The Mentoring Experiences of Novice Principals in Rural Alabama

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural Alabama. Novice principals were defined as principals in probationary status, which in Alabama involves the first three years in this position. The focus of this research was on gaining an in-depth understanding of the mentoring relationships and experiences of these principals. The study examined the perceived role of the mentor, the outcomes of the mentoring experiences of these novice principals, the factors that hindered the mentoring relationship or experiences, and the facilitating factors that fostered their success. The researcher used a qualitative case study approach because it was the best way to capture the essence of the principals' experiences. This study identified three major recurring themes of the mentoring roles: guide, encourager and partner. The study identified four major recurring mentoring outcomes: professional growth, which involved administrative and leadership skills; confidence and self-assurance; and appreciation for mentoring. There were two major hindrances: lack of support and time constraints/distance, and the three facilitating factors: trust, support, and availability. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the implications of the findings for practice and for further research.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Educators in K–12 settings are being stretched to the limit as their role now encompasses not only teaching specific content, but also functioning as frontline social workers (Lumsden, 1998). Parks (1983) asked, "How does one compensate professionals for public criticism, limited assistance, disruptive students, large classes, and the lowest salaries paid to highly educated personnel in the nation?" (p. 5). As a partial answer to this question, a report National Center for Education Statistics (1997), written decades ago, noted that the factors that contribute to job satisfaction and high morale among American educators are "more administrative support and leadership, good student behavior, teacher autonomy, and an optimistic school atmosphere" (p. 6). Additionally, it is important that faculty and staff in school settings have leaders who allow and encourage them to have input into change initiatives that may affect teaching, learning, and achievement (Griffin & Green, 2012; Murley, Keedy, & Welsh, 2008).

The school leader not only impacts faculty satisfaction, he or she is also an essential element in student success. Although Leithwood (2010) found that teachers had the most significant impact on student learning and achievement, he also discovered that the principal's role in student success was second only to that of teachers, accounting for almost twenty-five percent of the school's impact on student learning and achievement (Leithwood, 2005). This makes it imperative that principals be prepared to do their job effectively.

Lyon and Maxwell (2007) noted that a leader is an individual with strategic visionary attributes who is willing to be self-sacrificing and able to go beyond individual self-beliefs in

order to obtain and accomplish the greater good and is willing to step up and take command when others need someone to look up to. Lyon and Maxwell (2007) also viewed the leader as someone who is ready to take the responsibility for the followers, has a philosophy that serves a purpose beyond oneself, and makes the difficult decisions that others might not be willing to make. Leaders of high-achieving schools realize that they do not have all the best solutions, and thus, they work to ensure that a collaborative decision-making process is in place (Murley, Keedy, & Welsh, 2008). Newmann, King, and Young (2000) interject that successful school leaders thrive on the team rather than relying on any one person to transform a school.

The importance of this job makes it highly demanding and Hansford ad Ehrich (2006) noted that this stressful title of being "principal" is not appealing anymore, which is leading to shortages in this position. In addition to the responsibilities and stresses of this position, in most cases, there is a lack of support during the principal's initial induction period into his or her role as a new principal. During the first few years on-the-job, most principals have had to learn by trial and error, in a secluded environment, and with limited feedback. Life during this induction period can cause novice principals to feel overwhelmed and without the assistance they need, they may burn out early and at a high rate (Johnson, 2008). Johnson (2008) stated burnout of principals has been an ongoing problem in the U.S. since the 1980s.

Many principals come from the teacher ranks. There are significant differences in the work of a teacher and that of a principal. The thinking of a teacher is restricted to a single room of students while the principal is responsible for the entire student body as well as having reporting duties to higher management within the district (Johnson, 2008). Thus, making this transition from being a teacher to a principal invites new and unique challenges which may prove difficult to deal with.

The vast challenges school leaders face range from day-to-day administrative decisions, such as ordering school supplies and building maintenance, to more important curricular decisions such as determining which courses to offer to students and disciplinary and personnel problems, which must be addressed in a timely manner. Furthermore, at the end of the day, the success of the students and the school as a whole comes under the responsibility of the principal (Johnson, 2008). Ashton and Duncan (2012) suggest that keys to becoming an effective principal are: beginning with a plan, pre-planning for possible challenges, and finding ways to overcome the challenges. Principals operate in many types of school settings. This study examined principals in rural environments who were in their first years (non-tenured) of the principalship.

Defining Rural School Settings

The classification of an area as rural is not uniformly understood. The U.S Census Bureau states that "rural" encompasses all populations, housing, and territories not included within an urban area. Thus, whatever is not urban is considered rural. Their definition for Urbanized Areas (UAs) is 50,000 or more people; and rural areas are those that have at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. Bollman and Alasia (2011) define rural as "any population in towns or municipalities outside the commuting zone of urban centers with a population of 10,000 people or more" (p. 6). Rural can also be defined by economic activities such as farming, by natural surroundings such as a forest, or by service areas such as hospitals (Pizzoli & Gong, 2007). The National Center for Educational Statistics, when dealing with school districts, introduced a three (3) tier definition of rural. They used the locale codes of 41–rural fringe (area within five (5) miles of an urban area), 42–rural distant (more than five (5) but less than twenty-five (25) miles from an urban area), and 43–rural remote (more than twenty-five (25) miles from an urban area).

In short, researchers do not use a standard definition of the word 'rural' when studying elements within this type of setting. The definition adopted for this study was that developed by the National Center for Educational Statistics.

The Rural School Leader

Urban and rural school districts deal with some of the same issues. The National College for School Leadership (2003) led a study of new principals in urban as well as rural districts and the challenges they each may face. They noted seven commonalities among them. These commonalities are: professional isolation, legacy of previous leader, time management awareness of school budget, ineffective staff members, school improvement, and site management.

Although there may be common elements in the role of urban and rural principals, Hobson, Brown, Ashby, Keys, Sharp and Benefield (2003) have determined that in rural school districts, some issues can be more intensified. This finding is confirmed by Clarke, Stevens, and Wildly (2006) who state that a "rural principal is responsible for areas such as "accountability, planning, monitoring, reporting, school discipline, liaison for community/school, being the public face, and school performance" (p.78). Force, Bard, Gardener, and Wieland (2005) determined that rural principals are involved more in the educational realm but have less support than their counterparts in non-rural school settings. The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL, 2005) reported that principals in rural school districts have a heavier load when compared to leaders in non-rural larger schools. Southworth (2004) found that although they had many similar responsibilities, principals of small (rural) schools tend to be more detached from helpful and needed resources, programs, and other principals than principals in other settings. It may

thus be plausible that principals in rural schools may need to have some skills and knowledge that differs from their counterparts in urban and suburban settings.

Interestingly Lock, Budgen, Lunay and Oakley (2012) found that most principals in rural settings are encouraged to apply for the principal position by someone in the district. This may have something to do with the fact that superintendents in rural districts stated they wanted to hire a novice principal who is aware of the community politics and social awareness (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009).

Schuman (2010) conducted a study in Pennsylvania consisting of four rural high school principals and the findings pointed to the fact that rural principals had more of an impact if they had ties to the community. Lock, Budgen, Lunay and Oakley (2012) agreed with Foster and Goddard (2003) that a rural principal needed community ties for the sake of dealing with stakeholder and community tensions. The importance of this community connection was verified by Morford (2002), who completed a study of 10 rural high school principals in which he discovered that only one of the principals remained in the position after three years. Out of the nine who left within a three-year span, eight of the rural high school principals stated that they never connected with the community as an educational leader. Jentz and Murphy (2005) also noted the importance of this community building when they stated that rural principals must engage in relationship building with the community, parents and key stakeholders. Clarke and Stevens (2009) reported that since rural districts tend to be conservative, it may take a while for parents and the community to trust a new principal, so new principals needed to place socialization high on their to-do list. Duncan and Stock (2010) define socialization as "the process of learning about the culture of a community and organization, along with cultural norms and conceptions of appropriate and expected behavior" (p. 298).

Studying this issue, Thomas and Hornsey (1991) concluded that many rural principals are overwhelmed by the workload. There is an abundance of paperwork, meetings, and interviews with little to no help from the secretary (if there is one). In short, Thomas and Hornsey (1991) found that rural school districts can have unwarranted high demands that may be too much for novice principals in the community to deal with.

Mentoring for Leadership Development

About 20 percent of principals new to a school leave their posting within one or two years, leaving behind a school that generally continued on a downward academic slide after their departure, according to a study released by the RAND Corp (RAND Corporation, 2012). One strategy that can help with a novice rural principal's transition and foster success is mentoring. There is not a universally accepted definition of mentoring. Johnson (2008) described a mentor as a professional who provides support, assistance, and guidance to beginners to promote their professional growth and success. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) note that mentoring is an important means of providing support to teachers transitioning into principal positions. Ashburn, Mann and Purdue (1981) describe mentoring as personal relationships for the purpose of professional instruction and guidance. Samier (2000) suggests that mentoring relationships are an important element in fostering one's professional growth. Hansford, Tennent, and Ehrich (2003) found that mentoring through personal and confidential relationships offers personal and professional growth. Whatever the description, mentoring is generally viewed as a relationship between an experienced person and a novice that is focused on fostering the growth and development of the person new to the job or situation.

Mentoring can be formal or informal. Carruthers (1993) stated that a formal mentoring program tends to be one in which the head person, in the school setting, the superintendent,

school board or state legislature require that a mentoring program be implemented for various individuals within the system. When such programs are mandated for school administrators, prearrangements for relationships are generally developed through formal arrangements. Materials needed for this plan of action have been arranged (goals, timelines, and interactions) (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). In contrast, informal mentoring generally takes place by chance, stemming from relationships/friendships that cause an administrator to become close with another administrator because they have common links and interests (Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992).

Leadership mentoring is an induction strategy that supports principals in obtaining skills, knowledge, and confidence to become successful principals/instructional leaders (Killeavy, 2006; Rhodes, 2012; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Daresh (2004) suggested that the use of mentoring programs is a powerful tool in the preservice preparation, induction, and ongoing in-service education of school administrators. Saidun, Tahir and Musah (2015) found, in their work with head-teachers (the term used for principals in the United Kingdom), that mentoring had drastically improved them as school leaders as well as helping them develop their professional values. Saidun, Tahir and Musah (2015) found that mentoring led to the creation of a knowledge sharing culture that lifted leaders' spirits and improved their knowledge related to school leadership.

Spiro, Mattis and Mitigang (2007) agreed that principal mentoring caught many districts' attention with hopes of alleviating pressure, stress and the shortage of new principals. An example of such a program is Entry Year Program (EYP), a two-year pilot program of an Administrative Leadership Academy (ALA) that delivered quality professional development to enhance growth and learning for principals. The Entry Year Program (EYP) assisted novice

principals with the development of their school (administrative) portfolio. The EYP Program was researched by the Ohio Department of Education which learning experiences were mandated through their standards.

On a national level, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) provides professional research-based and peer-tested resources to assist principals in becoming visionary school leaders. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) supports novice elementary school principals' development through a mentoring program. NAESP's National Mentor Training and Certification Program (2017, January 23) offers a professional development program to help build skilled leaders (https://www.naesp.org).

Cognizant of the issues related to the importance of the school leader and this high turnover rate in the early year, the governor of the state of Alabama — the state in which this study occurred — established The Governor's Congress on Educational Leadership in 2015. The Congress was given the charge to work with a design team composed of a variety of stakeholders to create small/statewide pilots and evaluations for a program entitled the Alabama New Principal Mentoring Program (ANPM).

The Alabama New Principal Mentoring Program was designed to promote the success of "first-time" principals. Initially, there was an optional two-year mentoring and support program for new school principals, supported by the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) through federal ESEA, Title II, Part A funding. The program was implemented for the first time in 2010. Each participating principal was assigned a trained mentor who would help him/her create a development plan and a map of various learning activities that would facilitate professional growth based upon the Alabama Continuum for Instructional Leader Development. Some of the areas principals were trained on were: Stages of Mentoring, Mentor Standards, New

Principal Concerns, Mentoring vs. Coaching, Leading in a Culture of Change, Discovering Your Strengths, The Art of Effective Feedback, along with The Art and Science of Mentoring and Supporting Effective Mentoring.

The program was designed to provide a framework and research-based practice for novice principals (2017, January 23) (http://www.alsde.edu/sites). The program was implemented on a pilot basis for the first time in 2010. Each participating principal was assigned a trained mentor who would help him/her create a development plan and a map of various learning activities that would facilitate professional growth based upon the Alabama Continuum for Instructional Leader Development.

After the novice principals, mentors and district liaisons all provided feedback stating the program had a positive impact on novice principals in their transition (http://www.alsde.edu/sites/memos/Memoranda/FY12-2075.pdf). Although, state policy does not require districts to implement these aspects of an induction and mentoring program, based upon the recognized need and this positive feedback, in 2012 Dr. Thomas (Tommy) Bice, who was the Alabama State Superintendent at the time, sent a memo to all Alabama school systems encouraging them to take advantage of the ANPM. The program is still available in the state and is administered through the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS).

Purpose of the Study

The role of principal has changed from management to instructional leader, and the instructional leader's role requires a different set of knowledge and skills. Additionally, the role of the rural principal has some unique features and challenges which may be dealt with more effectively through mentoring. The benefits of mentoring for new principals have been established by a number of researchers including Killeavy (2006), Rhodes (2012), Wise and

Hammack (2011), and Daresh (2004). Mentoring programs have been established in many educational leadership programs (Rowley, 1999), through national organizations (Hale & Moorman, 2003), and at the state level in the state in which this study was conducted. Yet, there is little research on the role of mentoring in building these skills in principals in general and in rural settings in particular, and there does not appear to be any research on this topic in the state in which this study occurred. There is minimum data available about the degree to which these principals are receiving mentoring or about quality of the mentoring experiences in terms of enabling novice principals to succeed in rural settings. Thus, there is a need to explore the mentoring experiences of principals in rural settings.

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural settings in Alabama. Novice principals are defined in this study as individuals in their first three years of the principalship. In this state, this is considered a probationary period for principals.

Central Research Question

The central research question for this study was: "What are the mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural Alabama?" There were four sub-questions.

1. How do novice rural principals in Alabama describe and define their mentor's role?
2. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as outcomes of their mentoring experiences?
3. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their mentoring experiences?
4. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their mentoring success?

Significance of the Study

Research Design

A qualitative research design was used to obtain data that gave insight and understanding about new rural principals' perceptions concerning the mentoring experiences that occurred during their first to third year which is considered as probationary in the state in Alabama. The goal was to obtain data from interviews which would give accurate accounts of experiences of principals discussing how their professional learning occurred within a formal mentoring relationship.

The researcher used random purposeful sampling and selected these participants to participate in the study. Sandelowski (2000) defined this particular sampling strategy as "a large pool of potentially information-rich cases and no obvious reason to choose one case over another" (p. 249). The researcher contacted the Director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and the Alabama State Department to ask for a list of principals participating in the state CLAS formal mentoring program. CLAS and ALSDE worked hand-in-hand on the Alabama Mentoring for New Principals program. The researcher then contacted the school superintendent or principal to gain approval to interview, depending on the approval system used within the school district. This resulted in a group of 15 novice principals, 9 of whom agreed to participate. There were some principals' who lived close enough to have face-to-face interviews and those who were not close agreed to skype or participate via telephone conversations. The interviews, which lasted 45–90 minutes were audiotaped and transcribed. They then were sent to the interviewees for a member check. Data collection and analysis processes are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Significance

In the field of education, new teacher mentoring has been illuminated, but very little research has been conducted on mentoring new principals, particularly in rural areas. The results of this study can be used by educational leadership professors who prepare principals who will serve in rural districts. Similarly, superintendents and others responsible for principal development in rural schools in Alabama may find this study enlightening. The State Education Department of Alabama may also be interested in knowing about the unique challenges that rural principals face when it comes to accessing mentoring as a professional development support. This could, in turn, lead to policy and program changes that would address the unique needs of the rural principal.

The study should also be of value to schools, school systems and those involved in school leadership development through mentoring in other states and at the national level. It should also provide important information to researchers and practitioners who examine mentoring programs and relationships.

Assumptions

1. There was an assumption that the data provided by the participants was an accurate description and their perceptions were truthful.
2. There was an assumption that the principals selected for this study were representative of similar principals in the state.

Limitations

1. This researcher only interviewed a select number of rural principals in Alabama.
2. Only principals were interviewed.

3. This study only focused on rural schools.

4. The study will not be generalizable beyond the population studies.

Definitions of Terms

Formal Mentoring – Mentoring which is mandated and/or involves specific guidelines and structures which generally pairs someone with knowledge and/or experience with a novice with the purpose of transmitting and/or sharing knowledge, assistance, or advice which will inform and support the novice.

Informal Mentoring – A relationship between two or more people which involves having a friendly and relaxed relationship in which the mentor teacher advises helps and supports the less experienced mentee.

Mentor – One who is responsible for providing support to an individual (mentee) who is usually a novice in the profession.

Probation (ary)- The testing or trial of a person's conduct, character, qualifications, or the like; the state or period of such testing or trial.

Rural Schools – Rural schools are those that serve communities of 2,500 or fewer in population.

Tenure – In the United States and Canada, tenure is a contractual right of a teacher or professor not to have his or her position terminated without just cause. It is awarded after a probationary period.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the study of mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural areas of Alabama. It included a definition of rural schools, information about the rural school leader and defined and described the value of mentoring. The chapter also

detailed the purpose of the study, presented the conceptual framework, listed the research questions, and summarized the research design, significance, assumptions, limitations and definitions used in the study. The next chapter presents a literature review of the topics important to this study.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of principals in rural settings in one southeastern state. This chapter presents a review of the literature on this topic and provides a foundation for the development of the conceptual framework upon which the study was grounded. It provides background information essential to understanding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study and its purposes. Relevant studies, theoretical articles, books, and reports describing these topics are included in the literature review.

The chapter begins with an examination of the changing role of principals and the need to provide mentoring support to them as they enter this position. This is followed by sections on principals as instructional leaders, mentoring for principal growth and the definition, purposes and processes of mentoring, an explanation of formal and informal mentoring, and the structures and processes of these mentoring endeavors. The next sections deal with the roles and frameworks of mentoring and mentoring novice principals. The benefits of mentoring are next, along with the benefits for the mentees, benefits of mentoring for mentors and mentors and the organization. This is followed with research on elements that help create successful relationship, matching, the mentor, and the desired characteristics of mentors and mentees. The final sections in the review of literature deal with the desired mindset of the mentees, the mentor training process the conditions of adult learning, and evaluating and monitoring effective mentoring

programs. This is followed by the conceptual framework. The chapter ends with a short summary.

The Role of the School Principal

Principals play a central role in the effectiveness of any school and have a significant impact on student achievement and school culture (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). Over the past three decades, school leadership responsibilities have been defined primarily as fostering student achievement and success. The passage of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2001) and the *Race to the Top* (USDoE, 2009) initiatives, mandated attainment of school and district academic performance levels to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements of schools throughout the country. Meeting these benchmarks and demonstrating achievement within schools requires principals to take responsibility for their schools' performance or face consequences (USDoE, 2009).

In order to meet this obligation, educational leaders must possess a broad range of skills, such as data analysis, development of effective staff communication, and understanding and engaging in data collection and analysis processes. Thus, they must serve as the instructional leader of the school.

Principals as Instructional Leaders

Instructional leadership grew as a concept from the effective schools' movement and continues to be refined and developed based on increased accountability, reform efforts, and the changing roles and responsibilities of the principalship. It supports the notion that principals must possess strong leadership skills in the area of instruction and foster high expectations for teaching and learning within a supportive culture (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013).

The literature has illuminated a broad list of principals' responsibilities that might fit within the construct of instructional leadership. For example, establishing a vision, being visible within classrooms, engaging in frequent communication, creating professional learning communities, using data to determine the use of instructional strategies, and monitoring student achievement. Hvidston et al. (2015) identified similar behaviors critical to effective instructional leaders that include engaging in shared decision making, supporting instruction, monitoring instruction, and providing resources.

Zepeda (2013) described instructional leadership as a combination of effective teacher supervision and evaluation strategies aligned to targeted professional development. Another critical factor in instructional leadership that Zepeda identified is the ability of principals to develop a sense of collegiality among teachers and to create environments in which teachers continually learn about effective instruction.

Although instructional leadership is the primary duty of principals as they attempt to improve teacher and student performance, principals also need to maintain a proficient level of organizational leadership (Stronge, 2013). Sometimes referred to as management skills, principals require organizational leadership skills because the day-to-day duties of the principalship are time-consuming and cause stress for many principals, especially novice ones (Claxton & Smith, 2014; Markow, Macia & Lee, 2013; Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2013).

Research by the Wallace Foundation (2010) found that to be an effective principal, leaders should be leaders of learning. Being a leader of learning entails five key components: a leader who is shaping a vision of academic success (for all students); creating a climate

hospitable to education; engaging in cultivating leadership in others; constantly improving instruction; and being comfortable with managing people, data, and processes.

It is obvious that school principals face a dizzying array of tasks associated with managing a highly complex organization (Markow, Macia & Lee, 2013). In addition, new assessments and evaluation processes which some administrators face adds another level of stress. For example, 34 states have passed legislation to comply with Race to the Top (RTTT) legislation, which requires principal evaluation systems aligned to rigorous outcomes including student performance data (Jacques, Clifford, & Hornung, 2012).

Some believe that this emphasis on transforming how principals are evaluated by including student performance was needed because past principal evaluation reform models have frequently been cursory, leading to ambiguity regarding principal standards and performance expectations (Stronge, 2013). Similar to teachers, principals require accurate feedback from evaluation systems to meet student improvement goals and district expectations. However, researchers have long criticized state and district principal evaluation systems, for the haphazard manner by which these systems are implemented, and the confusion and inconsistency these evaluation systems contribute to the educational profession (Jacques, Clifford, & Hornung, 2012). As a result, research indicates that principals' perceptions regarding their evaluation criteria are quite negative. These findings are supported by both the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) (Clifford & Ross, 2011).

The Wallace Foundation (2010) believes that school districts should regularly evaluate performance-based compensation systems to assess their impact on increasing student achievement. They also suggest that the assessment systems for principals should use multiple

measures that are closely aligned with state standards of college and career readiness, include performance-based measures, and measure individual student growth from year to year. Further, the Foundation stresses that the U.S. Department of Education should collaborate with researchers and serve as a clearinghouse to identify best practices of performance-based compensation systems and that school districts should constantly engage in activities to retain and recruit effective principals (Wallace Foundation, 2010).

Rapid educational change and external pressures and demands present complexities for the building leader and require a commitment of time and acquired knowledge in order for that leader to impact teaching and learning positively at the school-site level. This is particularly difficult for the novice principal. New principals must place a high priority on quality instruction and provide specific feedback to teachers and support for purposeful change. As one first year principal said about this, "At times, it's like I'm maneuvering in a minefield. Things blow up and I crawl out of the hole" (Lovely, 2004b, p. 53). This description suggests that the first year of the principalship is extremely challenging. The "long hours, excessive workload, and insurmountable expectations from several opposing factions can lead to unmanageable stress" (Lovely, 2004b, p. 55). Lovely (2004b) stated that these stressors afflict almost all principals but present an exceptional challenge for the inexperienced first-year principal.

Development of the necessary skills to be a successful principal requires time and an understanding of how to offer guidance and support for effective results (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). Based on the role of the principal, the University Council for Educational Administration confirmed that states and other educational agencies must strive to design programs for new leaders in order to shape leadership behaviors and attitudes that support needed change in school culture and have a focus on quality instruction (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014).

Mentoring for Principal Growth

One method for providing support and guidance to new principals is through the creation of mentoring programs. Mentoring is a complex process and involves building important relationships. Mentoring provides an opportunity for instructing and improving leadership skills. In this study mentoring is being viewed as a proactive move for school systems support the growth and development of principals. Principal mentoring can foster skills in instructional leadership specifically related to teacher performance, observation, and reflective feedback (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; James-Ward, 2013). Furthermore, new principals receiving mentoring from experienced and knowledgeable principal-mentors report success in improving school climate and quality instruction as indicated by increased test scores and observable instructional differentiation (Mason, 2012). There are many definitions of mentoring and it has multiple purposes.

Definitions, Purposes, and Structural Processes of Mentoring

Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016) wrote that mentoring is a powerful personal development and empowerment tool. It is an effective way of helping people progress in their careers and is becoming increasingly popular as its potential is realized (Schechter, 2014). Mentoring is generally defined as a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences (Blom, 2011; Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Mentoring is sometimes defined as a professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge to enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal growth (Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012). Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016) see mentoring as a developmental

relationship between a more experienced professional (mentor) and a less experienced partner, referred to as protégé. It is a form of helping relationship based upon mutual trust and respect and involves the mentor providing psychological support to the mentee (Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016). Mentoring is an intentional nurturing process that fosters the development of the protégé towards his/her full potential and is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the beneficiary (Bloom et al., 2011; Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012).

According to Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016), mentoring is derived from a Greek word, meaning ‘’enduring,’’ and therefore, they defined it as a sustained relationship between the experienced professional or adult and less experienced professional or youth. Through continued involvement, the experienced professional or adult offer supports, guidance and assistance as the less experienced or younger colleagues goes through a difficult period, faces new challenges or works to correct earlier problems on the job (Bloom et al., 2011; Sciarappa & Mason, 2014).

Formal and Informal Mentoring

Mentoring relationships are of two primary types–formal and informal (Desimone et al., 2014; Torney-Welsh, Bhave & Yong Kim, 2012). Informal mentoring relationships develop on their own (Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016). Informal mentoring can take place in life, in a family, in an organization or in any other setting. Informal mentoring can occur in organizations that do and do not have a mentoring culture. If a mentoring culture exists, but there are no mentoring programs, companies may provide some tools and resources and encourage managers to accept mentoring requests from more junior members of the organization. Informal mentoring relationships usually occur spontaneously and are largely focused on dealing with psychosocial

issues, such as enhancing the mentee's self-esteem and confidence by providing emotional support and discovery of common interests ((https://www.merriam-webster.com/).

Formal mentoring refers to a structured process supported by an organization and addressed to target specific populations (Desimone et al., 2014; Torney-Welsh, Bhave & Yong Kim, 2012). Formal mentoring programs are generally designed to promote employees' development (Desimone et al., 2014; Torney-Welsh, Bhave & Yong Kim, 2012). Generally, there are program goals, schedules, training for mentor and mentee and evaluation. Among the realm of the mentor's role is often the goal of inspiring the mentees to follow their dreams (Polikoff, Desimone, Porter & Hochberg, 2014).

Formal mentoring relationships are usually organized in the workplace where an organization matches mentors to mentees to help developing their skills and careers (Desimone et al., 2014; Torney-Welsh, Bhave & Yong Kim, 2012). In organizations, formal mentoring is often part of talent management addressed to populations such as key employees, newly hired graduates, high potential employees and future leaders. There are also formal mentoring programs that are values-oriented, and some mentorship programs provide social, emotional and vocational support.

Mullen (2011), a leading expert in the field, saw mentoring as a personal approach that could lead to professional relationship that was long term. She stated that mentoring in leadership development reflects a higher commitment to new principals and introduces expectations for assigned mentors and mentees. This researcher compares two types of mentoring- voluntary and mandated mentoring. While both types build the capacity of people and organizations, voluntary mentoring, is a type of informal mentoring and generally focuses more upon enhancing the development of the whole person.

Required mentoring of principals tends to be formalized through program initiatives and is geared toward goals of school improvement and student achievement. Mullen (2011) suggests that when they are an outgrowth of mandates that require that mentors and mentees make documented gains these relationships may feel impersonal and evaluative. Mandated mentoring can jeopardize the mentoring process. The extent to which mentoring relationships can be successfully formalized depends on the personal connection between mentors and mentees and the manner in which the mentoring program fosters strong relationships and provides adequate support (Mullen, 2011). This will be discussed in more detail in later sections of this chapter.

Structure and Processes of Mentoring

Kochan and Trimble (2000) offer a model for the implementation of mentoring at the macro and micro levels. They assert that mentoring relationships change over time. Dealing with this issue, Merriam and Thomas (1986) identified four cycles in mentoring: initiation, duration, termination, and assumption of a leadership role. This cycle evolved into Kram's (1991) four phases of mentoring: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. In comparison, Kochan and Trimble (2000) name their four phases in the mentor-mentee relationship as: groundwork, warm-up, working, and long-term status. They state that these may be overlapping and are part of an ongoing journey.

The first step of the model, referred to as "groundwork", consists of the mentee's proactive stance in initiating a mentoring relationship. According to Kochan and Trimble (2000), during the groundwork phase, the mentor takes responsibility for his/her learning, establishing goals, networking, and gaining insight into creating relationships. The warm-up phase occurs when the mentee takes the initiative in approaching potential mentors, verbalizing goals, and making a selection of a mentor. During the warm-up phase, the mentor and mentee

also clarify values, and work to build a trusting relationship. Additionally, the warm-up activities provide opportunities to enhance organizational and human relations skills such as sensitivity, communication, and listening. During the third phase, the working phase, the mentor-mentee relationship focuses on important issues and includes having the mentee demonstrate new behaviors and receiving feedback on the results. The working phase also involved sharing ideas, developing communication skills and engaging in reflective practice, which helps both parties to become more reflective and make better judgments. During the final stage, the mentor and mentee examine the status of their relationship to determine if it has been beneficial. The purpose of the final phase is to help the mentor and mentee determine if they want to dissolve, extend, expand, or renew the relationship.

Kochan and Trimble (2000) summarized the levels of mentoring into four themes:: (1) Professional educators can benefit from proactively engaging in mentoring/co-mentoring relationships; (2) Mentoring relationships involve overlapping phases that can foster development and success; (3) Open and trusting mentor-mentee relationships can enhance the development of personal and professional collaborative work skills; and (4) Discussing the status of the mentoring/co-mentoring relationship on a consistent basis can be beneficial in maintaining, transforming, or dissolving the relationship as appropriate.

Mentoring Roles and Frameworks

Geismar, Morris and Lieberman (2014) referred to the mentor as one with experience, high ranking, who is influential within the organization as well as committed to promoting others' careers. Augustine-Shaw and Liang's (2016) description of a mentor is an entrusted and experienced person who is interested in the development of novice people, and someone whose advice is sought or who offers advice and suggestions. Thornton (2014) defined the mentor as a

person who starts a "relationship for the purpose of instruction or guidance or one who is concerned with the career development of another" (Thornton, 2014). Daresh and Alexander (2015) explained mentoring as "the process of bringing together experienced, competent administrators with beginning colleagues as a way to help them with the transition to the world of school administration" (p. 27). Speaking to mentoring within a school setting, Johnson (2015) defined a mentor as a peer who gives support intended to assist novice principals in managing the transition from teacher to principal. Hudson (2015) referred to the mentor as a father figure who is responsible for the guidance of and who acts as an advisor to a younger person.

The mentor has numerous responsibilities which may be different, depending on the situation. Shapira-Lishchinsky and Levy-Gazenfrantz (2015) emphasized that mentors could be utilized in welcoming and introducing new colleagues to their new environment with its customs, values, and resources. Shapira-Lishchinsky and Levy-Gazenfrantz (2015) stated,

> The mentor should be a master at providing opportunities for the growth of others, by identifying situations and events that contribute knowledge and experience to the life of the steward. Opportunities are not happenstance; they must be thoughtfully designed and organized into logical sequence. Sometimes hazards are attached to opportunity. The mentor should take great pains to help the steward recognize and negotiate dangerous situations. In doing all this, the mentor has an opportunity for growth through services, which is the highest form of leadership. (p. 6)

Della Sala et al. (2014) emphasized that the mentor, who is teacher, role model, coach, and sponsor, is responsible for providing growth opportunities for the novice. Daresh's (2001) definition of mentoring is "an ongoing process of guidance and support to novices so that they can be effective contributors to the organization's goals". In conclusion, common elements in

the definitions of mentoring include: guidance, support, and instruction of an individual in order to improve his or her effectiveness.

Kochan and Pascarelli (2012) developed a framework for mentoring focused upon mentoring as a cultural endeavor. Kochan (2014) expanded the framework, providing a strategy for applying it in practice. The framework identifies three types of mentoring, specifies its purposes, the roles of mentor and mentee and the positive and negative aspects of each approach. The model includes three types of mentoring Traditional, Transitional and Transformative. The primary purpose of traditional mentoring is to transmit the values, roles, and practices that exist within an organization or culture. The mentor is considered the teacher and the mentee is considered the learner. In the Transitional type of mentoring, the purpose is to bridge cultural gaps between mentor and mentee without dishonoring either. In the Transformative type of mentoring, the purpose is to create an environment that encompasses all differences and is open to change (Kochan, 2013).

Mentoring for Novice Principals

The concept of mentoring has existed for thousands of years, and mentors have played a significant role in the development of talents and skills of novices throughout history. Although there has been a longstanding interest in mentoring in the corporate world and it has been integral to the professionalizing process in fields such as medicine, law and architecture, it is not something that has been implemented extensively in the academic section and is not historically common in school administration. However, there has recently been a resurgence of interest in the mentor-protégé relationships in the context of academic and professional institutions (Claxton & Smith, 2014; Markow, Macia & Lee, 2013; Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015; Spillane, & Lee, 2013). The idea that novice school principals should receive guidance has only

recently been accepted as an important step on the road to more effective school leadership (Claxton & Smith, 2014; Spillane, Harris, Jones, & Mertz, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2013). Thus, awareness is growing within the educational systems that mentoring is an important practice, enabling prospective and beginning principals to experience a better transition from the teaching role to the administrative one (Claxton & Smith, 2014).

Research has found that the various demands placed on novice principals in the current millennium requires principals to focus on academics as well as being strong individuals if they are to have a successful school (Calman, 2010; Searby, 2014). For novice principals to overcome challenges, researchers believe the principals should have mentoring support from experienced principals (Ehrich et al., 2004; Lovely, 2004; Parylo et al., 2012; Searby, 2014). Researchers have found that new principals are more successful in their first years if they are a part of mentoring programs (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth 2004; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2003; Searby, 2014; Villani, 2006).

Schechter (2014) wrote that administrators, who are entering into a new position, can be helped by an experienced guide or an inspiring role model to mentor. Schechter (2014) identified some common characteristics of mentoring programs that develop prospective principals' capacity to effectively manage a highly complex school organization. These characteristics of mentoring programs include: helping mentees develop skills to create mission statements; enabling new principals to develop as transformational leaders; fostering learning about instructional leadership; aiding principals to become resource managers; and facilitating novice principal's abilities to effectively interface with others in the school and community. These skills imply a need for mentoring, not as a one-time isolated occurrence.

Researchers in Wyoming, studying rural school principals and the value of mentoring novice principals, found that 97% felt that mentoring was important to them (Duncan & Stock 2010). Mentoring programs can provide the novice with an invaluable opportunity to strive and not just survive. Daresh and Playko (2012) emphasized that mentoring programs can be a powerful instrument in aiding the novice school administrator to survive the first year, but they also emphasized that it should not just be seen as a safety net for survival. Instead, mentoring should be part of an ongoing professional development process that benefits both the mentor and the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) suggested that implementing a well-designed and structured mentoring program could be a valuable professional development instrument for both the mentor and the protégé. Their research involved a study of multiple cohorts of aspiring and practicing principals engaged in professional development. It provided perspectives on the benefits of mentoring through clinical practice by clarifying issues related to role-socialization, professional development, and leadership capacity building.

Later, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) made recommendations based on the collected data from participants in several cohorts and reviews of research on clinical practices, leadership preparation, and mentoring. Those recommendations involved the improvement of university-based preparation programs through models and programs such as teachers on special assignment (TOSAs), job sharing, and a 110-day mentoring program. These models and programs enabled aspiring principals to gain authentic administrative work experience guided by leadership mentoring. The authors also reflected on the critical importance of practice and administrative mentoring in the initial and continuing preparation of principals.

The research of Scott and Scott (2013) made the assumption that mentoring was a powerful tool to use in helping novice principals survive the first year in the principalship. Scott and Scott (2013) tested this assumption by surveying principals and found the majority of the principals reported that mentoring and guidance from their peers was one of the greatest benefits to them. Dziczkowski (2013) concluded that mentoring could enhance professional development, personal growth, and learning for the mentor and mentee. Other researchers found that mentoring was also effective in reducing isolation, increasing collegiality and socialization, and providing networking access (Dziczkowski, 2013). Although mentoring may seem to be a great idea in providing support for the novice principal, it should not be seen as a cure-all for the beginning principal (Dziczkowski, 2013).

Long (2009), Mathur, Gehrke, and Kim (2013), and Menon (2011) discovered that although there are several states in the U.S. that do not benefit from administrative and teacher mentoring programs, there are also many states and school systems that have turned to these programs. For example, decades ago, Albuquerque, New Mexico (USA) arranged formal mentoring programs for new principals called ESP (Extra Support for Principals) that made an appearance in 1994. This ESP program paired novice principals who needed guidance and assistance with a principal who had experience and knowledge of the position (Malone, 2001). This appeared to be a great move for the novice principals as well as the experienced principals according to Weingartner (2001).

Another similar program was one in which a mentor was assigned to a district to render mentoring and coaching. The program is Southern Regional Education Board's Leadership Academy (Malone, 2001). Another program is "Growing Your Own" in Santa Cruz County

where the principal is responsible for mentoring the assistant principal. The idea is focused on growing collaborative leaders within the public school arena (Bloom & Krovetz, 2001).

Another program, examined by Johnson (2008) stated the program goals were: to improve performance; to increase retention of promising beginners; to promote the personal and professional well-being; to transmit the culture of the system; and to satisfy mandated requests connected to induction and certifications.

Shaw and Funk (2013) examined the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI), which was an organization founded to bridge the gap between mentors and mentees through assisting the novice school leaders in their educational and leadership growth. The program was created to assist novice leaders in collaboration, networking, and professional development for the 21st Century (KELI, 2014). The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute's vision to develop support for Kansas leaders was a success its first year. The five-year plan allowed them to see the commitment of partners and professionals. Through the KELI's mentoring and induction program it provided a solid foundation to prepare novice leaders with the skills and strategies for challenging environments.

Mullen (2011) provides a model for the successful implementation of school and school system mentoring programs. First, the author asserts that on a large scale, in order to successfully implement mentoring programs, professional learning communities (PLCs) should be developed with goals of engaging students and improving the school. She describes the PLC as an "engine for high-quality induction" (p. 66). Second, a team of district administrators should work with new administrators and their mentors in order to circumvent isolated relationships. There are roles and responsibilities for the mentors and PLC members that should be clarified in order to support the idea of mentoring. Third, mentors should receive ongoing

support from the PLC members and engage the new administrators in peer coaching. Fourth, time for mentoring must be sanctioned for mentor/mentees interactions and must allow principals to facilitate collegial dialogue and foster access to resources. Fifth, mentors and mentees should have opportunities to review and reflect upon their learned experiences.

At the local level, Mullen (2011) stated that principals should draw on professional standards, best practices, learning communities and additional stakeholder groups, such as professional associations, to help adjust to the school culture. The mentors should address assessment data in a conversational manner and reflect on evidence-based practice. Online learning communities can also be used to provide seminars that ground work in instructional and administrative challenges and assure that school improvement goals are met.

Mentoring new principals can be part of a program of succession planning. Succession planning involves identifying employees within the organization who possess the skills necessary to move into positions of greater responsibility (Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016). Such programs can bring employees together to establish a network of professionals within the organization and foster new principals' motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibility with confidence (Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Oladipo, Adebakin, & Iranloye, 2016; Parylo, Zepeda, & Bengtson, 2012).

In the school year of 2013-2014 the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), the state in which this study occurred, created a mentoring program for new principals: the Alabama New Principal Mentoring (ANPM) Program. This program was designed to support new principals in their first two years as a novice principal. The program allowed novice principals to be led by experienced and trained principals for two years (http://www.alsde.edu/). Since 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has served K-8

novice principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has served secondary novice principals in the United States, Canada and overseas by providing mentoring programs. The National Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (NAESP and NASSP) believed 21st Century principals did this as they believed there was a need to support education as a priority by helping to assure that new principals obtained the help they needed to succeed through mentoring (http://www.naesp.org/). Although results from the pilot year of this program indicated it was very successful, the program was never mandated and so, although it remains in place, school systems and novice principals are not required to participate in it.

Outcomes/Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring programs and relationships have many outcomes which benefit mentees, mentors (Ehrich et al., 2014), and the organization (Daresh, 2004). These benefits overlap and are interrelated. However, they are discussed individually in this section in order to highlight each of them.

Outcomes/Benefits of Mentoring for Mentees

The essential objective of mentoring is to facilitate the growth of an individual in a given context. Mentoring may involve teaching, coaching, assisting in the development of performance, helping another develop primary skills, as well as strengthening competencies and attitudes to achieve desired outcomes for the one being mentored (Malone, 2001).

Ehrich and his co-authors (2014) reported that a compilation of studies indicated that the most important outcomes of mentoring for the mentee/protégé were career advancement and psychosocial support. Kram (2012) stated that this psychosocial support comes in the form of advice, friendship, performance feedback, and encouragement. This allows the protégé the

opportunity to have discussions as well as share ideas, problems, and information with their mentors. Principal-mentoring can foster skills in instructional leadership specifically related to teacher performance, observation, and reflective feedback (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014; James-Ward, 2013). In other studies, new principals receiving mentoring from experienced and knowledgeable principal-mentors report success in improving school climate and the quality of instruction as indicated by increased test scores and observable instructional differentiation (Mason, 2012). According to Daresh (2004), first year beginning principals stated that they were more productive due to the support received through their mentoring experience. Other mentoring benefits for the protégé include gaining knowledge about how to assist teachers with lesson plans and presentations. This includes such things as involves teaching strategies, planning, discipline, content, securing available resources and assistance in moving the organization in new directions and avoiding maintaining the status quo when things need to be changed (Ehrich et al., 2014).

Mentoring programs have afforded the protégé the opportunity to become more goal directed, detail-oriented, self-confident, and reflective (Bush & Coleman, 2015). It also allows them to gain more knowledge and skills while diminishing the feeling of isolation (Bush & Coleman, 2015). Further, a structured and well-developed mentoring program can develop and strengthen the protégé's cognitive and problem-solving skills as well as improve upon their reflective thinking skills which can assist them in making better decisions for their schools (Leithwood & Steinback, 2012).

Well-developed mentoring programs are not about producing carbon copy leaders. Nor are they about a last ditch effort to save the novice in crisis, but rather they represent a means to refine and develop existing skills demonstrated by the novice. Grogan and Crow (2011)

reminded us that those who mentor should be careful not to "stifle innovation and create and perpetuate the status quo" (p. 466). Daresh (2004) reiterated that mentoring should be used to enhance and expand the traditional vision of leadership and not just be used to reinforce the past.

Outcomes/Benefits of Mentoring for Mentors

It would be easy for one to conclude that the only benefactor of mentoring is the protégé. However, the literature dispels that myth by pointing to the many benefits of this experience for the mentor. Job satisfaction appeared to be the greatest benefit. To illustrate, lessons learned about mentoring in the Singapore educational context indicated that mentors were satisfied knowing that they helped future leaders' careers, improved their own analytical skills, and clarified their own practices. Ehrich and his colleagues (2014) report that mentors reported that the joy of grooming new school administrators who have shown potential has been rewarding to them. Clutterbuck (1985) found that this joy was especially true if the mentor suffered a loss of job excitement within their own career and the protégé performed with excellence. The success of the protégé can also increase the mentor's peer recognition and opens the door for personal career advancement (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Ehrich et al., 2014). This experience allows mentors to receive new ideas and insights regarding problems their protégé faces. Mentors also often receive new ideas and perspectives from mentees which they can turn into a new source of knowledge, insight and talent, which can later be integrated into their own professional growth and advancement process (Bush & Coleman, 2015; Daresh, 2014; Gordon, 2014).

Reviewing the research literature on successful mentoring programs reveals that one of the most important benefits for mentors is that in this role, they are also provided with professional support. Playko (2015) reported that mentors have an increased sense of collegiality and the opportunity for networking and sharing ideas with colleagues and they considered these

important professional benefits, alongside the opportunity for career and professional development. The role of the mentor can result in a feeling of job satisfaction for one's contribution toward the preparation of the next generation of principals (Playko, 2015). Bush and Coleman (2015) concluded that mentors also gain great insights into current practices, improve problem analysis skills, receive the enjoyment of interacting with new principals, and have an opportunity to discuss professional issues with colleagues. Apart from developing competencies, skills, and knowledge, mentors perceive successful mentoring as an opportunity for increased recognition from peers, which may later help to pave their way to acquiring key managerial posts (Bush & Coleman, 2015).

There appears to be some parallel between the benefits of mentoring for the protégé and mentor, such as less isolation from peers, which encourages and allows a collaborative environment and a sharing of professional interests, ideas, and resources (Ehrich et al., 20014). If the mentoring experiences are carefully structured and executed, then mentoring can serve as an effective professional development for all involved (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Ehrich et al., 2014).

Benefits of Mentoring to the Organization

Mentoring programs not only produce profitable advantages for the protégé and mentor; they also benefit the school district. Researchers have noted that the school system's gains are numerous. This reality led Geismar, Morris, and Lieberman (2000) to advise school systems to establish a quality mentoring program district wide or statewide.

Among the ways that the district profits are by gaining more capable staff, increasing employee motivation, improving employee productivity with greater self-esteem, and the promotion and sometimes creation of lifelong learners in their system (Daresh, 2004). While

mentoring programs are not an absolute guarantee for ensuring lifelong learning as part of a district's culture, there is evidence that novice principals who receive mentoring assistance to help them gain experience and knowledge as part of a school district support effort, themselves perpetuates a climate of collegial support. In turn, this type of climate will tend to eventually result in a culture of lifelong learning system-wide (Daresh, 2004).

There is also evidence that professional motivation levels may be enhanced as a result of having programs to support the work of organizational newcomers (Wanous, Keon, & Latack, 1983). People are satisfied and motivated to serve an organization more vigorously when they feel that their organization has gone beyond the call of duty to meet their needs. School districts that provide a mentor program for new principals fit this profile of ensuring success for their novice. As a result, beginning principals will tend to have a stronger motivation to succeed and want to return the dividends to the school district (Daresh, 2004). This type of program also produces a climate of collegial support (Daresh, 2004; Playko, 2015).

Effective leaders are always beneficial to any school district. The findings in the literature suggest that effective mentoring programs can help to strengthen the leadership development processes of novice principals and this, in turn, provides the system with effective leaders (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth (2004). Although it is difficult to determine precisely whether mentoring and higher administrative productivity increases student achievement, higher job satisfaction of teachers, and lower student failure, the literature highly suggests, but does not confirm, that the most important benefit to the school district may be that producing effective principals through mentoring programs leads to the improvement of students' grades, achievement, attendance, and behavior (Ehrich et al., 2014). These findings require further study.

Creating Successful Mentor–Mentee Relationships

While the benefits of mentoring programs have been documented, potential and real problems can exist within the mentor–mentee relationship and within the program structures. Thus, it is important to be cognizant of the elements and strategies that create successful mentoring relationships. Schechter (2014) argued that achieving effective mentoring requires that mentors as well as mentees are willing to engage in a continual teaching and learning process. Decisions related to designing a mentoring and induction program to support the complex role and responsibilities of a new principal must be built on best practice and defined by need, while recognizing different communication styles, job responsibilities, past experiences and the commitment required in the process (Schechter, 2014). Successful mentoring relationships are dependent on the purposes of the relationships and attitudes and actions of both the mentor and the mentee and the manner in which their relationship is established.

The mentor–mentee relationship should be a two-way interaction that rejects a rigid vertical top-to-bottom pattern of management, expanding instead into a lateral supportive one (Schechter, 2014). In this regard, if a mentor is perceived to be acting as an assessor, even if only informally, the openness that is greatly needed in the mentor–mentee relationship is at risk. It is important to think of a mentor as a master craftsperson who will support and guide a leader, (rather than evaluate him or her). The mentor is acting as a scaffold for a joint learning process (Mullen, 2012; Schechter, 2014).

An essential component to the success of a mentoring relationship is the personal characteristics of both partners. Searby (2009) and Schechter (2014), indicated that mentees most value the mentors' availability to listen and provide different perspectives, ask reflective questions, and provide general support throughout the year. They also value the mentors'

willingness to introduce them into the informal administrative networks and connect them with others whom they could consult for assistance. Mentees found that mentors who were overly harsh, critical, out-of-date in their thinking, defensive, or untrusting had a negative effect on the mentoring process. This list of attributes of a good relationship was echoed by the mentors. The attitude and actions of the mentee are also important aspects in the success or failure of the relationship (Mullen, 2012).

Selection and Matching of Mentors and Mentees

Haberman and Dill (1999) stated that in pairing mentors and mentees there should be a focus on location, need, similar school culture, age, and even gender. Searby (1999) believed "the mismatch of the unspoken assumptions between a mentor and mentee can result in a less than satisfactory mentoring relationship" (p. 2). Searby (1999) also noted that if there are cultural differences, myths, and faulty concepts in the mentor and mentee relationship, issues should be discussed because they can form roadblocks in the mentoring relationship. She also found that an important task in mentoring is to focus on the assumptions the mentor and mentee both have.

Open communication will empower participants to be more interactive, responsible, and receptive to learning and performing their roles more effectively. Thus, the selection and matching of those involved is important. Crow, Matthews, and McCleary (1996) observed that "mentors [were] often selected without a great deal of thought and rarely trained" (p. viii). Grogan and Crow (2011) noted that school districts must also not assume that long-time or retired principals make the best mentors. Examining this issue, Daresh (2011) found that often the only criteria used for mentor selection was based on seniority within their position. His research findings stressed the importance of the selection and preparation of mentors. Daresh

(2011) stressed that "only the very best principals can serve as true mentors, and care must be given constantly to make certain the 'best of the best' become role models and mentors" (p. 26). Despite the importance of mentor selection and although several states have required an induction program in support of the first year of new principals, Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) found that the selection of mentor principals was done haphazardly.

Another issue that should be addressed is the reason the mentor accepts this role. If a mentor accepts a mentorship primarily for personal gain, such as career advancement, and has no concern about the process or the protégé, then the protégé is set up for failure. Likewise, if a mentor does not believe in the protégé's potential to be successful, it is incumbent on him/her to decline participation and suggest a more suitable mentee/mentor match (Keyser et al., 2011). In such situations, the mentor assignment should be changed.

The incompatibility of mentor and protégé has posed a problem for mentoring programs. Research has shown the forcing of mentoring relationships failed to give the support needed for novice principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). One way to assure that the relationship will succeed is by engaging in a careful matching process. When mentors and mentees are matched, variables such as professional goals, interpersonal styles, and learning needs should be considered. It is important to recognize "differing communication styles, job responsibilities, personal past experiences with mentoring and the level of commitment to the process" (Schechter, 2014, p. 11). Mismatches are generally the result of personality or ideological and expertise differences. For example, mentors and mentees alike express feelings of anxiety and stress as well as opinions that it is difficult to create a productive relationship, if there are differences in teaching philosophies.

Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that matching mentors and protégés by gender, age, or school type has no concrete supporting evidence that such matches have any effect on mentoring relationships. This was especially true in the matching of men with women. The literature indicated that both men and women could be effective mentors for each other (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Daresh (1988) suggests that great thought and care should go into pairing of mentors and protégés to ensure effectiveness. Daresh and Playko (1989) both agreed that matching mentor and protégé should be based on interpersonal style, personalities, professional goals, and the learning needs of both. Kochan (2013) stresses the need to consider and address cultural differences related to such things as ethnicity, gender, and race and to other issues of cultural identify, when forming and operationalizing a mentoring relationship. The primary issue that this research revealed about pairing mentor and protégé was that one must give thoughtful consideration of similar needs, professional goals, and leadership styles when matching the mentor and protégé (Playko, 2015).

Mentor and Mentee Desired Characteristics

Mentors are catalysts for developing the protégé's capabilities in problem solving, reflective thinking, and cognitive development. Barbian (2002) agreed that "Protégés seek personal growth, career development, lifestyle enhancement, spiritual fulfillment, goal achievement and a firmer footing within the company" (p. 38). Novice administrators with their leadership deficiencies will have difficulty developing the expertise needed without the assistance of skilled and experienced administrators in the area of problem solving. However, the attitudes, beliefs, and actions of both the mentor and the mentee are very important in determining the success or failure of the relationship.

The Mentor

Daresh (2004) stated that although there is often the belief that the master's or mentor's job is to teach the protégé practical skills, research revealed that there is much more to the role of the mentor than just teaching the protégé to be a practitioner who is responsible for such things as master schedules, teacher evaluations, parent/teacher conferences, or other school-related activities. Instead, it is the mentors' role to elicit or raise more questions than they answer. They should provoke thoughts and reflections from the protégé. Therefore, "mentors hold the key novices need to unlock their professional expertise" (Barnett, 2015, p. 54).

It is essential that mentors have a mindset that supports mentoring and the mentee. There are challenges in every relationship, including the mentoring relationship. Like any relationship, obtaining a successful mentoring relationship requires hard work. Even then, one cannot expect a perfect mentor and protégé fit (Keyser, LaKaoski, & LaraCinisomo, 2011). Sometimes a mentor enters into a mentorship in search of making a clone or a carbon copy, encouraging the protégé to be dependent on him or her rather than seeking to cultivate the mentee's thoughts and ideas (Keyser et al., 2011). Mentors sometimes have unrealistic expectations and faulty assumptions. Mentors may have trouble determining how much mentoring is enough. A mentor may tend to feel responsible for everything concerning the protégé while the protégé may desire a more distant relationship. The mentor may have specific plans of success that are in conflict with the protégé's idea of his/her future. Because of the conflict, the vision or standard of performance may never be realized.

Daresh (2004) believed that there are sometimes difficulties when veteran principals view mentoring programs dimly because they themselves did it on their own; and they may also feel that this type of program is needless and a waste of time and resources. Their thought may be

that any school administrator needing this service must be weak. If principals have this point of view, it makes it difficult for school districts to implement successful mentoring programs (Daresh, 2004). Research indicates that if principal mentors do not support the concept of mentoring, mentees will not feel motivated to support it (Daresh, 2004). Daresh (2004) stated, "If mentoring is not respected as a legitimate approach to learning, it will not be successful and effective" (p. 511). Such lack of support could possibly doom the program.

Mentors can also become a detriment for protégés if they are so dominant that protégés become too dependent upon them and are not able to make decisions on their own. The mentor could become an enabler to the point that the protégé is not able to reflect on school problems and develop his or her own answers, which would stifle professional growth (Bush & Coleman, 2015). The job of the mentor is to assist the protégé in decision-making, not make the decision for him or her (Bush & Coleman, 2015).

Examining the primary problems related to mentors, Daresh and Playko (1989) identified four problems with mentors, some of which overlap with the findings of other researchers. They state that: (1) Mentors may become too protective and controlling; (2) Mentors may have personal agendas to fulfill; (3) Mentors may not acknowledge the limitations of their protégés; (4) Mentors may impose on all beginning principals an ideal vision or standard of performance, which may never be realized.

The Mentee's Desired Mindset

The American Heritage Dictionary (2011) described the word 'mindset' as a stationary mental attitude or a habit. Eberly et al. (2007) stated that the word 'mindset' is an attitude that can be observed. Dweck (2009) found there were two types of mindsets–fixed and growth. Dweck (2009) described a fixed mindset as a belief that there is only a fixed or limited amount of

anything, i.e. talent. A growth mindset is the total opposite. It fosters the belief that individuals can develop through effort, practice and instruction. In short, there are no barriers.

Researchers found that there are ten common characteristics that effective protégés possess. They are found to be intelligent, ambitious, risk takers, initiative takers, full of energy, trustworthy, optimistic, emotionally intelligent, demonstrate integrity, and have complementary skills to the mentor (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Searby, 2014). Researchers such as Mullen (2010), Rice and Brown (1990), and Clutterbuck (2005), all found that good protégés possess positive characteristics throughout their mentoring relationships. Although this mindset seems to be an important factor in mentee success, Tripses and Searby (2009) found there is little research on how novice principals are to develop a mentoring mindset.

Training for Mentoring

Mentoring provides a real opportunity for instructing and improving leadership skills. It should be viewed as a proactive process provided by experienced and trained principals. Jacobi (1991) found that some programs train mentors, some do not; some mentors are assigned, and some mentees choose their own mentor; some programs allow the participants to make all the decisions. Many researchers are adamant about mentor training being is an essential piece of the puzzle and they stress hat inadequate mentor preparation can limit the effectiveness of the program (Ehlich et al., 2014; Kochan, 2002; Playko, 2015). Researchers recommend that school districts give specialized training to potential mentors (Daresh & Playko, 1989). The training provided should aim at the development of cognitive growth in the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1992). The training should require the mentor to master the art of asking the right questions to stimulate reflecting thinking, problem solving, and conferencing to help the protégé (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Research points out that mentoring training format can vary, but the following specific issues should be included regardless of the format: (1) review of basic assumptions, concepts, and definitions associated with mentoring as a way to assist beginning administrators; (2) discussion of basic beliefs, values, and assumptions concerning desirable administrative practices, i.e., what is "leadership"?; (3) development of awareness of personal strengths and limitations that may be called upon in the performance of the mentoring role; (4)review of feedback techniques and other forms of interpersonal communication; and (5) understanding of interpersonal styles so that matches with protégés may be productive (Daresh & Playko, 1992, p. 53). Daresh and Playko (1992) found that to ensure the effectiveness of a mentoring training program, four major conditions must be met within the school district. The conditions are trust, sufficient funding, open communication, and knowledge of the principles of adult learning.

Conditions of Adult Learning

The ultimate purpose of new principal mentoring programs should be to help first-time principals "gain insights into trends, issues, and social realities that go beyond existing practices. To ignore this point would no doubt lead to another major pitfall of traditional mentoring programs, namely the temptation to use mentoring to promote cloning, not growth" (Daresh, 2004, p. 512). Engaging in this type of relationship and seeking to foster the type of thinking and reflection necessary for mentee growth requires the application of adult education learning theory. This is essential because educators tend to have more knowledge about the learning needs of children, but not necessarily about those of adults. The work of Malcolm Knowles, an adult educator, was cited by Daresh and Playko (1992) as being of great importance in the mentoring process. They noted that Knowles' work indicated the characteristics of an adult learner as: (a) being self-directed, (b) having a reservoir of experiences from which to draw,

(c) remaining problem-centered, and (d) focused on the developmental responsibilities of their appointed social role.

Evaluation and Monitoring

Ehrich et al. (2004) and Kochan (2002) noted effective mentoring program must include an ongoing evaluative component throughout its duration. The program should also contain a follow-up assessment after completion to ensure effectiveness in supporting novice principals in the future. While there is strong evidence that continuous evaluation is essential to maintain a high-quality mentoring program, there is also evidence that not all programs include an evaluation process (Jacobi, 1991). Additionally, Merriam (1983) concluded that many evaluations of mentoring programs are limited and tend to "consist of testimonials and opinions" (pp. 172–173).

Creating Effective Mentoring Programs

Although the literature cited several benefits of mentoring programs, there are some program elements that must be in place in order to assure program success which school districts need to be aware of when considering this as a support system for new principals. Some, such as mentor training and continuous assessment, have already been dealt with. There are other elements that must be addressed. Long (1997) listed several reasons mentoring programs might fail. Those concerns included: (a) a lack of well-thought-out details for program, (b) mentor and protégé incompatibility, (c) poor program planning, (d) insufficient time to implement the mentoring, and (e) lack of mentor appropriate mentor assignments for minorities. He also cited the lack of school district support and commitment in the form of funding, lack of visible support, and lack of alignment with other organizational activities.

Research indicates that implementing mentoring programs effectively requires extensive planning and monitoring. Among the strategies that need to be considered are proper program focus; assuring adequate resources; the selection and matching of those involved; training; integrating principles of adult education into the process; and monitoring and evaluating program processes and outcomes. These are described in more detail in this section.

Program Focus and Structure

Many states are now jumping on the bandwagon and mandating the adoption of mentoring programs to support the new principal. Although school systems may be complying with the mandate, Daresh and Playko (1992) argued that the success of these programs definitely does not lie with simply adhering to state mandates. They agreed that token compliance to implementing mentoring programs would result in ineffective mentoring which might be worse than not complying with the mandate at all.

Those adopting or implementing these programs must be cautious and not allow "unwanted side effects that can stifle innovation and create and perpetuate the status quo" (Grogan & Crow, 2011, p. 466). If school systems only want mentoring programs to ensure that new principals perform their duties the way they have always performed them, then the school system could have a huge problem as student achievement may not improve. School districts must be experts at responding to societal change rather than trying to maintain the status quo. According to Daresh (2004), "Mentoring takes on a much different character when it is used to promote an enhancement or expansion of traditional visions of leadership and [is] not simply a reinforcement of past practices" (p. 512).

Examining an Exemplary Mentoring Program

One model of an exemplary novice principal mentoring program was designed by educators in Kansas. Examining this program may be helpful in enabling the reader to comprehend the processes needed to develop a model program. Educational leaders in Kansas started a program to support new principals with opportunities to gain skills and knowledge from experienced principal mentors (Augustine-Shaw, 2015). In their process, these leaders explored research and best practice to define valued program components and identified needs of practicing principals, superintendents, and other state and agency stakeholders.

The Kansas Model was known as the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI). It was a collaboratively developed model. A taskforce with twenty-two members from the Kansas Association of Principals, the superintendent's association, and the Kansas Leadership Institute (KELI) worked with the Kansas State Department of Education to create the mentoring program. (KELI, 2014). The model is comprised of a five-year plan that focuses on mentoring and professional development for their new leaders (principals and superintendents).

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) and the Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI) worked with the Task Force to create relevant standards and norms to be used as a guide for the new leaders. The focus was on best practices and research; stakeholder involvement; making reference to local and state goals; welcoming current practices; and acknowledging changing needs (KELI, 2014). The support given to these novice leaders in the forms of quality mentoring and social networking has been found to give leverage to the students, teachers, communities, and most importantly, the new leaders (KELI, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study is drawn from general concepts in mentoring. The Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/) describes a mentor as "someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person." There are two types of mentoring: informal mentoring and formal mentoring. Formal mentoring is defined as having attributes that include, "to obtain specific guidelines and structure; following or agreeing with established form, custom, or rules set by the mentee or a trusted counselor or guide" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Brady (1997) wrote that formal mentoring was introduced in the United States in the 1990s. Informal is "having a friendly and relaxed quality without set rules" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/).

The conceptual framework for this study was developed from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, dealing with factors that foster and hinder mentoring program success and positive outcomes that result from such programs. It is presented in visual form below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Formal Mentoring Programs

Summary

This review of the research literature addressed the importance of the role of the mentor, as one who gives guidance, support, and instruction to a novice. The literature on the mentoring of novice principals indicated a continuum of mentoring programs, including both informal and formal mentorships. Mentoring programs vary in structure, training, and mentor selection processes. Mentoring provides benefits for protégés, mentors, and school systems. Some of these advantages are a reduction in the feeling of being isolated, increased job satisfaction and collegiality, improved student achievement, networking and professional advancement, and more effective professional development. In addition to these advantages, the literature points to increased self-confidence and improved job performance for the protégé and increased peer recognition for the mentor. The literature, however, did point out potential problems with mentoring programs. These included the stifling of innovation, the mismatching of mentors and protégés, forced relationships, lack of mentor training, resources, and program evaluation. Another problem that has been pointed out is the potential for the mentoring relationship itself to be unhealthy for the protégé. The literature revealed some ideas on what makes an effective mentor and an effective mentoring program. There are skills that were suggested for the mentor to learn, conditions in which mentoring programs could flourish, and steps that administrators could take to ensure a successful mentoring program. Overall, the literature seems to support the idea of mentoring programs for novice principals.

Some of the previously discussed benefits such as cost effectiveness, easy implementation, and more egalitarian approach to mentoring have made it attractive to organizations. This literature review indicates some of the options that are available to a school

district when designing and developing a research-based program for the support of novice principals.

However, it can be difficult to determine what mentoring program will work best in a given situation, or whether other types of support would be equally or more effective in helping novice principals through the process of role socialization. Ehrich et al. (2014) pointed out that the potential problems associated with formal mentoring programs could be overcome with careful planning and good leadership. Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2014) agreed with this assessment by stating, "Carefully constructed and implemented mentoring experiences serve as effective professional development not only for aspiring and novice principals, but also for veteran principals" (p. 471).

This study addresses the need for a greater understanding of novice principal support systems by investigating participants' experiences of one mentoring program that was executed without extensive research. Chapter 3 details the methodology used in the study, including the research design, process of data collection and analysis, the validity and reliability of the study, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methods used to examine the perceived mentoring experiences and outcomes of new rural principals. The researcher used a qualitative approach because it was the best way to capture the essence of the principals' experiences. For this study, new principals included probationary status principals during their first and second year as a school leader in elementary, middle, and high schools in rural school systems in Alabama.

Problem Statement

The school leader not only impacts faculty satisfaction, he or she is also an essential element in student success. Although Leithwood (2010) found that teachers had the most significant impact on student learning and achievement, he also discovered that the principal's role in student success was second only to that of teachers, accounting for almost twenty-five percent of the school's impact on student learning and achievement (Leithwood, 2005). Johnson (2008) stated burnout of principals has been an ongoing problem in the U.S. since the 1980s. This is also a problem for teachers. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) note that mentoring is an important means of providing support to new principals and teachers and can help prevent burnout. New teacher mentoring has been researched extensively in today's society but research on new principals has been less extensive (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006).

There are two types of mentoring – formal and informal. Formal mentoring is mandated and/or involves specific guidelines and structures which generally pairs someone with

knowledge and/or experience with a novice with the purpose of transmitting and/or sharing knowledge, assistance, or advice which will inform and support the novice. Informal Mentoring is a relationship between two or more people which involves having a friendly and relaxed relationship in which the mentor teacher advises helps and supports the less experienced mentee.

There are 7,810 rural school districts which equates to approximately fifty-seven percent (57%) of the school districts in the country, and 9,765,385 students, which is about twenty-one percent (21%) percent of the student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Johnson, Showalter, Klein and Lester (2014) found that in the state of Alabama forty-two percent (42%) of the students are in rural schools. Also, the National Center for Education discovered in 2003–2004 there were approximately two hundred thirty-four (234) Alabama schools that were considered rural; and their findings depicted twelve of those schools as low achievement, high-poverty, and high minority. Thus, a large percent of schools and students attend rural schools in this state.

. The school leader in these schools, like all school leaders is a pivotal element in student success. There may be common elements in the role of urban and rural principals. However, Hobson, Brown, Ashby, Keys, Sharp and Benefield (2003) determined that in rural school districts, some issues can be more intensified. Most research conducted related to creating high quality schools in which children from high poverty, high minority backgrounds succeed has been conducted at urban/suburban elementary and middle schools and it is estimated that only about six percent (6%) of all educational research is conducted in rural areas (Hardre & Sullivan, 2008). The impact of the principal in student success; the lack of adequate research on mentoring principals, particularly those in rural schools; and the lack of research on mentoring

principals in Alabama, make this research on the mentoring or principals in rural schools in this state important.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of new principals in rural settings. There are three designations of rural and they are: 41–rural fringe (area within five (5) miles of an urban area), 42–rural distant (more than five (5) but less than twenty-five (25) miles from an urban area), and 43–rural remote (more than twenty-five (25) miles from an urban area). The researcher sought to determine what the mentoring experiences were for new rural principals who participated in formal and informal mentoring programs in which they were paired with veteran principal mentors. These new principals may experience unique challenges because of the geographic location. The researcher sought to examine the barriers, facilitating factors, and outcomes of those mentoring relationships.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was: "What were the mentoring experiences of new principals in rural Alabama who were mentored in a formal program?" To answer this question, there were four sub-questions.

1. How do novice rural principals in Alabama describe and define their mentor's role?
2. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as outcomes of their mentoring experiences?
3. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their mentoring experiences?
4. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their mentoring success?

Research Method

The focus of this research was on gaining an in-depth understanding of the experiences of new rural principals with regards to their mentoring relationships. The most appropriate method of capturing lived experiences is through qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) noted that qualitative research needed to make sense of situations that happened in daily experiences. Qualitative researchers gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior(s). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) also stated that qualitative method investigates the why and how of things, not just what, where, when using "research strategies (case studies, grounded theory, biographical, historical, participatory, phenomenology)" (p.14). Qualitative methods attempt to find out how people make meaning or interpret a phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

In addition, qualitative research includes characteristics such as: a natural setting, researcher as a data instrument, the perspective of the participants, extensive engagement, wholeness and complexity, subjectivity, emergent design, inductive data analysis, and reflexivity (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research is essentially a study of relationships between people; therefore, qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning people have derived from their experiences, making sense of their world (Merriam, 1998), and seeking to understand something from others' perspectives (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002).

The researcher used a multiple case study design because it was believed that it would better assist the researcher to gain insight and understand the formal mentoring experiences of new rural principals in Alabama. This method allowed the researcher to collect a broad range of data that assisted in understanding the experiences of each individual and this method also allowed the researcher to conduct a cross-case analysis to examine how the cases were similar

and how distinctive they were as well (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) stated that the benefit of using the multiple case study approach is to increase strength of the findings. Merriam (1998) added that the multiple case study approach created a more fascinating narrative or anecdotes. The researcher is urged to select cases that will assist the researcher in understanding the phenomenon as well as provide balance and variety (Stake, 2006).

Participants

Criterion sampling was used to determine the participants in this study: new principals (with one to three years' experience) in a public school setting that is considered demographically rural. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2006) found a total of two-hundred and thirty-four (234) schools in Alabama that are considered rural.

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is commonly used for the identification and selection of information-rich cases and maximizes the effectiveness of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The process includes identifying individuals or groups who can knowledgeably speak to or about the researcher's interest (Creswell, Klassen, Plano, & Smith, 2011).

The researcher contacted CLAS (Council Leaders for Alabama Schools) for a list of novice principals in rural systems participating in the mentoring program sponsored by this organization. This resulted in a list of 15 individuals. The researcher sent emails to those principals whose districts fell into a rural designation, and who were determined to have been involved in mentoring during their first three years as a principal, inviting them to participate in the study. Nine individuals agreed to participate.

Data Collection Methods

Upon receiving approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher sent an email to the identified potential participants. The email invited them to

participate in the study either face to face and or via Skype to discuss their mentoring experiences as new rural principals as they were mentored in the state mentoring program. The email also included a brief description of the study along with the purpose of the proposed research. The potential participants were also provided written assurance that their participation was strictly voluntary, and confidentiality was assured in a letter of information. Before the interview, the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form stating they agreed to participate in the study.

The researcher utilized a standard interview protocol with each participant. The protocol was drawn from literature on mentoring and new principals' experiences. The use of interviews provided for each participant to share his or her own voice and story, feelings, successes and challenges as a new principal. The use of open-ended questions in the protocol was critical. Also, the use of follow-up questions, probes, and re-structuring questions was used to ensure accurate responses. The interviews were audio-taped and were transcribed for analysis.

Analysis of the Data

The data collected for this research was from interviews which were transcribed, and they were analyzed using the data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used the "bottom up" approach to identify patterns and trends within the data as suggested by Creswell (2013) who believed that meaningful pieces of information should be organized to develop an understanding of the questions being answered. The researcher had to reduce the data, simplify it, and transform it into codes to make it useful (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011).

In hand-coding the data, the researcher implemented processes recommended by Saldana (2015) for analyzing qualitative data. First, the researcher thoroughly read all nine transcribed interviews twice before assigning any codes. Next, each transcript was analyzed again, this time

employing eclectic coding (Saldana, 2015). Eclectic coding is a first-cycle coding method in which the researcher assigns words or phrases to lines or segments of the transcript. The codes may be of different types, such as noting emotions, noting processes, highlighting exact quotes (in-vivo coding), or other analytic memos in the margins (Saldana, 2015). Next, holistic coding was employed, in which the researcher applied a single code to a large unit of transcribed data, and a master code list was kept. From the holistic codes, the researcher looked for similarities across the transcripts in order to develop some common themes, with the research questions always in mind. In this step, the researcher kept a running list of illustrative quotes as examples of each theme. Themes, patterns, and categories were identified to align with the first three research questions in the fourth step. The researcher analyzed themes within each case and across cases. In the last step for analyzing the interview data for research questions one through three, the researcher reviewed all transcripts again to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated with the data obtained from the interviews. This was done to establish validity of the data.

The researcher triangulated data by taking field notes (notes on the setting of principal's school, office, etc.) and the researcher asked for any pertinent documents, such as a description of a mentoring program the principal might have been involved in, as it was a formal one (Creswell, 2013).

Validity and Reliability

The researcher first established reliability of the study by conducting a literature review on the topics of mentoring and new principals and created an interview protocol drawn from the concepts in the literature. Next, the researcher used multiple sources of data for the study. Schwandt (2007) stated that by using multiple data sources the researcher can protect the

integrity of the assumptions and conclusions discovered during the research process. Interviews, field notes, and artifacts were the three sources of data for the study. By triangulating the data sources the researcher established validity of this study (Creswell, 2013). Also, the researcher returned the transcribed interviews to the participants for member checking during the data analysis to ensure validity. Harper and Cole (2012) recommend that member checking in research is considered standard quality control.

Throughout the process of the study, the researcher made an effort to bracket her own personal experiences. She was interviewing rural principals, and since she herself had been a rural principal, she had to guard against researcher bias. Fischer (2009) mentions two types of bracketing that takes place in research. One form of bracketing Fischer (2009) discussed was the researcher overriding what he or she already knows about the topic/subject. The next form of bracketing discussed by Fischer (2009) helps enable being careful not to interpret the data with preconceived biases.

Conclusion

Chapter three defined the study participants, research design, research methods, data collection, reliability and validity, and analysis of the data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses these findings, and their implications for practice and future research.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Introduction

School leaders' impact on student achievement is second only to teachers (Leithwood, 2000). The role of the principal has common characteristics no matter what the setting, but researchers have found that although rural principals have responsibilities similar to urban principals, they often have less support (Force et al., 2005). Mentoring is a proven strategy for fostering professional support (Johnson, 2008) and thus may be particularly helpful for rural principals. Mentorship can be formal or informal. Whatever the form, mentoring has the ability to promote the skills, knowledge and confidence of the mentee (Wise & Hammock, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to explore the formal and informal mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural school settings in the State of Alabama. In this study, novice principals were defined as principals in their first three years of the principalship, a probationary period in Alabama. The research involved a case study of a principals in several school districts, using a qualitative research design. Data were collected and analyzed from nine interviews with school administrators.

Research Procedures

Each participant was provided with a *Request to Interview* and an *Informed Consent Form* giving permission to be interviewed and audio-taped. The researcher used a 30 question semi-structured interview guide with questions which focused on the experiences and/or effects of their mentoring relationships as novice principals. The researcher transcribed each of the

interviews and the participants were provided the opportunity to check the transcription for accuracy. A central research question and four sub-questions guided the study.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was: "What were the mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural Alabama?" Research sub-questions included:

1. How do novice rural principals in Alabama describe and define their mentor's role?
2. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as outcomes of their mentoring experiences?
3. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their mentoring experiences?
4. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their mentoring success?

Setting and Participants

Of fifteen participants invited to participate in this study, nine principals accepted the invitation and shard their lived experiences about their involvement with mentoring programs. Pseudonyms were given to participants in this study. Three of the interviewees were females and six were males, four were White, and five were Black. Four schools were high schools, three were elementary, one was K-12 school, and one was an alternative school setting. The demographics of these principals and the type of mentoring they were involved in are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Principal's Mentorship Experience

Participants	Gender	Race	School Type	Type of Mentorship
Principal L	Male	B	High School	system embedded/formal
Principal D	Male	W	High School	network of support/informal
Principal M	Male	B	Elementary	independent choice/informal
Principal J	Male	W	Elementary	university program/formal
Principal T	Female	B	Elementary	system embedded/formal
Principal D1	Male	W	High School	independent choice/informal
Principal M1	Male	B	K-12	independent choice/informal
Principal S	Female	B	Alternative	system embedded/formal
Principal S1	Female	W	High School	independent/informal

Types of Mentoring Experiences

When attending to CLAS presentation principals are assigned a mentor, therefore one would assume that all of these principals would have been involved in a formal mentoring program, however this was not the case. Five of them engaged what is being labeled as the type of informal mentoring. Two principals decided the distance between the mentors was too great, one felt he would be more comfortable with someone else, and the other two felt like their mentor had too many other mentees and went out on their own. Thus, there were four types of mentoring endeavors. They have been labelled as system embedded, university program, support network, and independent. As previously noted the names of these principals were given to the researcher by the CLAS director.

A system embedded program means that mentoring is implanted, set, rooted, and inserted within the school system. Mentors are chosen and assigned by the central office administrators for the program the system has in place. Three principals were affiliated with this type of mentoring.

A university mentoring program has similarities with the system embedded program except that this program is incorporated into a university educational leadership program in which the university requires that the principal, who is a student in the program, engages in a mentoring relationship. Like the embedded system, the mentor is assigned to the mentee and the mentee is required to engage in this endeavor. One interviewee was involved in the university mentoring program.

Support network mentoring refers to having one or more mentors you work with and/or turn to gain professional and personal support. The mentee has a personal and/or professional relationship with these individuals and selects them as helpmates to achieve their personal and/or professional goals. One principal was engaged in this type of mentoring.

Independent choice mentoring is similar to support network, in that the mentee selects his or her own mentor. These mentees engage in this relationship because they see a need or a void in their knowledge and/or because they seek a means for personal and/or professional growth. Four principals were engaged in this type of mentoring.

Data Collection Procedures

The primary data source for this study was semi-structured interviews of each participant. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to plan purposeful questions while providing an opportunity to probe beyond what was scripted (Berg & Lune, 2012). This procedure promoted a natural, comfortable flow of conversations which empowered interviewees to digress

as needed. This method also provided flexibility to ask a pattern of comparisons from previously gained information. This technique offered rich, thick descriptions for analysis. Questions were purposefully geared toward the central focus of the study (Morris, 2006).

After interviews were conducted, they were transcribed, shared with participants for member checking and corrections were made as needed. The researcher then began open coding of the interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher made several passes through the data to identify and reconfirm codes as they emerged through a process called pattern coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In pattern coding, codes were grouped under the appropriate research sub-question, in order to see patterns emerging. Saturation of the data was reached after several passes through the data and after data were coded and placed in the appropriate sub-question categories (Strauss, 1987).

Next, the categorized codes under each research question were grouped together by similarities and assigned descriptive themes. Themes were included if a minimum of four of the nine respondents identified that theme. The findings are reported according to each research sub-question for this case study.

Mentor's Role

The first research question was, "How do novice rural principals in Alabama define their mentor's role?" There were three ways in which mentees described their mentoring experience. The roles were categorized as guide, encourager and partner. While some participants conveyed a blending of the roles, each of these roles was discreetly identified. Each of these themes is discussed, along with illustrative comments from the study participants which describe each theme.

Guide. The first concept of the mentor's role was a guide. The dictionary defines a guide as "one that leads or directs another's way; a person who directs another's conduct or course of life" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Eight out of nine principals used words that indicated that their mentor was like a guide to them. Some interviewees actually used the word "guide" to describe the role of their mentor. For example, Principal J shared,

> Mentoring is sitting down with me to explain certain situations that I have not gone through and what I do not quite understand. She did not sit in a class for 5-10 minutes; she sat in a class for 45 minutes to capture everything to give real feedback. I would not be here today if it wasn't for her guiding me.

Participant M1 agreed with Respondent J. When discussing the role of a mentor, Participant J revealed,

> I would say more like a guide…. I am thinking about the three [mentors] that I have been interacting with. They were all like guides in the best practices on what to do in certain situations.

Respondent L expressed similar sentiments,

> They [mentors] are there to guide. I think it's really that they play all three roles [guide, partner and encourager]. The part I liked most is that they're able to listen and guide.

Other mentees did not use the word, guide, but shared the manner in which they were guided. Several respondents used the phrase "give advice" in reference to providing guidance. For example, Respondent M said,

> He gave me advice on how to lead effectively as an administrator and advice on being consistent at doing my job. When a problem did arise, he would give me several ways to handle the problem.

Principal S1 acknowledged guidance as giving advice,

> Typically, when I am calling them, I just need advice. I am just pouring out my story and telling them that this is what happened or that this is what I think or how I would like to handle a situation. Then I would inquire of their thoughts and perceptions about the matter.

Another explained the guiding role by using a metaphor of the mentor as a vehicle when she stated,

> She knew and could give me a lot more of what I could do when it came to looking at data and making those instructional accommodations based on what the data said. She was the vehicle to get to the end of the road.

Principal S concluded,

> Just having someone to reach out to you is priceless. It is good to have that someone. They [mentors] make those hard decisions a little less difficult to make.

Encourager. Another concept the principals used when defining the role of a mentor was that of an encourager which means to inspire with courage, spirit, or confidence, to stimulate by assistance, approval, etc. Seven out of nine principals stated their mentors were encouragers throughout their mentoring process. Of this, Principal T said,

> She encouraged me to attend professional development and put myself out there; to meet other administrators for job opportunities. I was given the responsibility of structuring the class schedules for the upcoming year.

Another principal added something very similar.

> His job was to encourage and inspire me day to day and it was a success. He always encouraged me to try new things and to think outside the box. He also encouraged me to build from my strengths, and I also built off some of his.

Another principal shared:

> He encouraged me to adopt my own leadership style and would challenge me on it. He encouraged me to get involved in and enroll in programs to assist me in my career.

as another stated…

> She would encourage me to do what was best for me and my school. She would say the last say so is with you. She encouraged me to become a part of the community and join a church of my choice in the community.

Principal S recalled:

> I've been encouraged by my mentor to go in and do what needs to be done within my boundaries. He gives me the reins to do what is needed at my school and he doesn't micromanage me.

Principal J explained the encouragement he received extended from internship to candidacy for a leadership position. He confided,

> She encouraged me to put myself out there, apply for positions. She encouraged me to join CLAS and attend the conference to prepare for a principal's position while I was completing my residency program. She said, "Look, I'll help you. If you get a position and you have something come up that you have questions about, I will help, and if I don't know it, I will refer you to someone who does." She was very encouraging.

Principal T recounted how she viewed her mentorship as encouraging, she stated,

> Every time we spoke, it was about developing who you are as an administrator, an instructional leader and then steps to move towards that direction of becoming what it is we both knew I could be.

Principal M1 also experienced a mentor whom he described to be encouraging. He reflected,

> They're always encouraging if I wanted to try some new things, because I am just on my own, looking at several things that we want to try to do at that school to implement and bring in, to draw new students.

Partner. The next concept of the mentor's role was a partner. The dictionary defines a partner as "one associated with another especially in an action; a member of a partnership especially in a business" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Four principals out of nine said their mentor was comparable to a partner. Three of the four were African-American, two were female and one was a male. The fourth individual was a White male. All were involved in formal mentoring endeavors. The three African-Americans were in system-embedded programs and the White male was in a university program. Principal J stated,

> My mentor treated me like her equal; I had a desk and an office. When she was absent I was acting principal. She included me in on everything, from discipline to evaluations. She was very open and honest; I didn't know her as well as I thought I did.

Another principal stated the role of a partner was relayed, but never spoken as he shared,

> There were certain instances when he would ask me what I thought about certain situations and we would collaborate together. He had respect for me being an up and coming professional.

Principal M1 explained,

> I am always open to learning new concepts, new ideas. In that sense, I am a student, but then I was also partner with my mentor.

Principal L shared,

> I think it is a mutual partnership. It is not as if I am just sitting there, and I am receiving information, but I am also able to talk in an open forum and just share. We have dialogue.

Other principals also believed being a partner was give and take; of this principal (T) said,

> As well as me springing things off her, she would spring things off me. Any conversation I brought up was never off the table.

As respondent T reflected on one of the three factors which made mentorship successful, she explained, "… just being able to bounce ideas off one another is beneficial." Another believed very similarly by adding,

> Open house, certain things I wouldn't have done, the first faculty meeting and the opening of school would have had more mistakes if we did not talk back and forth to one another offering suggestions and ideas.

Principal L also talked about the mentoring endeavor as being one in which ideas where shared by stating,

> Being able to bounce ideas…running ideas by my mentor and then the mentor can say, 'Hey, this might not be such a great idea.' That saves time and energy.

Another principal underscored the importance of being able to partner with a mentor. Respondent M1 shared,

> … you must have that line, that connection, that network of people where you can bounce off ideas. Things that don't work, have not worked—mentors can talk to you about previous attempts before you make the same mistake as they once did.

Principal D1 commented,

> We are not equipped with all the answers. The fact that you still have people that have twenty or more years of experience to bounce our ideas off of. One of the things we deal with is a once in a lifetime issue or a first-time scenario. We are dealing with a lot of unique personalities when you're dealing with school, both children and adults. There is no real way to express some of the demands of the job until you are working in that role.

Respondent T shared similar thoughts,

> Having a mentor is like walking into a classroom, you know what the textbooks say, but reality is something totally different. Having someone to bounce off ideas, someone to ask questions about specific things that come up … it gives you an avenue to think about things before you just strike out there on your own.

Mentoring Outcomes

The second sub-research question was, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as the outcomes of their mentoring experiences?" Interview data revealed three major outcomes of the mentoring experiences. The first, which was professional growth, was consistent across all participants as the universal concept — included two aspects: the development of administrative skills and leadership skills. The second outcome was confidence and the third was gaining an appreciation for mentoring.

Professional Growth

Professional growth included the skills or knowledge that the mentees acquired which assisted them in understanding and performing the job of a principal as expected by their district supervisors. While all nine respondents discussed professional growth as the universal concept, the responses varied in their focus of components of professional growth. There were two primary types of professional skills: administrative skills and leadership skills.

Administrative abilities. Four principals of nine selected administrative abilities as part of their professional growth experience through mentoring. These abilities tended to be specific skills and knowledge that enable a principal to run the day-to-day operations of a school effectively. Of this, Principal J shared skills he had acquired which enabled him to run the school on a day-to-day basis when he said.

> All the structure that is required in making sure the building is operating as a school is something I feel is an outcome of my mentorship experience. It was a real steep learning curve. It is so important to have a clear structure and a process developed so that with the many assignments and responsibilities, you don't lose sight of the main one which is teaching and learning. While maintaining operational, fiduciary, and school climate, I had to make sure I was in classrooms observing what really matters—teaching and learning.

Principal J described myriad tasks and responsibilities of a school leader where sometimes deadlines and issues are sometimes conflicting. "We get bogged down all those other things going on and it is easy to do." This principal contributed expanding administrative skills and abilities which allowed him to deal with these issues to the mentorship experience. Principal T recalled a direct impact on the ability to plan. She stated,

> I am very organized; I am OCD. I once planned things in my head, but my mentor has helped me to trouble-shoot ideas before anything happens. I now pre-think so that I can have alternative plans in the event the original plan is not efficient.

Principal M1 opined,

> I think I would have had to make a lot of mistakes, more mistakes than I've made in the opening of school, things that I probably wouldn't have done in the first faculty meeting. I covered certain topics I wouldn't have covered.

Principal L discussed professional growth with the use of evaluation forms to help principals organize ideas and set goals. This principal shared that (he/she) realized at the end of the month, "Hey, I've achieved everything that we set out for goals this month."

Leadership abilities. The second area of professional growth was developing leadership abilities. Four of nine principals identified the acquisition of leadership skills as an outcome of their mentoring relationship. Although the statement by Principal M1, may contain some elements of administrative skills, it seems to make a transition over to leadership, since involves fact gathering and decision-making. This principal shared,

> Having been around these people [mentors], I have seen first that when they have had to discipline, they had to investigate situations as an investigator—like an actual a private investigator sometimes. As a principal you have to investigate, question students, bring in other ones until you can get to the truth. I've witnessed that with some principal mentors. I didn't anticipate that as part of the job before then. Seeing this first hand helped me to know what to do when I am in a similar situation.

Principal T added an aspect of being a leader as putting children first by saying,

> I'm never going to make a decision where the children are not the first ones that I think about; this was the thought of my mentor, and I walked away with the exact thought.

Another shared how leadership involves going beyond policy and procedures and dealing with the well-being of the child.

> Sometimes I feel there's just not a policy or procedure in place to deal with situations, and you just have to keep in mind: How would I want this situation to be treated if it was my own child?

Principal M1 reflected upon the impact of mentorship and articulated that the development of professional self as a leader who has now inherited duties never once imagined. He talked about developing skills that enabled him to understand the environment in which he was operating. He mused,

> Having been around these people [mentors], I have seen first when they have had to discipline and had to investigate situations as an investigator—like an actual a private investigator sometimes. As a principal you have to investigate, question students, bring in other ones until you can get to the truth. I've witnessed that with some principal mentors. I didn't anticipate that as part of the job before then. Seeing this first hand helped me to know what to do when I am in a similar situation.

For example, Principal M1 expressed the sentiments of the participants when he said, "It can be stressful if you take all of that on yourself. That's why you've got learn the most important element which is that you've to learn to share the load." This demonstrates understanding that leadership should be collaborative rather than directive. Principal M also shared how mentoring strengthened his leadership capacity when he stated, "He gave me advice

on how to lead effectively as an administrator and he also had given me information on different things that I needed to do to be successful."

Principal T shared another leadership skill he acquired in terms of being flexible and able to adjust to daily realities. He stated,

> Being able to adjust to all situations. No situation, no day is ever the same, but through our courageous conversations, I have to adjust to those things and I know you hear it all the time in education, you have to be flexible. Definitely, through my relationship with my mentor I've learned how to be flexible and take every day as a different day.

Confidence and self-assurance. Confidence is the "feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something; firm trust is the state of feeling certain about the truth of something. A feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Self-assurance is confidence in one's own abilities or character. Six principals out of nine agreed their mentor helped to give them confidence and/or helped them to become more self-assured. These are being addressed as one theme as they are so interconnected. Sharing how mentoring helped him become more confidence, Principal J said,

> Mentorship has had a tremendous impact on my life as a professional. It has given me confidence. Applying for and accepting an elementary school to lead was never my desire—I never would have considered it because I didn't have elementary teaching background; however, having a great mentor in an elementary setting taught me a lot; it has given me the confidence that I can do it and be successful. This something that I would really consider in my future but I would not have done without the mentorship experience.

Principal M1 agreed about the value or mentoring saying,

> Just having someone to help me be more confident in what I am doing is needed. The outcome is I think more confidently in making decisions—there are a lot of decisions to make every day.

M1 declared,

> At certain times I just say, "hey, I'm just feeling like I don't know if I can do this." But they just said, "Hey, you can do this. We know you." Having this assurance from people you trust and whose opinions you value builds your confidence.

Principal S1 remarked,

> It's really given me more confidence. Just by having someone or a group of who has been there for me gives me more confidence to do my job right.

Almost verbatim to Respondent 1, Principal M1 reported,

> Just having someone to help me to be more confident in what I am doing…. The outcome, I think, is I am more confident in making decisions, because you have so many decisions, so many judgment calls, every day.

Appreciation of mentoring. As principals reflected on their mentorship experience, another theme emerged as a positive outcome. Nine of the nine respondents shared that being involved in mentoring themselves fostered a deep appreciation for mentoring. While most had experienced some type of mentorship in the past, they each expressed their belief that all principals could benefit from mentoring, especially those who are new to the job. They spoke how mentoring gives a principal someone to talk to, ask questions and someone to rely upon to help them navigate through the demands of the job from operations to financial to instructional

leadership and community involvement. Sharing about how having a mentor fostered an appreciation for the process and relationship, Principal J, explained,

> I think going through the mentorship when I did was very enlightening because I never would have even considered the importance of having a mentor. I believe we should add more emphasis on mentoring and moving forward as our system grows and ultimately, we're going to have more administrators in place.

I feel unqualified to be a mentor, but I would try to help with the aspiring administrators.

Principal T shared,

> I would definitely recommend mentoring to others. The reason is that everybody who is new at something doesn't need to feel like they are the only body on a ship, sailing alone. …you are able to talk things through.

Principal M1 candidly stated, "I believe first year principals need a mentor assigned."

This sentiment is shared by Principal L,

> I would recommend mentorships because it's another source of accountability. And, as a new principal, there's already so much that you mentally have to go through. It is just another level of support. Before I went through the program, I didn't know or was not even aware of how important mentoring really is for a novice principal. Now I do and would highly recommend every system having a mentorship program for new principals.

Principal D shared,

> I know how beneficial it [mentorship] can be. The support, the knowledge and the ability to share and exchange ideas is comforting for new leaders. I hope someday that I can serve as a mentor to another administrator.

Principal M confessed,

> I would recommend having mentors for other principals because of the advantage it gives to principals, especially novice principals. If assigned the right mentor, one could even be more successful as a principal.

Principal D1 reflected on the complexity of responsibilities of the job on day one as a principal and assessed the need for the mentorship program. Principal D1 acknowledged,

> We are not equipped with all the answers…. You didn't take a course to give you all of the answers. There is no real way to express some of the demands of the job until you are actually in it. I believe there should be a mentorship program to new principals figure out complex problems or having others' experiences as guiding posts.

Hindrances

The third sub-research question was, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their formal mentoring experience?" Interview data revealed that respondents noted the lack of support/funding as the primary hindrance of their formal mentorship experiences. They also found that time for mentorship to take place, such as scheduling meetings, hindered their mentoring endeavors.

Lack of support/funding. Five out of nine respondents implied that not having adequate resources for a formal mentoring program was an inhibitor to the mentorship experience, because they had to find or select a mentor on their own and basically design their own program. This hindrance dealt with situations in which participants did not have any, or enough, resources needed or desired to support an effort or idea. Dealing with this issue, Principal D1 recalled,

> I highly recommend the mentorship program when you can get the funding and the time or resources then develop a program. Currently, my system does not have a program for partnering anywhere or anything. They don't have the resources to put one together.

Principal T recounted,

> Mentorship was mostly on an 'as needed' basis. We did not adopt a formal mentoring program. Now, I realize that there are more concrete things that you must do when you are a mentor and there are times and dates and places that you must meet. But the cost, it was not put in place at the time I became an administrator, so it was on an as needed basis.

Principal J admitted,

> I feel we do a good job for teacher mentorship, but with new administrators you don't necessarily get the same support. That can be something that maybe we really need to look into moving forward I providing that new principal a mentor. I guess most people just assume that you are going to be mentored by the principal you are working with as an assistant, but that is not always the case.
>
> They had more funding to pay teachers for giving that extra time to help nurture and guide a new teacher; but not the money to help administrators; it is a lack of support for the program and lack of funds to pay for it.
>
> We never had a need for a program because there hasn't been that great of turnover. I don't know how it's done prior to me becoming the principal as for if they ever had a mentor program but in my own personal knowledge there's never been like a formal process.

Time and distance. Another theme emerging as a hindrance from the transcript was time for the mentorship to happen. Some of the respondents referred to time as a hindrance when discussing difficulty scheduling meetings with the mentor. The difficulty scheduling meetings was described by respondents as being a result of the busyness of a school schedule and

some discussed time being related to the physical distance between the mentor and mentee. These are being discussed as one hindrance since they are so closely related and interconnected.

Five out of nine principals believed that time challenges of running a school negatively impacted their mentoring endeavors. Sharing about this issue, Principal M1 stated,

> The only negative I can see about my mentoring experience was the time factor. I just cannot communicate with them as much as I would like because they are too busy. They are principals as I am, but they serve even bigger schools.

Principal M1 continued,

> Once school starts, it is hard to make time for mentorship unless you can just get some time with your mentor after school. That is rare as well because your school day doesn't end at 3:00 when there are other activities on your campus.

Another principal said, "You need your mentor the most when school starts but they have a school to start with teachers, parents and students too." While another principal shared he doesn't have much time to reach out to his mentor because there are days he gets to bed about 10 or 11pm (after a home game), to get up the next morning to do it all over again.

Five respondents also related this time problem to having difficulties in scheduling face to face meetings with their mentors because of the travel time it took. Scheduling a meeting with a large group of people, especially in different time zones is a difficult task. Even one-on-one meetings proved to be difficulty during the course of a school day for busy school leaders. Principal S remembered,

> Sometimes with busy schedules, it has been difficult to get directly in touch with my mentors…

Respondent T shared,

> The schedule that each of us had and the distance between us, we only met a couple of times while at a professional development. We never planned to meet up; we emailed and had phone conversation.

A principal shared that his mentor was further than he expected, over an hour drive so they never met face to face but would have phone conversation as needed. While another said, he and his mentor were not far from one another, but they did not make time to communicate with one another.

Facilitating Factors

The last sub-research question was, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their formal mentoring success?" Participants articulated three dominant factors that they believed enhanced and sustained their mentoring success. The factors include trust, support and availability of the mentor.

Trust. The first facilitating factor was trust. Trust is a complex belief in another person's behaviors. It includes the belief that another person has the best intent for another's outcome. It has necessary risks where the mentee is vulnerable to the mentor's willingness to help the mentor be successful (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). The respondents' defined trust as confidentiality and the belief that what they shared with their mentor was non-judgmental, non-evaluative and private. The respondents also identified trust as the belief that their mentor was competent as an educational leader and could provide helpful information. When describing the expectations of a mentor, Respondent M stated, "…they have to be good listeners and trustworthy." Principal M1 agreed that trustworthiness is indeed an important factor for mentoring to be successful. Principal M1 explained,

> I believe the mentors that I talk to are trustworthy. I don't think that I have to worry about them going, for example, going back and repeating anything I have said.

M1 continued,

> You've got to trust them to talk to them about certain things. You've got to trust that person. You've got to believe that they are knowledgeable, because otherwise, I would not even call them in the first place.

Principal L described the mentor as "very trustworthy," and elucidated, "I could freely ask questions or say what was on my mind."

Principal S expressed experience of trust. Principal S stated, "I felt free to talk to mentors and they have been good listeners and trustworthy."

Principal D also viewed the mentor to be trustworthy. Principal D maintained,

> I have never felt alone or unsupported. It is great to have people working with you that desire for you to be successful as much as you want to succeed.

Support. When assessing what facilitated the success of their mentoring relationships, four respondents quickly reflected on the support that they received from their mentor. Support is described as listening, attending and being available to the needs of the mentee. It is also described by respondents as feeling supported and cared for. The mentor support should be knowledgeable, consistent, accessible, confidential and desiring the best for the novice principal. Eight of the nine participants explained an added value of mentorship as part of the mentorship outcome.

Principal M stated,

> I feel that I was supported by my mentor by on a day to day basis. It was nothing for me to stop and call my mentor at any time.

Principal D further explained,

> … the feeling of support that she provided and her experience with curriculum and instruction. I have never felt alone or unsupported. It is great to have people working with you that desire for you to be successful as much as you want to succeed.

Principal L agreed,

> It was really important to me to have that support. It made me feel that I am not alone.

Other respondents described feelings of support as their mentors simply listened and conversed with them.

Principal J remembered,

> I just appreciate her taking time to go through all of that [information] with me and really explain a lot of things of which I was just completely unware.

Principal M believes this to be paramount to success. He advised,

> …you must connect with somebody and ask questions (find out what they know and take advantage of what they're willing to share). Then, the things you do not think will fit, you don't have to implement, or you modify to fit your needs. You just don't go into school leadership thinking that you are a person that knows everything. You will not be successful. You've got to have somebody you can ask questions and connect with.

Principal M1 resolved,

> Sometimes they [mentors] can see stuff in you that you cannot see in yourself. They say, "You've got this. You'll be able to figure it out and no problem." Just having that sense of support and straight talk, that's the most important element that I think that helped me out to not just be shaking in my boots.

Availability. A final facilitating factor was the availability of the mentor. Eight of the nine participants discussed the availability and availability of the mentor. Availability and availability are used interchangeably in this context. Respondents described mentors' availability and availability as time spent with their mentor either face-to-face or on phone discussing the concerns of the mentee. Mentees candidly discussed the frequency and availability of their mentor (s) as part of their mentoring experience.

Principal D1 expressed appreciation of the availability of a mentor. He shared, "I think if a mentor was needed on a day to day basis, she would be available." Principal M explained how he took advantage of the availability as needed and recalled,

> My mentor was available for me. I would describe it to be a weekly basis, depending if it was something I wanted to get some input on, or if were just having a general conversation about general things. I could just call.

Principal S agreed, "We talk on an 'as needed basis.' The experience is causal and one." Another respondent, Principal J, when describing the frequency of availability of a mentor stated,

> I would say that we would talk at least two to three times a week. We would sit down at the end of the school day, especially if something happened that was unusual.

Principal J also informed,

> I felt great about being able to communicate with her about anything and she would give me honest feedback about anything. It was good.

Principal L reported,

> Meetings with the mentor is scheduled. I have a monthly meeting with my mentor. We have conversations about weekly concerns and about things upon which I can improve.

Principal S also described scheduled meetings. Principal S explained,

> I have felt free to talk to mentors.… Regularly scheduled visits to the school—maybe every two weeks, if possible.

Summary

The importance of school leaders in creating a positive environment for teachers and students and the importance of their impact on positive teaching and learning is unquestioned. Therefore, on day one, principals should be ready to lead academic achievement. Mentorship for principals has been found to be an effective strategy to provide principals with support necessary to be successful as school leaders.

The researcher aimed to answer the following central question: What are the formal mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural Alabama? Three sub-questions investigated to answer the central question. In this chapter, the researcher has reported findings according to the research question for this case study. The next chapter discusses these findings.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This research study investigated the mentoring experiences of novice principals in rural settings in Alabama. It examined novice principals' conceptions of the role of their mentor, the outcomes of their mentoring relationships and factors that fostered and hindered mentoring program success. The researcher used a case study design with a selected group of administrators who received formal or informal mentoring during their novice years as school administrators. Novice principals were defined as individuals in their first three years of the principalship. In Alabama, where this study was conducted, this time span is considered a probationary period for principals.

The research instrument used was structured one-on-one interviews with principals, which focused on four research questions. The information from the interviews was transcribed and then hand-coded. The transcribed interviews were submitted to the interviewees so that they could conduct member checking. Nine principals from three types of rural school settings were interviewed. Some were engaged in a formal mentoring program run by their school systems. Others were involved in informal relationships which they created on their own.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How do novice rural principals in Alabama describe and define their mentor's role?
2. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as outcomes of their mentoring experiences?

3. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their mentoring experiences?
4. What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their mentoring success?

Discussion of Findings

Types of Mentoring Experiences

There were four types of mentoring endeavors. I have labelled them as system embedded, university program, support network, and independent. An embedded system means that mentoring is implanted, set, rooted, and inserted within the school system to assist new principals, teachers, and staff. Mentors are chosen and assigned by the central office administrators for the program the system has in place. Three principals were affiliated with this type of mentoring.

A university mentoring program has similarities with the system embedded program except that this program is incorporated into a university educational leadership program in which the university requires that the principal engage in a mentoring relationship. Like the embedded system, the mentor is assigned to the mentee and the mentee is required to engage in this endeavor. One interviewee was involved in a university mentoring program.

Support network mentoring refers to having one or more mentors you work with and/or turn to gain professional and personal support. The mentee has a personal relationship with these individuals and selects them as helpmates to achieve aid in achieving their personal and/or professional goals. One principal was engaged in this type of mentoring.

Independent choice is similar to support network, in that the mentee selects their own mentor because they see the need to do so. These mentees selected their own mentor and

engaged in this relationship because they saw a need or a void in their knowledge and/or because they sought a means for personal and/or professional growth. Four principals were engaged in this type of mentoring**.**

As reported in Chapter 1, in the state of Alabama, where this research occurred, there is a formal principal mentoring program sponsored by the state that is run by the Alabama State Department of Education. School districts may also operate their own program and universities may also include mentoring as part of their program offerings. However, school systems are not required to place their principals in mentoring programs and principals are not required participate in mentoring endeavors during their novice years.

In this study, some principals engaged in formal mentoring programs and others did not. As reported in chapter 4, there were four types of mentoring endeavors: embedded, university, support network and independent. Only the embedded system and the university system required principals to engage in mentoring and only these two types of mentoring involved assigning mentors to the mentees. Four of the mentees engaged in this process because they were required to do so. Five engaged in this process because they chose to do so, and they selected their own mentors. This is a very intriguing finding. It appears to signify that principals in the field tend to recognize their need for professional guidance from others even though their school systems so not provide that guidance. Where this desire came from or why these individuals took it upon themselves to form mentoring relationships is unknown and may need further investigation.

Mentees Description of Mentors' Roles

The first research question asked, "How do novice rural principals in Alabama describe and define their mentor's role?" There were three primary roles discussed. The roles were categorized as guide, partner and encourager. While these roles may have some overlay and

some participants conveyed a blending of these roles, the data clearly present the presence of all three of them.

Guide. The data indicated participants viewed their mentors as being a guide throughout the mentoring process and they viewed this as invaluable to them. The dictionary defines a guide as "one that leads or directs another's way; a person who directs another's conduct or course of life" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Eight of nine principals used words that indicated that their mentor was a guide for them. Some actually used the word "guide" to describe the role of their mentor. For example, one principal (J) said, "Mentoring is sitting down with me to explain certain situations that I have not gone through and what I do not quite understand. She did not sit in a class for 5-10 minutes; she sat in a class for 45 minutes to capture everything to give real feedback. I would not be here today if it wasn't for her guiding me."

Others used descriptions that indicated their mentor was a guide without using the actual word. Several respondents used the phrase "give advice" in reference to providing guidance. For example, Respondent M said,

> He gave me advice on how to lead effectively as an administrator and advice on being consistent at doing my job. When a problem did arise, he would give me several ways to handle the problem.

Principal S1 acknowledged guidance as giving advice.

> Typically, when I am calling them, I just need advice. I am just pouring out my story and telling them that this is what happened or that this is what I think or how I would like to handle a situation. Then I would inquire of their thoughts and perceptions about the matter.

The principals viewed this guiding role as very important to their development.

The research also recognizes the importance of guidance in the development of new administrators. For example, Schechter (2014) wrote that administrators who are entering into a new position can be helped by an experienced guide or an inspiring role model to mentor. Development of the necessary skills to be a successful principal requires time and an understanding of how to offer guidance and support for effective results (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). Thus, based on the principals' feedback, these mentors did what they were supposed to do by operating as a guide, providing support on a regular basis to aid them in understanding their position as principal.

Encourager. The second concept the principals used when defining the role of their mentors was that of an encourager encapsulating their ability to inspire their mentees with courage, spirit, or confidence. Seven out of nine principals stated or implied that their mentors were encouragers throughout their mentoring process.

The data indicate that being an encourager was a highly important in the mentor role. For example, sharing about this, Principal T said, "She encouraged me to attend professional development and put myself out there; to meet other administrators for job opportunities." Another principal shared something very similar adding,

> His job was to encourage and inspire me day-to-day and it was a success. He always encouraged me to try new things and to think outside the box. He also encouraged me to build from my strengths, and I also built off some of his.

Kram (2012) stated that in mentoring, this type of psychosocial support comes in the form of advice, friendship, performance feedback, and encouragement. This allows the protégé the opportunity to have discussions as well as share ideas, problems, and information with their

mentors. There appears to be some parallel between the benefits of mentoring for the protégé and mentor, such as less isolation from peers, which encourages and allows a collaborative environment and a sharing of professional interests, ideas, and resources (Ehrich et al., 2014). Once again, it appears that the mentors served a role that the literature says is vital and one that the mentees found of great value to them.

Partner. The third mentor role identified by the participants was being a partner throughout the mentoring process. However, while almost all of the mentors identified their mentors as a guide and/or encourager, only four principals of nine said their mentor was comparable to that of a partner. Three of the four were African-American, two were female and one was a male. The fourth individual was a White male. All were involved in formal mentoring endeavors. The three African-Americans were in system-embedded programs and the White male was in a university program.

Although the respondents indicated that the role of a partner was relayed, it appears that the relationship may never have been specifically spoken of as a partnership between the mentor and mentee. This seems reasonable, because it is feasible that most experienced mentors would not have considered their mentor to be an equal–which the concept of partnership connotes.

Some authors do define mentoring as a partnership between two people (mentor and mentee), normally working in a similar field or sharing similar experiences (Blom, 2011; Frels, Zientek & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016) see mentoring as a developmental relationship between a more experienced professional (mentor) and a less experienced partner, referred to as protégé. However, a partnership can also indicate equality and may even evolve into what Kochan and Pascarelli (2012) identify as co-mentoring or transformational mentoring, which results in changes in both the mentor and mentee and

sometimes the organization or culture in which they are functioning. In this type of mentoring, those involved view their relationship as one in which both of them are learning and growing and becoming. The authors indicate that this type of relationship is not very common but is growing. This is verified by Mullen (2012).

Examining the data and the remarks made about the way these mentees shared about their mentor as a partner it appears that the partnership was a limited one and perhaps not a relationship of equals. For example, M1 stated, "I am always open to learning new concepts, new ideas. In that sense, I am a student, but then I am also partner with my mentor." Some principals, such as T, believed being a partner was give and take. This was indicated by the statement about how he and his mentor worked together. T shared, "As well as me springing things off her, she would spring things off of me. Any conversation I brought up was never off the table." Similarly, Principal L shared, "I think it is a mutual partnership. It is not as if I am just sitting there, and I am receiving information, but I am also able to talk in an open forum and just share. We have dialogue."

While it appears that these mentees viewed their mentoring relationship as a partnership which involved the sharing of ideas and included some was give and take, it is not necessarily true that these relationships were viewed by the mentors as being a relationship between equals in which the mentor also viewed him or herself as gaining or changing. The depth and breadth of the partnership bears further research.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The mentors in this study were operating in both formal and informal mentoring relationships, with the majority of them having relationships that were not formally developed by their school systems. It appears that all of them viewed their role as helping and supporting–

something that most researchers on the topic state is essential to a successful mentoring relationship. Samier (2000) suggested that mentoring relationship is an important element in fostering one's professional growth. While Hansford, Tennent, and Ehrich (2003) discovered that mentoring through personal and confidential relationships offers personal and professional growth.

It is interesting that all mentors understood that role and did not try to impose their own ideas upon their mentees but appeared open to listening and sharing and in some cases to take on the role of partners. It is not known why this is the case. It may be that all mentors had training in how to mentor. It may also be that they themselves had a successful mentoring relationship with another and modelled that relationship. Another possibility is that since more than half of these relationships were formulated between the mentor and the mentee without school district or university involvement, these mentors already had a reputation for providing effective mentoring and that is why they were chosen.

One very intriguing finding was that all respondents who labelled the mentoring role as that of a partner were engaged in formal mentoring relationships. Three were engaged in system-embedded programs and one was engaged in a university required program. This seems almost counter-intuitive as one might expect relationships which were mandated would not be as close as those that in which the mentee selected the mentor.

One explanation for this might be that these mentors received training in which they were taught the mentorship is a partnership. Another factor may be cultural. Three of the four mentees were African-American. The literature on mentoring notes that African-American cultures are more communal than White cultures. It may be then that these African-Americans tended to view these relationships as more helpful, closer, more in line with their own tendencies

for closeness in relationships, than those in the White communities (Tillman, 2005). The race of their mentors is unknown but looking into this further may bear some interesting results.

The perceived roles of the mentors in this study-guide, encourager and partner are consistent with research findings on the qualities of a good mentor and the relationship that should exist between mentor and mentee, if it is to be successful. For example, Zachary (2009) states, "Mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship between the mentee and the mentor. To be effective, the relationship needs the following elements: reciprocity, learning, and relationship" (pp. 2–3).

All of these principals had mentors who viewed their role as listening, sharing, and helping. Although the manner in which they gained these skills and attitudes is unknown, the value of what they did is backed up by the views of their mentees–that these relationships were positive and helpful–and by the literature.

Since mentors are vital to the success of new principals as related in the literature and as verified by these mentees, it is essential that those operating mentoring programs in educational leadership train mentors to embrace being a guide, partner and an encourager who is trustworthy and who is willing to have open dialogue. It would also be of value for those who educate instructional leaders through preparation programs to assure that those who may need mentors and those who may become mentors understand the importance of these roles and seek mentors who have these skills as well as implementing these attitudes when they mentor others.

These findings support the importance of new principals having the opportunity to network with others through mentoring in order to grow in their profession. Thompson (2017) noted in many cases, this involved the necessity to collaborate with and learn from others as demonstrated by the identification of the networking component in some mentoring programs. In the case of

the mentors in this study, their experiences with mentors who willingly shared with them aided them in their professional role as will be demonstrated in the next section of this chapter.

Mentee's Description of Mentoring Outcomes

The second research question asked, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as outcomes of their mentoring experiences?" The outcomes of the mentoring experiences of these mentees were: professional growth, confidence and an enhanced appreciation for mentoring. Each of these is described in detail in the sections that follow.

Professional growth. Professional growth included two areas, administrative skills and leadership skills. Five of nine principals shared that their mentoring experiences fostered their professional growth. Professional growth had two foci. The first was administrative skills and the second was leadership abilities. Three of the four who said they gained administrative abilities and leadership abilities were the same people. One was a Black male at a K–12 school (informal mentoring), one was a White male at an elementary school (formal mentoring), and a Black female at an elementary school (formal mentoring). The person, who was not a part of this group of three, who identified administrative skills was a Black male at a high school (formal mentoring) and the other person who selected leadership skills was a Black male at an elementary school (informal mentoring).

These findings are somewhat consistent with other research. For example, Johnson (2008) described a mentor as a professional who provides support, assistance, and guidance to beginners to promote their professional growth and success. Likewise, Dziczkowski (2013) concluded that mentoring enhances professional development, personal growth, and learning for the mentor and mentee.

Administrative skills. Four principals out of nine believed their mentors helped them gain administrative skills. One example was shared by Principal L who discussed how mentoring helped foster his professional growth by providing him with the tools and knowledge to organize ideas and set goals. Another principal shared that she had acquired some planning skills and she realized this at the end of the month when she thought to herself, "Hey, I've achieved everything that we set out for goals this month."

Discussing this, one respondent said, "He gave me information on different things that I needed to do to be successful." Principal T agreed that it is important for principals to have the knowledge and skills needed to adjust to all situations. He said, "No situation, no day is ever the same, but through our courageous conversations, I have to adjust to those things and I know you hear it all the time in education, you have to be flexible. Definitely, through my relationship with my mentor I've learned how to be flexible and take every day as a different day."

Leadership skills. The findings indicated that the four out of nine principals perceived that the mentoring program fostered the development of their leadership skills. It appears that these four mentors understood the importance or helping the novice make the transition into their administrative roles and master the necessary leadership skills to effectively perform the duties required.

Principal T recalled a direct impact on the ability to plan. She stated, I am very organized; I am OCD. I once planned things in my head, but my mentor has helped me to trouble-shoot ideas before anything happens. I now pre-think so that I can have alternative plans in the event the original plan is not efficient.

Said another respondent, "I think I would have had to make a lot of mistakes, more mistakes than I've made in the opening of school, things that I probably wouldn't have done in the first faculty meeting. I covered certain topics I wouldn't have covered. That is leadership."

This finding is also consistent with expectations and findings in the literature. According to Browne-Ferrigno (2014), the University Council for Educational Administration s has stressed that agencies and states should set up programs for novice leaders to develop leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary to support the needed changes in school systems and an emphasis on good instruction (Brown-Ferrigno, 2014). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated, "a leader, by definition, can effect change around him or herself: It is not only what you do, but how you do it that makes the difference in any given situation and environment" (p. 5).

Confidence and Self-Assurance

Another element discussed by six of the nine new principals as an outcome of their mentoring experience was gaining confidence and self-assurance. Of the three principals who did not identify confidence and self-assurance, one was a Black male in a high school (formal mentoring), and the other two were White males in high schools who had informal mentoring relationships. Confidence is the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Webster's definition also notes that confidence is a feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities. Six principals out of nine agreed their mentor helped to give them confidence and/or helped them to become more self-assured.

For example, Principal J shared that the "mentorship has had a tremendous impact on my life as a professional. It has given me confidence." Principal M1 agreed that "just having someone to help me be more confident in what I am doing is needed. The outcome is I think

more confidence in making decisions—there are a lot of decisions to make every day." Principal J shared, "mentorship has had a tremendous impact on my life as a professional. It has given me confidence." Principal M1 said that he appreciated "just having someone to help me be more confident in what I am doing is needed. The outcome is I think more confidently in making decisions—there are a lot of decisions to make every day."

Appreciation of Mentoring

The third perceived outcome of mentoring perceived by new principals was gaining an understanding of the value of principal mentorship. All nine principals viewed this as on outcome. Participants indicated that the mentoring they received helped them to gain an added appreciation of the value of mentoring, because it had been a powerful avenue for their own growth and development. As Principal J explained,

> I think going through the mentorship when I did was very enlightening because I never would have even considered the importance of having a mentor. I believe we should add more emphasis on mentoring and moving forward as our system grows and ultimately, we're going to have more administrators in place.

Principal T concluded, "I would definitely recommend mentoring to others. The reason is that everybody who is new at something doesn't need to feel like they are the only body on a ship, sailing alone. You are able to talk things through."

Principal M1 expressed gratitude for having the mentorship experience. Principal M1 acknowledged that the mentorship experience contributed to his to success and because of this the respondent believes that mentorship for novice principals can help avoid unnecessary failure. Of this, Principal M1 stated, "I believe first year principals need a mentor assigned." This sentiment is shared by Principal L who shared, "I would recommend mentorships because it's

another source of accountability. And, as a new principal, there's already so much that you mentally have to go through. It is just another level of support. Before I went through the program, I didn't know or was not even aware of how important mentoring really is for a novice principal. Now I do and would highly recommend every system having a mentorship program for new principals".

Discussion and Implications of Mentoring Outcomes

Five of nine principals identified professional growth as an outcome. Three said that they acquired both leadership and administrative skills and two identified one or the other of these skills as being something they learned. In recent years, the literature and leadership preparation programs have stressed the role of leadership within the principalship (Daresh 2004; Killeavy, 2006; Rhodes, 2012; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Thus, the support given to these novice leaders in the forms of quality mentoring and social networking has been found to give leverage to the students, teachers, communities, and most importantly, the new leaders (KELI, 2014).

While leadership is vital in becoming a successful school principal, it is important to remember that principals must also have the ability and knowledge to run the day to day operations of the school through the implementation of strong administrative skills. Some of these principals and mentors appear to have recognized the importance of these skills and abilities and made sure they discussed them and that the mentees gained the ability to implement them.

The fact that only three of these mentors appeared to stress both areas of the job and only five mentees identified professional growth as outcomes of their mentoring experiences is troubling. The reasons for these findings are unknown. It is possible that the mentees who did not mention this may have believed they already had these skills and did not need them, but if so,

that also is problematic because everyone can grow in these areas. It may also be that the mentors simply did not stress these areas–which also is something of concern. The reasons for the findings are simply unknown.

As with the other areas of professional skills, a number of researchers indicate that mentoring can aid principals in developing confidence in themselves (Killeavy, 2006; Rhodes, 2012; Wise & Hammack, 2011). Likewise, reporting on specific areas in which mentoring builds confidence, Frels, Zientek and Onwuegbuzie (2013), Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016), and Parylo, Zepeda, and Bengtson (2012) suggest that mentoring bring employees together to establish a network of professionals within the organization and foster new principals' motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibility with confidence. Although these principals did not specifically address building networks among themselves, they did appear to view their relationships with their mentors as a form of networking and these relationships helped to bolster their confidence across many dimensions.

Since the role of principals in rural schools tends to differ somewhat than those of principals in urban and suburban schools (Lock, Budgen, Lunay & Oakley, 2012), it is plausible that the principals in these schools needed to acquire some skills and knowledge that differs from their counterparts in urban and suburban settings. For example, Principal J described myriad tasks and responsibilities of a school leader where sometimes deadlines and issues are sometimes conflicting when he noted, "We get bogged down all those other things going on and it is easy to do." Although it is not possible to determine if what these principals needed differs from those skills needed in other settings, what is known is that they reported receiving mentoring that fostered their professional growth and administrative abilities. One reason for this may be that

all of the mentors were also principals in rural schools. This may be an important consideration for those matching mentors and mentees.

Engaging in mentoring appears to have been a powerful tool in building confidence for six of the nine participants. Those that gained confidence varied. However, the three who did not say the word confidence were all males who worked in high schools. Two were engaged in informal mentoring and one was engaged in formal mentoring. Why these men did not select confidence as an outcome is unknown. They may have been individuals who already had confidence and did not feel the need to develop it further. It may have been that their mentors, did not feel the need to bolster this attribute. Further information is required to determine the reason for this finding.

Having a deepened appreciation for mentoring is a very interesting finding and one that was not found in the literature. Schechter (2014) argued that achieving effective mentoring requires that mentors as well as mentees are willing to engage in a continual teaching and learning process. Five of the nine mentees created their own mentoring relationships, indicating that they believed in and wanted such relationships. The other four who were engaged in a formal mentoring relationship viewed them as partnerships. Thus, it appears that all of the mentees had a firm belief in the value of mentoring and had experiences with their mentors that tended to enhance their appreciation of this process.

It appears that these principals were willing participants and that because of this, they had successful outcomes and gained a real appreciation for the mentoring process. It may also be that these mentees had the proper mindset to engage in mentoring and to have their experiences be successful (Tripses & Searby, 2009). Such a mindset includes knowledge, skills and dispositions.

It also appears that the mentors must have been committed to the relationship as this outcome is so consistent across all the mentees. As Daresh (2011) stressed, "only the very best principals can serve as true mentors, and care must be given constantly to make certain the 'best of the best' become role models and mentors" (p. 26). It appears that these mentors must have been among the best. Although not directly related to the research questions of this study, the findings here raise a question, as to how these mentors gained their mentoring abilities, which not only resulted in their mentees gaining professional and personal skills and increased confidence, but a deep appreciation for the mentoring endeavor. It would be of value to investigate this further.

The fact that all the principals who engaged in a mentoring relationship gained an appreciation for its value is something not found in the literature. It is a powerful finding because it denotes not only professional growth but the building of a sense of responsibility within the principalship to give back to others through mentoring. School districts might gain a great deal in terms of having their leaders wanting to assist others to grow and become powerful leaders. The findings here emphasize the value of mentoring in fostering individual growth and in building a sense of giving back among those who have been mentored. It presents a powerful picture of the value of mentoring of which school districts should be aware. It appears from these findings that any funds and time spent in mentoring endeavors for school leaders is money well spent.

Factors That Hindered the Mentoring Process

The third research question is, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as factors that hindered their formal mentoring experiences?" Respondents noted only two issues that hindered their mentoring relationships. The lack of support/funding was the primary

hindrance of their mentorship experiences. The second issue was the lack of time for mentoring to take place. Each of these are discussed in this section

Lack of funding and support. Five of the nine respondents indicated that although they had a mentor, there was not a formal mentoring program, sponsored by their school district in place. The demographics of the five were: two White males, one White female, and two Black males. While all mentees reported having successful relationships, which resulted in increasing their skills, knowledge, and confidence, not having a formal mentoring program was also an inhibitor to the mentorship experience, because they had to find or select a mentor on their own. Principals say the absences of a formal program as a result of inadequate funding and a lack of support for the concept of mentoring. For instance, Principal D1 said, "I highly recommend the mentorship program when you can get the funding and the time or resources then develop a program. Currently, my system does not have a program for partnering anywhere or anything. They don't have the resources to put one together."

Principal D recalled that, "mentorship was mostly on an 'as needed' basis." In this situation, we did not adopt a formal mentoring program. Now, I realize that there are more concrete things that you must do when you are a mentor and there are times and dates and places that you must meet. But the cost, it was not put in place at the time I became an administrator, so it was on an "as needed basis."

Dealing with the limitations of the mentoring process partially because of limited resources, Principal D recounted," that mentorship was mostly on an 'as needed' basis but the system still did not adopt a formal mentoring program." The lack of role models, mentors, or sponsors was the number one barrier in reaching administrative positions in our county.

The issue of funds is one that is also addressed in the literature in terms of what is and is not funded. As Bernhardt (2002) stated, "the budget is developed in conjunction with the action plan, will determine the financial feasibility of the actions for the year" (p. 122). Obviously, these school districts did not place mentoring as an essential part of their planning process. This lack of support can cause problems for those who seek to establish mentoring relationships (Kochan, 2002). The five principals in this study who created their own mentoring programs displayed a great deal of initiative. However, it seems plausible that there are many principals in school systems which do not have formal programs who do not take this kind of action. Based on what the literature says about the struggles of new principals, this lack of mentoring support is troubling.

Time constraints. Another concept discussed as a hindrance is time to have a mentoring relationship. The demographics were: 2 White males, 1 White female, and 2 Black males. These were the same five from above. Five out of nine principals believed it was difficult to schedule meetings because of the time challenges of running a school. Even one-on-one meetings proved to be difficult during the course of a school day for busy school leaders. Of this, Principal M1 stated, "the only negative I can see about my mentoring experience was the time factor. I just cannot communicate with them as much as I would like because they are too busy. They are principals as I am, but they serve even bigger schools." Principal M1shared, "once school started, it was hard to make time for mentorship unless you could just get some time with your mentor after school. That was rare as well because your school day didn't end at 3:00 when there were other activities on your campus."

As one first year principal said about this, "At times, it's like I'm maneuvering in a minefield. Things blow up and I crawl out of the hole." This description suggests that the first

year of the principalship is extremely challenging. Writing about the first year of a principalship, Lovely (2004) wrote, the "long hours, excessive workload, and insurmountable expectations from several opposing factions can lead to unmanageable stress" (p. 55). Lovely (2004) also stated that these stressors afflict almost all principals but present an exceptional challenge for the inexperienced first-year principal. This barrier, a lack of funding, and institutional support for mentoring was mentioned extensively in the literature (Carli, 2009; Derrington & Sharratt, 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2009; Lumby & Morrison, 2010; Sperandio, 2010).

In addition to the demands of the job causing problems in terms of time to meet, Respondent T also dealt with the distances between him and the mentor serving as barriers to their relationship. Of this he said, "The schedule that each of us had and the distance between us, we only met a couple of times while at a professional development. We never planned to meet up; we emailed and had phone conversation." Dealing with this issue, Principal D1 recalled, it seemed we never dedicated our Saturday to drive and meet up. Another principal shared that his mentor was further than he expected, over an hour drive, so they never met face to face but would have phone conversation as needed.

Discussion and Implications of Hindering Factors

The issue of time and funding being a hindrance to mentoring success was noted by Kochan (2013), who stressed the importance of having adequate resources–both physical and time for mentoring to operate at optimal levels. Whether funding was state or local, variations in the amount of funding impacted many decisions, particularly the operational struggles faced by superintendents daily. The fact that more than half of these school systems had no formal mentoring program was surprising and troubling. One reason for this may be that all of these schools were in rural school districts. Traditionally, rural school systems in Alabama have lower

funding than many non-rural settings (http://www.alsde.edu/general/quick_facts.pdf). Part of the reason for this is that part of the funding for schools is based upon funding from the community and most rural systems in the state have very limited funding.

The five individuals who selected their own mentors and who were in districts that did not have formal programs identified barriers to success is another interesting finding. This seems to indicate that in those settings where the school system or another agency (i.e., University) took the time to develop a program and provided mentors and perhaps some funding to implement it, mentees did not identify any barriers to mentoring success. This speaks well of formal programs.

One solution to the time and distance issue may be the use of e-mentoring. Muller (2004) suggests that e-mentoring is a cost effective and efficient because a large group of mentors and mentees can be matched and coached continuously using blogs, conference calls, skype, face time, and email. Bierema and Merriam (2002) also suggest that "E-mentoring is another way to develop an innovative definition of mentoring. This innovation might help expand mentoring, particularly in rural settings where distances between mentors and mentees might be large, number of mentors available in the rural setting might be minimal, and funding for face-to-face meetings might be limited.

Although Alabama has developed a formal mentoring program for principals–Alabama New Principal Mentoring (ANPM)–the state did not mandate that this or any other mentoring program is required for novice principals in the state. The fact that five of these principals created their own mentoring program and that the mentees found only two barriers to their success, both of which were outside of their control, seems to reinforce the high level of commitment that the mentees and mentors in this study had for assuring that their relationship

was going to be a positive one, even though most of them had no financial or administrative support for their efforts. Even those whose systems or university-mandated programs provided support still had limited resources for the program and still faced the issues of financial and time constraints. This speaks well for the professionalism of all those involved.

An issue that may need attention is that these principals were all supposedly in the CLAS mentoring program. Thus, they received assigned mentors. Yet, two of them found the distance between them and their assigned mentor to be too great. Two discovered that their mentors had a large number of mentees and so they found their own. These mentees demonstrated initiative and concern for their own growth. Yet, it is unknown how many other novice principals may not have done this. It is likely that CLAS was not informed of this, so they may not be aware of the problem. They may need to add more mentors and/or check back with mentees to determine if matches are working. This state did a great deal of work to investigate mentoring programs and at one point appeared to have understood their value, but it also appears that the state has not provided school districts or its state organization the funding and personnel support needed to make principal mentoring a priority in the state. The importance of the principal in student success and the shortage in individuals wanting to fill this role make this oversight a problematic one.

Although all mentees in this study reported that they gained skills and knowledge from their experiences, and all gained an appreciation for the mentoring process, the fact that so many of them were in districts that did not support their efforts is troubling. This seems to demonstrate a lack of understanding of the value of these experiences. At the same time, it is also inspiring to read about the positive outcome that occurred, even when resources were not available. It appears that the state has given lip service to the importance and value of mentoring, but neither

the state or many of the districts have put resources into this endeavor. Both would be wise to reconsider this as the outcomes of all of these mentoring experiences indicate that the novice principals gained personal professional skills and were able to apply their learning to higher standards.

Facilitating Factors

The fourth and final research question was, "What do novice rural principals in Alabama perceive as facilitating factors of their formal mentoring success?" The respondents uncovered three dominant factors that they believed enhanced and sustained their mentoring success. The factors include trust, support and availability.

Trust. The first factor discussed is trust within the mentoring relationship. Four of the nine principals described trust as confidentiality. There were two Black males, one Black female, and one White male who identified trust as an important factor. They actually defined trust as confidentiality and the belief that what they shared with their mentor was non-judgmental, non-evaluative and private. Trust is defined in the meridian as a complex belief in another person's behaviors (https://www.merriam-webster.com/).

Some of the trust issues involved in dealing with mentoring relationships seemed very relevant to the respondents. One example from a principal is "I believe the mentors that I talk to are trustworthy. I don't think that I have to worry about them going, for example, going back and repeating anything I have said." When describing the expectations of a mentor, Respondent M stated, "…they have to be good listeners and trustworthy." Principal M1 agreed that trustworthiness is indeed an important factor for mentoring to be successful. Principal L also described the mentor as "very trustworthy," and elucidated, "I could freely ask questions or say what was on my mind."

Webster (2016) suggests the formal mentoring includes a mentor who is "a trusted counselor or guide" (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Other researchers also note that a good mentor must be trustworthy (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Searby, 2014). This aspect of being a mentor is also noted by Augustine-Shaw and Liang (2016), who describe a mentor as an entrusted and experienced person who is interested in the development of novice people. They believe this individual's advice is sought by many and the mentor offers advice and suggestions, while authors Oladipo, Adebakin, and Iranloye (2016), and Frels, Zientek and Onwuegbuzie (2013) state that it is a form of a helping relationship based upon mutual trust and respect and involves the mentor providing psychological support to the mentee.

While the characteristic of trust is identified as an important quality in a mentor, it is interesting that the mentees not only recognized that they could trust their mentors, but this trust seemed to be vital to their belief in the mentoring process and thus served as a powerful element in the relationship working. This trust may also be closely related to the next finding dealing with mentors as a support. Although only four principals said the word 'trust', there does not appear to be any pattern in who said this. Some were males, some were females, some were White and some were Black. Two respondents were mentored informally, but one had a network of people to call on and two were engaged in formal mentoring programs.

Support. Another concept discussed as a facilitating factor of the mentoring process was the support that the principals received through this process. Support is described as listening, attending and being available to the needs of the mentee (https://www.merriam-webster.com/). Eight of nine principals said support was imperative (3 Black males [one formal], 2 Black females [formal] and 3 White males [one formal]). Some of the support involved the ability to deal with the mentoring relationship. Respondents spoke fondly of feeling supported; they

enjoyed knowing someone was there or a phone call away. One principal added "I have never felt alone or unsupported. Principal L stated, "It was really important to me to have that support. It made me feel that I am not alone." Other principals simply defined feelings of support as their mentors simply listened and conversed with them.

Availability

The final facilitating factor discussed was the availability of the mentor during the mentoring relationship. Eight of the nine participants (2 Black males, 2 Black females, 1 White female and 3 White males) discussed the availability of the mentor. All agreed that being available during the mentoring relationship was important. The Black male who did not agree with the majority never met his mentor because of distance and he rarely talked to him because he never felt that they bonded. Respondents described mentors' availability and availability as time spent with their mentor either face to face or on the phone discussing the concerns of the mentee. Availability and availability are used interchangeably in this context. This availability took many forms. Principal D1 expressed appreciation of the availability of a mentor. He shared, "I think if a mentor was needed on a day to day basis, she would be available."

> Principal M explained how he took advantage of the availability as needed and recalled, My mentor was available for me. I would describe it to be a weekly basis, depending if it was something I wanted to get some input on, or if were just having a general conversation about general things. I could just call.

Principal L also reported that meetings with the mentor is scheduled.

> I have a monthly meeting with my mentor. We have conversations about weekly concerns and about things upon which I can improve.

Schechter (2014) indicated that mentees most valued the mentors' availability to listen and provide different perspectives, ask reflective questions, and provide general support throughout the year. These mentors seemed to have done these things. In doing so, they demonstrated their commitment to their mentors and to the mentoring process. Mullen (2000) quoted "when professional support networks use a collaborative mentoring model, new possibilities become available for relationship and intuitional change" (p. 1).

Discussion and Implications of Facilitating Factors

Research indicates that it is essential that mentors have a mindset that supports mentoring and the mentee; even then, one cannot expect a perfect mentor and protégé fit (Keyser, LaKaoski, & LaraCinisomo, 2011). All but one of these believed that their mentor was assisting them and supporting their efforts. Why one person did not feel this way is unknown, but research also indicates that if principal mentors do not support the concept of mentoring, mentees will not feel motivated to support it (Daresh, 2004). Daresh (2004) stated, "If mentoring is not respected as a legitimate approach to learning, it will not be successful and effective" (p. 511). Such lack of support could possibly doom the program. Research has also shown that the forcing of mentoring relationships failed to give the support needed for novice principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

However, the majority of mentees in this study did believe that they were supported. The type of support one receives can be small or extensive. For example, Zachary (2012) suggested that, "a mentor can offer support simply by checking in with the mentee between meetings to give the mentee friendly reminders and help them stay on track" (p. 87). It appears that the majority of both the mentors and mentees in this study believed in the mentoring process and worked together to assure that it was successful. This, in turn, appeared to lead to the mentees

feeling that the process supported them, making the mentoring process a meaningful process in their development. It is interesting that all of these respondents were males. Two of the five were in programs in which they selected their own mentees, but three were involved in formal programs in which their mentors were selected for them. Three were Black and two were White. Therefore, race and type of program did not seem to be factors in this outcome. The fact that no women and no individuals in elementary or middle schools identified support as an outcome is likewise interesting, but no conclusions can be reached from these indicators.

This fact that the mentors were viewed as available by eight of the nine respondents is a very interesting and somewhat surprising finding, especially in light of the fact that within the hindrances, finding time, the overwhelming requirements of the position, and the physical distance between the mentor and the mentee were problems. Yet, despite all these barriers, these mentors remain totally available to their mentees. It is also a powerful finding since five of these mentors appeared to be volunteers who were not affiliated with a formal mentoring program developed by the school district. Thus, it appears that these mentors were committed, caring, conscientious individuals who willingly gave of their time and expertise. What caused this commitment is unknown. Perhaps some or all of the mentor and mentees knew one another previously and therefore this personal relationship created.

Researchers have found that there are ten common characteristics that effective protégés possess. They are found to be intelligent, ambitious, risk takers, initiative takers, full of energy, trustworthy, optimistic, emotionally intelligent, demonstrate integrity, and have complementary skills to the mentor (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Searby, 2014). Another possibility is that the mentees demonstrated these characteristics and a commitment and a positive mindset that caused

the mentors to gain respect for the mentee and enhanced the mentors' willingness to be accessible and available.

Mentoring and coaching relationships are important in any profession (Bjork & Brunner, 2000); and the importance of mentoring is clearly indicated by Michael Watkins (2013) in his book, *The First 90 Days*. Mentoring is an approach that supports novice school administrators and has been frequently proposed by researchers since its advent in the mid-1080s (Crow & Mathews, 1998; Daresh, 2004). It appears both the mentors and mentees in this study understand and appreciate the value of mentoring and that they both gave generously of themselves to make their mentoring relationships succeed.

Conceptual Framework

The original conceptual framework for this study involved three separate figures capturing the primary foci of the research questions. The findings of this study led the researcher to simplify the conceptual framework developed as an outgrowth of this study. It is presented in visual form in Figure 2. The framework captures the essence of the findings. It includes the roles of the mentor, the outcomes of the relationship, the hindrances and the facilitating factors. The conceptual framework represents the findings. The mentoring role was connected to the things that facilitated the mentoring success. The pendulum was weighted or heavier on the facilitator's side because the facilitating factors outweighed the barriers.

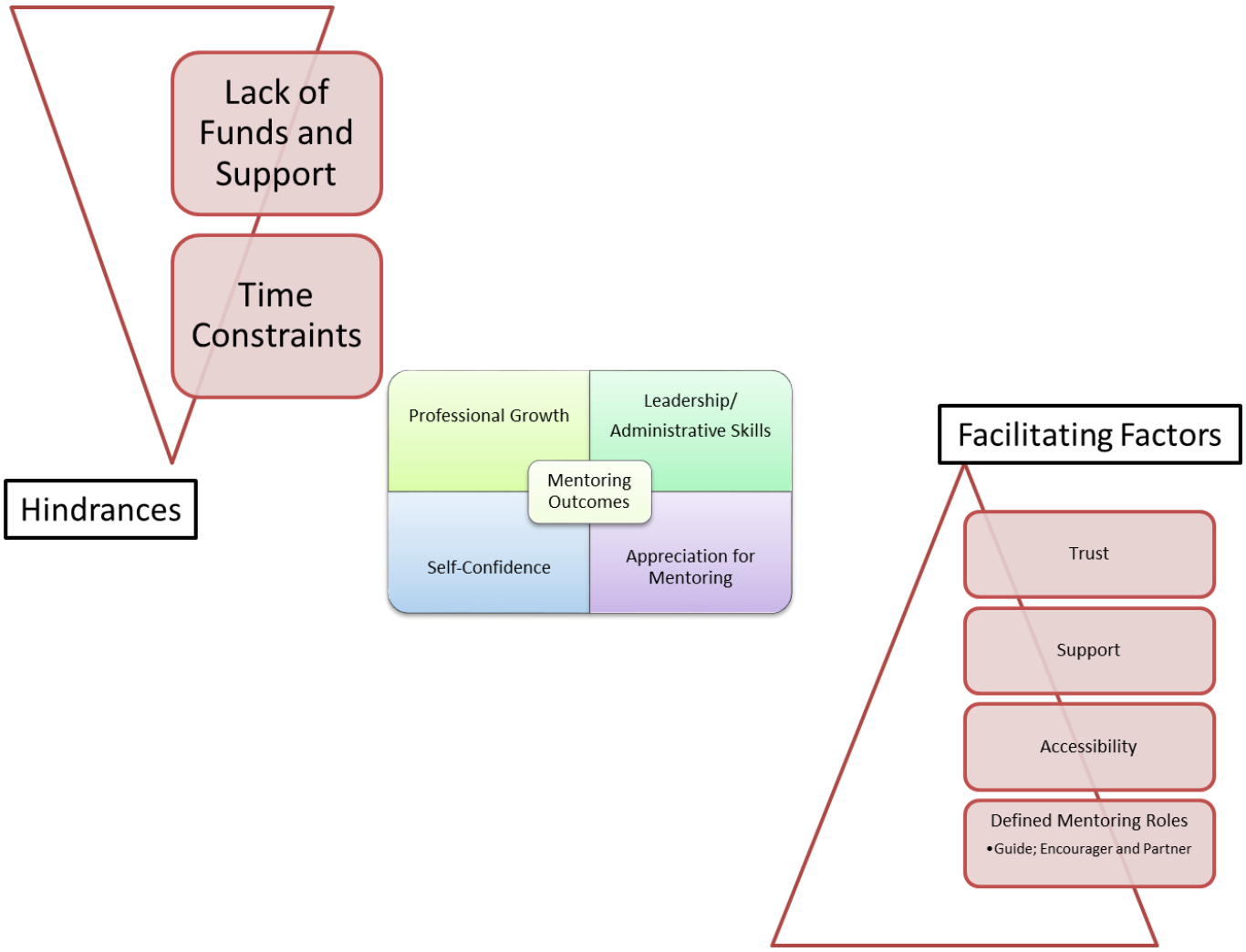

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework for Mentoring Relationships

Implications for Further Research

The researcher focused on the mentee's perspective of the relationship. It might be interesting to interview the mentors for their insights and perspectives on the mentoring program/relationship. This study sought to investigate the mentoring relationship for novice principals in rural Alabama. Examining the issue in urban and suburban settings with the state might also prove fruitful. Also, to what extent did these principals become mentors?

Since these mentoring relationships appeared to be quite successful, further research into how these mentors gained their skills and their understanding of the mentoring role could provide some important insights. It might also be interesting to discover if all or some of the mentors had training in how to mentor and if they themselves had a successful mentoring relationship with another and modelled that relationship. Characteristics of a good mindset includes: knowledge, skills and dispositions. It might be of value to investigate the degree to which these mentors saw these characteristics in their mentees.

Future research could explore why or why not school administrators are supporting mentoring relationships for novice administrators. The fact that only three systems in this study had formal mentoring programs and yet all the principals involved in mentoring developed an appreciation for it makes one wonder why superintendents in this state are not providing financial or time support for its implementation.

Additional quantitative and qualitative data could also be collected from new principals to determine the degree to which time and distance of mentors is a factor in their participation in a mentoring program and what might be done to alleviate these issues. This study could also be replicated to measure Alabama new principals' and/or assistant principals' perceptions of the key components of mentoring programs in other settings such as urban and suburban schools to identify similarities and difference in the findings. The findings of this study could be expanded using a quantitative survey of the four questions to gather additional information within the state. Finally, this study might be replicated in other states to compare the outcomes.

Concluding Thoughts

Based on the role of the principal, the University Council for Educational Administration confirmed that states and other educational agencies must strive to design programs for new

leaders in order to shape leadership behaviors and attitudes that support needed change in school culture and have a focus on quality instruction (Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). In this instance, school districts and the state in which they operate do not appear to be totally committed to this process because they do not appear to be providing funding for mentoring endeavors, which can aid in this shaping and professional growth process. Yet, the individuals in this study found a way to establish and maintain powerful mentoring relationships that resulted in meaningful outcomes. This speaks well of the people involved and demonstrates the commitment of these educators to one another. It also demonstrates once again, the power and value of mentoring.

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