

An Exploratory Model of ESL Program Leadership

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This study researched the preparedness of English as a Second Language (ESL) directors in school corporations in Indiana to determine their background experiences, awareness of second language acquisition research, levels of qualification, attitudes towards English learners (ELs), efficacy for leading ESL programs, and to gain an understanding of how to provide guidance and support to this group of individuals. Furthermore, the study investigated relationships between these factors to gain insight into how they impact each other and program implementation. The study endeavored to provide useful information towards policy making and support of ESL leaders. An exploratory model of ESL program leadership, developed by the researcher, concluded that when ESL leaders are certified and bring experience of working with ELs to their positions, it is more likely that their programs will be successfully implemented. Finally, the interplay of variables showed that these directors' levels of knowledge of second language acquisition principles and efficacy for leading the ESL program had highly significant effects on attitude, program implementation and each other. The implications of this study include directions for policy, training programs, and further research.

Keywords: School Leadership, English Learner, ESL director, educational policy, leadership efficacy, educational leadership development, leadership model

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While it has been well documented that leadership is vital to student success in school (Waters, Marzano & NcNulty, 2003), it is important to learn if those leaders have the training and efficacy

necessary to do the job effectively, and to determine what support they need. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) has placed requirements on school corporations to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) with categories of students sorted into subgroups, such as race, socio-economic status, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Even with the Indiana Waiver for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), ELs must meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and are also included in what Indiana defines as the “bottom 25%” of all students on state testing. This includes ELs in another subcategory that is new. In 2011, 53.7% of ELs were in the bottom 25% for English Language Arts (ELA), while 42.1% were in the bottom 25% for Mathematics (U.S. Department of Education, Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). In a time of high stakes testing and accountability, are English as a Second Language (ESL)/Title III/Non-English Speaking (NESP) Program Directors (ESL Directors) well qualified and supported to make the decisions necessary to enable English Learners (ELs) to succeed?

The above statistics lead to inevitable difficulties for Indiana in several areas. From work conducted by several universities in Indiana through the National Professional Development Grant, several difficulties are specified. First, the rapid increase of English learners was not anticipated nor planned for by many Indiana schools, which are not prepared to meet the challenge of ensuring that English learners will make AYP. An achievement gap of 19.7% in Math and 28.4% in ELA exists between ELs and non-EL students tested in Indiana in 2012-2013 (Indiana Department of Education Compass). Schools often do not have adequately prepared teachers or leaders who have the knowledge base to make decisions about program design and development to maximize EL student potential. They frequently do not have a background in effective instructional practices or knowledge and understanding of curricular materials that are effective with this population. Additionally, school officials are sometimes unaware of, and do

not know how to interpret the law with regards to ELs. Another problem schools face is knowing how to benefit from, and allocate the various available funds provided by the federal and state government to assist in teaching EL children. Furthermore, schools often do not have the resources or knowledge to provide effective professional development for their faculty and staff (Smith, & Mungro, 2009; personal communication, A. Teemant, September 28, 2012).

According to a report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in 2009 which investigated teacher preparation in Schools of Education in the U.S. for students that fall into the students with disabilities and English learner subcategories, preparation of educators for working with English learners is lacking. This document reported that in 2009, students with disabilities represented 9% of the U.S. student population, while English learners represented 10%. However, they found that while the majority of preparation programs required at least one class in serving students with disabilities, only 20% required courses for working with English learners. The article suggests, “The major reason cited by programs for not requiring courses with content on English language learners or field experiences with this student subgroup was that their state standards did not require this of teacher preparation programs,” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009, Highlights n.p.).

The challenge is great for a school and community to have the linguistic and cultural competency to meet the needs of the students and to successfully incorporate them into the school and community. All of these issues fall on the shoulders of the person the local education agency has delegated to report to the state on this population, often called the English as a Second Language (ESL)/Title III/Non-English Speaking (NESP) Program Director, hereafter referred to as the English as a Second Language (ESL) Director. This leads to several questions. What are the state guidelines for holding this position? What are these individuals’

qualifications, experience and attitudes with regards to ELs? How are these individuals supported and trained? Is there a relationship between levels of training and attitudes of ESL directors towards English learners? Are these individuals enabled with the leadership skills and efficacy needed to lead a program of this level of importance?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the circumstances of the Local Education Agency vis-à-vis the requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Title I, Title III, and rulings of law to equitably and effectively educate English learners, it is imperative that the individual making the educational and budgetary decisions pertaining to grant funding and corporation expenditures be knowledgeable and prepared. Much research has been conducted on leadership in the school setting, pointing to a strong correlation between leadership and student outcomes (Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood, et al., 2004). This study defined the Indiana Department of Education expected qualifications and requirements of the ESL directors in school corporations and the individual directors' levels of preparation, qualification, leadership experience, and level of efficacy with providing ESL program leadership, and professional development. The ultimate purposes of this study were:

- to determine the level of knowledge of second language acquisition theory, professional development attained, leadership efficacy, and attitudes towards English learners of the individuals managing the ESL programs and corresponding grants in Indiana Local Education Agencies;
- to investigate the relationship between levels of training and experience with attitudes towards English learners of the ESL directors;
- to investigate the relationship between attitudes towards English learners of the ESL directors and their leadership efficacy towards administering the ESL Program;

- to investigate the relationship between district data (demographics, personnel working with ELs, low incidence/high incidence/rapid influx, assessment) and the qualifications, attitudes and levels of professional development of the ESL directors;
- to provide documentation to the Indiana Department of Education Office of English Language Learning and Migrant Education Programs to support recommendations on how to further support, train and equip ESL Directors.

BACKGROUND

Role and Importance of Leadership on Student Achievement

Due to the lack of current research on ESL Directors of Local Education Agencies, the researcher looked to the literature on other leadership roles in schools to make connections. A review of the research conducted by Leithwood et al. (2004) suggests that not only does leadership matter, but that its effects are underestimated and account for approximately a quarter of the total of school effects on student learning. They state that leadership is second only to classroom instruction in terms of educationally related factors that affect what students learn. To further state the case and establish the relevance to the current research, Leithwood et al. (2004) showed that effects of leadership are seen the most in areas where there is the most need.

Reyes (Tellez and Waxman, 2006) pushes more specifically for the importance of leadership and the characteristics of successful leadership with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (CLD). She states that school leaders must be knowledgeable about their populations as a starting point. Deficit thinking in which CLD students are seen as bringing deficiencies to the classroom rather than funds of knowledge is particularly harmful as it causes teachers and leaders to see students as unintelligent. On the other hand, leaders who ran successful EL programs integrated those programs into the school vision and mission, staffing decisions, professional development decisions, instructional goals, assessment practices, and

parental partnerships. These leaders provided non-EL teachers with professional development and included EL teachers in decision making about programs and governance. Furthermore, these successful leaders knew and used second language acquisition research to drive decisions and made parents aware of these decisions. They valued and used various languages in the school and respected the first languages of the parents. Schools were run like families and moral leadership was the basis for decisions on providing resources and time for fair treatment of CLD students.

Reyes (Tellez & Waxman, 2006) cites Montecel & Cortez (2002) when she suggests that educational leaders must be committed to increasing student achievement through building bilingual programs, improving communication, and building community. These leaders must have knowledge about programming for ELs, must know strategies that are successful with ELs, and must be aware of the cultures and languages of the students. Relationship building and teaming efforts that include EL teachers and bilingual teachers throughout all subject areas is necessary. Ruiz (1993) is also cited in Reyes' work (Tellez & Waxman, 2006) as stating that there is a lack of attention to ELs in school reform movements even though there is a large body of research that supports bilingual education and other successful approaches. Additionally, it is claimed that while the dissonance between home and school accounts for much of the school failure of minority students, this research is mostly excluded from school reform movements. Reyes (Tellez & Waxman, 2006) cites Murphy (2002) in concluding that school leaders need to be recultured to be successful with CLD (including EL) students to be strong moral stewards, educators, and community builders.

To add to this part of the discussion, a doctoral dissertation written by Pierre (2009) found that leadership competencies for working with CLD students, as described by principals in

the study, included a deep understanding of second language acquisition and strong community engagement. Furthermore, principals in this study believed that diversity is a strength in the school; all students can learn given the time and support they need. The mandate of the school principal (leadership) is to improve student learning, and that the principal (leader) must build capacity to serve diverse communities better. Furthermore, relevant to Pierre's research, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) said that effective leaders promote teaching that is culturally responsive to the populations being served, and leads to equity and excellence for all students. Additionally, Ryan (2003) concluded that inclusive forms of leadership works more effectively with diverse communities. This involves including diverse communities in the culture and curriculum of the school, including their languages and funds of knowledge.

Expectations, Requirements, and Qualifications Required for ESL/Title III/NESP

Directors in Indiana School Corporations

The State of Indiana does not have specific requirements for qualifications or experience for the individual who holds the position of Director of ESL/Title III/NESP. This has been determined through email correspondence (July 26, 2010) and personal interview (August 25, 2010) with the Coordinator of English Language Learning and Migrant Education for the State Department of Education at the time (Harvey, 2010), and through document review of the Indiana Code through the Indiana Register dated December 14, 2012.

The Coordinator of English Language Learning and Migrant Education Programs stated that there are no requirements for who can serve as Title III/NESP director in school corporations. She said that it is often a district level administrator who is responsible for other Title programs that fulfills this role. Furthermore, she said that her office cannot dictate who manages this grant program because Title III only allows two percent of the district's allocation

to be used for administration. When asked if the person has to have an administrative license, the coordinator stated that this is not a requirement. When asked if the person must have experience working with ELs, she also stated that they do not (Harvey, 2010).

The Indiana Register document, known as REPA (Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability) dated September 12, 2015 posted by the Indiana State Board of Education outlines the qualifications required for other school leaders including building level administrator, district level administrator-superintendent, district level administrator-director of career and technical education, district level administrator-director of curriculum and instruction and district level administrator-director of exceptional needs. In order to be licensed by the state to fulfill one of the aforementioned positions, one must have completed an approved education program in that area, successfully completed the administrator's licensure assessment, have had relevant experience in that field or as an administrator, and have earned a master's degree (Indiana State Board of Education, 2012). These requirements are not specified for directors of ESL/Title III/NESP programs under State law.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology encompassed elements of both descriptive and correlational study. A tailored design approach was used to gather data through a survey. The intention of this approach is to gain support and participation from subjects who feel they have an interest in the outcome. A framework was used to organize the survey around the research questions and key data points. Data was analyzed using analysis of means, standard deviation, one-way ANOVA with post hoc tests, Pearson Product Moment correlation followed by post hoc tests and linear regression (Tukey's and Dunettes for post hoc.) Cronbach's Alpha was utilized on constructs that used Likert scale measurements and combined a grouping of questions (knowledge, attitude,

efficacy, and program implementation). Effect size was also utilized in this study. The survey was collected electronically using a commercial tool called QuestionPro. This allowed the researcher to ensure that only one survey was answered from each respondent computer. The number of subjects with data complete enough to be analyzed overall was 88. The number of public school corporations in Indiana was 295. Given that the survey was distributed through the Indiana Department of Education's Learning Connection to the Title III and NESP (English Learners) listserv and targeted those who direct ESL programs, this provides an approximate 30% response rate if one individual responded per School Corporation. Of those who started the survey (115), there was a 76% completion rate.

OVERVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

The four main constructs in this study, knowledge in the field of ESL, attitude towards English learners, efficacy for program leadership, and effective program implementation, were all affected to varying degrees by the leaders' qualifications, experience, and certification with ELs, roles in leadership of the programs, and number of ELs in the corporation. Knowledge, attitude and efficacy were affected by the greatest number of factors. Having teaching certification to work with ELs and experience teaching ELs had significant effects on all three of these areas. The level of involvement the respondent felt in the design and delivery of the EL program had significant effects on attitude and program implementation. Efficacy was also affected by the length of time the person held the position. The number of ELs in the corporation had a significant impact on the knowledge and efficacy levels of the subjects. The participants' roles in their corporations (sole responsibility being the EL program, to this duty being part of a larger job) had a significant effect on efficacy.

The constructs were all significantly correlated with each other (knowledge, attitude, efficacy, and program implementation), except for attitude and program implementation. Knowledge and efficacy were significantly correlated with attitude and program implementation, as well as each other. Even further, these showed predictive qualities for each. Knowledge and efficacy proved to be the power players in this study. Attitude also proved to be predictive of efficacy. Table 1 combines all of these factors that were discussed in individual sections in the results chapter to show their significant roles in the four constructs in this study.

Table 1

Significant Relationships Demonstrated in this Study

Factors	Knowledge	Attitude	Efficacy	Program Implementation
Education level		X		
Certification with ELs	X	X	X	
Experience teaching ELs	X	X	X	
Role in ESL in Corporation			X	
Involvement in design of ESL program		X		X
Time in position			X	
Number of ELs	X		X	
Effect of Knowledge		X	X	X
Effect of Efficacy	X	X		X
Effect of Attitude			X	

Unanticipated Findings

One observation that may be surprising was that very few personal characteristics (educational level, certification, and experience) or district data (number of ELs, role in corporation,

corporation classification) affected the level of program implementation as described through self-reporting. This may be because it was self-reported and many of those in the position are administrators who know how to navigate requirements placed upon them. It may also indicate that the state is doing a sufficient job of educating them about their requirements for reporting and implementation. The majority of them stated that they had training on how to administer the LAS Links test (predecessor of WIDA ACCESS), for example. Administering the test does not take a high level of knowledge about language acquisition, but does require one to know how to navigate procedures. Even so, the level of involvement the participant had in the design and development of the ESL program significantly affected program implementation. Furthermore, knowledge and efficacy both significantly affected program implementation. It seems that for program implementation, an individual needs to feel a level of responsibility, ability and confidence, and a sense of knowledge that they can perform the job adequately.

Another area of interest was found in the analysis of titles respondents held in their corporations relevant to the ESL program and the reasons they were placed in these positions. While no parallels can be drawn for certain, the percentage of participants who have a title that includes EL Coordinator/Director or some variation thereof was very close to the percentage of participants who said the reason they were assigned their role was that they had specific knowledge in the field. Additionally, the same pattern held true for those who were administrators with another type of title. The percentage of administrators who were assigned the ESL duties as part of their role as an administrator nearly matched with the percentage of participants who held an administrative title other than something related to ESL directly. On this same line of thought, the percentage of those whose titles were EL Coach or a support role for ELs nearly matched the percentage of those who volunteered because of their interest. Those

with other types of titles not related to ESL and those who said they had the responsibility for the program because no one else wanted it were also close. While these parallels are curious, they could be purely coincidental. In this study, the question about titles was open-ended and therefore was not set up in a way that could be easily correlated. In future studies, it would be worthwhile to investigate the possible correlations between how a district views the ESL leadership position and the reason certain individuals are chosen to lead them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research led to several overall conclusions that are discussed in this section along with their implications for the field. These are discussed as a backdrop for the resulting recommendations and lead to areas for further research.

Need For Review of Policies

The number of ELs in schools in the United States is increasing and will continue to do so at exponential rates (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009-10; Boyle, Taylor & Soga, 2010; Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress, 2010). Even so, it seems that the world of ESL in terms of laws, policies and procedures is years behind other subgroups of high need students, such as students with disabilities (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009). However, the demographic changes taking place in the USA and the projections showing that these will not slowdown in our lifetime indicate that educators need to act now. If action is not taken until this situation becomes dire with 40% of the school-aged population being English learners, it will be too late for several generations of students, not to mention the damage that would be done to society and the economy (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

A major difference to be taken into account is that, in the Special Education world, parents are more aware of their rights and are not a group without a voice. Multiple organizations exist to assist parents and to advocate for special education rights of children such as the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates and Parent Advocacy Council for Education. English learners' parents often do not speak English and are not well informed about the educational rights of their children (Fix & Passel, 2003). Furthermore, they are not an empowered group, often feeling intimidated by the school and official situations (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006). However, the American Civil Liberties Union is stepping up more often to advocate for this group of students. For example, the ACLU along with others filed a law suit on April 24, 2013 against the California Department of Education alleging that 20,000 English learners are not having their educational needs met (Maxwell, 2013). Additionally, more English learners are second or third generation American citizens (Fix & Passel, 2003). As these groups become better informed, they will insist on their Lau rights being met (*Lau v Nichols*, 1974; Hamayan & Freeman, 2006).

The education field needs to be proactive and not wait for law suits and legislators to make decisions that will dictate how decisions are made rather than doing what is best for kids now. According to a report by The Urban Institute (Fix & Passel, 2003, p. 7), "The flows (immigration) over the past decade have had a profound effect on the nation's demographic make-up and hold far-reaching implications for all domains of education and social welfare policy." In another study, it was mentioned that strong state legislative support was a factor in positive teacher attitudes towards ELs (Byrnes, Liger & Manning, 1997, 1996). In light of these changes, it would be prudent to review and enhance policies and programs to support English learners, their educators, and leaders now.

An Exploratory Model of ESL Program Leadership: Relationships between Factors

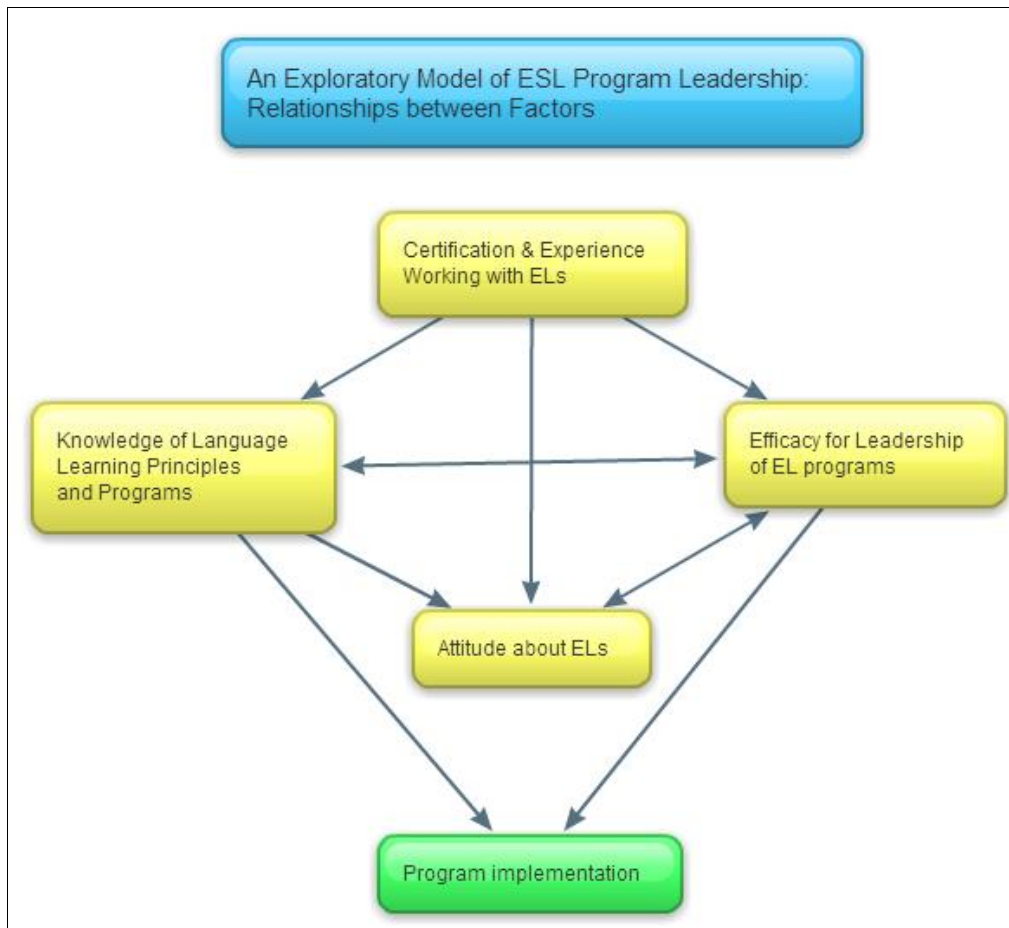
The power factors affecting leaders of ESL programs in this study were certification for teaching English learners and experience working with ELs. These two factors had implications on personal characteristics of leaders including knowledge of second language acquisition and ESL program administration, attitudes towards ELs, and efficacy for leadership of ESL programs. In turn, knowledge and efficacy were the power constructs having predictive value for all other characteristics of leadership, including a reciprocal relationship between the two.

Efficacy can involve many factors. In this study, the factors of preparation and mastery of tasks were primarily explored. A key finding demonstrated a strong relationship between efficacy and successful program implementation. This relationship has been confirmed in other studies, as well (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2005). Attitude proved to be the weaker of the constructs in this study in terms of correlation or predictive value, affecting only efficacy.

Figure 1 provides an exploratory model of ESL program leadership to assist in explaining the relationships between these variables and a base upon which to conduct further research.

Figure 1

An exploratory model of ESL program leadership: Relationships between factors



The Exploratory Model of ESL Leadership developed from this research has implications beyond research, into areas of training, licensure, leadership development and ultimately, successful ESL program implementation. From this study alone, conclusions cannot be made as to what successful leadership training programs might look like. However, its strongly significant findings, taken together with prior research, point in these directions for further investigation.

The trend in many states, including Indiana, is to move away from higher levels of qualification and education for teachers and educational leaders (Milner, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Indiana State Board of Education, 2012). Indiana does not require a Master's Degree for teacher professionalism. Furthermore, the Indiana Department of Education does not have any

requirements for the individual leading the ESL program in Indiana schools (Indiana State Board of Education, 2012). However, this study speaks to the importance of having experience and certification when it comes to effective leadership of ESL programs. While one cannot generalize from this study that all ESL leaders would be more successful with their programs given certification and direct experience with ELs, the results indicate that this is a direction to consider.

Another area in this research that supports higher levels of training specifically in the field of teaching English learners successfully is the finding that participants were relatively competent in the management side, but less so with instructional leadership. Respondents were generally able to properly fill out the paperwork and administer the requirements of the Title III/NESP grants, and follow through on the state's requirements for reporting. These are not the areas that ESL leaders felt they need support in for themselves or their staff. While they can check off all the boxes and fill out the forms properly, schools are still not meeting AMAO requirements. From the survey findings, there is a sense of frustration that mainstream teachers are not equipped to meet the needs of ELs in their classrooms and that support and funding are inadequate from the state and corporations. ESL leaders have become competent at the paperwork, but perhaps that emphasis has taken away from the focus on improving student learning, which is the educational leadership side of the equation.

Recommendations

Policy and qualifications. Minimal requirements should be established by the state for the leadership of ESL programs similar to other areas of district level administration (exceptional needs, career and technical education, curriculum and instruction) as found in the Rules for Educator Preparation and Accountability (Indiana State Board of Education, 2012). The

requirements for these areas generally require the educator to pass the school leader's licensure assessment, hold a proficient or accomplished practitioner license in the content area, successfully complete an approved district administrator program in that content area, and have a master's degree. While it is important to develop minimal qualifications, this should be done with a view to meeting the needs of the leaders so that they can in turn assist teachers and building level leaders in closing the achievement gap that exists between ELs and non-ELs. It is not necessary to mirror what is being done in the other areas, but to utilize research to determine what those minimal qualifications should be. Establishing qualifications would also professionalize the role of ESL director, giving that individual a place at the table in making district level decisions. With any new endeavor, there would be inevitable growing pains. A transition period would be needed along with avenues to pursue the qualification requirements. Those currently in leadership positions should have the opportunity and incentives to pursue qualifications. Professionalization of the position through certification will also incentivize schools of education to develop leadership training programs for ESL directors.

Preparation through advanced education. Development of leadership programs (master's level or above, or equivalent certificate) specifically designed to develop administrators for ESL at the same level as director of exceptional needs programs, or other specialized areas. There exists a body of knowledge that is unique to this field in terms of second language acquisition and research on effectiveness of instructional programming that would not be gained in a traditional administrative program or without specific studies in this content area. A review of requirements at several universities in Indiana to prepare administrators for state licensure as district level directors of exceptional needs and other areas revealed that courses are required in general administrative content, as well as content in that specific field. This type of program

would serve the purpose of developing support and collaboration among leaders which was an element that participants felt is currently lacking. Currently Indiana is systematically deemphasizing further education in the form of advanced degrees and providing for less rigorous academic programming pathways for certification of educators (Indiana State Board of Education, 2012). Although this provides an excuse for educational partners, such as schools of education, not to develop programs in leadership that are clearly needed, there are creative ways to provide this education. Certificates of study in ESL leadership can be used by educators for professional growth points. If universities are clever, they will design these programs so that those credits can be used towards a master's degree when the pendulum shifts again.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Leithwood et al. (2004) found, the effects of leadership are seen the most in areas where there is the most need. The changing demographic makeup of this nation indicates that educating English learners is a growing area of high need. This research has shown that as a whole, ESL program leaders do not feel well prepared to lead their corporations in the implementation of programs leading to academic success for ELs. These leaders feel that the established system has gaps in its support for them and those for whom they are responsible, the ELs, their teachers, and communities. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005) found that the perception of the quality and usefulness of education leaders' preparation and support from others played significant roles in efficacy for leadership. Efficacy and preparation (knowledge, certification, and experience) played significant roles in this study, leading to several suggestions and directions for further research. As an educational community, we need to find a path forward that will lead to highly effective programs for our rapidly growing English learning population and to provide adequate support for the task.

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Donna Albrecht has taught and administered in local and international PK-12, and university settings for 25 years. She has taught IB courses, social studies, high ability and ESL students. Donna has designed and administered ESL programs in Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and in Indiana. Before joining Anderson University, Donna was the intermediate school principal at the International School of Indiana. In her current role, Donna directs and teaches in the English Language Teaching Program and conducts Professional Learning Community groups, focusing on culturally and linguistically diverse students, and high ability learners in Madison, Hamilton, and Marion County schools. Donna has an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership, and Ed.S. degree from Ball State University in School Superintendency; an M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from The American University in Cairo, Egypt; and a B.A. from Anderson University in political science and economics. Donna is licensed as a superintendent, building level administrator, and teacher (ESL, High Ability, PK-12; and social studies 5-12) in Indiana.

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