ensure they were prepared to successfully lead schools. Forty states adopted the International School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards to gauge leadership practices (The Wallace Foundation, 2009). Research also suggests four changes needed for the preparation of a school leader in order to promote a “pipeline for effective leadership” whereas effective teachers who aspire to become effective leaders will be monitored, mentored, and trained and carefully

selected after demonstrating abilities and competencies that are thought needed to be an effective school leader. These four changes include:

1. Specifically state what a principal/assistant principal should know and be able to do;
2. Provide field experience that relevant and mirrored real-world experiences for administrators;
3. Only select candidates who are well trained and well prepared to carry out tasks assigned to the job;
4. Provide ongoing support, mentoring, and training for the principal while on the job based on data from ongoing performance assessments (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

A warning is given to caution against the belief that an instructional leader's focus points to teaching and learning, rather, it should also include organizational management for instructional improvement. Instructional leaders need the autonomy and expertise to hire, retain, place, and prepare teachers for quality classroom instruction (Horng and Loeb, 2010).

### **Role of Preparation Programs**

Scholars, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers are concerned about the effectiveness of programs that help prepare school principals. Empirical evidence of program effectiveness is scarce. Evidence used seldom provide support of the principal's impact on teaching and learning. Therefore, a need for further investigation is warranted. (Davis, Darling-Hammond, 2012) Much of the extant research on k12-university partnerships are descriptive and limited to one partnership (Amey Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Levine 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Osguthorpe et al., 1995). Recent studies that show positive relationships between exemplary qualities of a principal (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Orr 2011; Orr and Barber, 2007) and the



actual results of the principal (Orr and Orphanos, 2011) are now exciting. However, these studies are limited to perception data (Orphanos & Orr, 2013).

Preparation programs for educational leaders must be able to provide learning opportunities that afford aspiring administrators the requisite skills needed to make good decisions that impact student teaching and learning along with the other tasks a building leader must assume. Of the several core elements that have been identified to describe an effective school leadership program, school-university partnerships ranks among the top three (Perz, et al, 2010). Many colleges and universities are changing their college of education preparation program to include the following:

- A. Consistency in expectations and standards
- B. Extend program to include relevant practices
- C. Enriching instructional focus
- D. Assess effectiveness of practice
- E. Create k12-university partnerships (Shelton, 2010)

In 2003, The Wallace Foundation, the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute, in collaboration with the Finance Project spearheaded a study to identify and explore how exemplary college of education preparation and professional development programs produced strong school leaders. They focused their research in three specific areas: the components of effective leadership, the sustainability, and the support and constraints of funding and support of such exemplary programs. This study considered eight pre-service and in-service principal development programs. One of the implications from the study was the need not only for re-thinking how instructional leadership programs are designed, but also the need to build partnerships that would be sustainable between K-12 and universities to ensure the sustainability

of the program. If this link is weakened, evidence shows that its ability to last in a challenging school context is also weakened and likely to dissolve over time, regardless to how effective the leadership program might be (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007).

Researchers Michelle Young, executive director of the University Council on Education (UCEA), Christopher Mazzeo, Gene Bottoms and others involved in the research at SREB provided evidence of the need for change in the preparation of school leaders prior to the Governor's Congress on Schools in 2004 (SREB, Fall 2002). At a meeting of SREB Leadership Redesign Networks, conversations about the urgency for change was expressed by various speakers and education representatives. Betty Fry concluded to attendees that since the recommendation for redesign of preparation programs, change has been slow with regards to districts and universities working together.

The meeting of SREB Leadership Redesign Networks was a review after a year of implementation of college redesign. The team—including eleven universities and six state academies. Each of the university and state academies had undergone a comprehensive redesign to improve leadership preparation at their institutions. The goal was that the change would result in a clinical model rather than the traditional program to improve the preparation experiences. Charted progress among the participating schools revealed that with regards to collaborations between districts and universities, the majority of the schools reported level three progress; however, categorically universities and academies reported level one progress in other areas (SREB, 2002).

In 2004, the Governor's Congress on School aggressively pursued effective means to positively affect change in schools. They were determined to impact the "policy and practice in Alabama (SREB, p. 3, 2005). Their actions would result in a paradigm shift from school

administrators having a traditional role of supervising and managing to instructional leadership. This shift in roles would require a shift in expectations, evaluations and assessments, training and professional development as well as the way school leaders were being taught—redesign in leadership programs. This foundation for the shift was created through instructional leadership standards that would serve as descriptive indicators based on research of what instructional leaders should know be able to do in order to effectively lead schools.

The standards that would facilitate the assessment of training and development of instructional leaders were in eight domains. Each of the domains represented skills, dispositions and characteristics that research confirm are qualities of effective leadership, which include: planning for continuous development, teaching and learning, human resources development, diversity, community and stakeholder relationships, technology management, the learning organization, and ethics. The standards developed by the Governor’s Congress on Schools predated the ISLLC standards of 2008. The state board of Education adopted the new standards in May of 2005. These standards provided a framework and set direction for universities re-design. The districts, universities and other stakeholders agreed that these standards held promise for improvement in the state of Alabama.

While all universities were mandated to implement the new standards, they each had autonomy over how they would be implemented. Each university had to present a redesigned program that addressed each of the standards before the new program could start. Each university had to have each of the six listed components addressed in their redesigned program: formal partnerships between districts and universities, selectivity of candidates, relevant curriculum and field experience, effective mentoring, class cohorts, and rigor. For some universities, this resulted in an expansion of program and others it became additional hours for

field experiences. Change was inevitable for each program. However, there was not a requirement for consistency among universities of how this change would look.

The hopes of the Governor's Congress on Schools was to improve student achievement by improving school leaders and to improve school leaders by improving their preparation. The re-design was a mandate for all Alabama universities. Three universities were pilots for the redesign.

Levine (2005) concluded upon his analysis of several re-designed programs that "education schools have for the most part continued to do business as usual...too many have chosen to ignore not only their own short comings, but also the extraordinary changes in the nation and the world..." (p.10). Spence agreed that after a review of the progress made by twenty-two pacesetter universities, not much had changed. He concluded the following: there are inconsistent implementation efforts with varying results from university to university; not all leaders are convinced of the critical need for re-design in their leadership programs; the universities are not able to make this change alone; and, states continue to struggle with planning and implementing the right process to get the desired results. Researchers at the American Enterprise Institute studied thirty-one principal preparation programs and they concluded that there were many deficiencies in the preparation programs, mainly, they found the programs were more theoretical than practical—disconnected to current needs for district schools. The focus of the program was on administrative tasks with traditional coursework and functionalities that were not productive in preparing instructional leadership for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Again, SREB researchers found similar results. They researched 22 pacesetter universities and concluded that the majority of universities have made little progress in promoting high quality re-design programs. The progress has been really slow and inconsistent.

Some universities have made minimal efforts to satisfy minimum requirements and are “focused on the wrong things” (SREB, 2005, p. 10).

Levine (2005) reported that the quality of educational leadership programs were inferior to any other educational programs. He reduced the programs to institutionalized means to financial gains where candidates were given little expectation, little training, and insufficient preparation. He describes the motive of many candidates as wanting to receive a pay increase and not truly interested in the vocation of leadership.

In 2008-2009, the first cohort graduated from the pilot schools. The number of students graduating reduced from 97 students collectively in 1994 to 70 students in 2008-2009. However, many of the graduates were not immediately employed. A survey conducted to understand how the candidates perceived their preparation was recorded to have strong feelings of confidence to lead schools.

The re-design required all universities to change their selection process to be more selective and include district personnel (Kochan, 2005, p.8). University had to analyze and update their coursework to ensure they connected to the current needs of the practice and that they offered rigor in content. Another requirement was that each university require a ten consecutive day residency (Powers, pg.9, 2005). Mentoring was a requirement for all universities’ redesign as well as cohort structures. Cohort structures are “key to exemplary school leadership preparation programs” (Kochan, 2005, p.11). In 2008, another change was mandated—standards included professional learning units (PLUs) instead of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). This move followed the shift from managerial goals to instructional leadership goals.

Alabama addressed the need for change through state legislation with a focus on changing curriculum and teacher preparation. In 2004, Governor Bob Riley and State Superintendent Joseph B Morton convened The Governor's Congress on School Leadership which in 2010 required partnerships between k12 schools and university educational leadership preparation programs. "Before we can redesign schools, we must redesign the programs that prepare school leaders. We cannot have one without the other" (Bottoms & O'Neil, 2001, p. 7).

Education reform efforts and conversations about it have been herald through the nation as an urgent matter in political and social arenas over the last five decades. Much of which has been met with contradictions and criticisms. However, recent research has placed emphasis on changing the way instructional leaders are prepared to lead schools. Alabama's most recent response to education reform needs through the governor's office is to establish Professional Development Systems (PDS). While many colleges of education preparation programs have observed practices that include a practicum, research has found that both the program and the process of leadership development must fundamentally change (Bottom & O'Neil, 2001, p. 7).

It is not new news that college preparatory for school leadership is flawed and limited (Hale & Moorman, 2003). *Leaders for America's Schools* (1983) prepared by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), sponsored the Blue Ribbon Panel. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration identified specific problem areas in leadership including: one clear, consistent definition of leadership, disconnect between K-12 schools and universities, underrepresentation of minorities and females in the educational leadership field, lack of relevant and strategically designed professional development, lack of quality of candidates' preparedness and strategic selection process, lack of relevant field

practices and experiences, the need for standards and the promotion of excellence, and the lack of national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders (Hale and Moorman, 2003)

This report recommended three key points for improvement (Hale & Moorman, 2003). In 1996, the Council of Chief State School Officers, (CCSSO) developed a set of standards for school leaders, by the Interstate School Leaders, a representative body of most of the major stakeholders in educational leadership.

After the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Governor's Congress on School Leadership which was convened by Governor Bob Riley and State Superintendent Joseph Morton on November 30, 2004, met with delegates to address the development of "strong leadership in Alabama Schools." Of the one hundred selected team members, five task forces were developed. The task force teams were comprised of a variety leaders including participants from K-12, higher education, State Department of Education, education foundations and agencies, professional associations, business, and other community members. This was step one of six step process that resulted in all universities to meet approval expectations by 2008 for Lead Universities, 2009 for all other universities. It was clear through the guidelines that this process was to be a true collaborative process engaging both K-12 and university to work together through each step of the redesign process.

Under the redesign most universities were aiming to create exemplar leadership programs that would produce leaders who would possess both the science and art of school leadership. These programs have identified core components of effective preparation, including: cohesive, coherent, relevant and rigorous real-world curriculum, cohort structures, school-university collaboration and field practice, in-depth field experiences, etc. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; SCIA WR 1, 2005); Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2005; Orr & Barber, 2007).

The report, *Better Leaders for American's School: A Manifesto*, advocated for state policy and district protocol for selecting principals to be expanded to alternative candidates and not just hours or certifications exclusive to education should be considered. SREB (2001) agreed that that states need to be create more flexible means to expand the pool of candidates through a more flexible certification process (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001).

### **Advisory Councils**

Advisory groups can be advocates for schools or additional stress for schools, depending on how effectively they are formed and used (Farrell, 2011). Regardless of the type or purpose of the advisory board, there should exist the following documentation: 1). Responsibilities and rights, 2). Statement of purpose/mission/vision/objectives/beliefs, and 3). Structure of authority/hierarchy, etc. (Farrell, 2011). "Board structure should be designed to provide non-binding advice with no legal or financial authority or responsibility" (Fries & James, 2006, p. 90).

Advisory councils provide opportunities for representation between school and university to be engaging (Kochan, 2010). During the redesign of an Alabama University's College of Education leadership program, an advisory council was formed that included representatives from each of the district school partners, university faculty and representatives from the State Department of Education, as well as a business partner. The purpose was to ensure representation from each segment of the partnership and to increase opportunities for all voices and concerns to be considered. The main objective of the council was to "create a memoranda of agreement" and help design, promote and maintain the type of relationship among the different partners so that each would take ownership of" (Kochan, 2010, p. 511).



Advisory committees have long been a part of American schools. Through a democratic election process, it is the will of the people that representatives on the schools board of education must consider. Citizens understand that they “own the schools” (Britton, 1959, p.19) because it is their children the schools must serve. Citizen committees have influence on improvement efforts of the schools as they must understand what “good schools should do” (Britton, 1959, p. 19).

Advisory councils have long been a part of secondary and post-secondary educational institutions (Davis & Davis). Advisory councils usually consists of people inside and outside of the institution. Members are expected to be reflective of all the stakeholders. In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act was the first legislative act that endorsed and encouraged the use of committees as links between the schools and universities. This act was in response to the vocational education crisis (Davis & Davis). Because of the unique structure and function of advisory councils as a link between school and communities, Davis & Davis raised a question of it having an advantage as an “agent of change” (p.114) if the concepts of a “learning organization” (p.114) are integrated into what they currently do.

Davis and Davis explained that the advisory councils’ impact could be strengthened if they incorporate the concepts of learning organizations—as an endeavor of continuous learning for the improvement of all. Senge (1990) described learning organization as a community working together to create synergy. He defines the function of learning organizations as communities that seek to continually examine their “realities and how they can change their future” (p. 14). Davis and Davis describes this behavior as capacity building practices.

Garvin (1993) extended the description of learning organizations to that of a community of people who are skilled at producing, refining, and sharing knowledge, and with the added

ability to change itself to reflect the new knowledge. Garvin identified five areas in which learning organizations were highly skilled, to include: “systemic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization” (p.81).

In 1996, DeVito recognized the potential of learning organizations as a tool that could possible promote “global competitiveness” (). Reflecting on the works of his predecessors Senge and Garvin, DeVito (1996) constructed a model of the learning organization that depicts “building capacity” and “harnessing experiences” where synergy is created. In his model, members of the organization may build knowledge and understandings as a group that would be impossible to develop individually. Davis and Davis concluded that by definition and descriptions of Senge (1990), Garvin (1993) and DeVito (1996), advisory councils meet the definition of learning organizations and can thus be a powerful tool to help facilitate and guide growth within educational institutions.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

Chapter three includes the methods used to answer the research questions designed for this study. Specifically, the purpose of the study, the research questions used to guide this study and the rationale for qualitative research, and participants are reviewed again. Detailed information is used to describe the data collection sources and data analysis. In addition, attention is given to limitations, ethical considerations and reliability/validity assurances.

In 2004, Alabama's governor, Bob Riley, and State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Joe Morton, announced that Alabama's educational preparation programs would change to align to new leadership standards. These standards were aimed at improving the quality of educational leaders in the state. In order to comply with these changes, educational leadership programs in Alabama were mandated by ALSDE in 2005 to form and implement partnerships with K-12 school districts. This qualitative case study captured the experiences of university personnel, students of the university, K-12 district school personnel, and ALSDE administrators who were involved and/or who had direct knowledge of this process.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this case study was to investigate a university educational leadership preparation program and its K-12 school district school partnerships to order to explore the perceived benefits of the university and district school partnerships, the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing partnerships, and the perceived outcomes of the partnership, from the perspectives of those involved. This study took place in 2015, which was approximately ten years after the state of Alabama mandated the redesign of all educational leadership preparation programs in the state. The initial four pilot universities started the redesign as early as 2005 and other universities followed during the 2007-2008 school year. This

investigation is a case study of one of the universities which was a pilot institution in the redesign work.

### **Research Questions**

This study was designed to allow the researcher to answer the following central research: What were the perceived benefits, barriers and outcomes of one Alabama university leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners?

Research sub-questions included the following:

Questions 1: What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?

Question 2: What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?

Questions 3: What were the perceived outcomes of forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?

### **Rationale for Research Design**

In order to examine the concept of partnerships, case study research methodology was used to investigate the perceived benefits and challenges to the partnerships between K-12 school districts and one university. Yin (2014) explained that case study “arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 4.) This method helped the researcher to collect data on the lived experiences of the key stakeholders in the study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Yin (2009; 2014) reported that a case study is preferred in examining contemporary events and uses two distinct sources of evidence: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events.

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). This method was used as a means to systematically and accurately describe the perceptions and experiences reflected by each participant (Isaac & Michale, 1981). A case study allows the researcher to use multiple sources of data to investigate deeply and extend to broader meaning (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Creswell (2007) defined case study as “qualitative research” (p. 73) where the researcher investigates a case or multiple cases “over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of data...” (p. 73). Case study has a long history of use across different disciplines including anthropology and sociology (Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993).

A case study allows the researcher to “deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews, and observation...” (Yin, 2010, p.12). Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) stated that “qualitative research seeks to understand a phenomenon by focusing on the holistic picture and creates a depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data” (p. 426). Qualitative research functions under the key assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds; therefore, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed or how they make sense of the world and the experiences with them (Merriam, 2001).

A variety of evidence is usually used in a case study to triangulate the data examined for credibility. In this case study, interviews, artifacts and documents were used. These were especially important for this investigation because they provided insight to the process of forming and implementing this specific partnership between this university and its school district partners.

## Selection of Case

Purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007) was used to study the concept of university and school district partnerships. The participants for this case study had to meet the following criteria: 1) Faculty/administrators of an Alabama university which had undergone the redesign of its Educational Leadership Program under the state mandate of 2004; 2).K-12 district school personnel in Alabama who had partnered with the identified Educational Leadership Program during the redesign; 3) Students who completed the redesigned program of the identified Educational Leadership Program; and 4) Alabama State Department of Education personnel who were involved and/or had direct knowledge of the redesign for the identified university. The Table 1 depicts the participants of the study:

Table 1

### *Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Univ. Prof. A	White	Male	Ph.D.	Retired/University
Univ. Prof. B	White	Male	Ph.D.	University
Univ. Prof. C	White	Female	Ph.D.	University
Univ. Prof D	White	Male	Ph.D.	University
ALSDE Admin. E	White	Male	Ph.D.	Retired/ALSDE
Univ. Prof. F	White	Female	Ph.D.	Retired/University
Student G	White	Female	Ed.S.	K-12/Student
Univ. Prof. H	White	Female	Ph.D.	University
Student I	White	Female	Masters	K-12/Student
ALSDE Admin. J	White	Male	Ph.D.	ALDSE
K-12 Admin. K	White	Male	Masters	K-12/Student
K-12 Admin. L	White	Female	Masters	Retired/K-12
K-12 Admin. M	White	Female	Ed.S.	K-12 Admin

## **Data Sources**

Multiple sources of data were used to conduct this single case study for a convergence of evidence. The researcher used three sources of evidence for this study, which included:

1).documentation of physical artifacts; 2).archival records, and 3).interviews. Yin (2014) recommends that in case study, various data sources "...documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts" (Yin, 2014, p.106) are the most commonly utilized sources of data. The use of multiple sources of data helped to triangulate the data. This triangulation assisted in "constructing validity" (Yin, 2014, p.121).

**Physical Artifacts.** Documents included a booklet which was accessed from the archives documents that one university professor shared for analysis. This document was created by the Educational Leadership professor to organize and facilitate the partnership with the local school districts. This document was shared by key university personnel members who helped to implement the partnership. This booklet was used to guide the students, partners and university members on how the partnership would be implemented. University personnel were responsible for getting the booklets distributed to partners and students.

**Archival records.** Archival records included documents from the university web site, old news releases, and images that described and announced the partnership between the identified Alabama educational leadership preparation program and two of its partner district schools. A review of archived data was conducted to extract information that helped to further understand the partnership.

**Interviews.** Qualitative researchers investigate research questions of how, what, and why in situations calling for in-depth exploration to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014). Qualitative researchers rely on the participants'

views; ask broad, general questions; collect data that consists mainly of words; and describe and analyze these words for themes (Creswell, 2005; Yin, 2014). The general format of the interviews was the use of open-ended questions in a semi-structured design. Answers were recorded and follow-up questions raised to clarify and expand understanding. The wording and sequence of the questions were determined in advance by the researcher. The interview protocol was purposely designed to extract meaning of the central question: What are the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership between the one Alabama university leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners? Questions were arranged to fully investigate the central question with the use of sub-questions which were purposely organized to understand the following: 1).What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?; 2). What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?; and, 3).What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district school partners?

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The primary data source for this study was audio recorded telephone interviews. To obtain several diverse perspectives in this case study, the researcher collected data from key faculty members of the college of education leadership preparation program, the key personnel from one of its partner K-12 district schools, and administrators from ALSDE. Plummer (1983) suggests that one or more sources of data should be reviewed. Data collection began the Fall 2015 and was completed Spring 2016.



In the spring of 2015, the researcher made initial contact with the identified Alabama education leadership preparation program Dean to identify key personnel involved with the redesign that mandated partnerships between K-12 district schools and their university. All interviews were conducted via telephone for the convenience of the participants and audio recorded. Demographic questions were grouped to explore variables of the participant's positional role. The interviews consisted of 20 questions and lasted between 30 and 95 minutes (See appendix \_ for interview protocol). Prior to each interview, participants were presented with an informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate if signed. Each participant was reminded of the option to withdraw from some or all of the interview and were reassured of confidentiality. The purpose of the study was read, along with the explanation of the interview and various types of questions that would be asked. Member checking was conducted upon transcription of the recorded interview. Feedback was reviewed and updates made as indicated by participants.

Permissions were gained from the Dean to investigate archived data regarding the partnership development, design, and progress. Notes, memos, email correspondence, action plans, notes from meetings, agendas, and data were requested to be examined as archived data. Simultaneously, the researcher requested permission with K-12 district partner schools to conduct the study. A requested application to conduct research was completed and upon receiving permission, the researcher contacted candidates who were recommended from university faculty to participate in an interview. Recorded interviews of key personnel at K-12 district schools were conducted on the telephone using an audio recording device.

After each interview was completed, the snowballing technique was utilized to ask the participant who else should be contacted to participate in the study. This allowed the researcher

to gain additional participants for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Later, archived data was reviewed as it related to the partnership, including, Southern Regional Education Board reports, ALSDE website, and information obtained through web searches. While analyzing archived data, the researcher decided to interview ALSDE administrators who were directly involved in the redesign process. Two ALSDE administrators were contacted via email and a telephone interview was then conducted. Table 2 depicts the sources of data:

Table 2

*Sources of Data Collection*

<b>Who</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
University Dean/Retired	Document	Booklet to form and implement partnerships
University Prof./Retired	Archived	Memorandums of understanding
All Participants	Telephone	Interviews
Website	Document	SREB Report on Alabama’s Re-design
Website	Document	ALSDE Report on Alabama’s Re-design
Website	Document	Re-Designed Leadership Standards

**Data Analysis**

“Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 132). Interviews were analyzed to determine common themes among the participants and those that were different. Open coding was used to examine, compare, break down, conceptualize and categorize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This process is used to reduce data to manageable segments that can be used to generate themes and categories (Schwandt, 2007). Codes were developed from data collected from transcribed responses from the interviews. All data collected from the interviews were used in the coding process. Interview transcriptions were re-read and audio recordings of the

interviews were replayed to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Notes were made in the margins for emergent themes and ideas. Borgan and Biklen (2007) state:

As you read through your data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' way of thinking, and events repeat and stand out. Developing a coding system involves several steps: You search through your data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics and patterns. These words and phrases are coding categories. These are a means of sorting the descriptive data you have collected so that the material bearing on a given topic can be physically separated from other data. (p. 173)

First, all tape-recorded interviews were transcribed member-checked; the researcher reviewed all the data at least three times before developing categories, themes and patterns. As patterns emerged from the data initial themes were given. Second, responses were sorted and grouped by research questions. A master coding list was completed that represented all responses to each question. A frequency count was then conducted. Third, using the master coding list in step two, the researcher coded the transcript of each participant, noting when additional references were made to each response category. The coding list was then finalized. Finally, the researcher reviewed all of the transcripts again to confirm themes, and patterns. The findings were then organized to provide evidence of answering each of the research sub-questions, and selected illustrative quotes from the participants were chosen to be included in the findings report.

In addition to the analysis of the transcribed interviews, document analysis was used to help formulate a time frame and understanding of what was going on during this time frame. Creswell (2007) noted that researchers can use journals during the research study and analyze public documents such as official memos, minutes, and archival materials in the data analysis

process. Field notes were also utilized to formulate the researcher's thoughts and comments in relating items back to the conceptual framework.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher acknowledges the potential for researcher bias while gathering and analyzing the data (Creswell, 1994). The researcher also acknowledges that oneself is included in how information is interpreted and reported and has thus used member checking to validate the interview content (Merriam, 2002). In addition, the researcher made a conscious effort to bracket her own experiences. Bracketing is a means by which researchers put aside their own personal knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences related to the study in order to describe the participants experiences as accurately as possible (Merriam, 2002). This researcher practiced bracketing to ensure that her personal beliefs did not interfere with interpretation and analysis of the information uncovered. The researcher is a doctoral program candidate and current K-12 school district administrator. However, the researcher is not employed by either the K-12 school district or the university which has developed the partnership studied.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Golafshani (2003) reported that measures of reliability and validity prepare the reader to accept research as trustworthy, rigorous and of high quality. In this case study, the transcription of each interview was made available to participants for member checking to ensure "results are consistent with the data collected," (Merriam, 2009, p. 45).

Validity involved the degree to which the data was consistent and accurately reflected the content and context of the stories shared by those with the lived experiences. Hence, the researcher was ensuring that the content of the transcribed data accurately reflected information in its original context. Creswell (2009) stated that "reliability can be

enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed interviews by employing a good-quality tape for recording and transcribing the tape” (p. 209). These transcribed interviews are then used to develop codes and ultimately major themes.

In this study, after the interviews were transcribed, member checking was conducted as a tool for verifying data. Additional conversations were held by phone to clarify or extend information from the interview. The researcher attempted to ensure dependability and trustworthiness of the results through the triangulation of the data (Patton, 2002).

### **Assumptions**

The researcher made the following assumptions in regard to this study:

1. The study participants at each site would have direct experiences with formal and/or informal partnerships and therefore would be the best informants of the central concept of the study: partnerships.
2. An ethical and trustworthy rapport between the researcher and study participants would produce accurate findings in regards to the partnership process.
3. Qualitative data methods were the best methods to utilize to answer the questions that guide this research.
4. Respondents answered the questions honestly.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the partnership between one university Educational Leadership Program and its K-12 district school partners. Because this case study explored a very specific university and two of its partner schools, it is understood that the conclusions drawn from this particular case study may not apply to other universities and their partner schools. The primary limitations for this study were:

1. The small size of the study participants disallows the generalizability of the findings of the study but provided the researcher with a thick rich description of the partnership (Berg & Lune, 2012).

Because of the qualitative nature of studying the partnership, the researcher is “included” in the research reporting. Data collection was limited to interviews and documents collection from participants at only one purposefully selected partnership.

2. The researcher recognized that there were several retired participants, and personnel changes in the participating entities; consequently, some responses may have been affected by faded memory/recall.

### **Summary**

Chapter III provided a detailed description of the research methodology that was employed in this study. The chapter began with a statement of purpose for the study and was followed by research questions that guided the study and rationale for the study design. Specific information was provided that described the participants of the study. Additional information included ethical considerations, role of the researcher, reliability and validity, assumptions and limitations of the study. Chapter IV has been organized to present the analysis of the data collected to respond to each of the research questions.

## Chapter IV: Findings

In 2002, a collection of educators who specialized in school leadership development gathered for a meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board Leadership Networks in Atlanta, GA. Norton (2002) reported that every speaker and presenter at the conference echoed the need for immediate change in the selection and preparation of school leaders nationwide. Researchers have argued that leadership matters to student achievement. Leithwood, et al., (2009) explained that school leaders are second only to teachers in impacting student achievement. Frye (2002) acknowledged that some change had taken place; however, schools were yet failing students. Barnett (2004) questioned the quality of leadership training programs. His discussion added to the national debate of whether the preparation that leaders were receiving was matching the skills expected of them to perform on the job. The primary concern was that educational leaders may lack readiness to affect positive outcomes for students on day one of the job. This skill-set would require shifting leadership preparation from a managerial focus to an instructional leadership focus (The Wallace Foundation, 2009).

In 2005, Alabama's governor, Bob Riley, and the Alabama Superintendent of Education, Dr. Joe Morton, commissioned several task forces, including the Governor's Congress on Leadership, to assess and make recommendations for change in how education was done in the state of Alabama. Respondent E, ALSDE Administrator in the change of the redesign mandate for Educational Leadership, recalled,

He [the governor] said to the people, 'I want you to look at these points and look at what we're to do, and I want you to dream big exactly what needs to be done here. Let me worry about the funding as the governor.' We

broke this 200 hundred people down into large brainstorming committees  
and we worked....

The urgency for change in the state mirrored the urgency for change nationwide. This change required involvement from various stakeholders, education experts at both the state and local levels, higher education, and K-12 district schools. Each task force had specific goals that, when met, would bring innovation and progress to the state's educational system. One major outcome of the Governor's Congress was a call for change in how school leaders would be prepared in Alabama. A shift was needed to change from a focus on managerial leadership to a new model of instructional leadership, with the hope of improving student achievement. New standards were drawn up, called the Alabama Standards for Instructional Leadership. The roll-out of the new mandate was managed by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) ALSDE Admin. E candidly recalled:

All the courses had to be thrown out and redone, aligning them to the state's standards....  
Because we had courses being taught that really had nothing whatsoever to do with  
current leadership or the needs of students. Some of the courses had not been changed  
since the '50s.

Educational Administration programs across the state were mandated to redesign their administrative certification programs using the new Alabama Standards for Instructional Leadership. All programs had to shut down until they had redesigned their curriculum and been visited and re-approved by the ALSDE. Three universities in the state became lead schools in the effort, one of which was examined in this study (Legacy State University).



One of the new mandates to the universities redesigning their Educational Leadership programs was the requirement for the universities to form partnerships with local education agencies (LEAs). Universities were to partner with local school district personnel in the recruitment and selection of candidates for what would be called Instructional Leadership programs, as well as partnering in the creation of curriculum and evaluation of candidates. Local district personnel were to provide internship placement sites for the Instructional Leadership candidates, as well as choosing local mentors for them.

Fast-forward from the creation of the redesigned Instructional Leadership programs (2005) to today, 2016. What is the status of the redesigned Instructional Leadership programs eleven years out, particularly with regards to the mandate to form partnerships between the universities and LEAs? The researcher wished to answer that question by conducting a case study of one university which was chosen from the beginning as a model for other universities to emulate, Legacy State University.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher aimed to answer the following central research question: What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnerships between one Alabama Instructional Leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners?

Research sub-questions included the following:

- What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?
- What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

- What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

## **Setting**

This study captured the lived experiences of participants of one Alabama university Educational Leadership program and two of its K-12 district school partners, as they experienced Educational Leadership Redesign and partnership formation. The researcher examined Legacy State University (LSU) (pseudonym) and the two partner K-12 school districts of Regal City Schools (RCS) (pseudonym) and Prestige County Schools (PCS) (pseudonym). Legacy State University is in the heart of the large city of Davidson (pseudonym). Legacy State University joined other universities in response to the governor's call for redesigning Educational Leadership preparation programs and was deemed a lead university to create a model for others.

## **Participants**

Of the sixteen participants invited to participate in this study, a total of fourteen people shared their lived experiences about their involvement with partnerships between K-12 district schools and the selected Educational Leadership preparation program. Each participant's account was documented through audio-taped semi-structured interviews. There were two State Department of Education administrator participants who together represented the redesign period up to present (2004-2016); three university professors, and three of their successors who implemented, monitored and evaluated the redesign of Legacy State; four participants who were students at Legacy State University during and/or after the redesign of the Educational Leadership preparation program, and one former Superintendent of one of the partner school districts. All participants had K-12 experience and had achieved a master's degree or above.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The primary data source for this study was the transcribed semi-structured interviews of each participant. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to plan purposeful questions while providing opportunity to probe beyond what was scripted (Berg & Lune, 2012). This procedure provided a natural, comfortable flow of conversations which empowered the interviewees to digress as needed. Another advantage to this method was the flexibility to ask a pattern of questions and make comparisons from previously gained information to probe deeper. This offered richer, thicker descriptions for analysis. The interview process was used to gather information about the lived experiences of participants who were directly involved in the partnerships between K-12 district schools and the designated university Educational Leadership preparation program. An interview protocol was constructed using questions that each participant would be asked and they were grouped in the following categories: background information, benefits of partnerships, hindrances and/barriers to partnerships and outcomes of the partnerships. Questions were purposefully geared toward the central focus of the study (Morris, 2006). Each participant participated in the semi-structured interview at a time of his or her choice and each was offered opportunity for member checking after the interview was transcribed. The interviews lasted from twenty-nine minutes to 118 minutes.

After conducting the interviews, interviews were transcribed, shared with participants for member checking and corrections were made as needed. The researcher then began open coding the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and a code book was then constructed and reviewed. In addition, several passes through the data were made to identify and reconfirm codes as they emerged through a process called pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the pattern coding, codes were grouped under the appropriate research sub-question, in order to see patterns

that were emerging. Saturation was reached after several passes through the data and after data were coded and placed into the appropriate sub-question categories (Strauss, 1987).

The categorized codes under each research question were then grouped together by similarities and assigned descriptive themes. The researcher will now report the findings according to each research sub-question for this case study.

### **Research sub-question 1**

What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners? Participants articulated factors that facilitated partnerships and benefits of the partnerships. The following themes emerged from the data analysis: relationships, conversations, collaboration, shared resources, residencies, shared decision making, readiness of instructional leaders, and level of commitment of K-12 district schools and Legacy State University. Each of these themes will now be discussed, and illustrative comments from the study participants will highlight the themes.

**Relationships.** Relationships, as described in this study, refer to the purposeful interactions between K-12 district school personnel and university personnel for the purpose of developing partnerships. The relationships were critical to building trust and reaching consensus which promoted honest conversations and empowered each person to have a voice. The idea of having a network of people who worked together for a common goal perpetuated the development of the relationship and made it a facilitating factor for partnerships.

Univ. Prof. C shared the sentiments of many with regards to the facilitating factor of relationships. He saw connectedness as the core of the relationships between K-12 district schools and education leadership preparation programs. He maintained:

Connectedness. I can pick up the phone and call RCS' superintendent and have a conversation. Personal relationships with administrators with the area districts have been beneficial. Connectedness with the schools is real and a big deal.

A sense of connectedness was widely shared by other participants who explained that existing relationships "made it easy to pull folks together" (Univ. Prof. B). Other respondents added, it was "natural to have partnerships within the context of leadership" (Univ. Prof. A and Univ. Prof. F). All respondents agreed that the relationships were the building block to expanding partnerships to include Instructional Leadership preparation programs.

Univ. Prof. B also assessed the benefits of the relationship between K-12 district schools and university faculty. When asked how to build this trusting relationship, he concluded, "It's just being with each other and being consistent over time." He, too, acknowledged connectedness and strong relationships that he observed to have been a result of a lot of time spent together as K-12 district schools and university personnel.

Univ. Prof. B concluded, "Well, it [partnership] develops. The partnership reinforces the trust, the trust reinforces the partnerships. I think it's being as honest as you can about your intentions and being as candid as you can about how that's going with all the parties involved." His idea included having accessibility to one another to build a real, solid relationship.

All participants concluded that relationships between K-12 district schools and university personnel added benefit and value to the partnership. Each participant expressed that it was these relationships that helped to realize the potential the partnerships offered to all. These relationships were formed over time through purposeful planning, honest conversations and trust. Univ. Prof. A reminisced:

We realized that we could not do this program without the support of local superintendents. We had to have the districts' support, because PCS for example, it's professional development runs its people ragged in terms of PD after PD after PD. So, for us to start scheduling classes for leadership when somebody from PSC says that they need to be here to talk about the new math curriculum. We don't need to have that conflict.

Univ. Prof. F realized the value of the relationships and the implications for both programs:

And I think the partnership helps keep all of us on the same page so that we all stayed updated with recent challenges and needs of schools. Bullying came to the forefront in our school in the more recent times. Columbine has happened. When I first started teaching, we didn't have to worry about guns in school. We do now. I think we need to be kept abreast of the most recent challenges and have open dialogue about how to address those challenges, and I think that the university and district partnerships must definitely strengthen that collaboration and help us do that.

District personnel respondent M added:

It is a very close relationship in that 85% of our teachers and administrators have one or more degrees from Legacy State University. It is a local university and it is a very close partnership. It is a very, very close partnership. We are the field for everything to be tested and proven.

These and similar realizations about the benefits of relationships were most pronounced as Univ. Prof. B summed up how these relationships facilitated the partnerships. Univ. Prof. B stated:

Because we had that relationship.... It is about improving student performance rather than those kind of quid pro quo that characterized the relationship for the most part for university and public schools. We no longer saw ourselves as providing cheap labor, and they didn't see us any longer as exploiting them as part of the teacher training thing, but we were partners across a professional education preparation continuum that meant as we would say, "Why would you educate your next employee with your worst employee?" So, I refused to let any of our students go to places where there weren't quality placements from the school and the flip side was that we were committed to send our best professors and our best students to work with them. So, it was out of that growing but mutual trust about the importance of the work—I think that is what sustained it.

While relationships emerged as a theme, it was often described by conversations between Legacy State University and its district school partners. Thus, in addition, the theme of Conversations also emerged from the interviews.

**Conversations.** When assessing how the relationships added value to the partnerships, respondents quickly reflected on the conversations that they believed contributed to the development and sustainability of the partnerships. These conversations were conducted through meetings, joint activities, professional development, and formal/informal communications.

Univ. Prof. D noted:

...there seems to be a rapport between our department and the K-12 world. I think it helps having professors who have K-12 district school experience to stimulate the rapport. For example, we have a former superintendent who teaches in our program. Our adjuncts are central office personnel and superintendents in different districts. Having them involved in conversation and dialogue keeps us abreast of their problems and it also gives them a little perspective of where we're coming from....

Univ. Prof. A described the conversations that added value to relationships as "...Open communication to understand the roles of the district and university in preparing school leaders. We used to be an asylum and it was linear. Now it is horizontal." Univ. Prof. B reflected on his experience as he used conversations to facilitate the partnerships. He explained:

So I called these people up and had meetings with them. And we talked about what they wanted and what I wanted: the lay of the land. At some point as we were talking honestly and had sort of a cordial relationship I would simply say, "Well, here's what I hear about you folks. What do you hear about us?" And we would talk rather frankly.... Then I would ask, "Ok, so can we move on?" We would agree to move on.

Univ. Prof. F echoed that the conversations were critical to facilitating partnerships. Univ. Prof. F explained the efforts to have honest communication with partners by listening to the ideas and voice of others and including them in the process. Univ. Prof. F gave an example of how they were able to initiate honest conversations to ensure collaboration among all partners, Univ. Prof. F reported:



...through those meetings, having representative groups and listening [we included all voices]. Having an open mind and absolutely listening. When they offered a thought, I would respond, “I haven’t thought of that, but you are right. That fits there.” Just being receptive of the ideas of others and keeping an open mind [helped us to have real conversations that fostered our relationships which in turn sustained our partnerships.]

Univ. Prof. H expanded the notion that conversations included both formal and informal communication and was important to developing relationships and promoting partnerships between K-12 district schools and university in the following statement:

Well, I would say we have a lot of times former students who are now administrators because they feel a connection with the university they are willing to come to us with problems or situations. I have lot of former students who would call me and say, “I’m teaching this and I just need some help. Or, do you know any real good resources for this?” And I have certainly known that some of our former administrative students have come back to talk ... to say this is something that I have going on in my school. So I would say that it has created some kind of an advisory group in terms of once we have become colleagues. That’s kind of the relationship thing that has grown from good communication and expertise.

Univ. Prof. D gave an example of the relationships that facilitated partnerships. He shared, “As a superintendent of PCS, the person who was chief academic officer and I had quite a few conversations [with K-12 district personnel] in terms of how we could work together to help improve our leadership program.” This example was shared to express the significance of the conversations and its influence on the partnership.

Similarly to conversations, another theme that emerged from the interviews was collaboration between Legacy State University and its district schools. This facilitating factor emerged across the participant spectrum as important to forming and implementing the partnership.

**Collaboration.** During the study, respondents often spoke of communication and collaboration interchangeably. Collaborations that stimulated the partnerships were those behaviors that demonstrated the interdependence of the two organizations which emerged from relationships and open communications. Univ. Prof. H added that not only did collaboration help foster relationships for the partnership, but it also facilitated the purpose of the partnership which was to offer quality experiences that supported the needs of the student residents, K-12 district schools and the university leadership preparation program. When asked about the strengths of the partnership, Student G made the following claim:

Collaboration and communication [are strengths of the partnership]. For example, when I was going through the program and I was going through the residency, I had a supervisor from Legacy who kept in communication with my principal and assistant principal. She could tell me what I needed to work on and what areas I needed to grow in and what areas my strengths were in. That is because she maintained communication with the principal and AP where I was doing my residency.

When trying to explain collaboration and partnerships, Univ. Prof. H asserted:

True collaboration requires an interplay of both what I want and where and how I get there. That's what makes it so hard. It's both developmentally cognitively so hard because you've got to be able to hold on to both thoughts at the same time. I have to be

able to adjust how and where I am going in the relationship. Think of a good marriage. I as much have to adjust how I want to do this as how I want it to turn out.

Univ. Prof. H acknowledged that developing collaboration was a process and required time and willingness from all involved which resulted in compromise to reach consensus. He continued to explain that collaboration required purposeful effort and deliberate considerations in order to work. He continued:

So when we shifted the relationship in the public schools from cooperative, look, we'll do our thing and you'll do your thing, then you'll get free labor from us and we'll get a site from you and we'll pretend we're actually training some teachers along the way; instead, if we focus upon some other mutually satisfying outcome—student performance, then we have to constantly renegotiate with one another about how we go about doing that and what it looks like as we work on it. And that takes an interesting balancing act that comes from constantly looking at what do we need to do? How are we doing it? What does it look like? How are we turning out? What do we need to do to change that? So, we move back and forth in that way in evaluating our progress toward this kind of mutually satisfying outcome.

Many of the respondents explained that collaboration often resulted in best practice for both K-12 district schools and universities. Univ. Prof. F explained:

We worked with our school districts, had some conversations so that everyone was on the same page. We were not placing leadership candidates into schools to help struggling principals, we were placing them in schools with highly effective principals so that they have appropriate role models and would when they finished that experience have much

better idea about what's involved in being an effective leader and how they develop their own capabilities. We wanted them to be successful from day one when they were appointed the leadership role.

District personnel respondent M shared that because LSU and the local school districts were collaborative prior to the 2004-2005 mandate, it was very easy to expand that collaboration to providing real experience for Instructional Leadership candidates.

In addition to relationships, conversations, and collaboration, shared resources emerged as a theme across the spectrum of all participants as a benefit to forming and implementing the partnership.

**Shared Resources.** Another benefit of the partnerships that participants revealed was shared resources. Shared human and fiscal resources served as a gateway to opportunities that at times neither organization could accomplish alone. Shared resources included the knowledge obtained through the partnership and professional development offered between the two organizations where costs were defrayed. Sharing human resources was most noted by participants as a factor that also facilitated partnerships. Sharing human resources often saved money for both K-12 and the university. ALSDE Admin. E recounted:

The goal was for the LEAs and the universities to come together and the LEAs tell the university, "Here's what we need. We need this person in our schools. We don't need the principal from 1957. We need this person in our building who can understand the problems that the kids have, can understand the training that the teachers either have or they didn't have." The stress owns the system and there are a lot of stresses on the system in 2016 that didn't exist even in 2008. We want to have a constant dialogue with your university so that you're training people who get it, who can meet our needs.

Most participants agreed that adjunct faculty at the university level who had connections to K-12 district schools were effective as instructors. They provided a link between theory and practice which added a sense of relevancy to the preparation program. Univ. Prof. C shared, “A lot of adjuncts were actually at our local schools...they were teaching what is going on in schools...students love the fact that he can bring it to the level of this is what I do at my schools.” Along the same line of thought, Univ. Prof. B commented:

... having a Superintendent for a long time and when he moved from that position, he came on our staff. He knew everybody and everybody trusted him; we trusted him. It was a very long relationship. I think that more than anything sustains this kind of partnerships. You know you’ve got a dean and a superintendent who has been around for a long time. When they taught classes, students listened because they had their hands on the pulse of education and it was real.

Another way human resources was observed to promote partnership was through professional development of both teachers and school leaders. Being able to use the partnership to offer cost-effective ways to provide professional development was also a facilitating factor. Univ. Prof. D stated:

We [faculty of Legacy State University] provided various workshops at our regional service center. Professors bring them [K-12 district personnel] to classrooms as guest speakers and other resources. With signs like that, you can just sort of tell the environment is warm and friendly and conducive for partnerships.... Conversely, when we bring in speakers or big names through our regional service center, it's wonderful to

see all the K-12 people here enjoying that experience along with the college professors. I think those partnerships help bridge the gap between the K-12 world and the university.

Univ. Prof. F provided an example of how sharing human resources was realized through the development of the partnership itself. Univ. Prof. F discussed how they capitalized on human resources from both the university and K-12 district school personnel to forge the partnership:

We had a leadership advisory council that we identified in which we asked representatives from different school districts in our service area to participate from the parochial school district and we had regularly scheduled meetings with them. And not everyone could come every time, but we did have pretty good and strong participation. And they were with us every step of the way in developing what our program would look like, what activities would best serve the needs. We had a training session of several days prior to the opening of school year in which we invited our highly effective principals who would be working with our residents. We had our residents involved. The school district leadership was involved and we had the university leadership involved at every juncture as much as they had time to meet with us.

Having adjuncts who were once superintendents was instrumental in helping university faculty members develop their understanding of the role and responsibilities of K-12 district school leaders. This made it possible to plan realistic activities for the partnership. In addition, shared resources sometimes provided grant opportunities that either organization alone might not have received. Univ. Prof. D spoke at length of a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that the university and district schools jointly applied for and received. He reported,

Our chair had received a NSF grant that involved the school district. He was able to provide all kinds of technology and supplies for teachers. They would not have otherwise been able to get that kind of resource. So, things like that really connect with the K12 community.

When asked specifically about benefits of the partnership, Univ. Prof. B acknowledged that grant seeking with K-12 districts was “a much more powerful way to bring in grants.” Themes emerged which included many factors that participants described as benefits for forming and implementing the partnership. Among those themes, residencies emerged extensively throughout the interviews.

**Residencies.** Residences were defined as semester long internships in the Instructional Leadership program where residents (Instructional Leadership students) participated in leadership experiences at both elementary and secondary schools. During this semester long internship, candidates in the Instructional Leadership program were to be immersed in leadership practices.

In addition to sharing human and fiscal resources, Student G understood that partnerships between K-12 district schools and the university school leadership preparation program aimed to improve the quality of education leaders. The efforts to create and sustain a practical experience at each school level to provide leadership candidates with real world, relevant experiences that would prepare future leaders for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools was a recognized benefit. One way the university faculty and K-12 district administrators sought to do this was through the residencies. She remarked:

I think Legacy State University had a partnership with [Prestige County (pseudonym)] and had written a grant to provide a substitute for the residents. So I completed an 18

week residency, and I am sure surrounding counties were involved. My 18 week residency really kind of brought it home for me so to speak because there are things you cannot learn through textbooks and you can only learn through experiences and only learn through mentorship through principals, assistant principals or lead teachers and different levels of schools.

Univ. Prof. C commented, “It [semester long residencies] was an incredible experience for someone who aspires to be a principal. You are prepared more than you would be from a ten day catch all.” These sentiments were shared across the participant spectrum. ALSDE Admin. Respondent E contended, “Legacy State University got it [the residency] right...that was really the model.”

District School Respondent M stated:

I think that those people who went through the program [18 week residency] been successful school and leaders because they learned not only how to manage but also instructional leadership. We placed the individuals very carefully with principals who were the total package.

As with other themes, shared decision making was discussed throughout the interviews. All participants believed shared-decision making was a benefit to forming and implementing the partnership.

**Shared decision-making.** Emphatically, participants communicated a belief that shared decision-making was a facilitating factor to their partnership effectiveness. According to Univ. Prof. B, “When partnerships are established through the development of viable relationships and there is an environment for honest communication, shared decision making can and will



happen.” Implications of shared decisions were threaded throughout each interview. Participants recognized that this was purposeful in nature and conducive for partnerships. Univ. Prof. A described the extent of shared decision making when recruiting and selecting candidates for leadership preparation. Univ. Prof. A shared:

We had involved people from Regency City [pseudonym] and/or Alabama County depending on where the applicants were coming from in the interviews. Three to four to five interviews a day depending on how many we had. We could take [different education leadership faculty] and a principal and sit with people to interview all in different rooms. ....we would interview and score students on their responses. After the interview we would meet to discuss the interviews and discuss why we felt who should or should not be accepted into the program. We were able to determine. Initially, we actually had about 81% acceptance rate. So were actually turning people down and they were free to apply later.

Univ. Prof. F explained that making shared decisions was by design an outcome hoped for in the partnerships. This was thought of as a best practice for partnerships. He remembered:

...you could no longer admit principal candidates by using just the university staff alone to make those decisions. .... Principal candidates had to be supported by an LEA. And that LEA had to be within the group of people that determined whether or not a leadership candidate was accepted for the university. That was one example.

Univ. Prof. F communicated that the shared decision making process would help to ensure candidates were selected based on a “burning desire” to lead and not because they were relatives with someone or for reasons unrelated to the desire to help children. He continued his

conversation and explained why this was an important piece of the model for partnerships. Univ. Prof. F continued:

The model was that a would-be principal would, number one, be selected by his or her LEA. Here's the other thing. Everybody and his brother decided ... there was a time [in the state] and, I think, it's probably gone back to this to a degree. If you wanted to be a principal, all you had to do was have the money for the tuition, the grades to get into the graduate school and you could sign up and go get your certificate and they'll do it. The change was supposed to be that should not be happening. What needs to be happening is a teacher who wants to be a leader should be supported by his or her LEA.

That superintendent and that LEA ought to say, "You know what, you are quality. You need to be ... and we're going to put money in your training because we believe you could be a principal for us."

Univ. Prof. D referred to shared decision making as “coming together for the common good” when he described the way Legacy State University shared what the decision making process looked like. Univ. Prof. D stated:

I think the connection has really fostered that type of learning environment where our professors have an understanding of what's going on in the K12 world and help us adjust how we teach, what we teach, when we teach, all the things involved in pedagogy. The program structure is influenced by partnerships as well.

ALSDE Admin. E recalled including all partnership partners in every meeting for every decision to be made. Shared decisions ranged from the development of the program and

implementation to the evaluation of the program. It extended to the examination of expected outcomes and discussions about next steps. ALSDE Admin. E emphasized how involved all parties were as she recalled:

And they [K-12 district schools] were with us [university faculty] every step of the way in developing what our program would look like and what activities would best serve the needs [of our students]. We had a training session of several days prior to the opening of school year in which we invited our highly effective principals who would be working with our residents. We had our residents involved. The school district leadership involved and we had the university leadership involved at every juncture as much as they had time to meet with us.

Univ. Prof. F expressed that shared decision making also included making decisions about how, where and with whom leadership students were assigned for residency. When asked about decisions made specifically about placement and the determination of “effective principals,” Univ. Prof. F offered:

We did it together because we were in the schools enough to have a pretty good feel for the proficiency of those schools and we looked at the test scores to really get good handle on which schools and which leaders---it shows up in those student achievement results. An effective leader is one who achieved the results you want for the students. But we talked with the public district school leaders too. And gained insight from them about who was going to be the most highly effective principal for us to place leadership students with and from time to time, we made some changes, maybe after a semester, with some feedback from our students.

District personnel respondent M agreed that the collaborative relationship included shared decision making. She stated, "...Each step of the way the Prestige City Schools were involved in the development and plan to provide experience for those people who were aspiring to be school leaders."

**Leadership Readiness.** In addition to relationships, communication, collaboration, shared resources, shared decision making, and residencies, leadership readiness was reported as a facilitating factor for the partnership between K-12 district schools and Legacy State University Instructional Leadership program. Much of the purpose of the leadership redesign was to ensure that universities were preparing candidates who would be ready to be instructional leaders to lead schools. To this end, Alabama's State Department of Education required universities to stop and revamp their entire programs before proceeding with admitting additional candidates for leadership. Those revised programs had to undergo reviews to ensure that they fulfilled the requirements mandated by the State Department of Education. ALSDE Admin. E shared:

We visited every single university for two days. What it was, it was a review of the program and we interviewed faculty members. We interviewed former students. We interviewed the president of the university, the dean of the university. Anyway, it was a long two-day process to determine whether or not the program was in such shape that it could be reopened.

ALSDE Admin. E recalled that some programs stopped longer than required to ensure that their program was ready to prepare leaders. This work was designed to prepare instructional leaders for the work of saving children.

Univ. Prof. F explained that they knew initially that leadership students had to have some real experience in order to be prepared on day one of their appointment. She replied:

It's foolish to think that those who are effective teachers would naturally be effective leaders; maybe not. The skill set is really very different. We would never place a teacher in a classroom to teach students without completing, successfully completing student teaching. How dare we place school leaders in extremely responsible positions when they've had no opportunity for practical experiences. That's throwing them to the wolves. So to us it was very important somehow add that component of practical experiences to our leadership.

To prepare candidates and ensure their readiness, Legacy State University created an 18 week residency with state and legislative financial assistance.

Univ. Prof. C expressed beliefs that the 18 week residency through the partnership really prepared future instructional leaders. She replied:

One student was awarded [state funding for residency]. She felt it was an incredible experience. She got to go through three levels [elementary, middle school and high school]. She was with three principals for three weeks at a time. She would return to her home school for a week or two. It was learning at all the different levels. It was an incredible experience for someone who aspires to be a principal. You are prepared more so than you would be with a ten-day catch all. She graduated in the spring.

A similar experience was noted by Student I. She felt she was "ready to take on an administrator's job" upon completing her education leadership degree. She described her residency:

It was a wonderful experience for me. I feel as though my residency was key in helping me feel confident and positive when seeking an AP position. I met wonderful people and

felt as if my mentors were the best ones that I needed for my professional springboard into administration.

Student readiness may be measured with different tools. For an example, some participants measured it by a level of confidence, some by knowledge attained with evidence of passing a Praxis exam.

When asked about readiness, Student G responded to her readiness with regards to the ability to meet requirements needed to pass her Praxis test. She stated, "...the program at Legacy State University prepared me for my leadership experiences as an AP. First of all, it prepared me to complete the Praxis successfully after one time taking it." She also reflected on her experience in the residency and acknowledged that those experiences prepared her for the real tasks of an administrator.

However, all participants acknowledge the real measurement would be how skilled an individual would be at improving student achievement and that would take years to determine. Univ. Prof. B spoke of readiness in terms of measurable progress of the students in K-12 district schools which were being led by instructional leaders who had participated in Legacy's Instructional Leadership program after its redesign. He announced:

There has been measurable progress in terms of the overall students' performance in elementary. I would say that they're the best in the state and some of them that we have worked with have received acknowledgement from the federal government. It comes as a surprise even to some the people in Alabama, but some of the best elementary schools in America are in Prestige County.

In addition to candidate readiness for leadership, the level of commitment each

participant was able to make to the partnership emerged as a theme among participants' perceived barriers in forming and implementing partnerships.

**Level of Commitment.** Another theme that emerged in the data was the concept of commitment to the partnership. Participants discussed that levels of commitment to the development and implementation of the partnership was a facilitating factor. Levels of commitment were described as the drive and passion for the continuance of the partnership—the commitment to the work and purpose of the redesign. Levels of commitment were discussed from the state level, K-12 district schools, university level, and individual participants. ALSDE Admin. E made observations from the state level. ALSDE Admin. E explained the push for the continuance and fidelity of redesign model. He added:

The big reason, and the reason the governor and other people were so excited about this is we wanted to stop the turnover in the principalship. If you have no idea of what to expect and you walk to that job, you're not going to be there long. The idea was, get people real training and real support.

ALSDE Admin. E remembered his experiences as a principal. He recounted:

I can tell you it was not easy. I mean, learning ... and there was really no one to help me, so to speak. I had the central office down the street from [my school] but there was not a network of principals. There was a lot of competition, a lot of backbiting, a lot of jealousy.

Recalling his personal experiences, ALSDE Admin. E explained that with opportunity fueled by his passion, he was committed to bringing about change for others. He shared, “My goal as an educator was to be a catalyst for change and a catalyst for change for children and

support children.” ALSDE Admin. E described this opportunity and passion as he worked in his official capacity to support universities through the redesign process. He stated:

I do believe that the goals of these partnerships and the goal of this redesign, the goal of all the leadership work which began in 2004 was to help create a group of adults who can save children in the state, who understood how to save children. Saving children for me means educating them. You save a child by giving him the education that will able them ... you know, they can knock down the doors of prejudice. They can knock down the doors of ignorance. They can knock down the doors of generational poverty.

An indication of the university’s level of commitment to partnership was most described by the hours of time faculty put into the development and implementation of the partnership. Several participants reflected on the number of hours needed to ensure the partnerships were not only State Department approved, but also were a reality of what was proposed. A team of two to three university professors spearheaded those efforts.

Univ. Prof. A shared that one key person did most of the work. “She took all of the standards and tried to group them functionally.” He explained that the process had three parts which included: planning, implementation and evaluation. During each stage of the process, the time required to get it all done was exhausting. Univ. Prof. H discussed levels of commitment that she observed:

I know that they made innumerable trips and phone calls to the State Department. They were always looking up data and talking to folks about that. It was a very long, involved process. Um, really just to create a new program where there had been none before. They knew that the need was there in our area. But to start from scratch and have to make sure



you are meeting all you are supposed to meet was just monumental. I have never seen two people work harder.

Another participant described the work to get done as “taxing” when asked about the amount of time needed to ensure the partnership would be a success. Univ. Prof. F responded:

It was very taxing. Um, it was an extra responsibility for which we received no additional remuneration nor did we receive any credit towards any advancement at the university. We did it because we saw the importance of it. It was a great deal of time and extra time. We met for up to six hours a day, day after day....but it was a lot of time for us to do that. We met day after day. We met a lot of times, found a table and sat around it to share what each of us had done and to begin to outline all of the components of our program and we came to understandings and drew up a model we felt like would have the greatest possible chance of working.

In summary, Legacy State University’s partnership success was attributed to several facilitating factors and benefits that participants recalled to be significant to its development. Those factors are depicted in Table 3, with check marks showing which groups mentioned each theme.

Table 3

*Benefits of Partnerships*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Legacy Professors</b>	<b>LEA District Personnel</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Alabama State Department Administrators</b>
<b>Relationships</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Conversations</b>	√			
<b>Collaboration</b>	√	√	√	
<b>Shared Resources</b>	√			√
<b>Residencies</b>		√	√	
<b>Shared Decision-making</b>	√	√		√
<b>Leadership Readiness</b>	√	√	√	
<b>Level of Commitment</b>	√	√	√	√

**Research sub-question 2**

What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners? Interview data revealed several factors which hindered K-12 district schools and the university Instructional Leadership program from forming and implementing partnerships. Themes which were consistent across participants' responses were: history/culture, time, funding, politics, level of commitment, and change. Each of these will be discussed in detail.

**History/Culture.** History and culture were referred to throughout the interviews as barriers. In many cases the two were spoken of interchangeably. History between the K-12 district schools and the university referred to the way things had previously been. It included negative perceptions due to misunderstandings about the roles, responsibilities and expectations each had of the other. The history shaped the culture that existed between them. Respondents described past relationships between K-12 district schools and university faculty as a hindrance to partnership development. Univ. Prof. B explained how he had to overcome negative perceptions of university faculty that K-12 district schools held before he could begin having real conversations. He described this barrier as “an enemy” that “paralyzes.” Univ. Prof. F also described this barrier as difficult to overcome. When asked about barriers to partnerships, Univ. Prof. F responded, “I think it is attitude and history of working separately. You are fighting history because it isn’t how it has always been done.”

ALSDE Admin. E expressed how history impeded partnership efforts and reasoned:

... there were some universities who felt like this was state initiative and who is the state department to tell us how to do our job because we know what we're doing and they don't know. ... every state was redesigning their leadership programs. We had to get through that hurdle.

ALSDE Admin. E explained how he recognized history/culture as a hindrance to partnership development. He understood that universities had a history/culture of accepting every applicant in the leadership program without consideration of quality. He shared:

There were schools that didn't want to turn away anybody. There were schools that were very afraid to say to people, "No, no, you're not ready." We even counseled with deans and associate deans in the different universities. It doesn't have to be "no." It can be "not now."

Univ. Prof. F continued to explain that a part of the history/culture barrier was the belief that the State Department of Education was not going to follow-up on the program they implemented. He explained how, in the past, new initiatives took longer to implement because of resistance to change.

ALSDE Admin. E insisted:

One of the biggest challenges was we'll do it on paper and when they come to see us, we'll make it sound good and look good. What they didn't understand was in this particular event, it wasn't like the old study where once you did it, it went on the shelf. We weren't going away because we came back in three months and said, "We'd like to see how many interviews you've had and we'd like to talk with those people."

Univ. Prof. F admitted that she felt there was still the belief of an ivory tower ideal that was held by university faculty. She confessed, "...I think there can be a little bit of an attitude of 'We know it all. We are superior to school district people. We have doctorates.' This attitude is a barrier to getting to real conversations and developing real relationships. Education does not encapsulate in Kindergarten through high school; it is a continuation through higher education."

**Time.** Not only was history of past relationships and perceptions from those experiences a barrier to developing partnerships, but lack of time to create and sustain the kind of partnerships that influence student achievement was brought forth. K-12 participants noted that

there was not time to plan and collaborate, while university participants agreed but added that also the lack of time to provide adequate residencies was a barrier.

Univ. Prof. D communicated the belief that the lack of time was a problem for both the K-12 district school personnel and university personnel. He noted that both organizations were busy doing their primary work, but when the redesign became a reality, both sides had to manage time to develop and sustain partnerships that would benefit K-12 district students and future education leaders.

It's probably not unlike many places. I think the greatest barriers have to do with the lack of time there are responsibilities on both sides. University professors are under pressure to research and publish and bring in grant money, teaching classes, chairing dissertations. Sometimes it's hard to carve out time to get into the K-12 schools without some type of release or someone else taking over some of the responsibilities.

Univ. Prof. H recalled there were many hours exhausted in the development stages of the partnership. She described many phone calls to the State Department and a lot of time spent reviewing data and state requirements to ensure accuracy. Univ. Prof. A shared similar beliefs. He explained that partnerships required a lot of advance work, especially when planning for residencies for students. Univ. Prof. A warned:

You cannot plan for your numbers, but you've got to start talking to school districts. You have to get systems committed well in advance for the internships. You have to be about a year ahead of the semester calendar to get everything coordinated with the districts. It was a lot of work.

Univ. Prof. B acknowledged “time is a consideration.” Univ. Prof. B recalled how limited she felt when she was given information and expected to “pick up the pieces” of the partnership in addition to other responsibilities at the university. Univ. Prof. C recognized time was “barrier on both ends.” Univ. Prof. C continued, “We have difficulty because we are really busy.” Univ. Prof. F voiced similar concerns about time as a hindrance to partnerships. Univ. Prof. F iterated:

We had to take the time to explain what we wanted to do and how we wanted [to] begin working very closely with them on their behalf so that we could provide for them the best trained, best prepared qualified candidates for the jobs that they needed to fill. This required working longer hours and extra time to do what we knew was right to do for students—ours and theirs [K-12 district schools].

Interviews confirmed that barriers of the partnership included the history/culture that existed between university and district school. Time was another barrier that critical to forming and implementing partnerships between the university and district schools. Notwithstanding, funding also emerged as a hindrance to forming and implementing partnerships.

**Funding.** In addition, the need for funding was a hindrance to partnership development and implementation. Many respondents agreed that without fiscal resources, both K-12 district schools and universities struggled to maintain partnerships that enabled Instructional Leadership students to have quality residencies. It was believed by K-12 district schools and Legacy State University that the residency would positively affect the readiness of future instructional leaders and achievement of K-12 students, but could only be done with funding.

The 18 week residency required the instructional leader candidate to be absent from his/her teaching assignment to complete an internship while a certified substitute replaced

him/her in the classroom. Funding was needed to support the instructional leadership candidate's salary during the residency placement and pay for the certified substitute.

Funding for release time for teachers was a major reoccurring theme that participants expressed as a hindrance to partnerships between K-12 district schools and the university Education Leadership program. Participants noted that while this was a significant part of preparing leaders, it was the biggest barrier to having that goal realized, mostly due to costs. PCS district offered summer internships as a creative way to continue to provide students with real-world learning experiences and reduce costs. According to Respondent D, "The way they had designed their internships were different. PCS uses their interns during summer school, which is really beneficial because the interns really get to see what it's like to lead an organization." These were concerns mostly for K-12 district schools to figure how to manage such a costly endeavor.

Univ. Prof. B described release time for teachers as a challenge. He understood the associated costs and the considerations K-12 district schools would have to undertake. He believed "the fewer experiences given an intern, the less prepared he/she will be." While he agreed that an extended internship was beneficial, he understood the implications for K-12 district schools. Univ. Prof. B discussed this issue of not having the money to pay for the teacher and the sub to release the teacher. Not having the funding to provide the opportunity hinders the partnership with regards to providing a residency.

Univ. Prof. C also noted that release time for teachers was a barrier due to financial hardships. She stated:

Funding is the big thing. When the money was there, it ran like a clock. A lot of people were involved in it and wanted to be involved in it, but when the funds sort of dried up

then we had to go back to what we use to do because we could not afford to do the residency.

ALSDE Admin. E communicated the belief that extended residencies are needed to prepare school leaders and not being able to offer these experiences is a hindrance. When asked about hindrances to the partnership and the ideal internship, he stated:

Year-long would be ideal. If you look at national models, a year-long internship is by far the best but a semester can do wonders. Ten days is laughable. It's a waste of people's time. But the issue here comes down to this: how are we going to pay for substitutes to cover classes and pay for those teachers who are interning for a significant length of time. The real issue is not rather or not the residency is best practice, the research tells us that, but it is how are schools going to afford to do this best practice?

When responding about the residency, Univ. Prof. D explained that there were “financial implications for school districts when implementing partnerships. Univ. Prof. D stated:

It [is] certainly an experience that I think we should never take away. ...I was in the university world when SREB came out with the administrator redesign some years ago and it was all sort of predicated on the medical field. It is a wonderful concept but in reality is the biggest roadblock to real partnership is where you spend a whole year focusing on interning. In education you have people who have jobs and families and responsibilities and they can't afford to take a year off without salary to do that so that is sort of our challenge as university people.



Univ. Prof. F expressed similar beliefs about funding being a hindrance. Univ. Prof. F shared:

The resources are always so scarce. And a real important part of what we wanted to do was to give our leadership candidates some practical experience in working in schools along beside effective school principals. The only way to do that is to have some money to work with. Those aspiring school leaders don't have the personal resources to quit their teaching job or to request leave with no pay and then spend a year or so working along beside an effective principal to really gain the right kind of experiences.

Univ. Prof. F insisted:

So to us it was very important to somehow add that component of practical experiences to our leadership. To do that, we needed money. We needed opportunity for our candidates to be removed from their teaching duties, placed in schools with highly effective principals, able to concentrate on what I need to do and how I need to help develop myself to be an effective school leader. Well, we didn't have the money.

When asked of concerns about the future of the partnership, Univ. Prof. B added:

The availability of money to send students to different levels [elementary, middle and high school levels] as they are away from their regular assignments. Especially at high school from AP courses as we would have a substitute for 18 weeks teaching the students. That's one of the things that the principal complained about because he really couldn't let his AP teachers go. Well, he did because the superintendent intervened. But I understand his concern, you are getting a sub for 18 weeks and it's hard to do that in

secondary core classes. The state also required that the sub must be certified in the area. That means a retired teacher or someone certified but didn't get a job, and that's a real issue; that's a hard issue because it is situational and change form term to term and year to year. The sub has to be paid for 18 weeks in addition to the teacher. Having funds available for that was great. Some superintendents helped to get that done. The fewer experiences given to an intern, the less prepared he/she will be. You have to recognize what you can or cannot control.

Univ. Prof. F understood that "dollars were a factor" as the superintendents had to fund interns. Not all K-12 district schools were able to financially support a year-long residency. He acknowledged this was a problem for some districts. He stated, "Unless you invest resources into a program, you are not really concerned with how that program turns out." Univ. Prof. B also commented on funding as a barrier for partnerships. He argued, "The other [barrier] is funding from the State Department is going down. You have to find other ways to resource the kind of activities you want to provide." Univ. Prof. C also identified funding as a barrier to partnerships. Univ. Prof. C stated funding was "a big thing." Univ. Prof. C admitted that once the grant money was gone, the residency changed and offered less time for leadership candidates to get practical experience.

Like others, Univ. Prof. H believed funding was a barrier, Univ. Prof. H concluded:

I think that one of the barriers was money. In the program that followed me, they are not requiring that you do the 18 week residency. For example, I have a teacher who is currently in the program is only required to do a 10 day residency. I know that ten days is all the state requires and that is all that they required in the past when I was in the

program, but I don't think she is getting as well prepared as I was because she will not have the experience of going to an elementary, middle and high school--all three levels and spending six weeks at each level. A ten day program, I feel that the grant and money with the partnership afforded me the opportunity to be better prepared as it allowed me time to develop my skill sets in the different levels.

Univ. Prof. A communicated the belief that a downturn in the economy brought about financial hardships for K-12 school districts which reduced funding for partnerships. Univ. Prof. A remembered:

Their [the residents'] experiences were intense and the superintendent had agreed to pay for all year internship (if you have a superintendent willing to pay all year, go for it). Ours was not. Dr. \_\_\_\_ came and said, 'Guys, I was planning to fund these internships for a year, but PCS was on the fringe, but,' he said, 'I just got a requirement from the state to have a four months operating budget. So I cannot fund residents for a full year.' We opted to go with all systems for one semester. For the poorer systems around the university, that was more feasible.

Univ. Prof. B remembered trying to make the residency year-long but was unable to find funding to release teachers for one full year. Therefore, the compromise was a semester long internship. Univ. Prof. C reasoned:

When we first started, PCS was very bought into that and before the economy took a downturn, PC school district paid for those semester long internships for their students. They basically paid for a substitute for the classrooms. PCS kind of backed out of being

proactive or maybe not the right word, but maybe they could not afford to continue that. The semester long residency was funded by the state. The state only funds about one dozen and so last year in the fall they funded one in our region. We had about five to apply across two counties nearby. One student was awarded.

ALSDE Admin. E also realized funding was a hindrance to the partnership. ALSDE Admin. E stated that other programs such as Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) were having a direct impact on the quality of teachers and student outcomes and were getting a lot of money, leaving little for partnerships. ALSDE Admin. E recounted financial distress that he believed had an adverse impact on partnerships. ALSDE Admin. E shared:

We hit 2008 and the downturn in the economy really hit this a lot because schools couldn't afford to do some of what we had been asking them to do. There just wasn't money to do it. With that, a lot of things went by the wayside because of economic reasons.

ALSDE Admin. E stated, "The biggest problem that you have is the economy. You can't get the state to fund things what they don't see as a priority." ALSDE Admin J explained:

The first year the state legislature put in \$500,000 which was to be matched by the board of education. You could get \$25,000 per candidate to pay for that semester leave who gets approved through this process. At that time everyone who applied was funded a residency. Then funding went from a million dollars initially to \$100,000. We had more people to apply than the money to fund them.

District personnel respondent M agreed. She explained that one of the barriers she believed that impacted the formation and implementation of partnerships was the lack of funding. While she maintained the belief in the program, she also noted that money to pay for the residency was more than their system alone could sustain. While the state of Alabama provided some funding, it was not enough to match the interest the program had. It only provided for two candidates to have the residency experiences where currently there are 60 people awaiting placement for internship.

While funding emerged from the interview data as a huge barrier, politics was another theme which emerged as barrier to forming and implementing partnerships.

**Politics.** Another significant piece of the discussion focused on the adverse effects of politics on partnerships. Respondents claimed that politics often interfered and sometimes sabotaged the advancement of K-12 district schools and university Education Leadership programs' partnerships. Respondents identified political interferences at both state and organizational levels. They shared how Legacy State University benefited when one of their university professors was able to get legislators to fund their program through a sizable grant. However, like other legislative grants, it did not last forever. The benefit of a semester long internship at all three levels soon became a memory. ALSDE Admin. E recalled:

She was amazing. She went after the money. She got money too from the state legislature later to fund [Alabama's partnerships] you know, got it from just a hope and it was a big buck of hay.... she was pivotal in the success of Legacy State University and in the state. She went after for the state and so desperately wanted every university to have a semester internship. She got very ... and I understand this and I did too. She got very disheartened because some of her competition ... some of their competition did not play by the rules,

began to flex and bend and do some stuff that they weren't ... they [Legacy State University] had to go back and, I think, was forced out of competition to go back and change things and become online [leadership preparation program online].

Several respondents noted how state politics hindered partnerships between K-12 district schools and university Instructional Leadership programs. For example, a tax referendum suggested by the governor was not passed in a time of an uncertain economy. This referendum was proposed to help fund education including Instructional Leadership preparation programs. ALSDE Admin. E described political considerations at the state level that hindered partnerships as he recounted conversations about wanting to get the legislature to fund semester long internships for all thirteen university leadership preparation programs in the state. ALSDE Admin. E described how the state applied and anticipated an award from a major benefactor of education to start the redesign process for future leaders but board members of the company stated, "How can we spend millions of dollars or how can we fund this grant for your state when the people of your state will not fund education?" While the governor and the state superintendent and the entire commission shared strong desires to make the change happen, the funding to secure it was not available. There were concerns over the state continuing to provide funding. As new state issues would arise, older issues were sometimes pushed back on the list of priorities. ALSDE Admin. E also explained the challenge the State Superintendent faced when asking for financial support from the legislators to continue semester long partnerships. ALSDE Admin. E shared:

Here's what the state superintendent at the time said to me in a meeting because we were pushing him for a full semester internship and to go to the legislature and get the

legislature to fund that for every university. At that time (I don't remember what because there's so many political crisis when you work for state government) there was a huge political crisis and he looked at me and he said, 'I'm going to give you a choice. Yes, I will go over there, and I will fight for that and you may be lucky enough to get the funding but I suspect what will happen is, you will lose this entire program.'

Univ. Prof. F cautioned that education is a state function and that it would "benefit to know each state's culture to understand nuances." She continued, "Without this, you would have a steeper learning curve in the State Department." Univ. Prof. F acknowledged that a "strong political connection is needed to secure funding."

When asked about concerns about the future of the partnerships, Univ. Prof. D responded that "our state is very involved in preparation programs and also helps establish outcomes in classes." Univ. Prof. C shared a similar observation, when responding to the same question:

I do feel that they [State Department] have the best intentions, but I believe it causes the institutions to be cookie cutter. It inhibits innovations because of all of these check-offs you have to do to make sure everything is lined up. That probably is the biggest concern I have for the program.

Univ. Prof. C also commented:

My greatest concern about partnerships is the State Department is the most restrictive in terms of state level involvement. I am not saying the most involved. We have some good people at the state level, but it is a double-edged sword. They are at the point of

almost micro managing and all of the hoops we have to jump through. The level of state involvement with the minutia we are required to do, I would say is problematic.

Univ. Prof. B added:

There is so much conversation about the quality of education and the importance of it for the most part it is a lot of rhetoric. When you get down to it, no one wants to be taxed for it, the state doesn't want to send you the money, the school boards want to feather its own corner of the district, so on and so on. And as long as the agenda is kind of self-serving to the politics of it all rather to citizen development, we struggle with it.

Political hindrance was not only from the State Department, but according to several respondents, politics at the institutional level was also a barrier to partnerships. Univ. Prof. A talked about the challenges at the university that were politically driven. Univ. Prof. A explained how internal expectations sometimes conflicted with the ideals of developing and implementing partnerships since the redesign. He concluded:

It's the same ole, same ole. It doesn't change much until you get some deans who are willing to take a hit on a smaller program instead of trying to get the masses. The decision has to come from the deans. You have them looking over your shoulders saying, "Hmmm, you only have twelve people in the program this year." Your response would be, "yeah, but we will have twelve really developed school leaders finishing."

That [number of students] didn't concern me, but it does concern the deans and others who deal with the financial side of it. We were concerned about the quality to adhere to the notion of quality over quantity, but sometimes we were overruled. That's part of it,



but I think people who don't know 'diddly-squat' about the program shouldn't be making program decisions.

ALSDE Admin E shared political barriers that were K-12 district schools' concerns.

ALSDE Admin E remembered:

Superintendents were saying, 'We can't be supportive of them [future education leaders] because if we don't want to hire them can we get sued because we supported their candidacy and there would be some expectation that there would be a job?' They had to get past that and we had some legal representatives to work with them, the ones that had fears of that don't make any promises. They had to write agreements. They had memorandums of agreements with every person who went into the principalship.

The political theme which emerged from the interviews indicated the interference of politics on every level and across the spectrum of participants. There were both internal and external politics, even to the extent of legal concerns.

**Change.** 100% of all respondents referred to change as a major hindrance to partnership development and sustainability of partnerships between K-12 district schools and university Instructional Leadership preparation programs. When the respondents spoke of change, they included change in personnel, change in state priorities and requirements, and change in funding.

Univ. Prof B discussed changes with state requirements as he spoke of barriers to partnerships between K-12 district schools and university. Univ. Prof B insisted:

The major challenge is the state abandoning, of what I think is good work, ten years of good work of developing these programs [Instructional Leadership programs]. Whatever voices were able to persuade the state superintendent's wisdom of undercutting those

programs, then other institutions in the state will seize that opportunity to create somebody who's certified. End of story.

When discussing change as a barrier, Univ. Prof. H reported:

They [the state] change so often and [it] goes into effect immediately and there is no grandfathering in. We have to make sure that we have stayed on top of everything and all the requirements—all the minutia of requirements.

Univ. Prof. A shared how change within the institution challenged partnerships. He reviewed:

We tried to adjust for that [institutional changes] as best as we could, but any whimsical change that they came up with in the spur of the moment from the dean's office turns into a lot of man hours to work to modify and make those changes happen.

Univ. Prof. A also shared:

If you've got a curriculum and you're trying to train people, say we need thirty-three hours, you start tinkering with the 'Cadillac program' in the state institution—we were the only ones to pass the certification on the first go round—we had a good thing going and those who knew nothing about it wanted to start tinkering with numbers.

In addition to changes in expectations, another discussed that the change barrier was that of personnel changes and/or transitions. Univ. Prof. B expressed the challenge of personnel changes as a barrier to the partnerships. When asked about barriers, he noted:

One of them is turnover. If the life expectancy nationwide is 18 months, a principal about 3 years and a teacher about 5 years.... So, you kind of think your way down through that system and you notice that everybody can out wait the person above them. If that's the case, it is very hard to do any innovation. With school boards turnover every year, that even gets worse. From the top down, everyone looking above them has someone who would not last as long as they would. So that's a major impediment to this.

Univ. Prof. B continued to analyze the effect of changing funding on the partnership, he continued:

The other is the funding from the state is going down. You have to find other ways to resource the kind of activities you want to provide. And then, I think it just because it takes so long and the products are initially rather intangible. You really measure your effect by student achievement which means that graduate people and they have to become principals and so by the time you see the effect it is a distant remote. And so because all of that takes so long it has a lot of opportunities to be derailed along the way by a shifting of focus by the state, personnel, or whatever.

Univ. Prof. D addressed the transition in jobs as a barrier and described his experience as "... a great amount of mobility. You just develop a relationship with a person and bam, they're gone. You have to start all over again." He also shared his interaction with partner districts as having a lot of changes and its impact of the relationships. ALSDE Admin E also noted changes in personnel as a barrier. He affirmed, "We trained superintendents. We had meeting after meeting after meeting with the seated superintendents. Guess what. Those folks aren't in place." ALSDE Admin E concluded that a shift in focus happens when new people come into office and

they don't know the importance of the work. He also shared that sometimes federal focus sometimes change the state's focus. ALSDE Admin E shared:

One of the things that happened to me and to my staff was that the federal government put enormous pressure behind and through the adaptation of that into creating evaluation systems that ties student achievement to evaluation. In the middle of all this and as we were really getting our feet on the ground about this process, the state superintendent said to me and my staff of seven, 'Kill the focus on the redesign and the teacher leader evaluation systems now because that's called for in this change. It was part of all this change and created a foundational piece that's a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century foundational piece on which we can tie different kinds of evaluation pieces with student achievement and other things.'

Changes in personnel at Legacy State University was also described as a barrier for the partnerships because of a loss of 'institutional memory' and because partnerships needed to be revitalized after key players of the partnership development transitioned out of the program. Univ. Prof. C acknowledged that since the personnel changes at Legacy State University, there are not many people presently with the university who could discuss partnerships since the mandated redesign. She stated:

I hate there is not anyone better [than myself] to talk to about this [partnership between K-12 district schools and university education leadership preparation program], but there just isn't. When I came here four years ago, the redesign had just begun. Those instrumental to the program are now retired.

Univ. Prof. D expounded on this idea, recounting:

When you have most of all your department leave, there's no institutional memory.

People are searching round just to trying to figure out things for a while. It is easy to say, it's harder to do. It's not the best situation to have everybody leave without somebody transitioning over and filling the gap.

Univ. Prof. F discussed how personnel changes were a challenge for K-12 district schools and could prevent instructional leadership students from being best prepared through residencies. When discussing what he perceived as a barrier to partnerships, he stated, "The biggest is turnover and so you've got people now in the positions who had no idea and all they want is somebody to get their certificates so they put somebody in the position." He expressed his belief that when new people are in position, there is not always someone there to reiterate what was done before them and often that work becomes obsolete.

District personnel respondent M expressed her belief that there must always be a principal person in every successful program. She believed that once that principal person retired that Legacy State University had a shift in priority and dean; the program was not sustained.

Legacy State University challenges to forming and implementing partnerships were attributed to several factors that participants recalled to be significant to its development and implementation. Such factors were themes identified from the analysis of the interview data. Those themes are depicted in Table 4, with check marks showing which groups mentioned each theme.

Table 4

*Barriers of Partnerships*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Legacy Professors</b>	<b>LEA District Personnel</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Alabama State Department Administrators</b>
<b>History/Culture</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Time</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Funding</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Politics</b>	√	√		√
<b>Change</b>	√	√	√	√

**Research sub-question 3**

What were the outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners? Outcomes of the partnership were categorized as either positive or negative. The positive outcomes which emerged were expansion of university Instructional Leadership program, the 18 week residency experience, the re-design of the Instructional Leadership preparation program, and student readiness. However, negative outcomes that emerged were the loss of an 18 week residency and an inability to measure student outcomes.

**Expansion of University Instructional Leadership Programs.** One of the positive outcomes respondents explained was the expansion of Legacy State’s Instructional Leadership program.

Univ. Prof. B outlined:

A tangible improvement is that it [partnerships] helped us develop a doctoral program. We are a year away from graduating the first cohort of graduates. It dramatically changed the promotion and hiring practices within the school districts in that there were in other universities which were cranking out people in education leadership, I would say I would really like it if you would hire our people. But understand that I am much more appreciative if hire people who are faithful to this model and not just people who got a degree from somewhere. That has dramatically changed hiring and promotion within the school district.

Univ. Prof. C recalled:

Our leadership program expanded as a result of this partnership. Leaders who were already in position wanted to further their education with a doctorate degree. Others who were not in the state also inquired about getting into our program.

District school respondent M agreed that the Instructional Leadership partnership resulted in a program expansion. She noted that colleges and universities are always recruiting and that Prestige School System was the field of Legacy State University. She believed that as news of what was happening with the residency spread, more and more people applied to participate in the Instructional Leadership program.

**Residency Experience.** Another positive impact that grew out of the residency experience was school leaders wanting to be selected as effective principals who would mentor residents. Univ. Prof. F continued:

...principals saw it [serving as a mentor for residents] as a compliment to them. They called us and asked, 'How can I be one of your principals?'" It was really kind of neat

because we saw them begin to aspire to be selected. They realized they wanted to be among the best. That was kind of exciting. We thought, 'good. Then you are going to work a little harder, aren't you'?

In addition, District school respondent M explained that residency was very beneficial. She recounted:

The residency was a “practical experience and often as we see right now in other programs, people do not have a realistic view of leadership and what is needed to be an effective principal.” She concluded that the residency offered “very real experiences with how demanding and how complex it is to be a successful leader.”

Univ. Prof. C recalled the residency experience as being an “incredible experience.” She explained that one of her students was awarded a scholarship to participate and that she was afforded experience on all three levels. She believes this is an incredible experience for anyone who aspires to be a principal. She asserted, “You are prepared more so than you would be with a ten day catch all.”

District school respondent L recalled:

LSU program required all Ed Leadership candidates to have a semester long residency. I had ten residents in about five years. The residents get a chance to see and hear what I did daily for two months. The principal job cannot be explained or learned in an assistant principal role. The relationships I shared with the students and university benefited the resident more than a normal six week internship most leadership programs offered.

Student G agreed. She described her residency experience as one that profoundly changed her perspective about what leadership really entailed. She commented that students



who do not have this opportunity are not really being given the opportunity to be successful administrators. She explained that prior to the residency she never thought she could be an effective elementary principal as she was a secondary educator; however, after her three different placements, she desired to work with younger students. She later became a middle school principal.

ALSDE Admin. J reported that Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) produced a report about the semester residency program versus the ten day residency. He shared,

They [instructional leadership candidates] had a much higher depth than those with ten days [internship]. The ten days give you a snap shot, but you really don't have a chance to understand the dynamics and culture of the building.

**Student Readiness.** Student readiness was another positive outcome that 100% of the respondents mentioned. Respondents described student readiness as the students having practical real-life experiences in a residency. Univ. Prof. F stated:

It was at least satisfying and a lot of fun to hear feedback from our students that we did that routinely to find out their perspectives about what we were doing. On the second day of their residential experience they kind of said, 'I had no idea this is what the life of a school leader is like'. And one student, out of all we worked with looked at me one day and said, 'I don't want to do this the rest of my life. Thank goodness I know this now.' And fell back. He took another direction. I had a young lady, the second day of her residency, I stopped by the school to see how things were settling in for her and she said, 'Dr. \_\_\_\_, I went to Wal-Mart yesterday and bought two pairs of flats because you cannot wear high heels in this job.' I thought, no ma'am you can't. I am glad you know that

now. Well, there are plenty little anecdotes like that we just thought were just so satisfying to be able to observe the opening of their eyes.

Student G and Student I stated that after completing a three level residency, they each knew which level of administration they wanted to pursue. Univ. Prof. A confirmed that experience in three different levels of administration was a positive outcome of the partnerships. He stated:

A human factoid that grew out of this was the number of elementary people by training, design and experience decided that that is what they would really rather do when they returned to their regular system. In other words, I don't want to be elementary any more, I want to be middle or high school. That was really interesting. That was outside of any plan that we had and that was something that they would have to work out in their district. Their exposure to that is what helped allowed them to make that decision.

ALSDE Admin. J also discussed the positive outcome of the partnership in terms of confidence which equated to student readiness. He reported:

I can say that I have a higher degree of confidence when they [education preparation programs] prepare the leaders for the job before them. I believe the better prepared they [education leaders] are the more confidence they will have and a better job they will do—which will have an impact on teachers and the teachers will have an impact on children. It may not show up in a test.

In summary, there were several notable positive outcomes of the development of the partnerships between Legacy State and the local school districts. However, negative outcomes of the partnerships were also noted.

## Negative Outcomes

Negative outcomes of the partnerships included the change from 18 week residency to a 10 day program and the time it takes to measure student outcomes as a result of the partnership. The participants spoke with sadness and regret about the fact that the once-vibrant partnerships between Legacy State and the local school districts deteriorated significantly over the years.

**Loss of the 18 week residency.** When asked about the progress of the partnership, respondents agreed that while the partnership still exists, most agreed that the previous partnership that offered an 18 week residency was better than its current 10 day internship program. Student I shared:

It is very unfortunate that the partnership is no more. I hope that it will be re-formed.

Having 18 weeks at each level of administration really added understanding and quality to me as student. It afforded me an opportunity to really understand the role of a school leader from a different lens.

Student G remarked:

Without the 18 week residency, I wouldn't know how to approach the adults in the building. That was part of my growth. During my residency, it became clear to me that I didn't really believe I was in the leadership role and the teachers did not trust me either.

As my residency continued, I found my leadership style, my confidence and my voice. It is hard to imagine being able to transition from a teacher to a leader within 10 days. It is not going to happen.

Univ. Prof. B believed that ending the semester long residency was not in the best interest of the instructional leader program. He commented:

The major challenge is the state abandoning of what I think is good work—ten years of developing these programs. Whatever voices were able to persuade the state superintendents’ wisdom of undercutting those programs, then other institutions in the state will seize that opportunity to create somebody who is certified. End of story.

ALSDE Admin. J added:

The transition from the old way of a semester long internship to the current ten day internship was a compromise among several groups. The goal was to get some consistency to time and finally have a form of immersion in what leadership looks like rather than a piece here and there. SREB conducted an interview and revealed that students who had a whole semester of what leadership looked like had a much higher depth than those with ten days.

Univ. Prof. A believed that the loss of the residency would greatly reduce the quality of candidate graduating. He stated, “The fewer experiences given to an intern, the less prepared he/she will be.” District school respondent M also expressed disappointment in the loss of the 18 week residency. She acknowledged the many benefits of having the semester long residency and recognized the lack of funding available to support it. She stated, “I would hope that the legislators would fund the program and that there would be interest in reviving the program.”

**Inability to Measure Student Outcomes.** Another negative outcome of the partnership was the length of wait time between a candidate’s leadership preparation and the candidate’s leadership placement. This waiting period delayed the ability to measure impact between those trained for leadership since the redesign and student outcomes that might have been influenced by those leaders’ abilities, competencies, experiences, and skills gained from the program.

Univ. Prof. F communicated that Legacy State University aimed to provide the best qualified candidates to fill administrative jobs by providing people ready to be successful from day one, and the further hoped-for impact on student achievement. Student G responded that she had not been in leadership long enough to see student improvement outcomes from her experience at Legacy University.

Student I agreed. She replied "...student outcomes as a result of my training cannot be measured yet because I have recently been appointed into a leadership position. I am not the 'instructional leader' whose decisions determines what, when, who and how, yet, so I am in a more of a supportive role of the principal."

Univ. Prof. B explained the difficulty of measuring student outcomes when asked about the role of the partnerships and their impact on student performance. He reasoned, "I think it's just because it takes so long and the products are rather intangible. You really measure your effect by student achievement which means that we graduate people and they have to become principals and so by the time you see the effect, it is a distant remote." He argued:

One of the things we are tracking is performance as measured by student outcomes by graduates of our program. But this is long process. They have to graduate the program and often become assistant principals before they become principals and so it takes a while before seeing those effects. I think we're getting in a place where we might be able to see something substantive.

ALSDE Admin. J agrees that measuring student outcomes is a challenge. He explained: "It's going to take three years or more with the new leaders and the new processes in place. Actually, after the first year, the data gets worse."

To summarize, Legacy State University’s partnership outcomes were both positive and negative. Four positive outcomes included expansion of university Instructional Leadership programs, residency experience, re-design of Instructional Leadership preparation program, and student readiness. Two negative outcomes include the loss of 18 week residency and the inability to measure student outcomes. Those factors are depicted on Table 5, with check marks showing which groups mentioned each theme.

Table 5

*Positive Outcomes of Partnerships*

<b>Positive Outcomes</b>	<b>Legacy Professors</b>	<b>LEA District Personnel</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Alabama State Department Administrators</b>
<b>Expansion of program</b>	√	√	√	
<b>Residency experience</b>	√	√	√	√
<b>Student readiness</b>	√	√	√	√

Two negative outcomes included the loss of 18 week residency and the inability to measure student outcomes. Those factors which were negative outcomes are depicted on Table 6, with check marks to indicate each participant.

Table 6

*Negative Outcomes of Partnerships*

<b>Negative Outcomes</b>	<b>Legacy Professors</b>	<b>LEA District Personnel</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Alabama State Department Administrators</b>
<b>The loss of an 18 week residency</b>	√	√	√	
<b>The inability to measure student outcomes</b>	√	√	√	√

**Summary**

The 2004-2005 Governor’s Congress on Leadership engaged in a process to reform education in Alabama which mandated that every university offering leadership preparation degrees in the state had to redesign its program.

The researcher aimed to answer the following central research question: What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership between one of Alabama’s Instructional Leadership preparation programs and its local education agency partners? Three sub-questions were investigated to answer the central research question. The researcher has reported findings according to the research questions for this case study.

Research sub-question 1: What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partner? Evidence from the investigation reveal that all participants found relationships, conversations, collaboration, shared resources, residencies, shared decision making, leadership readiness, and level of commitment as the perceived benefits for the partnership between Legacy State University and two of their partner schools.

Research sub-question 2: What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners? Themes which emerged from transcribed data concluded that there were specific barriers to forming and implementing the partnership between Legacy State University and two of their partner schools. Those barriers include the following: 1) History/culture; 2) Time; 3) Funding; 4) Politics; and 5) Change.

Research sub-question 3: What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners? Indication supported from themes which emerged from transcribed data concluded that outcomes of forming and implementing a partnership between Legacy State University and two of its partner schools were both positive and negative. The positive outcome participants identified were the expansion of university Instructional Leadership programs, the residency experience, the redesign of the educational leadership program, and student readiness. Negative outcomes identified by the participants were the loss of the 18 week residency and the inability to measure student outcomes. Findings that answer the central research question (What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership between of an Alabama's Instructional Leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners?) are depicted in table 7.



Table 7

*The Benefits, Barriers, and Outcomes of University/K12 Partnerships*

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Relationships	History/Culture	Expansion of Program
Conversations	Time	Residency Experience
Shared Resources	Funding	Student Readiness
Residencies	Politics	Loss of Residency
Shared Decision Making	Change	Inability to Measure
Leadership Readiness		
Level of Commitment		

## CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

Decades of criticism have marked our nation's education reform efforts. Reports outlining the failures in our educational system in comparison to other countries have led to calls for changes in both teacher and school leaders' preparation programs (SREB, 2010). *Leaders in America's Schools*, an early report two decades ago, produced by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) and the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987), identified several problems pertaining to the preparation of school leaders, specifically, including:

1. The lack of definition of good educational leadership;
2. An absence of collaboration between school districts and colleges and universities;
3. The low number of minorities and females in the field;
4. A lack of systematic professional development;
5. The poor quality of candidates for preparation programs;
6. The irrelevance of preparation programs; programs devoid of sequence, modern content in clinical experiences;
7. The need for licensure systems that promote excellence, and
8. An absence of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders (Hale and Moorman, 2003, pg.2; Broad Foundation and Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 1987, pp. 20-21)

To address some of these deficiencies, The Broad Foundation and The Thomas B. Fordham Institute provided three specific suggestions: 1) there should be partnerships between K-12 and universities for preparation of school leaders; 2) universities who could not follow the suggestions of the report should discontinue preparing school leaders; and 3) state policy makers should begin licensure procedures that would define what equips an individual to effectively lead

a school (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Although the report did not produce all of the results the authors of the report hoped for, it did, however, provide impetus in the development of a set of standards for school leaders by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the first of which were first released in 1996 and updated in 2008. Currently, all accredited Educational Leadership preparation programs must follow the latest version of the standards, which now have evolved to be called The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Murphy (2006) noted two trends in educational reform that have been catalysts for change in leadership preparation programs: field-based experiences and school-university partnerships. “Research indicates that university-district partnerships are very important. They not only provide the most effective means for preparing principals for specific district and regional contexts but also expand the resources available to both university preparation programs and school districts” (Young, 2010, p.7 ). Shoho (2010) contended that strong partnerships with K-12 LEA’s can help protect university preparation programs from being attacked by outside sources. Darling-Hammond et al (2007) researched quality school leader preparation programs and found university-district partnerships to be an important component needed for the development of school leaders. Young (2010) described university-district partnerships as beneficial and critical for school leadership preparation. “Such partnerships have the potential to leverage the collective capacity of both the district and the university if they are both willing and able to work together from start to finish” (p. 1).

In Alabama, which is the context for this current research study, all Educational Leadership preparation programs were mandated in 2008 (for lead universities, 2009 for other universities) to redesign their programs to align with newly adopted program requirements and

the Alabama Standards for Instructional Leadership. One of the mandated requirements was that the Instructional Leadership preparation programs at each university had to form partnerships with K-12 local school districts. The K-12 partners were to be key players in co-designing the Instructional Leadership curriculum, co-decision makers in admissions decisions, and co-planners of internships. This study investigated the status of one of these partnerships ten years after the mandated creation of it.

In this chapter, the researcher will recap the design of the study, summarize the major findings, and discuss the findings related to the conceptual framework. In addition, the researcher will outline implications for various entities involved with Instructional Leadership programs and their partners, and propose recommendations for further research.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

After ten years of the implementation of the Instructional Leadership redesigned programs in the state of Alabama, little research has been conducted to evaluate the partnerships between universities and K-12 LEA partner districts. The purpose of this research was to conduct a case study of partnerships between one Instructional Leadership program in an Alabama university and its K12 district school partners to determine the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of those partnerships.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher aimed to answer the following central research question: What were the perceived barriers, benefits, and outcomes of the partnerships between one Alabama Instructional Leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners?

Research sub-questions included the following:

- What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?
- What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?
- What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

### **Setting**

This study captured the lived experiences of participants of one Instructional Leadership program in Alabama and two of its K-12 district school partners, as they implemented the Instructional Leadership Redesign mandates and partnership formation. The researcher examined Legacy State University (LSU) (pseudonym) and the two partner K-12 school districts of Regal City Schools (RCS) (pseudonym) and Prestige County Schools (PCS) (pseudonym). Legacy State University is in the heart of the city of Davidson (pseudonym) which is populated with 195,000 people, according to the US census in 2010. Legacy State University joined others in response to the governor's call for redesigning Educational Leadership preparation programs and was deemed a lead university to create a model for other universities to follow.

### **Participants**

Of the sixteen participants invited to participate in this study, a total of thirteen people shared their lived experiences about their involvement with partnerships between K-12 district schools and Legacy State's Instructional leadership preparation program. Each participant's account was documented through semi-structured interviews. There were two Alabama State Department of Education administrative participants who together represented the leadership of the statewide efforts in the redesign period up to the present (2004-2016). Three university

professors and three of their successors who implemented, monitored, and evaluated the redesign of Legacy State's Instructional Leadership program were also interviewed. Two participants were from partner district schools, and three participants were students at Legacy State University during and/or after the redesign of the Educational Leadership preparation programs. All participants had K-12 experience and had achieved a master's degree or above.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection and analysis function simultaneously to create emergent data in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). The primary data source for this study was audio recorded telephone interviews. To obtain several diverse perspectives in this case study, the researcher collected data from key faculty members of the Legacy State's College of Education leadership preparation program, the key personnel from one of its partner K-12 district schools, and administrators from ALSDE. Data collection began in the Fall 2015 and was completed in the Spring of 2016.

In the spring of 2015, the researcher made initial contact with Legacy State's Instructional Leadership preparation program Dean to identify key personnel involved with the redesign that mandated partnerships between K-12 district schools and the university. All interviews were conducted via telephone for the convenience of the participants and audio recorded. Demographic questions were grouped to explore variables of the participant's positional role. The interviews consisted of 20 questions and lasted between 30 and 95 minutes (See appendix \_ for interview protocol). Prior to each interview, participants were presented with an informed consent form indicating their willingness to participate if signed. Each participant was reminded of the option to withdraw from some or all of the interview and were

reassured of confidentiality. Member checking was conducted after transcription of the recorded interviews. Feedback was reviewed and updates made as indicated by participants.

Permissions were gained from the Dean to investigate archived data regarding the partnership development, design, and progress. Notes, memos, email correspondence, action plans, notes from meetings, agendas, and data were requested to be examined as archived data. Simultaneously, the researcher requested permission with K-12 district partner schools to conduct the study. A requested application to conduct research was completed and upon receiving permission, the researcher contacted candidates who were recommended from university faculty to participate in an interview. Interviews of key personnel at K-12 district schools were conducted on the telephone and recorded using an audio recording device.

After each interview was completed, the snowballing technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was utilized to ask the participant who else should be contacted to participate in the study. This allowed the researcher to gain additional participants for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Later, additional archived data was reviewed as it related to the partnership, including Southern Regional Education Board reports, the ALSDE website, and information obtained through web searches. While analyzing this archived data, the researcher decided to interview ALSDE administrators who were directly involved in the redesign process. Two ALSDE administrators were contacted via email and a telephone interview was then conducted. Table 2 depicts the sources of data:

Table 2

*Sources of Data Collection*

<b>Who</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
University Dean/Retired	Document	Booklet to form and implement partnerships
University Prof./Retired	Archived	Memorandums of understanding
All Participants	Telephone	Interviews
Website	Document	SREB Report on Alabama's Re-design
Website	Document	ALSDE Report on Alabama's Re-design
Website	Document	Re-Designed Leadership Standards

**Data Analysis**

“Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings” (Yin, 2014, p. 132). First, all tape-recorded interviews were transcribed and member-checked; the researcher reviewed all the data at least three times before developing categories, themes and patterns. As patterns emerged from the data, initial themes were given (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Second, responses were sorted and grouped by research questions. A master coding list was completed that represented all responses to each question. A frequency count was then conducted. Third, using the master coding list in step two, the researcher coded the transcript of each participant, noting when additional references were made to each response category. Finally, the researcher reviewed all of the transcripts again to confirm themes, and patterns (Borgan & Bilken, 2007). The findings were then organized to provide evidence of answering each of the research sub-questions, and selected illustrative quotes from the participants were chosen to be included in the findings report.



In addition to the analysis of the transcribed interviews, document analysis was used to help formulate a time frame and understanding of what was happening during the redesign time frame. Creswell (2007) noted that researchers can use journals during the research study and analyze public documents such as official memos, minutes, and archival materials in the data analysis process. Field notes were also utilized to formulate the researcher's thoughts and comments in relating items back to the conceptual framework.

## **Findings**

This study examined partnerships between K-12 district schools and one Instructional Leadership preparation program in an Alabama university. Several perspectives were considered in this study which included students who had attended the university after the redesign, faculty who were directly involved in the redesign and their successors, district school personnel, and state Department of Education (ALSDE) representatives who were directly involved in the redesign.

The researcher aimed to answer the following central question: What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership between one Alabama Instructional Leadership preparation program and its local education agency partners? The following sub-questions were investigated to answer the central research question:

Question 1: What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

Question 2: What were the perceived challenges or barriers in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partners?

Question 3: What were the perceived outcomes in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district partners?

Themes emerged from the interview data and those themes were used to develop the analysis described in Chapter IV of this study to answer each of the research questions. Table 8 depicts a summary of the findings from this study.

Table 8

*Findings from Legacy State University’s Partnership with Two of its Partner Districts*

*What were the perceived benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnership of an Alabama’s Instructional Leadership preparation program and its local education partners?*

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Relationships	History/Culture	Positive: Expansion of Program
Conversations	Time	Positive: Residency Experience
Collaboration		
Shared Resources	Funding	Positive: Re-design of Program
Residencies	Politics	Positive: Student Readiness
Shared Decision Making	Change	Negative: Loss of Residency
Leadership Readiness		Negative: Inability to Measure Impact
Level of Commitment		

**Discussion**

K-12 district schools and university Educational Leadership preparation program partnerships were an outcome of reform efforts for leadership preparation in Alabama in 2005. Several educational experts met and served on committees to assist with what this would mean for districts and universities. It would ultimately lead to the mandated re-design of all Educational Leadership programs in the state of Alabama, which would be renamed Instructional Leadership programs after the redesign. The State Department of Education served as the gatekeeper to ensure this process was carried out to fidelity. Three universities took the lead in the process and created models for other universities in the state to follow. Legacy State

University was one to become a model program that developed a semester-long residency for its participants, in partnership with two school districts. The researcher now presents discussion on the major findings for each research sub-question which guided the study of these partnerships.

**Question 1: What were the perceived benefits in forming and implementing a partnership between the university and district school partner?** From transcript evidence from interviews, the researcher identified several factors that facilitated partnerships between K-12 district schools and Legacy State’s Educational Leadership preparation program. Those facilitating factors included: relationships, conversations, collaboration, shared resources, residencies, shared decision making, leadership readiness and level of commitment—all of which were contributed to the process of developing the semester-long residency the university developed with its partner districts. Often respondents would discuss communication and collaboration simultaneously as they described the benefits of the partnerships. In most cases, communication was described as open, honest, and collaborative in nature. The purpose of communication as described by the respondents in this study was to garner support for the partnership and was used to obtain resources to support their semester-long residency.

***Relationships.*** Transcript evidence affirmed that relationships between the faculty of Legacy State University Instructional Leadership program and district school personnel were close. These close relationships made it easy to transfer an already established rapport into one that would facilitate a more robust Instructional Leadership partnership. Respondents referred to relationship as the purposeful interactions between K-12 district school personnel and university personnel. As a result, it was natural to include partnerships between district schools and Legacy State University. One district school respondent description of the relationship spoke to the closeness of the relationship and how it perpetuated the partnership. She disclosed, “It is a very

close relationship in that 85% of our teachers and administrators have one or more degrees from Legacy State University. It is a local university, and it is a very close partnership.” Having a close relationship established is a not an automatic fix for partnership as Legacy State University’s partnership serves as an example, but it has proven to be a benefit for those seeking to form and implement similar partnerships. The close relationship that existed prior to the mandate for redesign seemed to have given Legacy State University an advantage in initiating the partnership. The transition into partnering to prepared instructional leaders was viewed by many as a natural transition. Haynes and Lynch (2007) argued that allowing a partnership to “naturally develop through mutual agreement and mutual benefit ensures the likelihood of it being sustained” (p. 443). While the partnership benefited from the relationship enjoyed by personnel from both Legacy University and district schools, the partnership was also encouraged through conversations.

*Conversations.* It was strongly supported through the interviews that conversations were key in forming and implementing partnerships between K-12 district schools and Legacy State’s Educational Leadership preparation program. The conversations prompted urgency and commitment and engaged all parties to determine what the partnership would be, how it would look, and what would be required to maintain it. Through this process, roles were assigned. Participants discussed having meaningful conversations, listening, and involving others in the decision making process which offered mutual respect and mutual trust as relationships between the two entities developed. These conversations were both formal and informal and were perceived to be critical to promoting the partnerships. Univ. Prof. A expressed how conversations added value to the partnership. She stated: “Open communication to understand

the roles of the district and university in preparing school. We used to be an asylum and it was linear. Now it is horizontal.”

This description reflects the consensus among most of the participants’ beliefs that conversations were both helpful and purposeful in forming and implementing the partnership. Over time, the ongoing conversations and time spent together between the two organizations allowed the relationship to develop into a collaborative one which benefits all. This theme confirms what is stated in the research literature: “When professors, teachers, interns, and teachers come together in professional settings everybody learns” (McBee & Moss, 2002, p. 61).

***Collaboration.*** Transcript data showed that the respondents believed it was through collaboration that all parties were involved to the extent that they were able to plan events and trainings that would benefit both organizations. Collaboration was described as being ongoing.

Collaborative activities were also noted as one of the strengths of the partnership as it kept both organizations abreast and involved of each other’s needs and provided opportunities for the two organizations to co-plan and co-create with a singular purpose and common goal. Collaboration engendered trust among the organizations’ participants. Respondents talked about a level of comfortability and familiarity with the people involved. Their descriptions painted a picture of engaging and sharing ideas to the benefit of both organizations and setting priorities for the partnership that would later evolve into the creation of the semester long residency. Respondents also embraced their partner as part of the process or as an extension of their organization.

In addition, the collaborative planning offered an opportunity for both organizations to learn from the other. The respondents believed that the shared knowledge allowed them to remain relevant in theory and practice. Respondents shared that the ongoing collaboration

between the two organizations offered a sense of validation with students as it showed students that the two institutions were communicating and collaborating. All participants expressed their belief that collaboration was a strength of the partnership and described it as being “mutually satisfying.” Univ. Prof. H added, “Collaboration fostered relationships and facilitated the purpose of the partnership.” Young (2010) confirms that university-district partnership as beneficial and critical for school leadership preparation. “Such partnerships have the potential to leverage the collective capacity of both the district and the university if they are both willing and able to work together from start to finish” (p. 1). These collaborative activities were sometimes made possible through the use of shared resources.

*Shared Resources.* Legacy State University and district school personnel agreed that shared resources were a benefit to their partnership. Shared resources included the use of personnel for professional development services. Both the university personnel and district school personnel discussed the ability to have a common professional development opportunity. This theme emerged from several interviews in which participants discussed at length the benefit of sharing resources, which included grants that were written by Legacy State University personnel to support projects in district schools. Many of the participants recalled district school personnel who later became adjuncts who were deemed an incredible resource as they could serve as liaisons between the organizations. Respondents believed that having someone who once was a school district employee but later became LSU faculty helped the two entities link theory and practice. Respondents believed that adjuncts who were once district superintendents and taught classes had their “hands on the pulse of education; and it was real,” according to one professor. Univ. Prof. D stated: “We [faculty of Legacy State University] provided various workshops at our regional service center. Professors bring them [K-12 district personnel] to

classrooms as guest speakers and other resources. With signs like that, you can just sort of tell the environment is warm and friendly and conducive for partnerships.” Researchers agree that a major benefit of partnership is sharing scarce resources (McCord, 2002). Limited resources and economic crisis present opportunities for partnerships to forge (Russell & Flynn, 2000). Resources may be in the form of expertise—shared knowledge and common interests where the success of one is dependent upon the other (Gray, 1998).

***Residencies.*** The strongest theme from the data was that the semester-long residency was the centerpiece of the partnership. It was believed by respondents to be the most significant facilitating factor of the partnership. University personnel expressed their satisfaction and pride in the belief that the semester-long residency helped to positively impact both K-12 students’ outcomes as well as Educational Leadership preparation students’ outcomes. The semester long residency experience was widely accepted by all participants as the definition of the partnership itself. This claim was widely believed by respondents who associated the “positive impact” with the fact that several of the partnership district schools received state and federal recognition as banner schools and graduates from their programs were recipients of honor within their profession, such as Teacher of the Year, etc.

Similar beliefs were held by students who progressed through LSU’s Instructional Leadership program, district personnel, and Alabama State Department of Education administrators. All agreed that the semester-long internship was a benefit to forming and implementing the partnership. Most participants described the semester-long residency as “relevant field experience on different school levels” [elementary, middle and high school levels]. Most students noted that upon completion of the residency, they had a real idea of what

school leadership was like and were able to make decisions about their future leadership based on the real-world experience afforded by the residency. Student G stated:

My 18 week residency really kind of brought it home for me so to speak because there are things you cannot learn through textbooks and you can only learn through experiences and only learn through mentorship through principals, assistant principals or lead teachers and different levels of schools.

Brooks, Howard and Patrick (2010) described the lack of having practical experience or school leaders as a reality gap. They explained that the “reality gap” (p.420) is about how to provide the type of relevant, authentic experiences for preparation that administrators would face in the field that help prepare school leaders. This type of field experience varied from district to district and was a huge change for preparation programs and K-12 LEA practice. Legacy State University used the residencies to fill this gap and prepare students for the work of instructional leadership.

***Shared Decision Making.*** Another contributing factor to forming and implementing partnerships was shared decision making between the university and its district partners. Data proved that shared decision making was both visible and welcomed. Shared decision making was described as district schools and university faculty making joint decisions about the entire Instructional Leadership program including the selection, recruitment and retention of Instructional Leadership candidates. While the State Department of Education placed a mandate for joint decision making, Legacy State’s and district schools’ existing relationships made this transition easy. University professors described shared decision making as district schools being with them every step of the way in developing what the partnership would look like and what activities would best serve the needs of the students. Univ. Prof E shared:



And they [K-12 district schools] were with us [university faculty] every step of the way in developing what our program would look like and what activities would best serve the needs [of our students].

***Leadership Readiness.*** Another benefit that emerged from the data was leadership readiness as a facilitating factor for forming and implementing partnerships. Participants agreed that the partnership provided an 18 week residency which included placement at three levels of schools: elementary, middle and high school. Participants of the program, district personnel, university personnel and State Department of Alabama administrators all agreed that leadership readiness was a benefit to the partnership as the residency allowed an involvement in authentic leadership practice. Participants really believed that an extended opportunity in a real-world experience in school leadership prepared them for a leadership placement. All agreed that this partnership prepared future instructional leaders with realistic expectations for the job. Participants explained that through the partnership they better understood the complexities of leadership and developed an appreciation of leadership at different levels of schools. Students agreed that once completed, they were ready to take on the role of an Instructional Leader. As respondents discussed leadership readiness they categorized it as a level of confidence, and knowledge obtained with evidence of passing a Praxis test. Univ. Prof. C argued:

It was learning at all the different levels. It was an incredible experience for someone who aspires to be a principal. You are prepared more so than you would be with a ten-day catch all.

***Level of Commitment.*** The level of commitment that the university and its partners exhibited emerged as a theme across all respondents. Level of commitment referred to the

commitment to the work and purpose of the partnership. Respondents described a level of commitment to do the work of the redesign. Respondents celebrated the high level of commitment that university faculty demonstrated in lobbying for and receiving funding to support the semester-long residency from the State Department of Education and state legislators. In addition, the most visible level of commitment was described as the amount of time required to form and implement the partnership. Several participants described the amount of hours to form the partnership as “exhausting.” Others discussed the “innumerable trips and calls to the State Department.” Those involved agreed that it was laborious and very involved. While many referred to the work of the redesign as “taxing,” everyone agreed to do it. District personnel, university professors, and State Department of Education Administrators believed that the work was worthwhile. They each committed time, resources, and efforts to form and implement the partnership. They agreed with the sentiments of Univ. Prof. F who declared, “We did it because we saw the importance of it.” Higham & Yeomans (2006) indicated that a strong commitment to partnership is a benefit. Legacy State University agreed to do the work and continued to keep the work a priority.

**Question 2: What were the perceived factors that hindered partnerships between K-12 district schools and education leadership preparation programs?** This study revealed several barriers that were significant and posed as challenges to the progress of the partnerships between the K-12 district schools and Legacy State’s Educational Leadership program. The most significant barriers to partnerships included: history/culture; time, funding, politics, and change. Each theme will be discussed categorically.

*History/Culture.* History/Culture in this research was described as a barrier to forming and implementing partnerships. History and culture were discussed interchangeably by the

respondents. The barrier was defined as negative perceptions that each entity in the partnership held of each other due to prior misunderstandings of roles, responsibilities and expectations of each. This past history was referred to as “the enemy that paralyzes.” Respondents discussed history/culture as a barrier between Alabama State Department of Education administrators’ expectations and mandates and the forming and implementing of the partnership. Alabama State Department of Education administrators described it as a resistance to change by the university faculty during the initial redesign mandate.

Others described it by the metaphor of university personnel having an “ivory tower” belief of superiority to district school personnel during the initial forming of partnerships. A “privileged” knowledge may become a facilitative barrier to hinder the progress from cooperative to collaborative (Whitfield, 1994). All agreed that this barrier was difficult to overcome. Univ. Prof. F responded, “I think it is attitude and history of working separately. You are fighting history because it isn’t how it has always been done.” Traditionally, university faculty members have been perceived as the experts, but in a collaborative partnership, mutual respect, mutual voice, shared intellect and power must exist for the partnership to shift from cooperative to collaborative (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996).

***Time.*** In addition, planning time was a significant barrier to partnerships for both university and K-12 district personnel. Forming and implementing the partnership between Legacy State and K-12 district schools was a time consuming endeavor. It required time to develop collaborative relationships, time to have the many conversations needed, time for planning meetings and gathering people to form the partnership. Having time to share ideas and reach consensus on a particular idea meant that participants had to have both access and availability to each other. All respondents agreed that time was indeed a barrier. Respondents

explained how this time had to be carved from their already crowded schedules as there was no “extra time given nor remuneration provided” for the work of the redesign. Many of the faculty at Legacy State who initiated the formation of the partnership discussed how they had coursework to prepare and assessments to administer, presentations to deliver, manuscripts to publish, service and outreach—which are requirements for a tenure track professor.

Also, K-12 district schools were reeling with new initiatives from the State Department of Education, new expectations of accountability, and ongoing local changes which left very little time for additional work. Participants involved in the forming of this partnership acknowledged that partnerships required a lot of advance work, as well as ongoing work to implement it. Researchers Stephens and Boldt (2004) concluded that one problem was having time to work through the unknowns of partnership as a challenge. Univ. Prof. D concluded:

I think the greatest barriers have to do with the lack of time when there are responsibilities on both sides. Sometimes it's hard to carve out time to get into the K-12 schools without some type of release or someone else taking over some of the responsibilities.

**Funding.** Funding also prevailed as a barrier to forming and implementing partnerships. All participants agreed that money was a factor and realized that adequate funding was needed in order to sustain the partnership between Legacy State University and its district partners that offered a semester-long residency. Respondents described how funding impacted the partnership’s ability to continue the semester-long residency. Evidence from transcribed interviews across the participant spectrum points to the loss of funding as a detriment to the partnership. The semester-long residency required the instructional leader candidate to be absent from his/her teaching assignment during placement for 18 weeks. In the candidates’ absence, the

district was to provide a highly qualified substitute teacher to replace the candidate. This meant that money was needed to pay both instructional leadership candidate and the substitute.

Initially this cost was shouldered by district schools, who could apply for state funds to subsidize the costs of releasing the teacher who was in the Educational Leadership program and leaving for the semester long residency. However, in the 2008 economic downturn, schools could no longer afford the associated cost for release time. Legacy State University was instrumental in lobbying for and receiving a grant to support its program. However, funding that was once secured from state legislators soon dwindled as the interest in Instructional Leadership increased. Soon it became too little money for the demand. Costs associated with the release time for teachers became a major barrier -one that the partnerships could not overcome. Univ. Prof. C added:

Funding is the big thing. When the money was there, it ran like a clock. A lot of people were involved in it and wanted to be involved in it, but when the funds sort of dried up then we had to go back to what we use to do because we could not afford to do the residency.

*Politics.* Another emerging theme of a barrier to the partnership was politics. Politics was a barrier to the forming and implementing of partnerships. University personnel described politics as either the involvement of the State Department or the dynamics of their institution while the State Department of Education administrators described politics as the how and why certain decisions were made and priorities shifted. Respondents from Legacy State University and Alabama State Department of Education agreed that financial support was needed, but the issue was very politically charged.

University personnel understood that the Alabama State Department of Education was committed to its involvement in the redesign work. However, they also referred to the involvement as a top down approach. University Professors were concerned with the minutia of requirements from ALSDE that were described as “check off marks” universities had to accomplish for the mandate. Participants also described Alabama State Department as “restrictive” and “micro-managing.” Univ. Prof. C explained:

I do feel that they [State Department administrators] have the best intentions, but I believe it causes the institutions to be cookie cutter. It inhibits innovations because of all of these check-offs you have to do to make sure everything is lined up. That probably is the biggest concern I have for the program.

*Change.* Change emerged from the transcript data as a strong barrier to the forming and implementing of partnerships. Legacy State University lost key personnel from the Instructional Leadership program. These key individuals were the ones who started the work of the redesign. All of the key people who were instrumental in the development of the partnership retired within the same year or shortly thereafter. The information that was created was neither well-preserved nor passed down to another to continue. A lot of information was boxed and stored while other information was in the memory of individuals. All of the lessons learned, contacts made, and notes that guided potential next steps were neatly packaged away. It is noted that during the time of the retirement of the key Instructional Leadership faculty at Legacy State, the university waited before appointing a new person to take the lead. This wait time was critical because the void left no particular person to whom the torch could be passed. The replacements of the original key personnel resulted in new personnel having to start the process over again, re-contacting and reconnecting with school districts to build a partnership. The change in personnel

brought with it a change of focus, commitment and vision for the partnership. Univ. Prof. D summed:

When you have most of all your department leave, there's no institutional memory.

People are searching round just to trying to figure out things for a while. It is easy to say, it's harder to do. It's not the best situation to have everybody leave without somebody transitioning over and filling the gap.

Change was also happening at the State Department of Education level. These changes shifted the focus on the monitoring of the partnerships. ALSDE Admin. E recalled:

One of the things that happened to me and to my staff was that the federal government put enormous pressure behind and through the adaptation of that into creating evaluation systems that ties student achievement to evaluation. In the middle of all this and as we were really getting our feet on the ground about this process, the state superintendent said to me and my staff of seven, 'Kill the focus on the redesign and the teacher leader evaluation systems now because that's called for in this change.'

Simultaneously, there were changes in personnel with the K-12 district level superintendents. This change was also a huge hindrance for partnerships. One of the partner districts' superintendents who was there to hear the State Superintendent's commitment to partnerships with quality field-based experiences was no longer seated and had been replaced with a new superintendent. The new superintendent had a new focus; priorities had shifted. A lot of information failed to transfer as people transitioned. Univ. Prof. B reported:

With school boards turnover every year, that [changes] get even worse. From the top down, everyone looking above them has someone who would not last as long as they would. So that's a major impediment to this [work of the partnership].

**Question 3: What were the outcomes of K -12 district schools and university educational leadership partnerships?** There are five major findings of outcomes of the partnership. These outcomes were categorized as either positive or negative. The three major positive outcomes from the findings were the expansion of the program, residency experience, and student readiness as future school leaders. The two major negative outcomes from the findings were the loss of the semester-long residency and the inability to measure student outcomes.

*Expansion of the University Instructional Leadership Program.* The researcher found strong transcript evidence showing that as the partnerships developed, a pipeline of potential candidates for the doctoral program was an unintended positive result. And, as leadership students completed their training and were assigned to leadership roles, they then were called upon as mentor principals to assist in the residency experience. In many cases, K-12 district principals who had not completed the Educational Leadership program desired the label of an “effective principal” and began reaching out to the university to become mentor principals for those students who were residents. It was considered prestigious and desirable to be a mentor principal.

In addition, neighboring school district school leaders, and even those in neighboring states, began inquiring of Legacy State's Educational Leadership program options, specifically about the doctoral studies program. It was reported that more than 80% of the leaders at the partner district schools had received a degree from Legacy State University. The partnership



development was attributed as a factor for the Educational Leadership expansion, particularly with regards to the experience that the semester-long residency provided. Students liked the idea of getting to do the semester long internship that was offered through Legacy State. Univ. Prof. C reasoned:

Our leadership program expanded as a result of this partnership. Leaders who were already in position wanted to further their education with a doctorate degree. Others who were not in the state also inquired about getting into our program.

***Residency Experience.*** Another positive outcome of the partnership was the residency experience. This experience is described as an “incredible opportunity” for those desirous of instructional leadership training. All participants agreed that providing leadership candidates 18 weeks or a semester-long residency allowed them to be immersed in real-world experiences. Respondents discussed extensively of how the residency experience prepared them for the real job of an Instructional Leader as they had opportunity to focus on leadership practices with a high performing leader. Respondents also noted that these experiences included a mentor principal and three levels of school experience to include elementary, middle and high school. The residency experience was deliberate and planned to provide the type of experiences and field-based practices that would give leadership candidates a high quality, hands on experience with relevant tasks. District school Respondent M commented:

The residency was a practical experience and often as we see right now in other programs, people do not have a realistic view of leadership and what is needed to be an effective principal. The residency offered very real experiences with how demanding and how complex it is to be a successful leader.

***Student Readiness.*** Student readiness for future school leadership was another major positive outcome from the partnership. Respondents were confident that those who participated in the semester-long residency were more ready on day one of their appointment to serve in a leadership capacity than those who did not. This confidence was secured by conversations from students who expressed to their university professors that they felt being better able to transition from looking at their schools through a teacher lens to a leadership lens after their residency. Others explained that they knew which level of leadership they felt better suited to serve after having experience in the three different levels of school (elementary, middle, and high school). Student I commented “It [18 weeks residency] afforded me an opportunity to really understand the role of a school leader from a different lens.” These experiences yielded anticipated results which were to help future leaders identify their strengths, receive mentorship and support during their residency, and help them understand the complexity of school leadership. This allowed them the opportunity to practice their theory in a safe environment, similarly to medical residents. Student G explained, “As my residency continued, I found my leadership style, my confidence and my voice. It is hard to imagine being able to transition from a teacher to a leader within 10 days.” It was a real-world learning opportunity that involved real decisions. Students G and Student I stated that after completing a three level residency, they each knew which level of administration they wanted to pursue. This element of candidate preparation was deliberate, authentic, and purposeful by design. From all accounts, this component of the partnership was successful in achieving its goal to use best practices to prepare educational leaders. Univ. Prof. A shared:

A human factoid that grew out of this was the number of elementary people by training, design and experience decided that that is what they would really rather do when they

returned to their regular system. Their exposure to that is what helped allowed them to make that decision.

***Loss of the 18 Week Residency.*** Subsequently, one of the major negative outcomes was the loss of the semester-long residencies. Due to the lack of financial support and competition from other universities, semester-long residencies are no longer offered at Legacy State University. Like many other universities, a great deal of their Instructional Leadership program is online. The experiences of having a six week residency at each school level that allowed students an opportunity to understand the nature of school leadership and helped them decide which level of leadership they felt most called to serve is no longer available. Students must now only arrange a ten day internship that, for some, simply means to visit a school, write a reflection and complete some assignment where they can narrate an experience that is connected to a leadership standard. Univ. Prof A remarked, “The fewer experiences given to an intern, the less prepared he/she will be.” Hence, the term ‘residency’ has lost its original meaning for Legacy State University. They have now basically returned to the way it was done when critics of Educational Leadership preparation programs agreed that preparation for leadership was inadequate. Univ. Prof declared:

The major challenge is the state abandoning of what I think is good work—ten years of developing these programs. Whatever voices were able to persuade the state superintendents’ wisdom of undercutting those programs, then other institutions in the state will seize that opportunity to create somebody who is certified. End of story.

***Inability to Measure Student Outcomes.*** Although respondents believed that district school students were ultimately the beneficiaries of the partnership, the ability to measure the

partnership impact on student outcomes has yet to be determined. There is not empirical data to support those claims at this time. This negative outcome of the partnership was believed to be because of the difference in time between training and placement of candidates. Many of the candidates in the Instructional Leadership program were not immediately placed into leadership roles. In fact, many understood that there were more leaders prepared each semester through Educational Leadership programs throughout the state than there were positions available for prepared leaders to practice. This trend often left a lot of students who had been prepared for leadership without opportunity to lead for delayed periods of time. This delay sometimes extended from months to years. The delay in leadership placement meant the delay in assessing any tangible results in student achievement. Univ. Prof. B explained:

One of the things we are tracking is performance as measured by student outcomes by graduates of our program. But this is long process. They have to graduate the program and often become assistant principals before they become principals and so it takes a while before seeing those effects.

### **Comparing the Findings to the Conceptual Framework**

The findings of this study as related to partnerships between K-12 district schools and university Educational Leadership preparation programs led the investigator to engage in an analysis to determine if the findings of this study aligned with the original partnership framework chosen for the study. The original framework by Barnett, Hall, Berg and Camarena (1999, 2000) described how partnerships are formed and the process through which different levels of partnerships evolve and/or exist. They explained how, in partnerships, two independent organizations are linked together to promote an innovation. During the course of the linkage, the organizations may evolve from a vendor model, which is the lowest level of the two

organizations, to a spin-off model, which is the highest degree of evolvement. The various degrees also reflect different levels of complexities.

This conceptual framework takes into account the vulnerability of partnerships in the ongoing development of the relationship. Many factors which include complexity, length, structure, purpose, resources, and impact may cause change for partnerships at different times, levels, and/or degrees.

Barnett et al. (2010), constructed a visual (Figure 1) to represent the stages of partnerships. Figure I captures the dynamics of partnerships between a school and an external organization. Because of the authors' consideration to the ever changing nature of partnerships, this framework supports a variety of partnership types, indicating various levels of involvement, formation of structure, and level of impact. It shows a range from simple to complex relationships.

Barnett et al. (2010) identified four specific partnership models to include the: 1) Vendor model; 2) Collaborative model; 3) Symbiotic model and 4) Spin-off model. Each of these models increases in complexity and is easily identifiable on the continuum (from cooperative to coordinated to collaborative). The first model is the Vendor model. As its order suggests, it is the least complex model. This model represents a partnership that may be very narrow and short in nature. To differentiate this model from the others is to understand that this model is similar to a contract to client agreement. The terms are usually given up front for a service or benefit in exchange for another. This relationship may develop to the next level, but is often quickly terminated once the benefits are gained. On the continuum, this model is simple and independent and may move from cooperative to coordinated levels. Each organization is very independent of the other and only connects to exchange a service.

The second model is the Collaborative model. It is described as more complex than the Vendor model. It presents more difficulty to form and sustain—which is different than the Vendor model. The Collaborative model is more than a short term agreement; it requires more time to develop and requires more involvement from partners. On the continuum, this model may evolve from high coordinated to the collaboration end of the pendulum. If designed at best, this model may prove most beneficial for mutual benefits. Desired goals are often not as clear as in the Vendor model because this relationship is often more “ambitious” in nature and it makes the benefits less evident in short terms.

The third model is the Symbiotic model. This model is an even more complex partnership model in which partners not only enjoys mutual benefit, but they experience “compounding benefits through joint efforts” (Barnett et al., 2010, p. 26). On the continuum, this model is high on the collaborative end. There is a lot of interdependency. Organizations understand that the level of impact is mutual. The relationship evolves so that each organization is intertwined and shares successes or failures. The joint ventures are uniquely positioned so that accomplishments of either cannot be attained without the participation of the other.

The fourth model is the Spin-off model. As the name suggests, this partnership evolves into a completely different construct and no longer exists as it had begun. The level of complexity is highest. The two or more organizations merged to such a degree that they morphed into a new “organization” that is different than its original partnership identity where two or more organizations clearly existed. On the continuum, this is the absolute highest level of involvement. A new life cycle may replace the former existence of the partnership and start a completely new identity depending on the nature and purpose of the partnership.

Each of the models represented different ways partnerships may evolve when promoting innovation between a school and an external entity. The continuum helps to identify which level of involvement, formation of structure, and impact the different partnerships may have. Barnett et al (2010) explain that the purpose of knowing this is to help potential partnerships understand how partnerships are to develop over time and what successful partnerships appear to be.

As the researcher reviewed evidence from the study, it was determined that this framework was critical to understanding the status of the Legacy State University and its local school district partnerships. In addition, this framework helped the researcher gain insight on how the Legacy State University and its local district partnerships evolved. The diagram below is a replica of the framework presented by Barnett et al, 2010. See Figure 1.

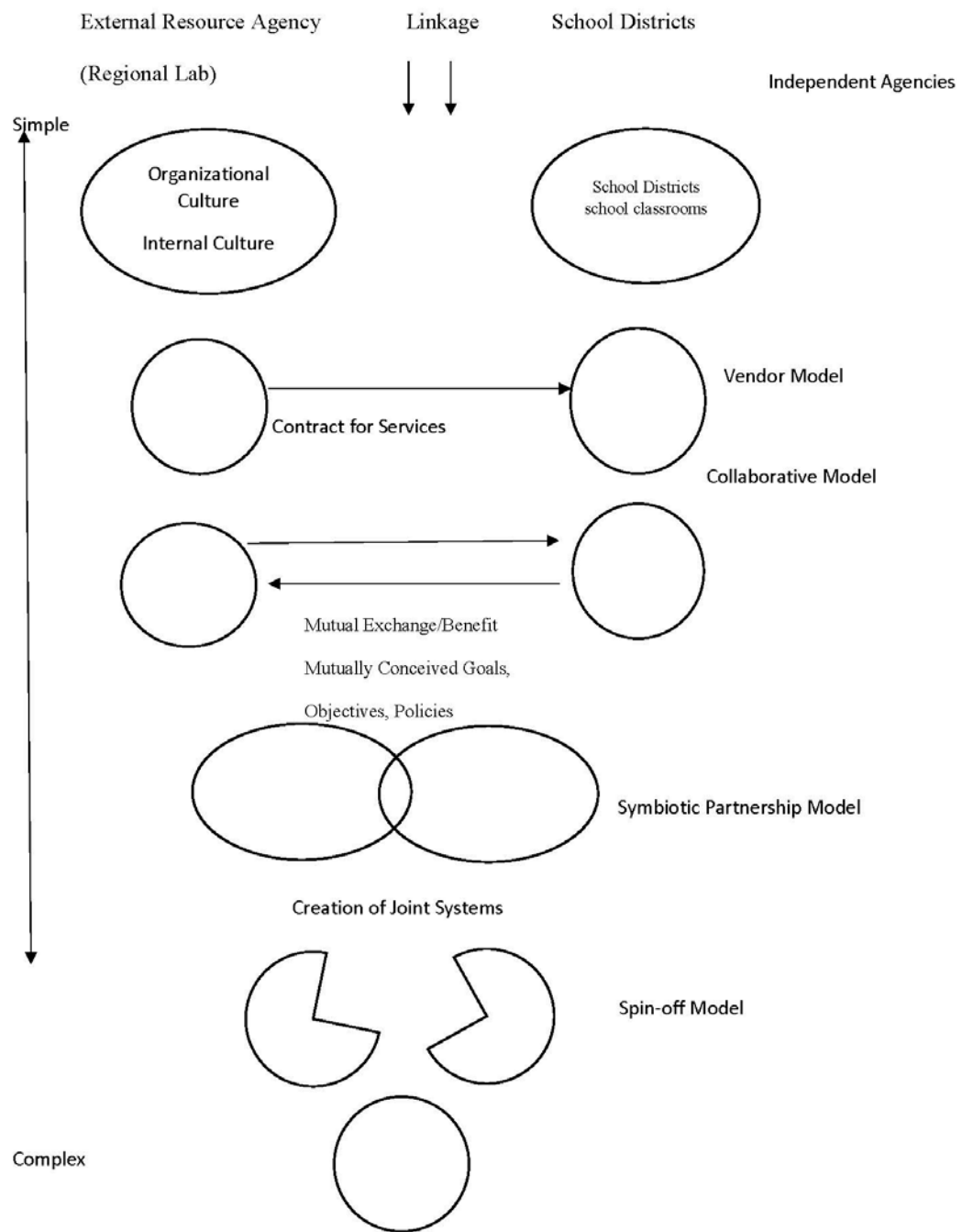


Figure 1



Figure 2 is a modified version of this framework which the researcher created to depict the evolvement of the Legacy State University and its local agency partnerships before and after semester-long residencies. This model represents the progression of the partnership in which Legacy State quickly became a leading university with model partnerships and a semester long residency collaboratively created with the partner school districts, but because of relentless barriers, later regressed and returned to the lowest level of the model. The dashed line represents regression of the partnership as it deteriorated after funding ended and the 18 weeks residency was no longer. This change significantly impacted the progression of the partnership.

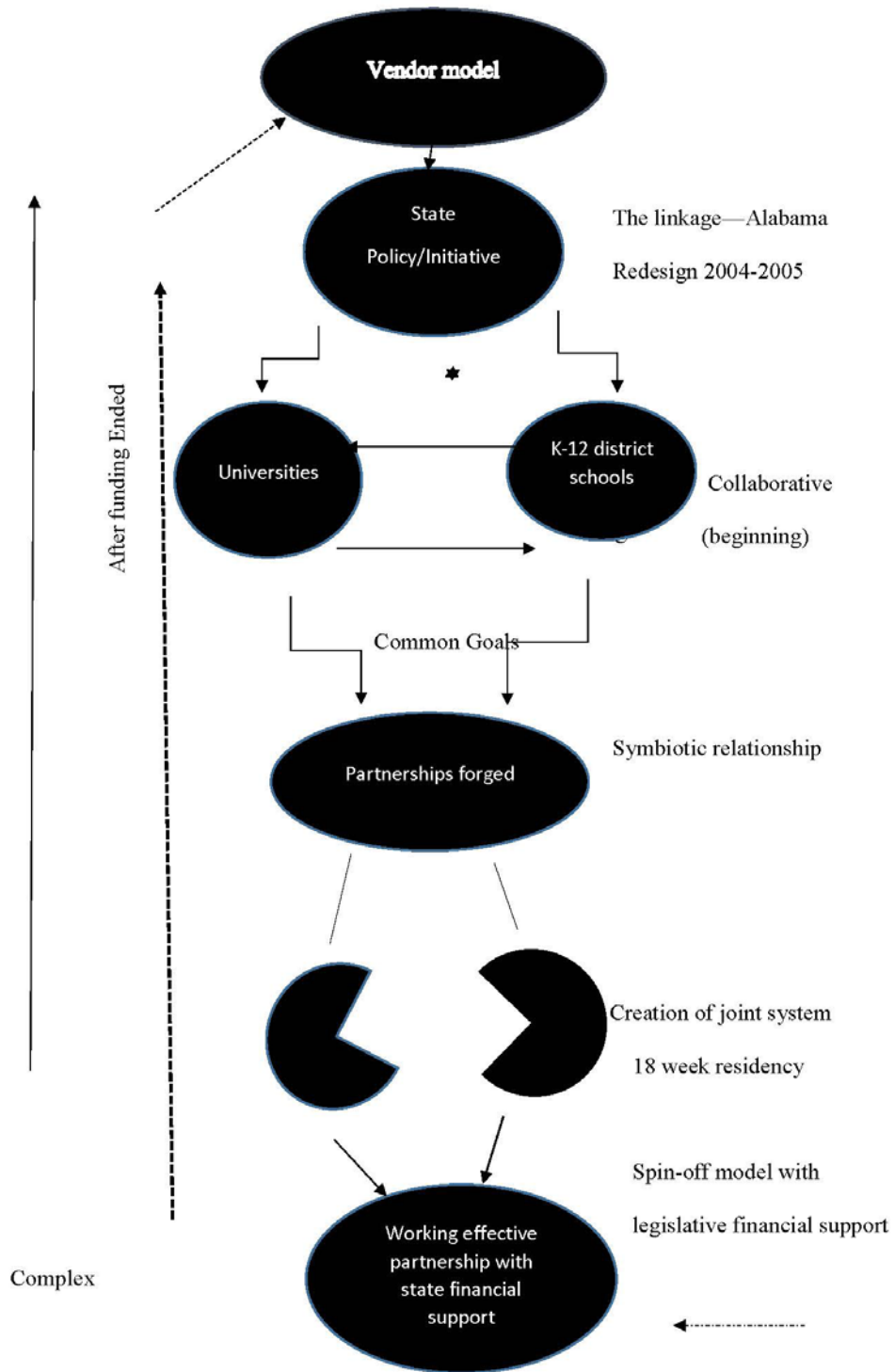


Figure 2

## **Current Reality of Legacy State University Partnership**

This modified model more accurately describes the partnership of Legacy State University and its school district partners. State policy was the linkage that forced the relationship to evolve rather quickly. In the beginning of the partnership, there was a rapid evolution accelerating past the Vendor model to the Collaborative model. Collaboration between universities and district school partners was mandated for the redesign of the Instructional Leadership programs in Alabama. As everyone was in agreement that partnerships were both needed and desired, efforts were put forth to ensure that effective partnerships were developed for the purpose of improving the way school leaders would be prepared. The centerpiece of this development would be through semester-long residencies. When funding was secured to support the residencies, the partnership continued to develop into a joint system. It is the opinion of this researcher that this partnership further evolved at the highest level, as a Spin-off. The support for this is the fact that the residencies were the goal of the partnerships, and the goal was ultimately achieved. Something new was co-constructed.

However, as funding dwindled and state mandates were not enforced with regards to partnerships, the partnership quickly dissolved and became more similar in nature to a Vendor model once again. As it presently exists, the university is preparing instructional leaders with a mostly online program, and the minimum ten day internship state requirement. School districts are eager to fill existing leadership roles, and do not want to wait for candidates to go through longer programs, and do not provide financial support for the semester-long residencies. The state only required a ten day internship and neighboring universities were offering programs with less hours for the same degree. These were competing factors with Legacy State University's

desire for a semester-long residency and ultimately their program succumbed to the pressure, thus catalyzing the partnerships' return to the Vendor model, at best.

### **Significance of the Study**

As other researchers have found, this researcher has also found that there are definite benefits, barriers and outcomes of a K-12 school district and university partnership. This study has confirmed the following: 1) Partnerships between K-12 district schools and university faculty are worth pursuing; 2) Partnerships are fragile; and, 3) Outcomes for partnerships are context dependent. These factors form the researcher's conclusion about how this study can contribute to the field of Educational Leadership in a significant way.

First of all, partnerships are worth pursuing. The benefits and positive outcomes of partnerships make the work of partnership worth the efforts required to form and implement them. Young (2010) argued that university K-12 district partnerships are critical in the preparation of aspiring leaders and concluded that partnerships are a win-win for both the university and school district. She concluded that district Local Educational Agents (LEAs) and university faculty should share in the preparation of aspiring leaders and create a contextual learning experience as well as support the leveraging of resources. The participants in the partnership between Legacy State University and two of its partner districts expressed the belief that the partnership proved to be worth the work. Univ. Prof F commented, "We did it because we saw the importance of it." Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson and Orr (2007) studied components to quality leadership preparation and reported university-K12 district partnerships as a major factor for school reform. While student achievement outcomes from the partnership were impossible to measure, the partnership for a time offered an extended residency which

prepared future leaders well for their positions as Instructional Leaders. This factor, alone, would make partnerships worth the work it takes to develop them.

Secondly, partnerships are fragile. The fragility of partnerships is a result of the many factors and dynamics involved in their formation and implementation. Barnett et al. (2010) described partnerships as “messy and complex” (p. 12). The truth is, forming partnerships is harder than it appears; it requires much work (Burton & Greher, 2007). Legacy State University and two of its partner district schools experienced the fragility of the partnership as they described the barriers of the partnership. Respondents described how barriers to partnership resulted from the complexity of the partnership. Researchers discuss at length about how dynamic partnerships are, but in addition to constant change, partnerships have life cycles and may easily deteriorate, as did the partnership between Legacy State University and its partner districts. Researchers Haynes and Lynch, (2012) shared that challenges to partnerships are “multilayered and cannot be overstated” (p. 439).

Legacy State University experienced similar challenges. Evidence confirmed the following factors as hindrances to the formation and implementation of Legacy State University partnerships: 1) history/culture; 2) time; 3) funding; 4) politics; and, 5) change in key personnel. Each of these barriers contributed to the complexity of the partnership formation and implementation. Partnerships need nurturing or they will deteriorate. There are also often external factors beyond the control of the participants that could hinder sustainability of a partnership. Barriers identified in this research have demonstrated the fragility of the partnership.

History/culture indicated the need to overcome past assumptions and separation between the district school personnel and the university faculty. History/culture was the result of years of

each entity functioning separately and doing its own thing. Time was also a barrier that made the partnership fragile. The partnerships required time from all participants to do the work. Participants in the partnership had to create time from already busy schedules to meet, discuss, create and implement the partnership design. Without having time to devote to the work, partnerships cannot sustain. Also, the lack of funding to provide release time for teachers to participate in the residency program was a source of fragility that ultimately led to the deterioration of the partnership. Another barrier that caused the partnership to be fragile was the politics that existed both internally and externally. Politically driven decisions made the partnership unstable and fragile. As political agendas shifted, so did the work of the partnership at Legacy State University. In addition, change in personnel caused fragility of the partnership. As key personnel left office and new personnel were seated at Legacy State University, Alabama State Department of Education and district schools, a shift in priority for the partnerships was evidenced by the loss of the residency program at Legacy State University. Any significant personnel changes made the partnership fragile as the “principal” person with the knowledge of the program was no longer there to promote the spirit of the partnership.

Not only are partnerships fragile, they are also context dependent. Legacy State University’s partnership was dependent on the Alabama state context, a local context, human capital context, and a financial context. The context in which their partnership existed proved vulnerable and, to some extent, unpredictable. As changes were made in the state and local contexts, unintended consequences occurred. Findings strongly suggested that changes in key personnel (human capital context) coupled with the loss of funding (financial context) significantly forced the regression of their partnership.

## **Implications**

Findings from this research have many implications for Instructional Leadership faculty, school districts, Alabama State Department of Education, and policy makers. Research participants shared unique perspectives through their stories that add to the understanding of forming and implementing partnerships between district schools and Instructional Leadership programs. Findings from this study should be shared with those who serve at the Alabama State Department of Education, University Colleges of Education, state legislators, policy makers, and district school administrators. In this case study, the process of forming and implementing partnerships between Legacy State University and its area school districts had benefits, barriers and outcomes that were evidenced by transcript data from this research, each bearing implications for those seeking to form and implement a similar partnership in two unique ways: 1) Commitment to form partnerships; and, 2) commitment to sustain partnerships.

First, Instructional Leadership faculty who seek to undertake the promotion of partnerships with school districts must have a commitment to form partnerships. One of the major facilitating factors for the partnerships in this study was the level of commitment to do the work of the partnership. Formation of partnerships required Legacy State University to establish close relationships with district school leaders and have open conversations regarding the redesign program. The partnership work included establishing relationships with district schools, hosting opportunities for conversations, and engaging in conversations about the partnership. The research revealed that the burden to start the redesign work was the responsibility of the university to promote, although the State of Alabama Department of Education required joint decisions to be made between the university and local district leaders. University faculty would have to commit to developing support, buy-in and participation from

district school leadership to begin the work. This commitment should include the allotment of time for university faculty to do the work of the partnership. This is an important factor that should be communicated to the Deans of the Colleges of Education. This commitment should also consider the financial costs associated with the partnership. University faculty must remain engaged throughout the process to help leverage resources to support the partnership as needed. This may include seeking additional internal and external funding to support the ongoing development and sustainability of the partnerships.

A second major implication for university faculty is the need for commitment to establish a systematic process to transfer information in ongoing implementation of partnerships. As university faculty retire or change position, acquired information should be stored and/or delivered to a designated “keeper” of the records. In the case of Legacy State University, there was not an established system to pass down information and when key personnel retired, information was lost. This commitment would help to sustain partnerships and without it partnerships may dissolve or shift in direction.

A third implication for university faculty is to not hinge success on one particular component of the partnership and to have a plan for sustainability. Legacy State University used their 18 week residency as the heart of their partnership. As the residency progressed, it became the definition of their partnership. However, when the residency ended, their partnership was no longer. University faculty must consider ways to sustain partnerships and not allow one aspect of the partnership become what defines it entirely.

Another implication for university faculty is the need to provide high quality field experiences with little financial demands. Having the resources to fully support the partnership must be a consideration for universities prior to implementation. Extended internships helped to



better prepare school leaders at Legacy State University, but the cost associated with teacher release time was inadequate to continue as interest grew in the program. University faculty must be creative in identifying resources and providing high quality field-based experiences for candidates of Instructional Leadership which require little to no additional expense.

Implications for school districts in forming and implementing partnerships are similar to those of university faculty. The first implication is that district personnel should also demonstrate a high level of commitment to ensure partnerships work. District personnel should co-create professional development with university personnel to help aspiring school leaders prepare for leadership opportunities. This cohort of potential leaders may be a pool from which the district could seek to employ to fill future needs. District employees who indicate interest, as well as those who possess a leadership degree or certification, should also be offered ongoing professional development. Second, the professional development provided by the district should be well planned and targeted to meet the needs of the district and to provide interested potential leaders with relevant, hands-on experience. Professional Learning Units (PLUs) should be awarded for activities designed in a cohort structure. The cohort structure would allow attendees to have experiences and learning in a small, safe community.

A second implication is for school district personnel to creatively and purposefully design opportunities for leadership candidates to get immersed into different levels of school experiences. All participants from this study believed that the residency was a great success because it offered different levels of experience with mentor principal leaders. District schools must identify successful leaders and carefully place teachers at different levels of schools to ensure the candidates have relevant experiences that are aimed to prepare them for the role of an instructional leader. This would include training mentor principals and providing a structure of

expectations of experiences that candidates should have. This work should be jointly planned with university personnel.

A major barrier that occurred during forming and implementing the partnership was the loss of funding to support the residencies. Implications for the State Department of Education are clear from the findings of this study. The first implication for the State Department of Education administrators is that they should avoid top down initiatives, however well-intended. Top-down initiatives are often met with resistance from those expected to implement them. The commitment to form partnerships should always include conversations with the entities involved in order to have feedback, buy-in into how initiatives will be implemented. Legacy State University agreed to the need for the work but did not appreciate the many check-off requirements that they believed the State Department of Education was mandating. The State Department of Education involvement was not described as support to get the work done, rather, many professors saw the State Department of Education as interfering and micro-managing. The State Department of Education would need to have conversations with the university and the school district leaders and provide support through the process of forming and implementing partnerships. This attitude would show a commitment to both forming and sustaining partnerships.

A second implication for State Department of Education administrators is to provide financial support for what they require. If the State Department of Education cannot financially support an initiative, the non-funded initiative should not be a mandate. Inadequate funding resulted in the loss of the Legacy State residency program that the partnership developed; the partnership collapsed.

A third implication for the State Department of Education is to ensure fairness for all parties when mandates are made. When joint decisions are to be made by separate entities, both entities should have the same expectations. The partnership mandate placed burden on the universities to make the partnerships work, but the expectation was for it to be done through collaboration with school districts. The school districts had no mandate to form the partnerships, or to sustain them. The burden was all on the universities.

A fourth implication for the State Department of Education is to look at the impact of those trained through the 18 weeks residency to compare to those trained through a ten day internship to see if there is a measurable difference on the quality of leadership and its impact on student achievement in K-12 district schools.

Finally, there are implications from this case study for policy makers. One implication is that policy makers must continue to review, monitor and evaluate what works and support that work. The loss of the semester long residency was a barrier that respondents shared disappointment to lose. Policy makers must stay abreast of current research in education and commit to support what works. Another implication is that policy makers should have meaningful conversations with those who are actually implementing programs and examine those programs to determine their worth. One of the purposes of the partnership was to connect theory to practice. Policy makers should consult with experts in the field prior to making decisions that may impact generations of school leaders and the children they may serve.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The findings from this study provided an in-depth examination of one partnership between a university Education Leadership preparation program and K-12 school district. The study revealed the evolution of the partnership from its inception to the height of collaboration,

and then sadly, the regression of the partnership to a low level status. The benefits, barriers, and outcomes of the partnerships were investigated and the findings were compared to the Barnett et al. (2010) conceptual framework of partnership development. In consideration of all of the findings, further research is warranted. First, this study should be replicated to examine the partnerships of other leadership preparation programs in the same state. Using other universities and their partners, further research should be conducted to determine facilitating factors, hindrances and outcomes of their partnerships. It would be of interest to replicate this study with other universities which had extended residencies and those which only had 10 day residencies/internships to determine if student outcomes in schools where their graduates were hired were measured and if so, if there were differences. The replication would be useful in confirming or disconfirming results of the existing research.

Second, the research should be expanded. The author suggests expanding this research to study partnerships between Educational Leadership departments and school districts in other states. This expansion should include investigating different state mandates and conducting multiple case studies across several states.

Third, the research should be expanded to include participants from Historically Black Universities. All of the research participants in this study were white. To purposefully include diverse representations of participants may yield different results.

Last, future researchers should consider the use of a different conceptual framework. While the framework used was significant for this study, the use of Bolman and Deal's (2010) four frames for organizational leadership which includes the following frames - structural, political, symbolic and human resources - would provide additional information with regards to partnership experiences. Examining partnerships from the structural lens would help readers

understand partnership from a building level perspective and those elements included in this perspective. Examining partnerships from a political lens may broaden the readers understanding of the extent of political influence. Examining partnerships from a symbolic perspective would help readers understand the power of symbolic leadership more succinctly. Examining partnerships from the human resources lens would bring greater attention to those human elements of partnerships. Repeating this study using the four different frames would guide researchers to understanding partnership from different lenses.

### **Closing Statement**

Through this case study, the researcher has identified, assessed and discussed the facilitating factors, barriers, and outcomes of one university Educational Leadership preparation program and its K-12 school district partnerships. It is the hope of the researcher that the partnerships which included semester-long residency experiences would be re-considered for future implementation in Alabama. It is also the investigator's hope that policymakers will be made aware of the negative implications of a decrease in the state's pool of future leaders. And, with that understanding, that policymakers would join efforts with the Alabama State Department of Education and universities to recommit to funding extended residencies. When researched- based best practices are known for leadership preparation in a time of increased accountability for educational leaders, why then, would "experts" choose not to implement those best practices?

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