

EXPLORING BEGINNING ADMINISTRATORS AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF K-12 ADMINISTRATORS IN THE STATE OF
HAWAI'I

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Kay and the late Gerald W. Duarte

and

For my son, Kealaponookalani Meyer

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Magical. Transformative. Life changing. Words that have defined my experience as I conducted this study. To those who have shared this journey with me, I am forever grateful. This has truly been an amazing ride.

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ABSTRACT

The research goal of this study was to explore the preparation and socialization of beginning administrators as educational leaders, focusing on their leadership growth and development over several years as they transitioned from teacher to administrative preparation participants and, finally, to emergent school leaders. A primary responsibility of school leaders is to implement strategies to move their respective schools forward. Having a desire to enter an administrative leadership preparation program requires one to have the commitment, dedication, and a plethora of leadership abilities that also include being able to support students, faculty and staff, and school-wide initiatives. Through utilizing a phenomenological, or lived-experience, approach for understanding school leadership development from the insights of the participants who experienced the process, the study's results should provide a more thorough understanding of the challenges new administrators in Hawai'i's public schools must navigate regarding leadership, collaboration, appropriate communication skills, classroom instruction, and sustained focus and coherence of school improvement efforts.

Results suggested most educators who have transitioned from teachers to school leaders initially had no intention of entering administration; however, over time, they developed a strong desire to influence change and make a difference with a larger impact beyond their specific classroom. Relationships were identified as essential to all parts of the administrative journey-- in particular, providing needed program support (e.g., hearing from other principals about their schools, discussions with preparation cohort members) for participants' learning the technical aspects of school leadership and learning to lead through day-to-day experiences and discussions with mentors and others at their school through the leadership transition. Emergent school leaders also suggested the need for greater recognition and inclusion of place-based educational practice (i.e., sense of where we live, understanding the cultural aspects to our history) within the

school leadership preparation experience and greater triangulation that aligns the state, district, and university level to develop educational leaders. Most importantly, this study facilitated the individual voices and the perspectives of school administrative leaders to be showcased as they completed the state's school leadership preparation program and also experienced their initial administrative roles in working closely with students, staff, families, and community members to enrich the lives of their students.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
Chapter 1: Overview of the Research	1
Background of the Study	2
Purpose of the Study	6
Need and Significance of the Study	7
Approach to the Research Problem	9
Phenomenology	11
Research Questions and Focus	13
Positionality	15
Organization of the Dissertation	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	22
Overview of National Trends in Education	22
Identification of Candidates and Leaders	26
Leadership Standards	27
Successful Leadership Practices	28
Skills of Effective Principals	30
Shaping a Vision – Setting a Direction	31
Creating a Climate Hospitable to Education – Developing People	32
Cultivating Leadership in Others – Developing the Organization.....	33
Improving Instruction – Managing the Instructional Program.....	34
Managing People, Data, Processes.....	37
Principal Preparation Program in Hawai’i: Hawai’i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) program.....	38
Leadership Standards Utilization.....	47
Summer Institute.....	48
Intern Year and Cross Training.....	50
Broadening Leadership Perspective.....	52
Problem-Based Learning.....	52
Conclusion.....	53

Chapter 3: Research Design.....	55
Phenomenology.....	57
Transition to School Leadership.....	58
Identification of Participants.....	60
Sample.....	61
Data Collection.....	63
Interviews.....	63
Steps in the Analysis of the Data.....	67
Epoché and Bracketing.....	68
Phenomenological Reduction.....	69
Themes and Statements.....	70
Epoché as a Researcher and Practicing Educational Leader.....	71
Conclusion.....	73
Chapter 4: Findings.....	75
Emergent Themes.....	76
Why Teaching and Why the Move: Intention, Impact, and Moving Forward.....	76
Supporting the Learning and the Leadership Transition.....	83
The Importance of Relationships: How it Informs and Enhances Practice.....	88
Supporting the Entity: Aligning Goals between State, District, and the University System	91
From Space to Place: Valuing our Culture.....	94
Where is our Future?.....	97
Conclusion.....	102
Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications.....	104
Summary of the Study.....	104
Discussion of Findings.....	105
In What Areas Did Beginning School Leaders Feel Most Confident in their Role?.....	106
Where Did Participants Believe More Support was needed to Grow as Leaders?....	110
Implications for Practice.....	115
Implications for Future Research.....	118
Closing Thoughts.....	122
Appendices.....	125

Appendix A.....	125
Appendix B.....	126
Appendix C.....	127
Appendix D.....	129
Appendix E.....	130
Appendix F.....	131
Appendix G.....	133
Appendix H.....	134
Appendix I.....	136
References.....	137

Chapter 1: Overview of the Research

The aim of this study is to explore beginning administrators as educational leaders, focusing on their leadership as they facilitate data driven educational practices. As educational leaders, school principals lead their faculty and staff in implementing best practices to support the needs of all students. In 2020, a world-wide health pandemic occurred, which changed most aspects of social interaction including educational practices across the globe. In the United States, state and school administrators made important decisions regarding the delivery of instruction due to the necessity to provide safe school and classroom environments. Locally, the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) implemented distance learning at the start of the 2020-21 school year, which drastically changed the instructional practices and engagement within our school buildings from previous years.

Throughout this pandemic, educational leaders continued to lead during this difficult and unprecedented time as the leadership skills of all administrators were tested. However, they continued to make decisions regarding a plethora of decisions that impacted faculty, staff, students, and community members. They guided, supported, and made critical and difficult decisions for the best interest of students. I foresee that this pandemic changed the way administrators view their jobs and how they needed to adjust to the "new" educational norms.

This study focuses on understanding the development of beginning administrators as educational leaders. A Wallace Foundation (2021) report stated, "Principals really matter. Indeed, given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership" (p. 43). If we understand what skills are needed for leadership development,

regardless of the situation or task at hand, we will understand how these leaders develop best. This study explores new school level administrators' experiences as leaders who are ready to guide teachers and others towards academic success in schools.

Background of the Study

Previous research on school leadership suggests principals are tasked with a variety of daily job duties. Kafka (2009), for example, described the principalship as a “complex and multifaceted role that principals have historically drawn on shifting sources of authority to assert their institutional and personal power” (p. 318). A primary responsibility is to implement strategies to move their respective schools forward. Neumrski (2012) shared that principals are more than managers of the school; that is, they facilitate the school’s core activities--teaching and learning. Principals lead teachers to implement best teaching practices in their classrooms, to provide a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum, and to differentiate learning experiences for all students. This integrated instructional role requires school administrators to support teachers and educators in their professional learning and development. In turn, educators support their students’ learning progress as they work towards ongoing improvement in academic achievement.

The characteristics of an effective instructional leader emerged during the late 20th century when researchers defined educational leadership as being able to manage schools and districts effectively (Bossert, Rowan, Dwyer, & Lee; 1982; Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Edmonds, 1981; Edmonds & Frederikson, 1978; Lezotte, 2001; Madden et al., 1976; Rosenholtz, 1985; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995; Weber, 1971). Over the past 40 years, the literature on school principals reflected the evolution of the role and responsibilities of the position. Orr (2011) described this as “Leadership preparation has become one of this decade’s

primary approaches to educational reform and improvement of student achievement” (p. 115).

The term “instructional leadership” originated during the 1970’s when researchers began comparing “effective” and “ineffective” schools with respect to serving the needs of urban children. Effective schools were defined as those that were successful in educating all students regardless of their socioeconomic status or family background (Lezotte, 2001). Ronald Edmond’s (1979) landmark study provided an explanation of what many stated; effective schools almost always have leaders focused on instructional practices. In the early years, researchers noted there was no real consensus as to what an instructional leader did to make schools “effective” (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger, 2005; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Sammons et al., 1995). The principal’s role in instructional improvement remained a type of “black box” as early studies focused primarily on effective schools (e.g., Edmonds, 1979), rather than the processes by which ineffective schools became effective.

In the years since the early effective schools studies, research indicated the importance of instructional leadership in conjunction with managerial skills to lead schools toward academic improvement (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Hallinger, 2011a; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). These studies have established that the work of school administrators involves a plethora of job duties to not only manage schools, but also to lead school-wide instructional practices and change as “school improvement rests to an unprecedented degree on the quality of school leadership” (Hess & Kelly, 2005, p. 245). Principals navigate both the managerial and instructional components of leadership, as they must be supportive of one another (Shellard, 2003). The five areas identified for managerial practice include: setting clear goals, communication, participative management, human resources

management, and resource distribution (Johansen & Hawes, 2016). Today, principal leadership remains a critical element to the success of both the school and its students (Grigsby et al., 2010).

A number of researchers defined instructional leadership as important in re-examining the school's core values beginning with the vision and mission of the school and culminating in high quality teaching and instructional practices (Grigsby et al., 2010; Hallinger, 2011a; Hallinger, 2011b; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010). Instructional leadership primarily lies with the school principal where practices are tied to teaching and learning (Green, 2010; Hallinger, 2005; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) and requires the school principal to be involved in the development of the school's instructional program (Hallinger, 2005; The Wallace Foundation, 2021). The principal is responsible for all aspects of the teaching and learning framework including using data in school-improvement decision-making and utilizing researched based professional development (King, 2002). They are also responsible for instructional practices involving assessing the instruction alongside providing meaningful and relevant feedback, mentoring, and coaching (The Wallace Foundation, 2021). Recent studies have also documented the importance of shared leadership in facilitating improved instructional practices (Leithwood et al., 2020; Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Instructional leadership focuses on the instructional guidance administrators utilize to support their own schools, classrooms, and teaching staff with respect to active support of the academic program (Shellard, 2003). The expertise of high-quality instruction engages the leader to observe and evaluate teachers in a constructive manner (City et al., 2009; Johnson, Uline, & Perez, 2011) and differentiate the differences between both high and low instructional practices and methods (Grissom & Loeb, 2017). Brazer and Bauer (2013) crafted this definition of instructional leadership: "Instructional leadership is the effort to improve teaching and learning

for PK-12 students by managing effectively, addressing the challenges of diversity, guiding teacher learning, and fostering organizational learning” (p. 650). Instructional leaders possess specific characteristics such as a strong results orientation, strength of purpose, and a willingness to involve others in the decision-making process (Rosenholtz, 1985; Sammons et al., 1995). Researchers emphasized that one of the most common misconceptions about principals is they work on instructional leadership alone, are responsible for the academic achievement for all, and coordinate and control the school’s programs (Bossert et al., 1982; Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger, 2011a; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Rosenholtz, 1985).

Grigsby et al. (2010) summarized earlier research by suggesting the role of an instructional leader to include several important responsibilities:

- Provide instructional leadership through the establishment, articulation, and implementation of a vision of learning,
- Create and sustain a community of learners that make student and adult learning the center focus,
- Facilitate the creation of a school culture and climate based on high expectations for students and faculty,
- Advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth,
- Lead the school improvement process in a manner that addresses the needs of all students,
- Engage the community in activities to solicit support for student success, and
- Utilize multiple sources of data to assess, identify, and foster instructional improvement (Green, 2010; Jenkins, 2009; Wanzare & Da Costa, 2001).

Instructional leadership begins here, but must also include the support of all. This provides the opportunity for continuous success to occur with the teaching and learning and improves educators' ability to teach and improve on their instructional practice (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008).

Purpose of the Study

Given the challenges of school leaders' role in facilitating school improvement, the purpose of this study is to examine beginning administrators as educational leaders and to describe how the principal preparation program in Hawai'i develops and supports their leadership skills. As identified in previous research, the resources and the structure of the preparation programs are integral to preparing school leaders who make a difference in schools and the lives of each member of their school community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr, 2011).

Recently, researchers explored the journey of those that have become educational leaders (Jenkins, 2019; Priest & Jenkins, 2019) and though many aspects of principal preparation programs across the country were previously studied (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Elmore, 2000; Horsford et al., 2011; Levine, 2005; Lindsey et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr et al., 2010; Peterson, 2002; Stein & Nelson, 2003; Wallace Foundation, 2013a; Wallace Foundation, 2013b), there are no recent studies regarding the experiences of program completers in Hawai'i. Such a study could provide information to inform and shape future program delivery to ensure it is meaningful, relevant, supportive, and effective in the context of new administrators working in their new roles as school leaders. Many of the experiences shared by previous participants may reveal not only about new administrators' leadership practices, but also about how they had to

learn to lead, as they highlight strength, growth areas, and possible next steps. It may provide insights into their own journeys with school administration.

Need and Significance of the Study

School leadership has changed over the course of the last several decades, as it is no longer primarily focused on being able to run the operational aspects of a school, but also on leading teachers in implementing strategies promoting academic rigor and student success (Leithwood et al., 2020). Previous research is clear that school leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating student success in terms of setting the school's direction, developing people, finding purpose, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Recently, the Wallace Foundation (2021) identified four practices that link effective outcomes and fundamental foundational skills. They include: high-leverage instructional activities, building a productive culture and climate, facilitating collaboration and learning communities, and the strategic management of personnel and resources. School leaders guide efforts to improve the quality of the school's instruction, professional development, and the implementation of targeted curricular changes.

In the current era of federal accountability for school improvement (e.g., No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and the Every Student Succeeds Act), the majority of states have undertaken revamping, reorganizing, and strengthening their principal preparation programs to better support the instructional leadership aspect of their programs (Davis et al., 2011). Previous research focused on how principal preparation programs prepare school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orr & Pounder, 2010; Young et al., 2009). However, despite a general consensus regarding the importance of school leadership to school success, research continued to emphasize that principal preparation programs lack rigor and relevance and were not as effective as they needed to be in producing innovative schools leaders (Bush, 2018; Darling-Hammond et

al., 2007; Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005; Ni et al., 2019; Peterson, 2002). There is a clear disconnect between skill-building opportunities between topics taught and what is required on the job (Hess, & Kelly, 2007).

As new principals adjust their roles from classroom teacher to school administrator, preparation programs must support and prepare them to lead others through effective instructional change as they to facilitate overall school improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr, 2011; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). Alignment between district, state agencies, and university preparation programs is noted as vital to the improvement of effective principal preparation programs as it supports learning opportunities for those preparing to be school administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013a; Wallace Foundation, 2013b).

As previous research suggests, greater emphasis should be placed on the integration of curricula with internships, problem-based learning and instruction, and the development of partnerships between district, state, and university levels as they focus on elements around the theory of adult and experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003; Knowles et al., 2005). The integration of school leadership coursework alongside school field experience provides the opportunity to learn what skills are needed on the job, execute essential skills, and receive immediate feedback from experienced mentors (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007). Such integrated learning allows candidates to integrate the pedagogical content with on the job learning (Grissom & Loeb, 2011).

As few studies previously exist within Hawai'i public school settings on the socialization of school leaders, the perspectives of those new school administrators who are "up close" to the day-to-day educational practices and efforts to make improvements should be studied. This study

should provide a more thorough understanding of the challenges new administrators in Hawai‘i’s public schools must navigate regarding leadership, collaboration, appropriate communication skills, classroom instruction, and sustained focus and coherence of improvement. If we understand the skills needed for leadership development, we will begin to improve efforts in the development of beginning leaders. This current study is important because it will explore new school level administrators' experiences as leaders who are ready to guide teachers and others to academic success in schools.

Approach to the Research Problem

The goal of this study is to describe the experiences of new administrators as they gain an understanding of school leadership during their first few years in their schools. The collection and analysis of the data regarding the leadership perspectives of new school administrators therefore utilizes an interpretative, or sense-making, research approach. Qualitative research methods are appropriate for the collection of rich descriptive information about individuals' natural settings, where the aim is to identify patterns and themes (Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods include ethnographies, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, and poetic inquiry to name a few (Saldana, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) examined qualitative research as it looks at “philosophical assumptions, to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems” (p. 44).

Investigation occurs in natural settings where data analysis is “both inductive and deductive and the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p.44). Creswell and Poth (2018, pp.43-44), examined the characteristics of qualitative research to support the analysis and reporting from a participant’s view. They include:

- For participants to be in their *natural setting* where data is collected in the field where the experience occurs. Information is gathered through talking directly to people and seeing them behave in their natural environment.
- For the research to be the *key instrument* as they collect data through the examination of documents, observe behavior and interview the participants. Questions would be developed by the researcher and be open-ended.
- To use multiple *methods* to collect data such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. The researcher would review all of the data, make sense of it, organize it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources.
- To use complex reasoning through *inductive and deductive logic* by developing patterns, categories, and themes by organizing the data. It may also involve collaborating with the participants interactively so that they have a chance to shape the themes throughout the process.
- The participants may have *multiple perspectives and meanings* and as the researcher, understand that each participant's perspective may differ from one person to another.
- The purpose may be *context-dependent*. The researcher must seek an understanding of contextual features and their influence on participants' experiences. This is essential because the particular contexts allow researchers to “understand how events, actions, and meaning are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur” (Maxwell, 2013, p.30).
- The process may be *emergent in the design* as situations may shift or change after the researchers enter the field to begin to collect data. A multitude of situations may occur while in the field to include question and data collection alterations, the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified during the process of conducting the study.

- *Reflexivity* and how as the researcher, our background and interpretation of the information within the study will be used and what is to be gained from it.
- To develop a *holistic account* and develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study where there may be multiple perspectives within a situation.

These elements of qualitative research are utilized to support the analysis and reporting from the participant's view throughout the process. With the use of this qualitative research process, phenomenology is the method used to support participants' views of their leadership experience. It focuses on the assumptions of the framework to inform the study of the research problems such as the human, social, individual, or group problems.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology refers to the study of the human lived experience or consciousness (Marion, 2002); that is, describing experience in the way subjects experienced it (Bevan, 2014). van Manen (2017b) stated that “Phenomenology is the study of what gives itself ‘as’ lived experience” (p. 813), while Buytendijk referred to phenomenology as the science of examples (van Manen, 1997). van Manen (1997) also noted that “the point of phenomenology, as a qualitative research method, is to arrive at phenomenal understandings and insights – phenomenal in the sense of impressively unique and in the sense primordially meaningful” (p. 819). It supports the study to reflect on the phenomenon and get a grasp and an understanding into the phenomenon and its meaning regarding the human experience, as it is a nonobjective reflection bringing awareness from the experience that we lived through as we reflect on what that meaning of the experience phenomenologically (van Manen, 2017a). van Manen (2017b) also discussed phenomenology as looking at what is phenomenal or singular about a

phenomenon or event including the “lived experience descriptions, anecdotes, stories, narratives, vignettes, or concrete accounts” (p. 814).

Phenomenology supports an individual’s significant meanings and supports this research of lived experiences in order to support current and incoming administrators as educational leaders. As school administrators, the participants share the experience of being “new” administrators, and they share similar experiences with the same administration program. The researcher’s focus is on examining the “what” participants experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994; Zahavi, 2005). Although individuals may experience the same event, how they interpret the event will likely vary from person to person, depending upon how each viewed and reflected on that moment (Bevan, 2014; Sokolowski, 2000).

Moustakas (1994) listed several elements with Phenomenology that occur throughout the research process. They include:

- Emphasize the phenomenon of interest to explore, study, and describe it in a single concept or idea.
- Explore the phenomenon with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews.
- Identify and understand the multiple perspectives of several individuals’ shared experiences of the phenomenon. The goal is to understand common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon.
- Reveal as the researcher discusses her or his own personal experiences with the phenomenon as a means to focus on the experiences of those being interviewed and bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences.

- Generate themes from the analysis of significant statements and build the data from the first and second research questions highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes regarding how the participants experienced the phenomenon.
- Develop and identify statements and themes to write a description of what the participants experienced, writing a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) also added an additional step where researchers write about their own experiences and the context and situations that have influenced their experiences.
- Report the essence of the phenomenon and focus on the common experiences of the participants where there is an underlying structure and has the same interpretation for all parties and the “how” and “why” of an individual’s experience.
- Describe the experience and detail the data collection and analysis. The results and interpretation focus on how the phenomenon was experienced with significant statements and a conclusion with a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon.

These elements provide a foundation for the phenomenology process to occur as the researcher interprets the experience.

Research Questions and Focus

Existing research currently focuses on principal preparation programs across the nation, but few have focused on beginning administrators here in the state of Hawai‘i. This study focuses on beginning administrators as educational leaders and their experiences as new administrators. Through the process, I intend to explore the experiences of those being socialized as new school administrators to clarify what their experiences were prior to entering into school administration. These experiences include any school level experiences prior to entering

administration, prior learning and knowledge, professional preparation, and early experiences as school administrators. This study will provide insight into the experiences of those in the principal preparation program in Hawai‘i and may help identify some of the best practices identified in previous research (Davis et al., 2005; UCEA, 2015).

The administrative leadership of a school is important to make the changes needed to address potential issues and influence teacher leaders in a positive and impactful manner. Few studies have focused on the experiences of the administrators in order to provide context to the “what” and “how” they felt throughout the training of the administration program and leadership skills needed after the completion of the program. Interviewing school administrators would provide a foundation and a basis to how to further develop and support their leadership.

The research questions I address are as follows:

1. Where do beginning administrators feel the most confident with their job role and why?
2. Where do they feel more support is needed and what further training and guidance would they find helpful to give them the confidence and ability to grow as leaders?

Conducting this research study contributes to the literature regarding the transition from teacher leader to school administrator providing insight, data gathering, analysis, and feedback. Engaging in conversations with recent program completers would provide them the opportunity to provide their input and perspective. Illuminating their experiences during preparation and their initial experiences in school settings should provide valuable insights into school leadership preparation. Educational personnel in the state of Hawai‘i may be able to use this research to gain a better understanding of the needs of beginning administrators through their lived experiences and further analyze how to better support their candidates for their respective career in the long-term.

Positionality

Education has always been a priority in my family. My sisters and I grew up and lived on the windward side of the island in Kāneʻohe, but attended schools in the Kaimukī and Kāhala areas on the island of Oʻahu; upscale neighborhoods known for some of the better public schools in the state at the time. Growing up, I had no idea my parents decided to move us geographically to schools outside of our geographical district. From an early age we were taught about the importance of education and to always try and do our best.

After high school, I immediately enrolled into Kapiʻolani Community College and thought I would major in Hawaiian studies or elementary education. In order to help with this decision, I took a job at a local elementary school teaching Hawaiiana. I thought I had hit the jackpot, as I taught a subject I enjoyed and with the grade levels I would possibly like to pursue in college. However, teaching at an elementary school, I didn't find the joy I had hoped for when I initially took the position. I decided the following year to work at a middle school and immediately found enjoyment, passion, and the drive to teach. I realized that when I taught, I appreciated not just the maturity level of the students, but also the conversations and positive relationships we were able to build with one another. It was here that I decided to look at other options within teaching. After transferring to the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa (UH Mānoa) and the College of Education, I received my bachelor's degree in secondary education with the primary focus on teaching Career and Technical Education (CTE). I then pursued my master's degree in education with an emphasis in curriculum studies from UH Mānoa.

My path towards becoming a leader was ingrained in me at a young age. As an elementary student, I remember being chosen often to lead the class in discussions, take the lead roles in plays, and engage in leadership positions such as student council and class elected

positions. The more I was encouraged to lead, I felt a fire burning within me to continuously improve and continue to hone in on my leadership skills. I believe teachers recognized these skills within me early on as well. My teachers helped and encouraged me to take risks and helped me to become the person I am today.

My own journey through education led to me incorporate and implement systems and strategies that support all of our students. As I progressed in my career from classroom teacher to instructional coach, I was given a multitude of responsibilities that taught me some hard lessons regarding leadership. These lessons included budgetary limitations and restrictions, promoting positive instructional strategies within the classroom with personnel, and systemic changes needed to move the school forward. These experiences helped me to make an informed decision about becoming a school administrator. Every experience has shaped who I am as an educator and the experiences that have developed me as an educational leader.

During my childhood, I had a fear of school administrators. Not because I was a bad or naughty child, but because the administrators I had lacked visibility, developed non-existent relationships, and perhaps had a disingenuous interest in my personal history and educational journey. They seemed distant and people that I can remember being seen only when you were in trouble for something. As I became a school administrator, this was not what I wanted to become. I wanted to develop meaningful relationships and to have the same compassion I shared with students, families, and staff members, just as I had done as a classroom teacher. I wished to be a support system, more visible, and seen as an educational and instructional leader who developed meaningful relationships and who took a vested interest in all of the students. I am hopeful that students begin to see administrators as educators who are beacons of hope and

encouragement instead of being seen as the iron fist you see or hear from only when situations and problems arise.

Throughout my tenure as an educator, I've had the privilege to learn from excellent mentors and leaders whose leadership styles and methods have impacted not just their schools in a meaningful way, but also where they have developed the leadership capacities of other educators around them. The direct impact leaders have on teachers and students is vital to the success within the school setting they are in as school quality and academic success rates are based on the academic achievements of students. I've been honored to have worked with and alongside them and am proud to continue to call many of them my mentors and now friends.

As I reflect back on my time with my own training to become a school leader, I think about how my skills were developed in order to create and sustain a school that engages in collegial discussions and collective efforts to increase student academic success. It was not just about ensuring that we provided teachers with the necessary skills, but also how we continuously support and guide others to the academic rigor needed to compete in the academic market. Through these experiences, I have gained a deeper understanding of the appropriateness of promoting positive relationships and understanding my own leadership style. Reflecting on all of my experiences, my perception regarding appropriate leadership has influenced my course of study. Aside from my personal observations and experiences, Fullan (2003) speaks about the importance of creating a shared vision with those you are leading in order to move and make improvements to the environment you are working in. Research by Bryk and Schneider (2002) studied the concept of "relational trust" and how this has a direct impact on student academic achievement. How these work in tandem to one another is important in moving any school forward.

Many of our HIDOE system leaders are byproducts of our own department. We are trained, molded, and taught to think a certain way. My hope is to find positive ways to develop leaders who have the moral imperative and are willing to think about how to lead others positively (Fullan, 2003; Heath & Heath, 2010). The research I conducted is qualitative in nature primarily because I wished to conduct interviews with administrators by engaging in conversations regarding how these factors are influencing the trend to take the next steps into leadership positions.

Supporting the needs of school administrators is a personal journey because of the influence and impact it could have when leaders are not adequately prepared to lead others. To see how this research affects leaders, teachers, and students alike, could ultimately affect not only how leaders are trained and developed, but also how they continuously support educators to become more effective in their practice and enhance student academic achievement for all students. Learning more about what supports are needed for school level administrators through the interview process, understanding their perspective, and identifying possible next steps is critical towards understanding their educational leadership journeys. This would help to build systems, monitor progress, and utilize data to drive student academic achievement. In the Hawai'i State Department of Education, we work hard to focus on areas of need including looking at student academic achievement and social emotional learning components. I hope to be able to use this framework and research to support the needs of our school level administrators as these experiences are what has cultivated my own identities within education. This will be important as we focus on the bigger picture and ways to make meaning in all that we do.

Part of this journey is the utilization of research-based practices, data driven decisions, and appropriate use of methodology. Throughout this process I've struggled with my own

interpretation of phenomenology because of the close relationships I have built with my peers and colleagues. Working alongside my peers and colleagues, I am aware of how others perceive me; both in my role as an educator, but also how this may have a direct impact as I conduct my research. I questioned if this was the right mode and method to conduct my proposed study because of my own internal struggle with how to interpret utilizing the epoché, bracketing, and reduction methods within the phenomenological methodology. I questioned much of the purpose and the analyzing of methods with respect to how I would continue to work on this aspect of the study.

After thorough review of Salis Reyes (2019), I too have come to understand my own reality regarding who I am as both the researcher as well as the educational leader. As a colleague and peer, it would be hard to separate what I have learned throughout my journey and tenure both as a teacher and as an educational leader. However, I am also learning to understand what and how my own position will be affected within this research. Being a native Hawaiian and a cultural practitioner has a huge impact on the work I conduct in all aspects of my life. The relationships I engage in impact my own innate being regarding who I am and what I stand for (Chilisa, 2012). Separating what my own beliefs are and aligning them with the relationships developed are critical elements in understanding and appreciating how they all coincide and can “live” happily together. Separating, but not departing from my own beliefs and values regarding my own personal journey in becoming a school level administrator is something that I will recognize throughout this process.

I also believe that being a woman still creates cultural stereotypes regarding their roles in leadership. To be taken seriously can be inundated by the intimidation from all realms; community influences, faculty and staff perceptions, and student preferences. All of these can

become interchangeable but still feels like the “work” is harder because you have to showcase your talent and your knowledge to the world. As a woman of color and specifically a native Hawaiian, I feel as an administrator, we are underrepresented. It is a cultural shift that we must start advocating that our kānaka take leadership roles to support our keiki and our next generation of leaders.

Throughout this process, my hope is to confront my own fears of conducting research to bring improvement for not just myself, but for others as well. Living, breathing, and experiencing the administration program within the state of Hawai‘i has guided me to become so passionate about my research project. The journey each administrative cohort embarks on to become school administrators has not only provided great friendships, but also has developed into a system of ongoing support both professionally and personally. Although I am still evolving as a leader, it is important for me as an educator to continuously ground myself and know that my research and processes are also supporting the leadership development of others on their administrative journey. This is no easy task; however, my hope is that this research study will continue to support administrators to become better leaders, to develop in their leadership roles, and to focus on promoting positive relationships for all.

Organization of the Dissertation

The exploration of beginning administrators as educational leaders is an important topic to explore within qualitative research. This study fills a gap with the existing research primarily focusing on principal preparation programs across the nation, but few have studied beginning administrators in the state of Hawai‘i. Chapter 2 provides an overview of principal preparation programs within the United States and the specific program within the state of Hawai‘i. The structure provides an overview of the current trends and what literature is stating, gaps that are

occurring, and some key differences between the national program and the local program here within the state. Chapter 3 describes the sample, data collection, and steps in conducting the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study through presenting the themes around the “research questions” that emerged during the analysis of the participants' perceptions of their experiences in becoming school leaders. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the key findings from the study, limitations, and provides recommendations for program development and future research. Finally, it also provides several conclusions from the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a discussion of national and local trends in school leadership preparation that inform the current study. The integration of research-based literature helps to align the background of the study and elements within the principal preparation programs. Although there are trends that occur both nationally and locally, in the state of Hawai‘i, there are components that exist only within our Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) principal preparation program. In order to highlight some of the similarities and differences with respect to the proposed research, I discuss and contrast these national and local trends in school leadership preparation.

Overview of National Trends in Education

Over the past few decades, leadership preparation focused on principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2009; Farley, Childs, & Johnson, 2019; Orr & Pounder, 2010; Young, Crow, Murphy, & Ogawa, 2009) and how they prepared their leaders for school leadership (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orr & Pounder, 2010; Young et al., 2009, The Wallace Foundation, 2021). Despite a general consensus regarding the importance of school leadership to the overall improvement of schools, previous research on the preparation of school leadership found that preparation programs lack rigor and relevance and are not as effective as they need to be in producing innovative school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005; Peterson, 2002). Much of the focus primarily was on what leaders should be able to do and very little was on what they should know (Horsford et al., 2011; Lindsey et al., 2005; Stein & Nelson, 2003).

These expectations altered the role of the principal over the past few decades, as principals must address not only schoolwide practices and expectations, but also school

outcomes (The Wallace Foundation, 2021). Developing educational leaders with skills such as educational content, pedagogy, instructional practices, and ability to create culturally proficient schools is critical towards ongoing success.

The literature suggests principal preparation programs are more effective if they shift their focus from school management to instructional leadership practice as they develop their leadership skills. As program participants begin to adjust their role from classroom teacher to school administrator, preparation programs should support and provide opportunities for them to guide others through effective instructional change as they work to facilitate overall school improvement (Bottoms et al., 2003; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr, 2011; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). The Institute for Educational Leadership (2020) describes this as being able to demonstrate instructional, community, and visionary leadership as it focuses on the classroom, teaching practices, professional development, data-driven decision-making practices, and accountability.

Currently, principal leadership has become a critical element to the success of the school and students (Grigsby et al., 2010) as the accountability measures in the United States have continuously shifted and transformed the work of school administrators (Farley et al., 2019). The ongoing changes with educational policies such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top (RTT), and the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) have increased requirements for not only student academic achievement, but also principal preparation programs and their effectiveness using student achievement and growth (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Ujjifusa, 2018; The Wallace Foundation, 2021). In response to these initiatives, the majority of states have undertaken revamping, reorganizing, and strengthening their principal preparation programs to better support the instructional leadership aspect of their programs (Davis et al., 2011) where

they are not only providing meaningful and relevant feedback but also utilizing observation rubrics and state and national test scores (Grissom & Young, 2016; Neumerski et al., 2018). However, with the reauthorization of ESSA, leaders are also being held accountable for non-academic requirements such as school quality, chronic absenteeism, discipline rates, and student surveys, just to name a few (Kostyo, Cardichon, & Darling-Hammond, 2018).

With many states adjusting their needs to support school leadership, there are many changes that have continued to influence principal preparation programs and its impact on those leaders. Some of these changes according to the Wallace Foundation (2021) include:

- The widespread adoption of high-stakes accountability systems that focus on student achievement,
- Attention to racial and ethnic disproportionality in exclusionary discipline practices,
- An increased focus on leaders' engagement with instruction,
- The spread of public and private school choice options,
- The adoption of common standards for student learning in most states,
- State and district investment in educator evaluation systems based on multiple measures of educator performance,
- Heightened attention to equity as a stand-alone policy and professional goal, often assessed by focusing on diverse learners, including Black, Indigenous, or other students of color.

Even though this list is comprehensive, these are areas that are also highly regarded. A review of state policies and regulations conducted by the University Council for Educational

Administration (UCEA, 2015) found that preparation programs included the following criteria. They include a clear selection process targeting recruitment and performance-based assessments, an internship which includes mentoring, university partnerships that align with both program needs and design, program oversight to include reflection and feedback for improvement in practice, licensure requirements to include years of teaching, and a completion of an approved preparation program. Davis et al. (2005, pp.8-15) explored other key elements for effective leadership programs containing the following components:

- Organization within the program and having a clear focus and values about leadership,
- Standards based curriculum focusing on instructional leadership, development and change management,
- Field-based internships with a mentor,
- A cohort which allow for collaboration and team work in practice-oriented scenarios,
- Problem-based learning linking theory and practice,
- A rigorous recruitment and selection of both candidates and faculty and,
- A strong partnership in alignment between schools, districts, and the university system to support quality field-based learning.

Many other researchers agree with these findings along with the use of assessments, mentoring and coaching, and reflective practices alongside an individual growth plan (Carver & Klein, 2013; Chesley, Egan, & Jones, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Jacobson, Johnansson, & Day, 2011; McCarthy, 2015; Ni, Hollingworth, Rorrer, & Pounder, 2016; Young et al., 2009). Principal preparation programs across the United

States continue to identify these components as elements programs should have in order to support the training and retention of school leaders (Carver & Klein, 2013).

Similarly Darling-Hammond et al. (2009, pp.125-146) identified three conditions for exemplary principal preparation programs to include:

- Program champions individuals or teams who guided their development and implementation,
- Partnerships, close working relationships between universities and school districts,
- Financial support, resources from various sources to offset program participation and more intensive internships.

These elements are inclusive to the positivity that can be created when partnerships and collaborative efforts are utilized to the greatest extent possible. Each of the elements listed above are crucial to the success of principal preparation programs and leadership success. In the following section, the focus will center on researched based elements within principal preparation programs that many national principal programs contain. These elements help to prepare candidates to become effective educational leaders based on researched based practices.

Identification of Candidates and Leaders

Many administrative candidates come from the ranks of teacher leaders. This includes educators who have held positions such as instructional coaches and department heads and have been identified to pursue educational administration by another educator or mentor leader (Haines et al., 2015; Myung et al., 2011; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). Although many teachers enter education without any intention of moving into administration, research indicates candidates pursue administration for a variety of reasons including increased salaries, personal

growth, desire to make a difference, and the professional challenge (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Lankford et al., 2003; Perrone & Tucker, 2019; Pounder & Crow, 2005).

Within the United States, training and principal preparation programs vary from state to state, as some states not only require teaching experience, but also require candidates to pass a licensure exam and/or hold a master's degree to obtain principal licensure (Anderson & Reynolds, 2015). The Education Commission of the States (2017) reported that in 2015, 47 states required some form of educational experience, while 45 required a master's degree in some field for principal licensure (Perrone & Tucker, 2019). Each program's requirements differ, but research continues to indicate that the educational leadership training, for the most part, identifies those candidates who are ready to lead our students and our schools.

Leadership Standards

Over the past two decades, professional standards for school administrators were developed and utilized on both national and state levels (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Many states adopted policies, procedures, and aligned administrative standards based on the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA, 2015). Principal preparation programs across the country utilize leadership standards that guide the day-to-day expectations for school leaders as they meet the ongoing demands of the job (Farley et al., 2019; Jones, 2017; NPBEA 2011, 2015, 2018a, 2018b). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration developed a set of professional standards for educational leaders (PSEL) that evolved over the past decade (NPBEA, 2011, 2015; see appendix A and B). In 2018, NPBEA crafted the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards to support administrators in training and principal preparation programs (see appendix C). These standards were created specifically to

help guide candidates through the building of their educational leadership capacity and the promotion of ongoing learning (NPBEA, 2018a; NPBEA, 2018b). These standards differed slightly from the PSEL standards (2015), as they were developed for novice leaders as they complete an educational leadership program. With the introduction of the NELP standards, programs made necessary adjustments to integrate these standards into their programs.

The national rubric aligned with the NELP (2018) standards have clear indicators to help to guide and support leaders within preparation program, as they help guide what they should know and be able to do as novice leaders. The use of standards provides guidance regarding the expectations and outcomes needed for leadership development. These NELP standards focus on critical areas and skills needed as educational leaders. Nationally, these standards provide guidelines and support for all programs and, therefore, needed national standards for the expectations and performance of our educational leaders.

Successful Leadership Practices

Preparing leaders to lead and manage schools is not only important, it is necessary to facilitate instructional change within the school system. School leadership plays a crucial role in student success, second only to teaching students in the classroom (Leithwood et al. 2004, 2006; Seashore Louis et al., 2010, Wallace Foundation, 2021). Some research indicates the importance of the teaching and learning framework for school principal preparation programs and their understanding of the framework prior to entering the program (Young & Crow, 2017). The behaviors of successful leaders are practices to consider when we begin preparing leaders for principalship. What do effective and successful leaders possess and what skills are necessary to achieve those goals?

Understanding the needs of the local, state, and national contexts influences the implementation of any school improvement effort. Providing principals with the opportunity to practice leadership skills in order to manage not only the day-to-day processes, but also work collaboratively, solve problems, decision-making practices, and the ability to motivate others supports a leader's developmental processes. Effective principal preparation programs integrate the skills needed for the job and are capable of applying that to practical situations (Cheney, Davis, Garrett, & Holleran, 2010; Darling-Hammond, La Pointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Program effectiveness has become a topic of conversation regarding specific behaviors and leadership qualities that matter the most for learning to occur (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Understanding the role and practices of school leadership is critical, as educators are held accountable for student academic achievement and performance measures (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As a result of this national attention, principal preparation programs are examining and aligning their programs not only to national standards, but also aligning their programs with the skills effective school leaders possess (McCarthy, 2002; Orr & Barber, 2009; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

For school principals, we can examine what success looks like. Leadership behaviors are critical to revamping the elements within the program (Meyer & Dokumaci, 2011; Orr & Barber, 2009; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Previous studies examined the impact of these preparation programs and the behaviors of those administrators trained (Meyer & Dokumaci, 2011; Orr & Barber, 2009; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). However, not all programs continuously updated their curricula to support the ongoing needs of school administrators today, as there is a clear disconnect between skill-building opportunities presented in programs and those skills that are

actually required on the job (Hess, & Kelly, 2007). As indicated, a greater emphasis should be placed on hands-on internships with the integration of curricula, problem-based learning and instruction, and the development of partnerships between district, state, and at the university level focusing on elements around the theory of adult and experiential learning (Fenwick, 2003; Knowles et al., 2005).

The development of school leaders is comprehensive and involves many different parts in order to lead a school successfully. Looking at the components successful leaders possess is one part, as the training and the development of such leaders takes time to obtain and master. This is an area that all leaders will need as they progress through their careers.

Skills of Effective Principals

Darling-Hammond (2012) and Seashore Louis et al. (2010) identified four key leadership practices successful school leaders possess, as these remained constant regardless of school or environmental context: setting directions, developing people, developing the organization, and managing the instructional program. The Wallace Foundation (2013b) identified skills that effective principals share. Encompassing some of the leadership practices that Seashore Louis et al. (2010) identified (*italicized below*), the Wallace Foundation (2013b) compiled a “decade-long” research regarding effective principals and what they are skilled at:

- Shaping a vision for the academic success of all students (*setting a direction*),
- Creating a climate hospitable for education (*developing people*),
- Cultivating leadership in others (*developing the organization*),
- Improving instruction (*managing the instructional program*),
- Managing people, data, and processes.

Shaping a Vision - Setting a Direction

Leaders engage in the development of shared goals and common purpose as they set a direction, identify and articulate a vision, set high expectations for all, and effectively communicate goals and expectations (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; The Wallace Foundation, 2013b). They shape and set the direction for their school, their staff, and their community. This is not just for motivation, but also clarity and purpose, as it centers on one's "moral purpose" (Fullan, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and one's moral imperative in leading others positively (Fullan, 2003; Heath & Heath, 2010). The opportunities provided for our faculty members to become leaders are greatly influenced by the leaders who are leading and guiding them. The influence could be diminished if they do not find value or relevance with the leader who is leading them. As a leader, knowing your vision and your "moral purpose" will help to set the direction for your school.

Monitoring and articulating the vision with all stakeholders is an important aspect in achieving the goal (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). It is learning how to inspire others to envision the goals for the school. To build a shared vision, one must be able to collaborate effectively with others and have each person take ownership of those goals in order for student progress to occur (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006).

Leaders create a culture that cultivates an environment promoting the ability to work towards a common goal (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). The development of long-range goals and planning a detailed plan on how goals will be accomplished are critical elements to support the project and the activity (Yukl, 1989). Creating a climate hospitable to education helps to establish administrative leadership and improve the environment in which you are working (Fullan, 2003).

Leaders who are more effective with their leadership practices have a greater effect on influencing other school conditions including teaching and learning, hiring quality candidates, ensuring quality school climates, and enhancing teacher collaboration (Donmoyer, Yennie-Donmoyer, & Galloway, 2012). Leaders find the right people, to lead in the right direction. Heath and Heath (2010) spoke directly about the elephant and the rider.

If you want to change things, you've got to appeal to both. The rider provides the planning and direction, and the Elephant provides the energy. So if you reach the Riders of your team but not the Elephants, team members will have understanding without motivation. If you reach their Elephants but not their Riders, they'll have passion without direction. In both cases, the flaws can be paralyzing. A reluctant Elephant and a wheel-spinning Rider can both ensure that nothing changes. But when Elephants and Riders move together, change can come easily." (p.8)

This speaks directly to the practices within leadership and being able to lead others where you cannot just lead, but you must show them how and appeal to all aspects of the environment and to all people. It is being able to cohesively move together in the right direction regardless of your role and responsibilities.

Setting the vision and direction of the school includes an array of responsibilities as a school leader. Knowing the goals and purpose sets the groundwork, but understanding your people and the journey you are on is part of the process as well. It is all seemingly integrated and woven together.

Creating a Climate Hospitable to Education - Developing People

Effective leaders build a sense of community to ensure all stakeholders take an active role within the school (The Wallace Foundation, 2013b), as it builds a collaborative culture (Jacobson, Johnson, Giles, & Ylimaki, 2005). The improvement of the school culture and how collaboration is utilized are skillfully navigated by the school leader as they engage collaborative discussions around norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes for all (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). A leader is challenged to do more and not less throughout the process.

Opportunities for people to develop as they work collaboratively is critical towards building capacity within a school (James, Dunning, Connolly, & Elliott, 2007). Trust between all stakeholders is equally important as you work on building capacity. Where trust is built, it is easier to guide and encourage collaborative discussions through positive relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). With the development of trust, other parameters begin to occur as collaborative practices ensue. People begin to not just trust others, but also conduct opportunities where mutual respect is developed and effective relationships are built with those in leadership roles (Lord & Maher, 1993).

Fullan (2011) focused on factors that supported a climate hospitable to education. They included: make a personal commitment, build relationships, focus on implementation, and develop collaboration. These areas are designed to support the collaborative relationships between educators and the significant steps needed towards success and achievement both in and out of the classroom (Blankenstein & Noguera, 2015). When we focus on these areas, we are focusing on how each of these factors into the whole and support one another through creating not just norms, but also making a commitment towards the development of a positive educational environment for all.

Cultivating Leadership in Others - Developing the Organization

Developing people ensures the success of others through capacity building within the environment you are working in (Kouzes, & Posner, 2008; Yukl, 2009). When people find value and are motivated to work towards the goals they find personally important, they become a part of the process (Bandura, 1986). People strive towards collaborative efforts and the achievement of shared goals when leaders continue to support professional development and ongoing efforts to build the leadership capacity within their staff.

As we begin to understand the importance of building capacity at the school level, we recognize the need to set and work towards organizational goals. Leaders who engage staff to be challenged and still be reflective, encourage growth from current practice to the desired practice and allow for people to take risks (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Posakoff et al., 1990). An essential component for educational leaders is to provide ongoing professional development as it can improve instructional practice and support overall school improvement in challenging circumstances (Day, 1999; Southworth, 2002; Spillane & Stein, 2005). Providing opportunities to promote the change and work towards improvement offers the opportunity to be successful throughout the process (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Successful leaders model desirable behaviors as they work towards achieving school wide goals (Harris & Chapman, 2002; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Developing leaders is a necessity and builds capacity within the school.

Improving Instruction - Managing the Instructional Program

The Institute for Educational Leadership (2020) describes the need to prepare school principals to demonstrate instructional, community, and visionary leadership. Change occurs with not just managerial aspects of the principal's role, but also the instructional shifts within the

school system (i.e., in teachers' day-to-day classroom practices and in the surrounding school instructional environment) and is necessary for the lasting change to occur (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008). Research suggests it is not just about how to lead, but understanding the importance of the instructional shifts and changes in classrooms that are needed to facilitate appropriate and lasting school improvement. Instructional leaders must understand what they want to improve before they can assist others in making improvements and adjustments (Neumerski, 2012).

Principals need instructional leadership. With the national leadership standards shifting within the last decade, student learning outcomes and support have become the center of what leaders are expected to do (Farley et al., 2019; Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2017). The impact indicates that “high-stakes accountability, multiple-measure teacher evaluation systems, heightened policy attention to educational equity, and other changes have altered expectations for what leaders need to know, how they spend their time, and the outcomes - both *what* and *for whom* - they pursue” (The Wallace Foundation, 2021; p. xi). Being an instructional leader has not changed how leaders are encouraged to lead instructional practices, but rather how research continues to focus on the impact instructional leadership requires to meet the rigor and pedagogical support needed by teachers for all students (Hornig & Loeb, 2010; Perilla, 2013). Instructional leadership is not just about how to lead, but also understanding why instructional changes in classrooms are needed to facilitate appropriate and lasting school improvement.

Instructional leadership also includes the understanding and implementation of digital technology and integration within instructional practices. As national trends have shifted much of the principal leadership training from not just being instructional practitioners, but also

navigating through the evolution of being technological and digital innovators through advanced technology learning; thus, expectations are now shifting (Chesley et al., 2020; Friend, Adams, & Curry, 2011; Hayashi & Fisher-Adams, 2015; Mann, Reardon, Becker, Shakeshaft, & Bacon, 2011; Mountford & Acker-Hocevar, 2013). The expectations do not just lie in the classroom for students and teachers, but also in the with principal preparation programs as well as they must be prepped with technological leadership and other technological practices (Hayashi & Fisher-Adams, 2015).

Becoming a technological innovator is now a global challenge, as the shift with both teaching and learning involves all stakeholders (Ossiannilsson, 2018). To understand how to engage students with technological advances, we must shift our approach towards appropriate leadership practices (Siemens, Gasevuc, & Dawson, 2015). Technology integration is not always a consideration for the coursework or taught as part of the leadership curriculum, but instead it is self-motivated and established on an individual basis (Hayashi & Fisher-Adams, 2013) as changing a traditional classroom to a blended online classroom is much needed (Korach & Agans, 2011).

Hess and Kelly (2007) conducted a study and reported that 31 universities received limited training on the use or integration of technology in instructional pedagogy. Since then, the technological delivery methods continue to be introduced and utilized in educational learning including how universities and leadership preparation programs preparing future educators for this technological realm (Duncan, Range, & Hvidston, 2013; Sailin & Mahmor, 2018). If leaders are showcasing and integrating their knowledge of the use of digital technology, these innovations should transcend traditional teaching methods and use of technology within their

schools, and should result in improved student academic achievement (McLeod, Bather, & Richardson, 2011).

Managing People, Data, Processes

Principals continue to be held to a different set of responsibilities as the job has continuously evolved. New responsibilities require the need to recruit leaders who are able to adapt, evolve, and work towards improving school and student outcomes (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Briggs, Cheney, Davis, & Moll, 2013; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Leaders must possess the skills needed to navigate through complex situations as they and make decisions in a quick and efficient manner (Chesley et al., 2020; Lewis, Andriopoulos, & Smith, 2014).

Principals are encouraged to stay in their position for five to seven years at their schools in order to support, implement practices and follow through on a multitude of initiatives. High principal turnover does not lead to strategic changes that lead to impact on school improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006; Matthews & Sammons, 2005). The school community turns to the school leadership expects schools leadership to facilitate and support school-wide changes (Jacobson et al., 2005). This type of long-term support is much needed in schools that are less stable in terms of school personnel and need strong, stable leadership to establish coherence and direction.

The research previously discussed suggests that principal preparation programs are recognizing and incorporating several key elements needed for the success of administrative leaders, which include:

- Shaping a vision for the academic success of all students (*setting directions*),
- Creating a climate hospitable for education (*developing people*),

- Cultivating leadership in others (*developing the organization*),
- Improving instruction (*managing the instructional program*),
- Managing people, data, and processes (Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013b).

These skills are essential for the development of school leaders who are able to facilitate a shared vision regarding the direction of the school. The inclusion of these practices supports and perhaps sets the tone for how we consider training and integrating the type of supports that will address their leadership needs. In examining the school administrator preparation program in the state of Hawai‘i, I will explore some of the commonalities as well as some of the differences between national and statewide trends for the principal preparation program.

Principal Preparation Program in Hawai‘i: Hawai‘i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) program

There are a multitude of factors that make up leadership preparation programs across the nation. Researched based practices prioritize and focus on various elements of the program, its structure, and most importantly the development of its administrators. The state of Hawai‘i is unique from other states in that it has only has one public school district. The system, therefore, works under a state-run, Governor directed, Board of Education and a superintendent that directly reports to the board. The Hawai‘i Department of Education (HIDOE) is further subdivided up into districts and complex areas that have a complex area superintendent to support, guide, and lead their geographic area. Each complex area superintendent reports directly to the Superintendent and staff. In the state of Hawai‘i, there are a total of seven districts (which are not individually run unlike in other states) further divided into 15 complex areas. Please see the table below.

Table 2.1 HIDOE Districts and Complex Areas

District	Complex Area
Honolulu District	Farrington - Kaiser - Kalani
	Kaimukī - McKinley - Roosevelt
Central District	‘Aiea - Moanalua - Radford
	Leilehua - Mililani - Waialua
Leeward District	Campbell - Kapolei
	Pearl City - Waipahū
	Nānākuli - Waianae
Windward District	Castle - Kahuku
	Kailua - Kalaheo
Hawai‘i District	Hilo - Waiākea
	Ka‘ū - Keaau - Pāhoa
	Honoka‘a - Kealakehe - Kohala - Konawaena
Maui District	Baldwin - Kekaulike - Maui
	Hana - Lahainalua - Lāna‘i - Moloka‘i
Kaua‘i District	Kapa‘a - Kaua‘i - Waimea

In the state of Hawai‘i, the HIDOE has established specific protocols as personnel identify, train, and develop school leaders. Pursuant to HRS§302A-605, the “HIDOE is responsible for certifying public school administrators and providing multiple routes for obtaining certification dependent upon your previous leadership history and service.” According to the HIDOE website, <https://intranet.hawaiipublicschools.org>, the department works in alignment with state leaders, complex areas, and the university systems, to prepare principals through the Professional Development and Educational Research Institute (PDERI). Working

alongside PDERI, the HIDOE trained its educators for leadership roles within the department for the past several decades. PDERI developed a vision, mission, and purpose for its programs. It states:

Vision: HIDOE school leaders collaboratively design, innovate and adapt systems which build communities to advance student success.

Mission: Design high quality professional learning opportunities which support and empower HIDOE leaders.

Purpose: Train leaders to become reflective practitioners and innovative thinkers; coach leaders through new learning; and, release leaders to extend their learning.

This provides a purpose and guide to how and why PDERI continuously adapts to meet the needs of all of its programs and the ongoing development of its leaders.

The leadership program includes a multitude of supports for leadership development. They include preparation, development, mentorship, and guidance of candidates who are interested in principal preparation. In the HIDOE, candidates apply and begin certification through the Hawai'i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) program. As research has encouraged the alignment of a leadership development pipeline, the HIDOE has developed one for its leadership development programs. These leadership opportunities provide both teacher and administrative development across the department including a teacher leader academy (Nā Kumu Alaka'i), state office leadership academy training, New Teacher Center, the HICISL program to develop and obtain vice-principal and principal certification, a new principal academy, foundations in operations, and a leadership symposium. This leadership pipeline creates a pathway for continuous development of school leaders from the ranks of teacher leaders

to those seeking administrative leadership roles and responsibilities and beyond. All of these components help guide the HIDOE’s administrative program for school leaders.

Specifically focusing on the leadership of school administrators, the Hawai‘i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) program provides administrative training to interested educational leaders. This includes leadership training, capacity building, and opportunities to support and improve student learning in the public school system. HICISL equips leaders “with the essential knowledge, skills and dispositions of highly effective leaders, and to further encourage their continuous development and pursuit of professional excellence” (HIDOE, 2020, p.3).

Although the HICISL program is in its infancy stages, the principal preparation program within the state of Hawai‘i has been in existence for several decades. As summarized in Table 2.2, the principal program within the HIDOE has had several previous names.

Table 2.2 Leadership Preparation Program Titles from 1976 to the Present

Years	Program Title
1976 - 1983	Educational Management Training Program (EMTP)
1984	School Administrator Training (SAT)
1990 - 1998	Cohort
1998 - 2001	Certification Program in School Leadership (CPSL 1 and 2)
2002 - 2008	Administration Certification for Excellence (ACE)
2009 - Present	Hawai‘i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL)

These programs have been through a multitude of changes that were aligned with the leadership skills needed to be an administrative leader during that time. The elements within the HIDOE and the HICISL program support components that align research-based practices to the

effective measures of leadership programs. Based on this, the training is provided over time to continue to develop those needs. For this particular research study, I focus on one particular time frame. The focus will be on the HICISL program, specifically the 2015-2018 cohorts. Focusing on a specific time frame isolates the shifts that may have occurred or have since occurred due to changes, updates, and/or personnel changes. The most recent change was a shift to a virtual platform for not just student learning, but also the HICISL program due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The HICISL program incorporates the research conducted by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA, 2015) to select and recruit educational leaders through a plethora of performance-based assessments. Once selected, an internship year for all candidates is provided which includes a range of supports, programs, and partnerships. This includes mentoring, university coursework, reflection and feedback for improvement in practice, licensure requirements to include years of teaching, and a completion of an approved preparation program (Briggs et al., 2013; Manna, 2015). Through these practices, emphasis should continue with hands-on internships, curriculum integration, problem-based learning, and instructional leadership (Fenwick, 2003; Knowles et al., 2005). The HICISL principal preparation program focuses on the essential elements of the program including a variety of training practices and leadership training such as change leadership, adaptive leadership, shared leadership, and instructional leadership are taught and implemented throughout. As with many other principal preparation programs throughout the nation, the program has specific eligibility and screening criteria to determine qualifications for being admitted to the program.

Research continues to reiterate the need for ongoing improvement with the development of school leaders and specifically, principal preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al.,

2009; Farley et al., 2019; Orr & Pounder, 2010; Young et al., 2009). Programs across the nation indicate that the curriculum is not matching the skills necessary for educational leaders on the job (Hess, & Kelly, 2007). The “what” versus the “how” varies greatly when we look at what other elements leaders need for effective job performance.

Elements Within the Program

Research has indicated elements that are needed within any principal preparation program. Aligning with researched based practices and other national programs, the HIDOE HICISL includes many of these same elements. They include a rigorous recruitment and selection process, retention, the use of a cohort structure, university and district partnerships, assessments, mentoring and coaching, individual growth plans, problem-based learning strategies integrating theory and foundation, and internship opportunities (Briggs, Carver & Klein, 2013; Chesley et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Jacobson et al., 2011; McCarthy, 2015; Ni et al., 2016; Young et al., 2009).

One area the HIDOE HICISL utilizes is the rigorous selection process. The selection process includes an interview, evidence of professional work with writing samples regarding candidates’ beliefs and values regarding education and leadership styles, and recommendations from their school principals. Candidates are interviewed by a panel of experienced administrators regarding their leadership style, influence, and impact. After the initial selection process, candidates participate in a summer institute, which includes pre and post sessions. This institute partners candidates and seasoned administrators to learn, explore, review and reflect on their leadership style. Candidates are placed in a cohort at the completion of the summer institute and are assigned an internship opportunity, engage in academic coursework from the local universities, participate in a school cross training experience and are mentored through coaching

seminars and individual and group support sessions to develop each person's leadership skills. The final project includes a leadership portfolio to culminate each candidate's year-long leadership journey and experience (HICISL, 2020). There are two parts of the HICISL program that comprise the overall program makeup. The first year focuses on the development as a vice-principal and the second year focuses on obtaining principal certification. These two years help to initially develop and then refine candidates' practices as they consider furthering their administrative careers.

The first year of the HICISL program focuses on the leadership as initial administrators. This training includes not just the internship, training, and day to day tasks, but also direct support and supervision from their mentor principal and a program support mentor through the HICISL program. HICISL (2020) states that this year is "about becoming adaptive, innovative and collaborative change leaders" (p. 4). Leaders learn skills needed to address not just their technical knowledge practices, but also how to lead as an educational leader. The knowledge and skills range from the day-to-day tasks, but also dealing with student discipline, operational components such as facilities, safety and security of people and space, special education support and compliance, employee performance appraisals, labor relations, investigations, change leadership, conversations, managing conflict, promoting a safe environment, and effective communication. Each topic is typically covered over the course of a day's worth of training. Although a wide range of topics, the topics help to support areas a school level administrator may need to directly support their principal, school, and communities. Throughout this process, the preparation activities try to ensure that candidates are provided appropriate and timely training as well as a well-rounded experience.

Alignment between state, district, and the university system is vital to the improvement of effective principal preparation programs as a way to support learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013a; Wallace Foundation, 2013b). During an administrator's initial program training, she or he must take coursework from the university system that aligns with the initial program training. The university classes all candidates must take include Introduction into Educational Administration, Education/School Law, Teacher Development and Evaluation (Personnel) and Curriculum Administration. These courses align the learning and engagement between the HICISL program with the research coursework and framework from the university level as they provide research-based theory and to align with the practice they may experience at the school level.

The second year of the program focuses on principal certification and “emphasizes the responsibilities of a principal as a systems thinker and instructional leader” (HICISL, 2020; p. 4) and aligns directly to the PESL (2018; see appendix B). They include areas such as onboarding, equity for all, hard conversations, fiscal management, instructional leadership with teacher support and evaluation, along with the development of a collaborative system of instruction and instructional support, communication, school design and systems thinking, walkthroughs and feedback. Depending upon the topic, some areas are covered in the course of a day’s worth of training and other areas are covered over the course of a few days of training. These leadership skills help to support leaders as they move from an initial administrative leader towards principalship at their own schools.

Similar to the first year, the alignment between the university coursework and the HICISL program is fundamental to supporting the learning, thinking, and knowledge of

administrative leaders. The continuity of courses aligns with the required coursework. The courses include School Community Relations, Seminar in the Principalship, and Education Finance. Through this educational leadership platform and the HIDOE HICISL program, educators learn to frame their thinking, while they analyze, and continuously engage in the journey to become administrative and educational leaders.

The alignment between researched-based practices and the HIDOE HICISL program align topics and areas of need as candidates continue on their leadership journey. Although there are many researched-based practices educational leaders should have to be successful such as shaping a vision, creating a climate, cultivating leadership in others, and improving processes through data (as discussed previously), not all may necessarily be covered to the extent needed to support beginning administrators. Research conducted by the Wallace Foundation (2021) stated that focusing on instructional practices alongside teachers (e.g., feedback, coaching), developing positive relationships with collaboration and teamwork, and the management of personnel (e.g., hiring, teaching lines, and retaining effective teachers), are critical for the success of educators as administrative leaders.

The skills and leadership successful principals possess and share are researched-based practices and methods. The focus relies on the outcomes of the program once candidates are trained as school leaders and begin to lead schools on their own (Ni et al., 2016). These components not only focus on the skills that effective principals share, but also a wide range of components that principals engage in (Carver & Klein, 2013). These skills are not new to the development of school leaders, but each supports and enhances what they should know (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Principals must also manage a plethora of other duties and possess a multitude of knowledge-based practices including the curriculum, instruction, and

assessment, teacher supervision, school business and budget, and school law (Carver & Klein, 2013) alongside the development of meaningful relationships and a positive culture for their school (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). As leaders they must demonstrate integrity and trust with those they guide and lead for change (Fullan, 2011). The essential elements are there, but it goes to the content and curriculum taught and how it is taught. In the following paragraphs, I discuss areas that have created positive movements aligning with national trends and other areas that may or may not be present nationally or locally.

Leadership Standards Utilization

Principal preparation programs across the United States help to provide a framework for leadership training for those candidates entering school administration. The development of professional standards for school administrators have been utilized in the past 20 years on both national and state levels (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). States have adopted many of the policies, procedures, and have aligned administrative standards based on the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA, 2015).

Aligning with other principal preparation programs across the nation, the principal preparation program in Hawai‘i has developed a set of standards and protocols to develop leaders within the public-school system. In the state of Hawai‘i, the HICISL program has also adopted the Professional Standards for Leadership (PSEL) based on recommendations from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) to support leaders in engaging student academic achievement (NPBEA, 2015).

The HIDOE utilizes state-developed leadership competency based standards (see appendix D) to guide leaders within the program instead of the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP, 2018) standards (see appendix C). The program also uses the “Profile of an Effective School Leader” published by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) under the Council of Chief of State School Officers (CCSSO) and the HIDOE leadership competencies to measure and rate leadership candidates (HICISL, 2018; see appendix E). The use of the profile of an effective school leader (NPBEA, 2018) and the HIDOE leader competencies drive the leadership program within the state of Hawai‘i, ensuring that leaders understand the outcomes and the expectations of what is expected of them as leaders.

Summer Institute

The summer institute offers all candidates entering the HIDOE HICISL program the opportunity to receive initial training for a two-week period during the summer, which includes both mandatory pre and post sessions. Prior to the summer session, a pre-session occurs which provides a basis for leadership and prepares candidates for expectations of the program. It offers a range of possible scenarios, encourages leadership practices (technical to adaptive) and informs and trains on instructional support necessary to working with a multitude of different entities. This pre-session provides critical insight of administrative leadership expectations throughout the program and the expectations needed for the summer session. Meeting the other candidates who will be a part of your cohort, mentors that will support you throughout your journey and the expectations with the reading, university coursework, daily expectations are all outlined during the pre-session.

The summer institute commences each summer and engages all candidates in a multitude of events throughout its two-week venture. It includes messages from state and school level

leaders and administrators as they present successes and growth areas with their leadership journeys. These messages provide context to mistakes they've made, but also lessons they've learned.

Candidates engage in problem-based scenarios, which challenge their decision-making skills, communication, and instructional and technical leadership styles. Written and oral practices, case studies, and scenarios are all integrated into the institute. Throughout this time, candidates are not just learning about the leadership framework from practicing administrators, but also are developing the adaptive changes they will need to support their students, families, and community members. Throughout the institute candidates observe, assess, and are provided critical feedback. This is where mentors align coaching and mentoring support to all of the candidates.

Based on the metrics and parameters of the standards and rubrics, candidates are held to standards where the thresholds not only align the standards, but also include the recommendations from mentors, and critical administrative leadership skills necessary to lead. The inclusion of the summer institute is a way for the department to identify leaders who potentially have the skill and knowledge to complete their journey as an educational administration intern successfully. It identifies candidates who are struggling with the leadership components and may need additional support to maintain at least an "effective" rating throughout the year. The journey for most of these educational leaders leads to residency placements and an internship year.

The summer institute seems to be unique to the state of Hawai'i, as it has not been identified as a research-based national practice or done on a national level. Programs have

indicated a recruitment process, but none have indicated training to a similar extent as the HIDEO HICISL summer institute for administrative candidates.

Intern Year and Cross training

Embarking on the candidate's administrative journey through an internship year supports the application of the learning experiences. The opportunity to learn administrative and leadership skills is a critical element to the roles and responsibilities to understand, follow, and engage in opportunities to participate in educational leadership. Orr and Orphanos (2011) examined how leadership programs are supporting student learning and overall school improvement practices. The alignment between learning effective instructional practices and being afforded a good internship opportunity are directly correlated (Ni et al., 2016). When principal preparation candidates are afforded the opportunity to engage in a quality internship to work collaboratively with an effective leader who puts theory into practice, the experience is rich and meaningful for them (Borden, Preskill, & DeMoss, 2012; Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011). Research states that theory and practice are related, and understanding and observing good instructional practice through effective modeling are critical to understanding how candidates are learning to succeed.

On-the-job learning through internships is highly encouraged as candidates begin to apply the pedagogical content not just with their classroom experiences, but also with the on-the-job learning (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). The integration of both leadership coursework and school field experience provides the opportunity to learn what is needed on the job, execute essential skills, and receive immediate feedback from experienced mentors (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Providing opportunities with internships and reflection for improvement

to support change within their school and district is an important aspect to supporting the learning of principals.

The HIDOE HICISL candidates are placed as interns at various schools at the discretion of the Complex Area Superintendent after the completion of the summer institute. Interns are placed with mentor principals at different schools and school levels from their teaching background and level in which they were trained and were accustomed to in terms of teaching assignments. The success of beginning administrators is pairing mentees with talented mentors. This is crucial to the development of beginning administrators as they learn the alignment of district and state initiatives (Briggs et al., 2013; Manna, 2015). As they learn to lead as school level administrators, they develop the skills needed to lead by example where new administrators develop these candidates to lead, coach, share, and continuously reflect on the various aspects of the job.

The HIDOE provides all of its administrative interns the opportunity to cross train at another school during their intern year for a three-week period. Through effective mentoring, feedback and consistent reflection on practices, beginning administrators learn significant, relevant, and experiential experiences to support their administrative journey. This is in conjunction with their internship placement they are already provided for their first-year experience. Candidates are afforded the opportunity to expand their K-12 experiences by learning additional administrative responsibility at multiple school settings. This also allows them to work with another mentor principal. Although, this component of cross-training has not been identified as a component done on a national level or other principal preparations programs have incorporated. The HIDOE incorporates this component into their HICISL program to expand the candidate's viewpoint and work with a different school, observe school-wide

practices, and take on roles and responsibilities, if applicable, to further their learning and knowledge as a school administrator (HICISL, 2020). As a school leader, it strengthens your perspective and experiences as you work with a multitude of schools, administrators, school, staff, community members, and broadens your leadership perspective.

Broadening Leadership Perspective

The HODOE offers opportunities to shadow school leaders in state and district positions to include both the state Superintendent as well as their complex area superintendent. These shadowing opportunities provide access to state leaders regarding the infrastructure at varying district and state levels and to engage in meaningful conversations. Interns observe the day to day job skills as they hear conversations, understand decision-making processes, and possibly interact with processes regarding educational issues that may arise. Observing the decision-making process impact decisions is part of the process.

As the HODOE is an entire system focusing on educational impact within the state of Hawai'i, this opportunity engages leaders to see the bigger picture and HICISL requires its interns to self-reflect on the experience as a reflective practice with the decision-making practices of state-wide leadership. The importance of shadowing state or district leaders has not been identified through research or identified as a practice on a national level. Although this opportunity affords candidates the ability to reflect on the impact system-wide decisions make, a one-time opportunity such as this may not be enough to capture the essence of the entire experience or process as it is only offered as a one day event.

Problem-Based Learning

Problem-based learning (PBL) experiences are integrated into the HODOE HICISL leadership preparation program as the opportunity to work alongside other cohort administration

members while you reflect, analyze, and problem solve to help support all on their journey towards becoming school administrators. Analyzing the situation, coming up with a solution, presenting their work and presentations, and finalizing in a final presentation format, teaches all leaders the skills to think critically and make decisions without penalty and forces reflection and possible next steps to occur. The PBL process provides an opportunity to engage with other leaders and learn how to lead organizational learning and thinking through clinical practice (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). Not only do leaders have the opportunity to learn and go through scenarios, but they are provided timely and immediate feedback and self-reflection on their actions and items that could have also been considered.

Conclusion

There is much to be said about what should be included within leadership programs and how they can support the needs of the learner. It is being able to find solutions and opportunities to better prepare and train school leaders to make an influential impact. The HICISL includes components and integrates and embodies many of the necessary components needed for an effective principal preparation program. The inclusion of these components identified by research and other elements the HODOE have identified are necessary skills administrators should have as they experience the various roles and responsibilities each are given during their early years transitioning from teacher educator to administrative leader. The importance of working with the state, district, and university initiatives and the methods and curriculum are influential to school leaders in the state of Hawai'i who are trained to lead schools successfully. The research has included a range of components identified in the research, but not all are necessarily covered in the HICISL program, but the program is constantly revising itself to broaden opportunities for leadership development. As we continuously think about ways to

support and encourage our leaders to have the skills necessary to be successful, we must continuously engage them with the direction and the influence to do so.

Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter presents the research design guiding the study in terms of the overall methodological approach, participants, data collection, and general steps in the analyses and presentation of the text. My collection and analysis of the interviews utilized qualitative research methods. There are a variety of ways to use data to examine and gather information for inquiry as qualitative research is conducted because a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research methods are appropriate for the collection of rich descriptive information about individuals' natural settings, where the aim is to identify patterns and themes (Creswell, 2018). This includes genres, techniques, strategies and methodologies to include ethnographies, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, and poetic inquiry to name a few (Saldana, 2015). Qualitative research looks at “philosophical assumptions, to interpretive lenses, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44).

Design and Analytic Approach

Understanding qualitative research is essential in addressing phenomenology, as it looks at the assumptions of the frameworks to inform the study of the research problems, the human, social, individual, or group problems. With qualitative research, there is a collection of data that occurs in the natural setting, where the people and places being studied through data analysis is “both inductive and deductive and the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change” (Creswell, 2013, p.44). Creswell and Poth (2018, pp.43-44), examined the characteristics of qualitative research to support the analysis and reporting from a participant’s view. They include:

- Participants are observed in their *natural setting* where data is collected in the field where the experience occurs. Information is gathered through talking directly to people and seeing them behave in their natural environment.
- Researchers are the *key instrument* as they collect data through examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing the participants. Questions are developed by the researcher and are open-ended.
- The focus is on multiple *methods* to collect data such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. The researcher reviews all of the data, makes sense of it, organizes it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources.
- Participants may have *multiple perspectives and meanings*, and the researcher must understand that the participant's perspective may differ from one to another.
- Researchers use complex reasoning through *inductive and deductive logic* by developing patterns, categories, and themes by organizing the data. The process may also involve collaborating with the participants interactively, so that researchers have a chance to shape the themes throughout the process.
- The purpose may be *context-dependent*. The researcher must seek an understanding of contextual features and their influence on participants' experiences. This is essential because the particular contexts allow researchers to “understand how events, actions, and meaning are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur” (Maxwell, 2013, p.30).
- The process may be *emergent in the design* as situations may shift or change after the researchers enter the field to begin to collect data. A multitude of situations may occur

while in the field to include question and data collection alterations, the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified during the process of conducting the study.

- Researchers must utilize *reflexivity* in examining their own backgrounds, feelings, and experiences and may enter into their interpretation of the information within the study will be used and what is to be gained from it.
- The goal is to develop a *holistic account* and develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study where there may be multiple perspectives within a situation.

These elements of the qualitative research study are utilized to support the analysis and reporting from a participant's view throughout the process. With the use of this qualitative research process, phenomenology was an appropriate method to support participants' viewpoints of the experience they've encountered.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology has been studied in many forms (Merriam, 2014; Moustakas, 1994), as it is an understanding of the phenomena at the “subjective reality” level (Qutoshi, 2018). Edmond Husserl (1859 - 1938), a German philosopher, is thought to be the grandfather of phenomenology as all other phenomenological methods follow in the basic tenets of this method (Schwandt, 2001). He believed that phenomenology provided a way to study humans at the most conscious levels of understanding (Fochtman, 2008; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Phenomenology identifies what is intrinsic and unchanged with the meaning or the idea as it refers to the true meaning of the experience through the identification of themes and statements identified by the researcher and someone who is responsive to the data (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenologists study both the analytical and descriptive experiences of phenomena with individuals in the everyday world (Creswell, 2013; Qutoshi, 2018). They describe human

experiences and interactions based on common phenomenological experiences (Creswell, 1994; Hopkins, Regehr, & Pratt, 2016; Marion, 2002), as phenomenology seeks an understanding of how individuals make sense of their everyday world (Bevan, 2014; Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). There is a sense that it establishes “the truth of things” attempting to understand the perspectives of those that have experienced the phenomenon (Christensen, Johnstone, & Turner, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). It opens the mind, alters the thinking, and allows us to see differently through the lived experiences as it broadens our perspectives (Qutoshi, 2018). It helps us to understand how to think and act in certain situations. van Manen (2017b) looks at what is phenomenal or singular about a phenomenon or event including the “lived experience descriptions, anecdotes, stories, narratives, vignettes, or concrete accounts (p. 814) as it aims to explore experiences (Hopkins et al., 2016). Interpretation of the data would reflect some of the researcher’s own experiences through the onset of data collection (Creswell, 1998).

Transition to School Leadership

This study utilized the phenomenological method to understand the perspectives of educational leaders as they’ve transitioned from a classroom teacher to an educational leader within the principal preparation program. Although this topic has been studied previously, understanding the shifts with how candidates transition from a teacher to an educational leader is important to understand, as it provides context to the background of the participants who enter into the program. Research has indicated that candidates pursue administration for a variety of reasons including increased salaries, personal growth, desire to make a difference, and the professional challenge (DeAngelis & O’Connor, 2012; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Lankford, O’Connell & Wyckoff, 2003; Perrone & Tucker, 2019; Pounder & Crow, 2005). Understanding each candidate's familiarity with leadership practices prior to entering

administration revealed how those experiences influenced their training preparation within the program.

The phenomenological process includes the use of the epoché, the reduction and bracketing process, and the revelation of themes and statements. These elements reveal the relationships and meaning each individual had with the process, but also how their experiences transcend who they are as leaders through their own individual development over the last several years.

Phenomenological methods assume meaningful discussions, dialogue, and the impacts of how educational leadership development has supported their development as educational leaders. Understanding the viewpoint as a “lived experience” is a viable point to explore and how it had an impact on them. The examination of the “what” participants experience and “how” they experienced it is further examined (Moustakas, 1994; Zahavi, 2005). Although individuals may experience the same event (the principal preparation program and their own experiences and perceptions), how they interpret the event likely varies from person to person, depending upon how each viewed and reflected on that moment (Bevan, 2014; Sokolowski, 2000).

Moustakas’s (1994) lists several elements within phenomenology that occur throughout the research process. The process involves the use of how the research problem was not just used, but how research was collected, analyzed, and understood (see appendix F and appendix G). Much more detail is provided in the appendix, but the basic tenets of the process includes:

- Determine if the research problem is best examined by using a phenomenological approach.
- Identify a phenomenon of interest to study, and describe it.
- Distinguish and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology.

- Collect data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews.
- Generate themes from the analysis of significant statements.
- Develop textural and structural descriptions.
- Report the “essence” of the phenomenon by using a composite description.
- Present the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form.

This phenomenological study can contribute to the literature regarding the transition from teacher leader to school administrator, as it focuses on illuminating how individuals’ personal experiences may have impacted their journeys from beginning school administrators to experienced school leaders. The information provided by the participants captured not only their experiences within the preparation program, but also provided a platform to share their stories and perceptions regarding their principal preparation journeys.

Identification of Participants

Phenomenology is based on the experiences of “how” participants experienced the phenomenon versus the preconceived notion of what interpretation or the perception the researcher may have with what is being studied (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). The identification of participants is an important element in this phenomenological process. Being mindful of the audience and participants I was seeking, those asked to participate met the following criteria:

- Worked in the State of Hawai‘i,
- Completed the Hawai‘i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL program) in the Hawai‘i Department of Education and were a part of the 2015 - 2018 HICISL cohorts,

- Received tenure and held a school administrator certificate also known as the Professional School Administrator license,
- Had access to a computer and the internet,
- Were able to meet online to conduct the interview.

The identification of these participants met the need regarding my research interest and what I hoped to understand regarding the transition from beginning to experienced school administrators. All had completed the leadership program administered by the Hawai'i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) between the years 2015 through 2018 in order to be tenured school administrators. Program requirements have since been adjusted to include pre-screening of candidates and components within the program.

A tenured administrator successfully completed two years and one day of administrative duties and training to obtain a professional school administrator license. As a tenured administrator, an individual not only completed the HICISL program, but also obtained a few years of experience and responsibilities as a school level administrator. Eliciting participants' perspectives regarding their perceptions, attitudes, and understandings regarding program participation and ongoing leadership training and development engages each in critical discussions of program elements that were helpful with their leadership success, next steps, and possible growth areas. It also provides context for what I am interested in as a developing researcher and a practicing school level administrator.

Sample

I asked 15 school level administrators to participate within the study. These individuals were initially recruited from across the districts and islands comprising the state system. For those that did initially respond, a few chose not to return the consent form, therefore opting out

of the process. In all, there were a total of 11 men and women who participated in the final study. The final sample consisted of eight males and three females, with the majority of the candidates residing on the island of Oahu (see Table 3.1). All of the participants had received administrative tenure and were able to apply for school principalship positions. Some were already school principals and some were in other district and state level positions.

Table 3.1. List of participants and pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Gender	Island
Ivan	Male	O’ahu
Kaleo	Male	O’ahu
Marisa	Female	Neighbor Island
Kalei	Male	O’ahu
Ryan	Male	O’ahu
Jared	Male	O’ahu
Lehua	Female	O’ahu
Josh	Male	O’ahu
Malie	Female	Neighbor Island
Ace	Male	O’ahu
Kalani	Male	O’ahu

Each administrator participated in an interview that took approximately 45 minutes to an hour to complete. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was given a pseudonym. Each of the participants willingly agreed to participate and had the opportunity to opt out at any point throughout the research project. Participants also received a copy of the results chapter to ensure that their identity was not revealed in any manner and to ensure that their information provided was what they had intended to discuss.

Obtaining a diverse sample to interview was important for the research goals, as it would likely reveal diverse perspectives regarding the participants' individual administrative journeys (Bevan, 2014). I have tried to depict the knowledge shared and their words to the best of my ability. To ensure confidentiality, I have changed some aspects of the narrative in order to protect participants' identities.

Data Collection

Data was collected through an interview process that took approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length. Each participant was audio recorded and the interview conducted via an online video platform, Google Meets, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and protocols and stipulations that were set forth by the HIDEOE which required all interviews be conducted through an online platform and not to be done in-person. This video platform allowed for the face to face interaction and to visually observe body language, facial expressions, and emotions that occurred throughout the interview. Each participant also participated from a location of their choosing. This allowed them to choose where they felt most comfortable to conduct the interview. However, no video chat recording was taken to further hide the participants' identities. Instead only audio recordings of the interview were taken and participants were notified of that type of recording. Notes were also taken from each of the participants' interviews and were highlighted, interpreted, cataloged, and themed to ensure that each participants' perspective was captured throughout the research project.

Interviews

The interview process and following analyses of the interviews form the basis of the data collection. Creswell (2013) describes the process of collecting information as involving "primary in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals. The important point is to describe the

meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (p. 161). This process can be time consuming, as it was important to determine how and to what extent the program supported administrators and built upon their leadership skills. Through a set of interviews, the stories of the participants were collected from those who experienced the phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsh, 2015; Qutoshi, 2018). Data was collected through the interview process with specific questions regarding the experiences of the phenomenon and open-ended questions as needed to support and clarify some of their statements throughout the interview processes as it focuses on the gathering of data and the common experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Qutoshi, 2018). For some participants in the study, the narratives, analogy, chronological or significant events were interpreted differently based on their personal experiences. Utilizing a set of descriptive questions along with the structural questions helped to support each of their experiences and capture the essence of the experience (Spradley, 1979).

Gathering the necessary data to engage in the next few steps of epoché and bracketing were critical in the process of moving from the interviews to determining how to analyze the data regarding how to address the process through which beginning administrators might achieve success in becoming educational leaders. Van den Berg, a well-known phenomenologist interested in conversation, noted how we view the world and share those views and understandings depends on the building of trust (van Moren, 2017). This is an important step in revealing how we engage and collect data in order to learn more about the process. Relationships are critical to finding out not just the stories, but also their truth with those stories and those moments that they have shared. Giorgi (1997) stated that “questions are generally broad and open-ended so that the subject has sufficient opportunity to express his or her viewpoint extensively” (p. 245). The questions utilized should include terminology and vocabulary that the

individual being interviewed would be able to understand and interpret (Benner, 1994) as the interview process is the most dominant method for the collection of data in phenomenological research (Bevan, 2014).

Structuring appropriate questions that seek the perspective of the participant was also essential to this study. This interview technique demands the researcher to hone in on articulating appropriately what or how they experienced the situation (Creswell, 2015). Interviews conducted between the researcher and participant took approximately 45 minutes to an hour of questions and answers. Through the interview process questions regarding previous experience were asked. These questions aimed at the following areas:

- An individual's school level experience prior to entering administration (e.g., any previous roles and jobs they held prior to entering administration),
- Prior learning and knowledge,
- Effectiveness of professional development courses in supporting participants' administrative professional goals,
- Information regarding the Hawai'i Certification Institute for School Leaders (HICISL) program,
- Current school setting and job roles and responsibilities,
- An individual's strength and growth areas that influence their current work experiences,
- Finally, their success stories that showcased their growth throughout their journey were shared by the participant.

Other questions were similar to the questions from Darling-Hammond et al. (2009, pp.180-181), regarding participants' experiences with the preparation program, their leadership learning and beliefs, their leadership practices, their school climate, and their school improvement process.

The specific questions that were asked during the interview included the following (also available in appendix H):

- Research has stated that teachers generally have no intention of moving into administration when they enter the field, however, they move for a variety of reasons including increased salaries, personal growth, desire to make a difference, and the professional challenge. Can you share what your motivation was and if that continues to drive you as an educational leader?
- Can you share some of your early experiences in education? School level experiences and background, prior learning and knowledge, professional preparation, and early experiences with school administration?
- Given the many challenges school leaders face, how has the principal preparation program in Hawai'i developed and supported your instructional and educational leadership?
- The teaching and learning framework for school principal preparation programs and the understanding of them is vital to the success of leaders. What was your understanding of the framework prior to entering the program and has it changed since being an administrative leader within your school?
- District, state, and university alignment is critical to the success and preparation of school leaders. Can you share your experiences and how these have shaped you as a leader?

- Mentoring and internships play a critical element to the success of school leaders. Can you share your experience(s) both with your mentor and your internship to support your journey as a school level administrator?
- What aspect of the program do you believe has supported you most through your administrative journey? (e.g., School level mentor, program mentor, program seminars, college coursework)
- Where do you believe the future of education will be in 10 years? What does this mean for administrative leadership?
- Do you have any other comments about school instructional leadership you would like to share?

These questions served as the foundation and guidance for the interview; however, some of the questions were altered based on the responses from the participants. This was to clarify their statement based on their own personal experiences as it became “emergent in the design” and modified when and during the process of conducting the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Steps in the Analysis of the Data

Through data collection, Husserl (1977) suggests using the phenomenological method to describe the realities, insights, beliefs, motivation, and actions of the participants. The researcher uses their perception to share their experience (Creswell, 1998). You look for “meaning” as you inquire, question, and further explore the “what is” or “are” questions as you as the researcher dive deeper utilizing the phenomenology method (Creswell, 2015). Moustakas (1994) recommends going through the process of building on the research questions, process through the data analysis, highlighting the “significant statements” that look at the understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon and clusters the meaning. This means the

researcher should clearly get to know what is occurring with each participant and how each has interpreted the phenomenon and the experience. It is based on looking at the participants point of view and being open to understanding the phenomenon at a deeper level. The phenomenological researcher uncovers the truth of what they are attempting to study (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). This approach engages both the researcher and the participant to explore perspectives and conduct an in-depth review and analysis with the use of the phenomenological method.

Epoché and Bracketing

Understanding how to interpret the data was important in the phenomenological analytic process. The epoché and bracketing was the next step within the process. Epoché and bracketing are key terms researchers use to purposefully set aside any preconceived notions, beliefs, experiences they have regarding the phenomena being investigated and to have a better understanding of the experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Previous literature, however, has often treated bracketing and epoché as synonymous with one another (Gearing, 2004; Spiegeber, 1973). There are, however, some clear differences between the two terms, as they “reflect the similarity of their core essences” (Gearing, 2004; p. 1430). For my own purposes and as I completed the interviews with my participants, I utilized the epoché and bracketing process after the initial data collection from the interviews conducted.

The epoché was interpreted through the process of looking at a particular period when a significant event occurred, but through memory interpretation, putting it aside throughout the data collection (Bednall, 2006). This leads us to how I, as the researcher, must refer back to what was being stated and to “construct patterns and, most importantly, the essences and essentials of the phenomenon -- the “bottom line,” “bare necessities,” or “must-haves” that define it” (Creswell, 2015, p.74). Bracketing, therefore, was a way to gain insight and access to the lived experience and make meaning of those interpretations (Qutoshi, 2018). The differences occurred

as I engaged with the data at the different stages from the pre-empirical and collection stage to the post-empirical interpretation stage (Bednall, 2006).

The collection of information from the interview was raw and engaged me in reflecting on the experience. Interpreting each individual participant's perception through the epoché and bracketing was an essential part of the process. The reintegration of these items held in epoché were further assessed for synthesis alongside the items shared by the participants (Bednall, 2006). Epoché occurred throughout the pre and post empirical phases and bracketing occurred during the interpretative moments and at the conclusion of the study (Bednall, 2006), whereas bracketing occurred when items were held and may be recalled in the epoché moments (see appendix I; Gearing, 2004). With epoché and bracketing, as the researcher, I allowed the respondents the opportunity to voice their subjectivities, which emerged organically as they shared their personal experiences. In theory the epoché asks the researcher to separate her own experiences and knowledge about the experience and instead interpret the true meanings of the responses given. It is separating and then connecting.

Phenomenological Reduction

The use of the phenomenological reduction asks that the researcher keeps an open mind and listens to what is being said regarding the descriptions of the phenomenological process (Moustakas, 1994). As the epoché and bracketing method is the first step in the "phenomenological reduction," the researcher must set aside any relatable experiences to understand the participants perspective within the study (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological reduction is used for analyzing the epoché, where we bracket and suspend all of our natural attitudes, beliefs, opinions and assumptions. This means that the researcher uses themes through the description to identify the phenomenological reduction. The essences are used to identify a particular time and place (Moustakas, 1994). Reduction occurs when the

researcher has completely suspended her natural attitude as a way of living (Morley, 2010).

Through this process, we bracket and suspend all of our natural assumptions as the experience will reveal and uncover other themes (Stolz, 2020). Reduction looks at features that are common and identifies them with similar properties.

Themes and Statements

The use of the epoché, bracketing, and reduction in the phenomenological process helped to create overall themes and statements participants were stating. It utilized the interpretation of the conversation to extract common themes across participants' interviews and then re-linked the thought process.

Coding is one way to bracket, but phenomenology encourages the construction of themes where the statements or the theoretical constructs provide a better grasp and understanding of the story and the “lived experience” (Auerback & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2015). Themes capture the overall meanings versus one word or short phrases fail to capture and reveal the overall topics that identify with a pattern of ideas and group a specific set of data (Creswell, 2015). Thinking thematically requires the alignment and referral to the data for main ideas and asking questions that will help filter getting to the meaning and reasons behind each question and interpretation (Creswell, 2015). Thinking beyond the questions and wondering about the participants' thoughts helped to generate ideas that had nothing to do with the research. Instead, as the researcher, it was finding opportunities to look for codes and to categorize them appropriately and move the process forward. Big picture ideas emerged from the categorizing of themes from the discussion. Throughout the process the goal became a way of theming the data to get other ideas about the bigger-picture meanings and looking at the idea from the balcony

view (Heath & Heath, 2010). These thematic affirmations allowed the researcher to look beyond the data provided by the participants and look for the broader meaning within the discussions.

Overall, themes were helpful when I was working with the phenomenological process. The themes and statements were not always aligned to some of my personal beliefs or how I may have interpreted my own experiences as a beginning administrator, but throughout the process, it revealed the truths and the interpretations from a variety of leaders who are leading both as educational leaders within their own schools and their own respective roles and responsibilities. Listening and reviewing notes taken from the initial interviews and notes taken from replaying the interviews, I continued to reflect not just on what was said, but also reviewed how these discussions led to the meanings within the individual interviews, and also how the participants shared similar thoughts and experiences regarding being new educational leaders. The major themes and statements captured the essence of what the majority of participants had stated. As a further check on their clarity and truthfulness, all participants had the opportunity to review the statements that were collected and how the interpretations were themed and formulated.

Epoché as a Researcher and Practicing Educational Leader

Phenomenology asks the researcher to bracket and set aside your own perceptions and experiences regarding the phenomenon you are researching and look at it from the perspective of the participant (Creswell, 2015). The suspension of judgements is sometimes difficult to achieve regarding our prejudices, assumptions, and judgements. The natural attitudes and experiences otherwise known as a “blind spot” may overshadow all of our conscious attitudes as the epoché is personal. It is an action that involves one position in the world (Morley, 2010).

Some researchers have stated that the epoché may not be viable or should be utilized to provide a re-orientation of what we already know and have already developed (Salis Reyes,

2019; Zahavi, 2019). Some researchers have shared concern about the objectivity a researcher can have for epoché and/or bracketing to effectively be utilized (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000; Porter, 1993). Other researchers have questioned the differing perspectives as time evolves and circumstances progress (Crotty, 1996; Groenewald, 2004; Schultz, 1994). In a non-philosophical use of phenomenology, the epoché may not be necessary and should be taken into consideration (Zahavi, 2019).

The researcher may have some difficulty with bracketing because it always incorporates some of the assumptions and personal experiences the researcher brings to the topic (van Manen, 1990, 2014). Deciding when and how the researcher integrates her own personal understandings on the study is a topic of discussion (Creswell, 2018). Research has indicated that phenomenology cannot be conducted without the inclusion of both the epoché and reduction in transcendental phenomenology, but questions if it is necessary in non-philosophical applications (Zahavi, 2019).

Reflection is a critical element to explore regarding your own assumptions and beliefs as a researcher (Hopkins et al., 2016). Understanding your own positionality identifies your own personal beliefs and assumptions as the researcher. Gadamer (1989) recognized that with each “individual” story, a piece of the puzzle becomes a piece of the researcher's understanding of the experience that is being studied. The reality of this research is understanding that what you already know or have experienced with the research topic area may not be feasible in removing the researcher from the equation. Reflections become more critical in understanding this phenomenon.

Salis Reyes (2019), reflects on how relationships supported her research practices and provided a deeper meaning for her. Relationships also play a critical role in my job as a school

administrator and educational leader. Through the development of positive relationships, you share similar experiences and can have critical dialogue about the experience itself. What the relationship entails, as well as having all shared and experienced the same program development and experiences, but the interpretations may be different from one another. The relationships that were developed throughout the process are critical to being a successful leader as they also help one during a time of need. I learned that relationships drive our profession as we support, encourage, engage, provide critical and honest feedback and raise one another up as we celebrate one another's successes. As we continue to further discuss how this research has impacted relationships throughout the process and throughout the journey, I continue to see that relationships are critical to the success and/or downfall of leaders as they continue to support the needs of all in the school community. The relationships help to support and guide you as a leader and throughout your administrative journey. It is finding positive people who will work to support and guide you throughout this process.

Conclusion

Through my own analysis, I reflected on my own personal standpoints with respect to educational leadership and the impact it has had on my development as an educational leader. With this process and as the researcher for this project, I had to review my own biases and put them aside in order to analyze, interpret, and present the study's findings. As I went through the process, I recognized three words that supported my process and progress forward with this data analysis. They helped me to understand phenomenology a little more as I continued to position myself as a researcher. These three words are: transformation, recognition, and development. Understanding these three words has helped guide me in my own understanding of the phenomenology mindset and practices. Whether they are right or wrong according to Husserl

(1970), I have interpreted phenomenology as such. As the research process unfolded, I reflected considerably on my role as a researcher and questioned my own authority to make phenomenology something that I can own and interpret from a fundamental standpoint.

Throughout this process, researchers have discussed the “lived experience” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2015; Qutoshi, 2018; van Manen, 1990, 1997, 2017b), and Creswell (2015) refers to phenomenology as the “description of lived experiences--the essences and essentials of experiential states, natures of being, and personally significant meanings of concepts” (pp. 73-74). Engaging in the phenomenological research practices, part of the struggle was consistently referring back to the epoché and being able to understand the intuitive-reflective process (Husserl, 1970). Understanding the complexities of the process is something that I will continue to work with and hopefully get better at over the course of time.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results of the study, organized by the themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants' interviews. Many of the experiences shared by the participants revealed not only their administrators' leadership practices, but also about how they had to learn to lead. The revelation of stories from the participants working in their roles as new school administrators and the uncovering of the themes presented in this chapter allowed me as the researcher to look beyond the data provided by each participant to uncover broader meanings within the discussion of becoming educational leaders. Through the analytic processes, a variety of phenomenological elements were utilized and emerged through the epoché and bracketing process, and the identification of themes and statements were identified throughout the process.

Part of this process of analyzing and presenting the data required my understanding regarding my own beliefs and where I stand with my own leadership. My choice was engage in conducting a research project that held meaning for me regarding the array of perspectives around educational leadership presented. I decided to integrate my perspective versus separating my position. At the start of this journey, I did not clearly understand the importance of relationships, but through the phenomenological reduction process and where the reduction occurred, the phenomenon was revealed (Moustakas, 1984, van Manen, 1990). The guiding factor was that relationships are central to the role in how we support and build up one another and choose to move forward in our career choices. We tend to engage better with others so that the relationships are developed and are not broken or severed.

Emergent Themes

I found that the responses from all questions centered around six themes. These themes supported the educational journeys of beginning administrators as educational leaders. These included:

- 1) The journey began with the intent of giving back and making a bigger impact on others within their educational careers;
- 2) Supporting the learning and learning to lead through the leadership transition;
- 3) Relationships were essential to all parts of the administrative journey;
- 4) Varied views regarding the alignment between state agencies and supports;
- 5) There should be a place to recognize a need to emphasize place-based education and the value of Hawai‘i’s unique cultural context in education;
- 6) Understanding our future within education.

The themes showcased how the participants felt as they ventured into their administrative careers, as well as their own unique journeys on their paths toward educational leadership. Throughout this chapter, these themes will be further discussed and how through the phenomenological process, these themes emerged through their voices, stories, and perspectives.

Why Teaching and Why the Move: Intention, Impact, and Moving Forward

Teaching, working with students, and the impact they wanted to have on students were the main reasons most of the participants entered education. All of the participants were initially classroom teachers teaching a variety of levels, content areas, and a range of students. Teaching brought joy, and some had a dream to teach from an early age. Others went into teaching for the students and the communities to which were connected. The relationships and the work they did

with the students were meaningful and provided an opportunity that they believed completed them and made them whole.

As the participants transitioned to school administration, some expressed that they loved teaching, but it became exhausting. We call it teaching fatigue. Being burned out from teaching was one perception that some participants shared; that is, feeling the need to change positions or look for other opportunities where they could continue to support educational practices and impact students, but on a different level. Josh and Ivan felt the teaching burnout. There was a sameness to being in the classroom that, after a while, each lost some of the spark and passion they initially had when he entered the teaching profession. From year to year, there were the same lessons with the occasional tweaks in curriculum, and getting students to pass the state exam. For Ivan, teaching became too repetitive and he was looking for other opportunities.

Personal growth and trying different things. Teaching was the best job I ever had.

The one thing I disliked about it was the sameness of teaching, especially in a high school. Teaching six lessons over the course of one day or two days and sometimes although I would change lessons from time to time, some of those classes I taught for five or six years and the edges would change, but there was a certain sameness to my job. The difference was the kids, but the job was the same.

What Ivan shared was similar to what some other participants also shared, which was that teacher burnout became a feeling that encouraged them to look at other educational opportunities. They shared stories of the love they had for teaching and being in the classroom with students, but their administrators saw leadership potential and encouraged them to look into educational leadership on their campuses--taking department chair positions, coaching positions,

and eventually entering administration. Their stories emphasized the opportunities to move beyond teaching and to take on leadership responsibility, as it changed the sameness of the job and changed their perspectives within education.

For other participants, being in the classroom opened up leadership opportunities, as their administrators also saw leadership potential. They shared having no desire to enter administration when they first began teaching. They saw some of the “difficulties” with the job and were not interested in going into administration. However, after being given leadership opportunities, some had the desire to have a wider impact on school-level decision making practices. This included instructional coaching, being department heads or grade-level chairs and, for some, the opportunity to take temporary administrative positions.

Marisa noted she had the opportunity to take on an array of leadership positions. These included serving as a grade level chair and working temporarily as a school administrator prior to entering HICISL. She revealed that leaving the classroom was not easy, as she had initially wanted to stay in teaching and had once hoped to retire as a teacher. However, opportunities presented themselves due to situational changes.

I had no plans to go into administration. Teaching was known from the beginning. I was initially going to retire as a teacher. I felt like I wanted to make a larger impact and make more decisions. I was asked if I wanted to be a TA VP (temporarily assigned vice principal) and to see if I wanted to give it a try and I absolutely loved it. I had the Principal and CISL VP who supported and shared their story about the program that made a huge difference for me. The only reason I went into administration so quickly was the school I was at. I felt like I had connections with the school. I felt I was called to do it.

Moving into administration because of the impact and people who believed in the leadership of these teachers and future leaders made the difference as they moved from classroom teachers to educational leaders. Personal drive, passion, and the ability to see a wide range of perspectives help to develop their leadership practices. For most, going into administration was not something they had envisioned for themselves. Their principal and school administrators recognized their potential and supported them to become teacher leaders. They were encouraged, molded, and given other opportunities to lead as teachers, instructional coaches, and other leadership roles and helped to encourage them to enter into administration because of the support they had from their school principal.

The challenge and taking the next steps in education encouraged some participants to give school administration a try. They asked, “How can I be great not just in the classroom, but also be great in all aspects of education?” The challenge was to be the best educator both in the classroom and out as they inspired their students. As Ryan summarized his personal reasons,

It was for personal growth and professional challenge. It was the next challenge and next thing. I want to do the best I can, and once I feel I've done a good job and I've done that job then I think what is the next job. It's about growth and the next challenge. Trying to do the best that I can.

A desire to continue supporting students and supporting staff were critical elements in how participants impacted the decisions within their school. The desire to help people within the school was at the center of the solidifying the move into school administration. The passion that each had and regardless of their individual reasons for the move, gave reason to continue in their educational practices with a different perspective through a different lens.

Transitioning from a classroom teacher to a school administrator takes time and skill. Participants mentioned teaching students was one thing, but leading, having critical conversations, and working with the school staff were entirely different. Some participants expressed that being successful school administrators takes great leadership and finesse. As former teachers, beginning administrators continued to learn how to become leaders that others would want to follow. Malie reflected on two school leaders with whom she worked as a teacher. Those school administrators made contrasting impressions on her present leadership.

I worked for a phenomenal leader. He had a sense of humor and we worked hard for him. He had very clear objectives and expectations. He made me reflect on 'Are you doing your best for these kids and doing everything that you could for these kids?' They were a principal that I could communicate with and pushed me to be better. Fast forward. I ended up moving and got a job in the best district ever, but it was the worst teaching experience for me. I had an administrator who made decisions based on what was best for the adults on the campus and not for the kids. Beliefs didn't align to the needs of the school. Two contrasting experiences of a very good principal and a good counter experience. I almost left education.

The positive experience Malie remembered showcased the skills she wanted to embody as an administrator. She remembered well how as a teacher she wanted to feel as a leader and be as encouraging and as supportive as she could be--taking the lessons and skills she learned from a great leader.

Mentors provide a foundation for skills the new administrator wants to emulate. These leaders demonstrated great leadership practices that were embodied, modeled and encouraged, as some of these "future" leaders took their own leap into administrative leadership. With these

mentors, the new administrator may experience working with great leaders who showcase their skills and practices. For example, during his preparation period, Kalei was able to learn from a school-level mentor who supported his leadership at the school.

The principals I was under provided a lot of experiences to see possible things that can happen at the school. We got to experience a lot of things and take steps to prevent negative outcomes. My primary principal mentor funneled a lot of things to us to see what happened rather than holding back on the tougher things and having to learn it on my own.

For others, mentors were able to model and have ongoing discussions with their interns. Through this internship, participants witnessed the differences leaders made in their schools, students, staff, and community. They saw leadership practices where anything was possible when one plans and incorporate best practices. The participants were reflective as they spoke about their school level mentors and principals. For Ryan, the school level mentor supported his learning and the transition to become a school administrator as he shifted his mindset and being able to think differently.

School level mentor was the best and was with me every day. Worked well as a team and guided me in the right direction. They were very beneficial and shifted my mindset, as I am not a teacher anymore and I have to lead. To me it was helpful to frame point of view and thinking and come into an administrator's role. It was good that transformative leadership helped to get me to think as a leader and as my own school leader.

The knowledge the participants experienced encouraged them as they led and trained under their leadership. These participants were given opportunities to experience the outcomes that occur when you are in a leadership position--the possibilities, but also how to run a school with the support of the principal. The experience, the knowledge, and the time each were given were immeasurable and supported their administrative journey. The experiences that were provided enhanced practice and encouraged the participants to be leaders as they learned from their successes as well as failures. The participants were consistent regarding how these mentorship experiences encouraged their transition to school leadership.

Part of the mentorship experience also involved working with other administrators at the school. Working as an administrative team is critical for all aspects of the school's educational processes. Oftentimes, candidates were placed at schools for their intern year because of the school principal. Some participants mentioned the mentoring of the HICISL interns by the "team" and not just the principal. Participants noted there were times the school principal became inundated with other school responsibilities and, as a result, the vice principal (VP) did most of the training of the HICISL candidate. Working closely with the leadership team, the participants learned not just the day-to-day aspects of the school, but also how the school administrator deals with people, situations, and the school. Ace mentioned the opportunity to learn from the other VPs at the school was a positive experience.

It's the mentor principal that you are working under and mentor VPs that you are working with...and look at the Principal and VP (placement) as a team rather than just at the Principal. Sometimes they forget that it is the VP who will do a lot of the training of the other interning VP. They (HICISL) need to take that into consideration. That's who you are going to learn from every single day. Principals

have a varying approach because of this. Some are hands on, and some are very hands off.

The role of mentors was to ensure that the beginning administrators honed their skills. Being mentored by a multitude of people helps you continue the progress and continue to work towards supporting the needs of the school. Participants appreciated the guidance, the opportunity to learn from their peers, and to put philosophy and knowledge into practice. They appreciated the plethora of opportunities they had when being mentored by a multitude of people as they transitioned from teacher to school administrator. The encouragement, words of wisdom, and support with taking the leap from teacher to school administration were provided because other school administrators recognized the importance these teacher leaders brought to the school and recognized their leadership capabilities.

Supporting the Learning and the Leadership Transition

The transition to becoming a school level administrator from a classroom teacher is daunting for some educators. Leaving the job they loved and were passionate about was hard to justify for some of the participants, but receiving an array of support was critical to the participants as they transitioned from being in the classroom to leading school-wide change. Participants it being a balancing act of sorts as they begin to frame their leadership practices reflect on the support they received during their administrative training and transition to an educational leadership position. Some expressed that that creativity they experienced as a classroom teacher was not always honored once they began their careers as school administrators. As Lehua shared,

Where is that creativity to do something in the department and how do we get empowered to be different in CISL and maybe that's not the purpose of it, and if it's not, then maybe they have to be clear that this is not the inspirational part of your learning. If they can honor and be creative and inventive and we will have an opportunity to do that at another time, maybe people can understand that a little more. That's the only place I feel there is no alignment.

As educators, creativity in the classroom sparks student interest and the building of relationships. Being able to replicate and continue that passion as an administrator still remains a critical component for administrators as they continue to lead in a different capacity--from the lens of a school administrator. A balancing act of sorts for school administrators is being able to balance creativity and still maintain the purpose, goals, and supports to drive the needs of the school, community, and system. Learning how to manage things differently and make decisions was something that tested some of the administrators. As Ryan reflected:

Management of adults and kids. Trying to figure out who I was as a leader. What are your values and virtues? That's what they did. The mind shift of now you are responsible for more, and you know what you value and you believe it and you stay true to it. To me, a lot of it, they are not going to teach much else. To me, you learn the most on the job. Not going to learn a lot from the book, but rather to just be thrown in is where you are going to learn everything and learn the most on the job. Mindshift of being a leader and what do you stand for?

For some, the HICISL program improved their leadership practices, and for others it reaffirmed who they were as leaders. The leadership practices they were given provided context and

engaged in thinking and practices regarding who they were as leaders. For Josh and Kaleo, the program experiences were about magnifying who they already were as leaders. It clarified their roles as leaders and what their beliefs were.

Josh: HICISL did a good job and prepared you very well. Brings out who you are and magnifies who you are as a person. Program itself provides. Just at the right level when you are in a principal role.

Kaleo: It reaffirmed who I was when I went through the program and where my philosophies lay. Education is about people first. Appreciate who we are and be their best selves. Put people first. Education happens because we put people first.

The shift in perspective in moving from a classroom teacher to learning how to become a school administrator affected how some evaluated their progress in order to move forward. As Ryan expressed this, “Mindshift of being a leader and what do you stand for?” The biggest shift for some of them was changing how they were thinking and on the job training from school administration. For others, the shift in perspective meant learning on the job skills that leaders may need throughout their careers; for example, speaking to crowds, being able to work well with others, being respectful, and internalizing skills and tips to enhance their practices.

As Ivan expressed this change in perspective,

I was a teacher, but I don't call myself a teacher anymore. As a beginning administrator, I would jump into the eyes of the teacher. “Oh, that's asking too much of the teachers, oh, that's going to be too hard for the teachers, I understand the teachers' point.” Along the way you learn it is student first and everyone else

second. Parents are second, office and custodians are second, and teachers are second. It doesn't mean that you don't support them and help them, but it gives you the proper perspective. It's a transition, and you need to quit solving it from teacher solutions and solve it from student solutions. And sometimes the teachers don't want to do it, but it is perfect for that kid and they just got to do it.

To hear the administrative perspective and to see the possibilities of what could be accomplished as a school level administrator supported some of the administrators' journeys. For Lehua, the preparation provided the opportunity to be connected and to learn from practicing school level administrators.

Hearing different principals from different complex areas share about their schools. It opens me up to spaces that I am not a part of, but still part of our system and not people you are not normally going to be talking to. Hearing what they are doing and that is possible. To me, it makes me more curious, and it makes me feel like I want to be connected. I loved hearing from the principals because they are so different.

The journey administrators took to transition from classroom teacher to an educational leader impacted many in a variety of ways. Some responded to the lessons learned, others adjusted their perspective, and for others it reaffirmed who they were as educational leaders. It supported not only the learning, but also supported who they were as leaders. It captured the essence of the journey where they were able to take those lessons and turn them into their own leadership practices.

One area that participants felt should be better tailored to individuals was the differentiation of supports based on needed growth areas. Although appreciative about principal

mentors and other school level mentors, a few participants felt some of the instructional components and/or supports should be differentiated to fit the specific needs of the candidate. As Lehua and Kalani expressed this view,

Lehua: Tailor it to what experiences a person has already had. I like to be challenged and open up my thinking to consider other things. People who don't have the instructional piece. Give them to mentors who's that's their strength or some people with the relational piece and maybe give them that dependent upon what your struggle is. Sometimes you don't know what your struggle is, but sometimes they talk about the competencies. Like mine would be resource management, money and people and have people identify and work on that. That would've been helpful to continue to have that support moving forth. I still struggle with some of that and every year is very different and those transactional pieces are very hard for me.

Kalani: I wish they would differentiate supports and separate the learning based on TA VP (temporary assigned vice principal) experience versus coming straight from the classroom. Differentiating the help and tiering those supports to help as it would have been beneficial and preparing me for principalship in the future. How do you go about being an instructional leader and they don't show you, but they tell you? Experience with different aspects of the school; athletics, Title I, managerial aspects. Needs to be differentiated.

Kalei found it was helpful to be able to work with different people and participate in a collective manner.

Foundational of the operational tasks or how systems work together. Biggest part to collaborate with others (VPs) during the summer on and connections with everyone and rely on. Developing that cohort. Second year more aspects and break up into different groups. Having people work with people that they get to work with too often. More exposing us to the more tangible aspects of the job. Procedures, protocols that we need to be aware of. Some attempt to do that. To make it more collegial and collaborative.

The primary message from these participants was the need for more specific feedback regarding areas of needed improvement and, importantly, the ability to provide them the skills and knowledge to continue to move them forward. The message is that if we understand how to best support those entering school administration and provide them with the appropriate support, the opportunities provided can become influential and impactful as interns work toward becoming effective school administrators as they lead their students, staff, and school.

The Importance of Relationships: How It Informs and Enhances Practice

Relationships are formed through a myriad of connective pieces and affect people as a whole. Relationships can make or break how others see school leaders and, as a result, can work for or against them. Most of the participants recognized the importance of positive relationships as they became school administrators. These included relationships with their mentors, cohort members, and learning to interact with others differently. As the new administrators changed roles, their new positions may also change the relationships that the candidates previously had. As Ryan reflected,

I needed to build relationships with kids and how to balance those relationships with kids who are almost adults. Figuring out ways to build relationships with kids.

Learning to interact with people in a different manner affected the way the relationships worked in favor or against their leadership. They were lessons learned as they continued to grow and strengthen their skills. They learned very quickly how these relationships were tested and how it impacted their leadership journeys.

Overwhelmingly, the participants acknowledged the strength of their cohort. The relationships built, the transparency, and the ongoing communication supported beginning school administrators' leadership as they continued on their journey. Most participants recognized the HICISL cohort experiences the preparation together--a journey unlike any other. Relationships developed and have since remained constant. Most participants stated they continue to communicate, ask questions, and get ideas about thinking or taking a different perspective to the decisions they are making as leaders. Participants stated that whether or not HICISL intentionally developed these relationships, this was the one component the candidates felt was most impactful to their learning and continues to inform, support, and engage their leadership styles. Several participants gave their perspective about the most influential piece of the program, which was the cohort and the relationships and people within it.

Malie: Cohort, that's the strength of the program and moving through everything together. It is a human resource and everyone has different talents and skills. All of that has been the greatest asset and developed a network of people that they can lean on.

Ace: The establishment of the cohort and whether that was the intention of HICISL or not, that's been the most supportive and influential part of this entire experience. It still carries forward today. Any problem that you have, you can go to the cohort. People volunteer and share things that they discover. How to deal with certain situations and how to approach situations. Having the ability to hear someone else's thought process. 100% of the time we face something that we never had to face before, we usually do it wrong or could have done it better. That ability to hear ahead of time about if this situation comes up, that's the most valuable thing from the CISL program.

Marisa: Having the cohort from different schools and all different islands has been the biggest and most supportive piece for me. Go through something together and it's challenging. Growth and time of vulnerability, it is very powerful. CISL supports that space and allows time for the administrators and how important that is. Unspoken feeling that we went through this together and we could laugh about it. It was challenging, but we made it through and it was a time to connect. Everyone was open to being vulnerable and there was trust there.

These testaments showcased the continuous support and the ongoing “teamwork” effort that continued for the participants and were a part of the learning process. It was not the paperwork or necessarily the elements of the job, although those are indicators that supported the cohort, but for the participants, it was the relationships that continue because they were developed over the course of time. They started on a journey together as strangers, engaged in many trials and tribulations, and completed the journey as friends and colleagues.

Supporting the Entity: Aligning Goals between State, District, and the University System

Research has indicated the importance of aligning state, district, and the university systems. They help to align initiatives and support the work of school level administrators as they work cohesively with one another as they provide structure and balance the development of leaders. As participants were questioned about the “triangulation” and how they believed the various parts worked cohesively with one another, there was a range of responses based on their experiences.

The participants interviewed had a range of responses regarding the level of support they were or were not provided. Some felt the connections were clear, whereas others felt like they did not get the connections initially and needed to make those connections on their own. Most noted they were looking for ways to have clear connections between research and best practices and the initiatives that were driven by the state and the district levels. A few participants shared how they felt the supports were in place, but sometimes connection between putting theory into practice and its alignment was not clear. As Ace shared,

I liked the coursework, and it was relevant in a lot of ways. Was in alignment what best research says with a lot of things, weighted student formula (WSF), what research says is the best way for funding to be spent. I was seeing all of that stuff. Best research practices out there and we are following theoretically what research says. As it comes into practice, that's where it gets off track.

As a group, participants felt there could be better alignment between state, district, and the learning from the university level. For the most part, candidates saw the intent, but the delivery of the message was often “hit” or “miss.”

Ryan: Not working as cohesively as they could. Beneficial and you get different points of view. UH (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) emphasis on theory and reflection. CISL was reflective and tried to frame the leadership foundation. You have state and district that you have to do at the school level are more actionable and put things into effect. Seeing different sides of things: UH and the classes, to what you have to do at the school level (district and state), theory and putting things into effect, e.g., HMTSS and foundations and how to help kids. From theory level to putting things into effect. All of these things: UH, state, district. You would hope it is to benefit the kids, but sometimes it doesn't always. Whether you are at UH, or higher up in the state, sometimes people forget what it is like at the school level. They say this is a great idea, but it doesn't always work at the school level. It can be cohesive and work together, but it could be better. Everything that is done should look at how it could affect the students. That's why we are here.

Ivan: Procedurally and technically and mechanics, you couldn't ask for a better alignment. In the front you can get coursework. Title and coursework made sense. Mechanically, it wasn't like going on your own and good luck. Alignment, it is hard to compare and it comes out unfavorably. HICISL and DOE, statewide program. Speakers were people you worked with or you would work alongside. You were playing from the same basic playbook. Directly or closely related to something that I have to do. Disappointing thing reinforces the idea that there is only one way to do things, but it's because we work for one system. You have to have some regularity and you can do it here and uniformity. University, more

theoretical and a little more distant. Concept of school law and cases. Of the three elements, onsite training and HICISL training and University training, the least amount affected is the University training. Part of it was I took the online option, which I did for my family. Detached and distant.

What some participants experienced was a disconnect, and they were not always able to connect the dots between what they were learning from either from the university system or from the HODOE HICISL program. Some participants could see the alignment, but they needed to make the connection themselves. What some preferred was the opportunity to use the research and the practicality of real situations candidates were faced with to make those connections directly and indirectly to the process and the procedure.

Candidates also were concerned about whether their training as school administrators would make it possible to obtain administrative positions in other states. With the cost of living so high in the state of Hawai'i, some school administrators were considering opportunities on the U.S. mainland to further support their families. Although they had completed training and received tenure as school administrators, they felt other components should have been included such as being nationally certified to be a school-level administrator, as in other parts of the country. Both the federal and state level initiatives for getting administrative credentials are barriers for school level administrators due to differing credential requirements one must earn in a specific state to be a school administrator. What they hoped for in the future is greater state alignment regarding preparation and necessary credentials for school administrators. As Malie explained,

I think they all matter, but if I had to pick one...in many other states you get your master's, and you got the job and they prepare you for being a school administrator.

Participants also mentioned that, nationally, administrative programs are so varied but, in some states, the training was limited. Although only a few participants mentioned wanting to be nationally certified, it was still something that was important for them, as it was something they were considering. Overall, to be in alignment between all entities (state, district, and universities) is important in the development of future school administrators in terms of being able to put theory into practice.

From Space to Place: Valuing our Culture

Understanding the sense of place and where we live, the cultural aspects to our history and the importance of how we educate our students were important topics of conversation for a few of the educators. The importance of instructional leadership and how we include and recognize our culture were a valuable aspect of how we recognize our space and place. Some participants discussed the importance of place-based learning and how it should have been directly incorporated into learning to be school administrators. For some, however, this felt like a missed opportunity. These participants shared that there were not sufficient opportunities to learn about a sense of place, as well as how to implement and infuse cultural practices within their schools.

Lehua: Content and process. I think one of them is because of who I am as a human person, but being Hawaiian. That's a really big piece too. Knowing how much education played in shaping the thinking of what people believed happened

*to Hawaii, I hope that we can use education to teach the real pieces of Hawaii.
Teach more about finding ways to be more sufficient and keep our resources and
our people here who want to be here and better our community.*

The opportunity to go from space to place was an opportunity some felt was missed. As some participants stated, we live in the state of Hawai‘i as educational leaders. Therefore, we must represent our cultural practices, as it is a critical element to our history and our culture. Lehua shared that, being Hawaiian, she wanted others to understand who she was as a person and how education has shaped the history of Hawai‘i. She wanted to use this understanding to teach about the cultural influences and cultural aspects that can make an impact today. She, along with some of the other participants, felt that it was important to ensure not only do our children understand the importance of living in Hawai‘i and what that represents, but also our educational leaders who lead our schools. These educational practices guide the learning that occurs within the schools. Transferring an understanding our culture and history is important as we continue to educate our students.

Some participants felt that place-based education provided opportunities specifically for students and communities in which they worked. For Jared, working within a large native Hawaiian community called for opportunities to connect space and place together because students may have understood the context and lived and breathed the Hawaiian cultural practices. Although he was provided some training, focus was made a priority because it provided context for his students within that community. As he shifted to working with a different cultural population where ethnic backgrounds were mixed, the focus was not necessarily on place-based education because students may not understand the context and the cultural practices--however, shifts may need to be made. As Jared mentioned:

I don't think we focus much on this topic. I did receive some training on place-based education. I think it helped that I worked in an area that had a strong native Hawaiian population so place-based education is relevant. Hawaiian was the prevailing culture for that area and it made sense to emphasize their 'āina. Working here in town, the culture is diverse and actually very international, mixed with locals. Because of the locale, we do emphasize the opportunities the land provides us--but it's not connected to a broader picture of Hawaii. I think we teach and share what will apply. Maybe we should do more. Maybe I can.

How we engage all of our students in their education and where they are living, the historical contexts of the places and spaces we are being provided, and the context of how history has played a role in the development of society is an important consideration for Jared. Being mindful of how this may impact students and their learning is something he wants to prioritize and focus on when working with his students.

Not all participants felt place-based education should be made a priority. Ace mentioned the need to continue focusing on students being academically ready and ensuring our students are meeting standards and proficiency at each and every grade level and not being distracted by other initiatives or topics of concern.

I don't believe in it. I think at the elementary level we should be focused on getting our kids to reach grade level proficiency. I think things like place-based education and whatever the next trend is, can be a good thing but when schools are asked to do these things they have to drop something else. Social emotional learning, computer science, place based education. Let the kids learn to read, write and do

*basic math before your school does anything else. What's the purpose of school?
To push social change or to educate?*

It was not that Ace did not believe in place-based education, but he felt the need to continue focusing on students being able to read, write, and do basic math was more important than the need to add additional elements to the mix of student-centered learning.

As many of the participants were working with schools, students, and staff, they sought more clarity in how to develop and implement a more comprehensive view of culturally-based practices. This includes encouraging others to understand the place in which they live as well as how they can also educate their students and families to do the same. These participants were seeking ways for these practices could enhance what previous research states is a critical learning aspect for all students.

Where is Our Future?

Education is constantly changing. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the way educators had to lead within their schools. As such, educational leaders also needed to adjust to how they continued to support their schools and students in new and innovative ways. This included being able to move from operational leaders to instructional and educational. There were many reasons to take the lessons learned throughout the pandemic to continue with these practices, but there were also perspectives where we should remember the way education engaged students prior to the pandemic. For some participants, regardless of the situation we are currently in, they felt the need to continue to lead our schools. Kalani summarized these challenging circumstances and changes:

*In the last year, administration has changed a lot. In the last 8-10 years,
administrative leadership has changed from an operational to instructional*

leader and run data teams and assist with meetings. It has taken away the leadership from DH (department heads) or instructional leaders and leaned more towards the administrator. Enabling the DH to defer questions to the administrator and there needs to be a balance. Allow someone to struggle and grow and build capacity and support them when they really need it. Main frame work will be the same. Need to have a vision and walk the talk. If you are going to say something as an administrator, you need to follow through and set the example, the expectation. No matter how things change around us. Have expectations, have a vision, support, and follow through on what you are going to do. The whole base line on leadership. You have to adapt to the different things that come at you. Curriculum, instruction, pandemic, people and being adaptive to different situations. Adapting to the different generations. Key part of leadership right now is technology and the core framework of setting expectations, supporting school and teachers and following through is the main thing.

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of school administrators is part of the leadership capacity and continues to be the future of leadership. Regardless of what is occurring, leadership and being able to lead with researched-based practices continues to be the center of how we function as educational leaders. For some participants, this meant implementing practices and making decisions that were in the best interest of students and, because of the pandemic, realizing that we may be headed in the wrong direction and are focusing on the wrong areas to support the needs of students. Overall, the feelings were varied and were based on the

experiences each had over the course throughout the pandemic, as their jobs were impacted with new responsibilities.

The continued practice of developing the whole child was a critical aspect in their continued engagement in practices that support all students. This included social emotional learning practices and the continuous use of elective courses. The view emphasized integrating all components for learning and not just the academic subjects. Some participants noted the need for a plethora of services and supports. Throughout COVID, what many participants recognized was that there was more than just the academic subjects that were needed in future educational practices. Josh, for example, highlighted the social, emotional, learning (SEL) components that students needed to be secure and successful with all aspects of learning and returning to school.

COVID has provided so much opportunity and recognizing the haves and have nots. There are a lot of have nots and COVID did a number on them. Our kids need communication, SEL, emotional learning, and really looking at jobs of the future. I think they need to be able to communicate, technology is only going to grow and they need to know the ins and outs. Greater need for mental health, and emotional intelligence, integrity, caring, compassion, and learning how to be a gracious winner. Being more reflective when you lose. Respect will be needed. But this is just where we are. Understanding the concept of depth vs. breadth. Need to have the touch points and not just the online components. Interdisciplinary curriculum and how everything is interconnected.

These administrators emphasized the need to recognize what and how they could support all students to continue on this path to promote the whole child and support all aspects of their learning.

Some school leaders felt that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, learning how to engage with the capabilities of technology was critical in educating students and holding meetings for families and faculty. They realized that technology could provide an important platform for engaging and educating larger numbers of people. As participants expressed, virtual learning impacted the ways school leaders needed to address the educational practices within all realms of the school campus. Many educators from teachers, administrators, and state leaders needed to adjust their teaching practices to support and engage students using a multitude of venues. Ryan summarized how this new environment impacted their leadership.

Way more virtual. Kids did well and suffered as well. Lead to changes down the line. Ten years to make those changes happen. A bigger shift to virtual learning and a different shift for administrative leadership. Walk the campus and no one is around. Incidence with virtual issues. Shift is how you deal with it and how you investigate it. Leads to different issues. Learn how to deal with things later and online.

Several participants shared offering different modes of learning in the future should be an important option. They saw that providing families and students a different option for learning should be permanent and some of the services offered during the pandemic should continue. This would allow both families and students the ability to have options in selecting their preferred educational learning platform. One of those perspectives was from Malie, who shared:

School being so much greater than academics and the whole family and all of their needs. Parents lost jobs with no technology and educating them and getting them to school. It made us work harder and be a part of the community. Kids that were super successful with online learning. Broaden our understanding of what it means to go to school and different options for families and students. Didn't work for everybody. We've seen the opposite with taking ownership of their learning. So I think in 10 years, see different models for a public school and what it can offer. If we know how to best support students, we have to put in energy to support teachers to support our students. Adjust a lot and try a lot of new things and have supportive teachers.

These participants emphasized the need to look beyond what we currently offer to support student learning and engagement. They noted that what was learned can become important in improving the learning process for students throughout their educational journeys.

In contrast, though, not all felt that the online component of learning supported all students. Marisa, for example, felt that the in-person relationships were critical to students' learning experiences. Although much was learned from the pandemic, she expressed that we may want to consider a blend for the learning, as relationships are critical to their overall being.

The things we learned and innovative and creative, hope we don't lose sight of those kinds of things. Be bold and resilient. This is the stuff we've learned and creative pieces we've stumbled upon. It worked well for kids. I'm hoping that it's realized how important teachers are in the relationships with the in-person experience. When students have those relationships in class with their friends and

their teachers. Build upon that and expand to the community. Community expanded type schools. Hope that continues. That requires leaders to be more open and being more bold and people taking chances. That's where we are headed. Not perfectly aligned and can't just check off all of the boxes.

Marisa felt that relationships were critical to the overall success of students, and she emphasized that not everything should be technological as it has been in the last year or so. Encouraging relationships and face-to-face instruction are still important to a student's well-being.

Overall, participants expressed varied view regarding our future with education. They emphasized that if anything was learned from the pandemic, it was that education has multiple opportunities to engage others in promoting improved means for student learning. For school administrators and leaders, this involves being open to a multitude of different ideas and suggestions to promote continuous improved educational practices for all.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the emergent themes from the data collected from the 11 participants collected via one-on-one interviews and through an online platform. Although each participant completed an individual interview, all data points were integrated into an analysis that emphasized themes, or patterns of consistent responses, that emerged from the participants' sense making about their experiences in the preparation program and years of transitions from beginning administrators to educational leaders. The primary intent of this research project was to focus on their experiences both within the principal preparation program and as new school administrators. Beyond their experiences shared, the data emphasized the impact of the multitude of school leaders roles and responsibilities on their evolving professional practice. This included some of the struggles they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through these conversations,

participants were able to answer the guiding questions I had developed regarding the domains of their professional roles in terms of areas of most confidence and needed areas for more training and guidance. These discussions led to more in-depth conversation about their role as educational leaders and the growth each experienced during their tenure as school administrators.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

This chapter provides a brief summary of the overall goals and method used in conducting the study. It then discusses the key findings related to the research questions and limitations in considering the results. Finally, it suggests several implications for practice and future research, as well as closing thoughts.

Summary of the Study

The goal of this study was to present the reflections of beginning administrators as they began their journeys into school administration within the state of Hawai‘i. It focused on their individual experiences including the support and training they received at the state and district levels, the HICISL preparation program, mentoring from school administrators, and their university coursework. Previous research established that the nature of school leadership changed considerably over the past few decades. With the influence of national leadership standards, there were considerable shifts in expectations regarding the nature and exercise of school leadership (Farley et al., 2019; Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Murphy, Louis, & Smylie, 2017). As a result, educators and policymakers recognized the need for changes in scope and quality of preparation programs that could produce school leaders who continuously make a difference in their schools and the lives of each member of their school communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Orr, 2011). The role of school leadership was critical not just for student academic achievement, but also the performance measures attached to it (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Therefore, principal preparation should be more closely aligned with the skills new school leaders should possess and the types of integrated experiences they should have in developing leadership practices (McCarthy, 2002; Orr & Barber, 2009; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

A foundational piece in framing this study was the scope of school leadership practices developed in Seashore et al. (2010) and the Wallace Foundation (2013b). These leadership practices included:

- Shaping a vision and setting a direction,
- Creating a positive climate and the development of people,
- Cultivating leadership in others,
- Improving instruction and managing of programs,
- Managing people, data, and processes.

As previous research indicated, the success of a school depends on the integration of these practices, rather than only one or a few indicators.

In examining the participants' stories, several themes that emerged aligned with findings from previous research, while others were surprising elements that arose from their stories and reactions. These findings provided a platform for discussion regarding the transition from teacher leader to administrative leader. As themes arose, they heightened my own understanding regarding the perspectives of each of the participants and where they felt most comfortable within their educational and administrative journey, but they also highlighted areas the participants struggled with as they continued to develop as educational leaders. The findings of the study move the substantive conversation about school leadership forward in several ways in terms of necessary preparation and early administrative experiences.

Discussion of Findings

The guiding research questions posed in Chapter 1 focused on understanding how beginning administrators become educational leaders. This included not only how they gained confidence in their job roles, duties, and responsibilities, but also how they led as educational leaders and where they felt they were most comfortable within their new roles as educational

leaders. These questions helped structure findings revealed from the interview data and additionally, how the leadership conceptual framework supported their ongoing learning and the multiple roles in which they engaged.

In What Areas Did Beginning School Leaders Feel Most Confident in Their Role?

Part of the success of school administrators centers around feeling supported and seeing small “wins” and small gains through their leadership practices. This was often where the school administrators felt the most success and therefore was a primary impact on their continuous development as school leaders.

Making the transition. A first theme was that making the change from a teaching role to an administrator role was not something many of them had envisioned for themselves; however, what they shared aligned to previous research. Previous research found that candidates pursued administration for a variety of reasons including increased salaries, personal growth, a desire to make a difference, and the professional challenge (DeAngelis & O’Connor, 2012; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Joy, 1998; Lankford, O’Connell & Wyckoff, 2003; Perrone & Tucker, 2019; Pounder & Crow, 2005). Respondents shared they had a desire to make a difference and to take on a new professional challenge. Some of the respondents, however, also shared having no desire to enter school administration. Over time, however, their administrators encouraged them to assume different leadership roles which allowed them to develop leadership skills.

Participants' personal stories revealed a similar process from being a teacher leader to an administrative leader. They shared their personal reflections on ways they could continue to grow as educators; hence, entering school administration presented a desirable next step in their careers. During this period of reflection, they also felt supported from their school principal and their school administration teams. One tangible result was that entering administration broadened their perspectives and allowed them to see things differently within education.

Mentoring support. Another theme that arose from the participants' stories was the importance of mentoring. Aligned with previous research, (Cheney et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2007; UCEA, 2015), they mentioned the mentoring aspect was influential during their administrative journey. Participants shared their appreciation for their administration teams and the support their administrators provided regarding their emerging leadership practices.

An important part of the mentoring process was the initial mentoring each received prior to entering school administration. They were given leadership roles and responsibilities that helped to prepare them for administration. For some of the participants, being asked to take temporary administrative roles allowed them to decide whether school administration was for them. Others were given opportunities to become curriculum and instructional specialists with various coaching positions, department head or grade level chairs, or other leadership positions such as accreditation leads or special education chairs. Participants stated that, regardless of the opportunity, they were able to develop their leadership practices, roles and responsibilities. One participant, for example, shared that valuable moments included being able to sit down with his school principal. These conversations provided opportunities to reflect on the things that were or were not working well and affected his personal reflections on his decisions and practices.

These opportunities provided the participants the necessary support that was critical to not just the on-the-job training, but also the support they needed to feel successful when they were in other positions prior to administrative preparation. It helped to develop them as leaders as it centered around people--students, faculty, community members. The support they received from their mentors was an influential aspect in the leadership journey, as it promoted a shift with their leadership practices; from teacher leaders to the transition of becoming school administrators.

Part of the shift was understanding the training and the time commitment when one becomes a school administrator. Participants often received different perspectives regarding school administration from the school's administration "team." For example, trainees who worked in larger schools, such as middle and high schools, were sometimes mentored by other school administrators in addition to the school principal. The school level mentoring approach was surprising, as mentoring and placement of candidates often occurred through the mentoring by the principal, but participants also shared that many times the mentoring occurred with the other administrators within the school. They stated that this helped to develop their leadership practices further as they continued to grow as educational leaders. They were able to ask questions, reflect with the team, and gain insight into the practices at the school, and also to learn to think as an administrative leader more generally. Vice principals, for example, often provided necessary day-to-day support and training in contrast to the school principal. Participants expressed that these moments with others enhanced their learning. Whether the support came from the school principal or from other administrators who supported their leadership journey, these experiences provided opportunities for positive reflection and to internalize effective leadership practices.

Importance of effective relationships. Relationships were also a critical element for the school administrators, as this made them feel more confident with their roles and responsibilities. The relationships they developed supported their transition from teacher leaders to administrative leaders, as they saw value in other colleagues who had already experienced the same administrative leadership training. Listening to others informed and enhanced new administrators' leadership practices. The participants understood the complexities of school leadership and were able to discuss and expand their perspectives as they engaged in meaningful dialogue and interacted in a positive and collaborative manner. The relationships that the

participants developed provided the foundation for developing leadership within their evolving administrative roles.

The most surprising element shared was the impact relationships had on the preparation cohort. The cohort provided a safe space for beginning administrators to ask questions as they continued to develop as leaders. As participants explained, there was a critical element to all aspects of the learning which included mentoring, the cohort, and the interactions with families, students, and staff. The learning was integrated within all aspects of the job and changed with different aspects of the learning experiences. Participants shared commonalities with their roles and responsibilities, situational opportunities, tasks that needed to be completed, and learning how to lead and guide schools. These discussions strengthened the bond many of them had with others who were in the program.

Relationships seemed to be at the center of their journey and supported their learning through an array of supports. Participants were passionate educators who pledged to make a change and to be supportive of a system that continues to embrace their next steps within their educational journey. Some participants mentioned feeling the most supported with their cohort. For example, one beginning administrator from a different island mentioned that going through something together was the most supportive part of the preparation experience. It allowed for growth to occur and to be vulnerable with others. Although it was challenging, the nature of the cohort program provided time for participants to connect socially and be trusting with others who were going through similar stages of development.

Overall, the participants felt that because they had the support of their mentors, cohort members, and positive relationships with others, they felt confident in their job roles. It was not necessarily accomplishing specific tasks or duties, but rather knowing that they had others to lean on that enhanced their ability to make decisions as a leader. They understood that they

would make mistakes and continuously grow as leaders, but they took the lead with challenges because they were able to ask questions and be confident in their practices and their leadership skills.

Where Did Participants Believe More Support was needed to Grow as Leaders?

Learning to lead as beginning administrators varied from participant to participant. These leadership practices and statements came from both positive and negative experiences. There were some participants that had very influential leaders who they wanted to emulate.

Making the shift and feeling supported. Participants shared the positive experiences that came from their school level mentors. These mentors were open to the impact administrators can make by having the appropriate vision and culture as well as decision making and problem-solving skills (Adair, 2007). Many important initial experiences occurred while they were teachers and not just as they were learning to become administrators. These early experiences facilitated several to see leadership practices as part of their initial learning progression. Being given opportunities to not just see leadership practices in action, but to also experience leadership roles and responsibilities as a teacher leader was an essential learning component as they progressed into school administration. These leaders were able to develop the skills necessary to learn as they were proceeding with tasks, as well as to learn to lead, make mistakes and then to make adjustments. These were some of the hardest lessons that some learned regarding how they wanted to be when they became school administrators ahead of actually entering the profession. This process was how some of the participants learned how to lead; that is, by having great examples from their school principals and administrative leaders and learning by example.

Participants emphasized the needed shift in mindset as they moved from a teacher leader to a school level administrator. As a teacher leader, participants mentioned being responsible for

supporting the learning occurring within the classrooms. This included understanding and making sense for teachers of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA) components of learning. As school leaders, participants shared the need to help build connections between the teachers and sometimes administrators, students, and the community. Some of the basic fundamentals included learning how to lead, communicate, and support some of the infrastructures within the school. Part of the transition included being able to see the bigger picture and learning how to make quick decisions. Shifting their mindset meant not letting go of lessons they previously learned as teacher leaders, but broadening their perspective with seeing the bigger picture and taking multiple angles and perspectives into consideration. It was not just seeing the lens from one angle, but rather seeing the view from numerous angles that may impact and affect the view of the school as a whole.

Some of the participants mentioned that seeing a situation from several angles was easier, while others indicated it was a harder transition. These thought processes and thinking practices were not an easy transition, but were based on some of the personal experiences each of the candidates felt that supported the importance of developing relationships within all aspects of school leadership. Learning to lead meant that the transition came with an opportunity for growth and learning. This included being able to learn from others who were facing some of the same struggles the participant might also be facing.

In contrast, where individual candidates may not have supportive administrators, it can be more challenging for them to broaden their perspectives and develop necessary skills in leading others in a positive manner. It can engrain how not to be as a school administrator.

Aligning state, district, and the university. Participants also mentioned the need for improved alignment between the state, district and the university systems. Previous research recognized the importance of working together cohesively as a state, district, and the university

system to develop effective leaders. Although in the state of Hawai'i, all elements were present, participants felt the alignment and the connection between all three were not as strong as they could have been. Participants shared that not all entities were clearly aligned, and some felt these entities were working in isolation. They expressed that all three entities should be realigned and have clear indicators for what was being taught and how it was being applied. This would support the practicality and application of the lessons learned through increased alignment between previous research, state-driven initiatives and district implementation. This result suggests the possibility to facilitate discussion around aligning their supports in a more effective manner and taking into consideration the feedback provided. Understanding how all entities can integrate and support the development of administrative leaders would be beneficial for all, as it supports the leadership framework and the ongoing development for these leaders.

Some participants were affected by some of the differences between the training provided by the university system and how this portion of the training may have supported, affected, or changed how one may be trained beyond the HICISL program. As there were multiple university programs that participants attended to receive their research-based training, some participants mentioned the different training or messaging that was given by the university they attended. Some participants indicated there were differences in class instruction and outcomes. More specifically, some participants did not feel they got everything that they should have and wanted more knowledge that could support them as they were preparing to be school administrators. One example was understanding how theory and action are put into practice. This possible adjustment could support how participants become more prepared to lead as they transition and learn about their roles, responsibilities, and research-based practices as educational leaders.

Differentiating and tailoring the supports. New school leaders understood the need to differentiate their own areas of strength, but also focus on their areas of need. This meant that as they were being prepared to assume leadership roles to vary the supports that were provided for each aspiring leader. Through various experiences and educational backgrounds, participants recognized their areas of strength, but also their areas of needed growth. This clarified for each how support may be differentiated based on their various individual needs as they entered school administration. The recognition that each person's needs were very different based on their previous experience impacted the ways they led based on areas of strength and need. One concrete example shared was that opportunities to learn more about resource management, money, and people would have been beneficial, as these were areas the new administrator identified where additional support and practice were needed. Additional support in specific areas would be beneficial for individual candidates for growth in leadership. Tailoring this support would help to promote more well-rounded and prepared school leaders.

Recognition of place-based education. Most surprising from this study was the recognition of place-based education and cultural relevance pressed by some of the participants. This was not a question or topic that was asked, but was illuminated by some of the participants. It highlighted their belief that, as school leaders, they were seeking more information regarding cultural-based influences and practices and their incorporation within student academic learning. Although the participants came from a range of academic disciplines, supports, training, and teaching backgrounds, they shared that regardless of training or background, as residents of Hawai'i, cultural influences are central to how schooling should be conducted in a specific way. Previous research often failed to recognize how cultural integration specifically impacted people because of the cultural space in which they reside. This perspective supports

how people connect to their sense of place and recognize how this sense of place supports the role educational leaders learn to lead for the betterment of all of our educational leaders.

Learning the basic tenets of cultural space is integrated in some capacity within the HICISL program, but not to the extent some of the participants were seeking. The HODOE has integrated the inclusion of the Hā framework within schools, but some participants mentioned the need for truly understanding what happened within our history and how to effectively communicate and teach that within our schools. The perspective that participants shared was understanding the cultural context of a place and being a steward for that place in which they live, such as being a positive leader and member of the community and caring for the place where one lives. Another school administrator sought an opportunity to use education to teach the real pieces of what occurred in Hawai'i and she expressed wanting to do more for the people and the community in which she represented.

These participants were seeking was to be culturally responsive and sensitive to the heritage and history as Hawaiians and kānaka living in a western world. For others to be culturally sensitive and to be “fair, just, and nondiscriminatory treatment of all students, the removal of barriers, the provision of resources and supports, and the creation of opportunities with the goal of promoting equitable outcomes” (The Wallace Foundation, 2021; p. 9). They were searching for opportunities where equity is looked at through all lenses to include disciplinary action, test scores, chronic absenteeism, and other subgroup outcomes, not previously measured (Skiiba et al., 2014). School administrators need to understand the population in which they serve as it requires much more skills, expertise, and knowledge than ever before. This includes the cultural aspects, economic impacts, and the learning needs of all of our students (The Wallace Foundation, 2021).

In 2010, research conducted in Hawai'i revealed a significant finding regarding the utilization of culture-based educational strategies to strengthen ties between students, their educational outcomes, and the impact on their emotional well-being (Kana'iaupuni, Ledward, & Jensen, 2010). The finding revealed that educators who made a conscious effort to promote cultural relevance, impacted students with greater effect than those that did not. This included the engagement, the learning, and the achievement success of students. Based on these research findings and what some participants sought to enhance their administrative leadership, including a component to support their leadership development would enhance their desire to align cultural practices to their development. It would provide an opportunity to engage a different style of leadership to support the learning of administrators who are seeking to include more cultural practices onto and within their schools. Research that supports beginning administrators will forever be changing and constantly changing, but how we use that research to adapt our next steps will be critical to the way we will continue to drive how we are changing our practices and how we will continue to meet the needs for those that will continue to support our needs.

Implications for Practice

Given the lack of studies within the state of Hawai'i conducted on the initial development of school leaders, this study examined the stories of sampled participants who completed their first few years as tenured administrators. The participants' stories showcased the journey each took to become school administrators as they completed the state's HICISL program. This study facilitated the individual voices of new school administrative leaders to be showcased as they completed the HICISL program and their initial administrative experiences in working closely with students, staff, families, and community members to enrich the lives of their students. Participants' reflections on their initial roles and responsibilities each had helped illuminate their

own journeys into school administration. Each had their own vision and view, but understood that there were many lessons learned in order to become the leaders they are today.

Although these are the perspectives from a few administrative leaders from a particular time within the cohort system, these perspectives provide insight into where they felt the most supported, the most confident, and areas where they continued to struggle as they became school leaders. Participants shared that the roles and responsibilities of administrative leaders were wide, but key elements during this socialization period as school leaders included how they learned to lean on others, seek help and clarification when they were struggling, and learned to find time to balance not just their professional lives, but also their personal lives as well.

Recommendations. Based on participants' interviews, I recommend three changes that would enhance school leadership training and practice. They are:

1. Incorporate instructional practices within the principal preparation program that would provide greater individualized feedback and support based on the needs of the candidates.
2. Develop greater alignment of research, methods, and practices between all entities (state, district, and universities) to support the learning and experiences of the principal preparation candidates.
3. Include cultural based practices and curriculum to support leadership efforts in engaging students in understanding cultural influences.

The first recommendation provides for the differentiation of individual supports. This allows participants the opportunity to identify both strength areas and areas of need. This may come from previous training, expertise and be guided through discussions with their cohort mentor, principal mentor, and/or their former principal to help identify areas of strength and

growth areas. Participants' interviews suggested they received the same training regardless of whether or not they needed it or not, and there were other areas that others may have benefitted from based on their area of weakness and need which were not addressed. This change would help candidates gain more in-depth knowledge in areas in which they continued to struggle as they transitioned from teacher to school administrator.

The second recommendation is to have intentional alignment between state, district, and university programs as programs are developing administrative leaders. Although there is some alignment, meetings between varying entities would be more meaningful to candidates if the topics covered were more closely aligned with what they are learning about certain elements within the program. The need for alignment between district, state agencies, and university preparation programs has been noted as vital to the improvement of effective principal preparation programs, as it supports learning opportunities for those preparing to be school administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006; Orr et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2013a; Wallace Foundation, 2013b).

As one concrete example, if participants are engaging with school level budgets, ensure that they are engaging not just with the vocabulary but also being provided with context and suggestions for implementation with researched based practices at the university level. Ensure that the classes they are taking align to what is being taught within the principal preparation program within a similar timeframe. Coursework and the timeliness of presentations within HICISL should align between all entities. Perhaps budget issues could be covered prior to schools having to turn in their academic and financial plans for the upcoming school year and participants might engage in real conversations with their mentor principals. For participants within this study, greater alignment may have helped them to understand the differences and

some of the decision-making processes to ensure they were getting the most out of the specific learning experiences.

The third recommendation focuses on incorporating place-based education. Research conducted in Hawai'i in 2010, revealed a significant finding regarding the utilization of culture-based educational strategies to strengthen ties between students, their educational outcomes, and the impact on their emotional well-being (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2010). When we promote the opportunities to include cultural based practices and strategies to support the learning of our students, it creates opportunities to build connections and opportunities for their success. For school level administrators, this supports their commitment to their leadership development and their engagement with others who may want to implement the same on their school campuses. It allows an opportunity to engage a different style of leadership to support the learning of administrators who are seeking to include more culturally-based practices within their schools.

There were discussions and suggestions that occurred based on ways to strengthen participants' leadership and needs moving forward. Not all of these were research-based practices or were even identified within the literature review, but rather they were needs that administrators identified that are needed living and working within the state of Hawai'i as they continue to lead. Those would possibly support the learning of the administrative leaders as they continue to lead and guide their schools.

Implications for Future Research

These results of this study contributed to understanding the perspectives of beginning administrators as educational leaders in the state of Hawai'i. The following themes were grounded in what participants shared regarding their journeys. They included:

1. The journey began with the intent of giving back and making a bigger impact on others within their educational careers;
2. Supporting the learning and learning to lead through the leadership transition;
3. Relationships were essential to all parts of the administrative journey;
4. Varied views regarding the alignment between state agencies and supports;
5. There should be a place to recognize a need to emphasize place-based education and the value of Hawai'i's unique cultural context in education;
6. Understanding our future within education.

What surfaced in the study was participants' perspectives, discussions, and questions they had as beginning administrators, and further exploration could be considered. Within the state of Hawai'i, few studies have focused on school administrators and their journeys as educational leaders. This study provided a phenomenological angle on the socialization of new administrators. There are still other angles and different perspectives that could be considered. Further research might investigate those administrators who have since taken on various roles such as school principals and/or district or state leaders. This would explore those that have made the decision to lead and take on leadership roles in different capacities.

Reflecting back to the beginning of the current study, the Wallace Foundation (2021) concluded, "Principals really matter. Indeed, given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership" (p. 43). If we invest in the development of our principals and their preparation to become effective school leaders, we are investing in their development in the true improvement of principal leadership. It grounds what we believe and how we can

support and implement an effective piece of our leadership practices and development.

Recognizing the importance of the development of school leaders, we need to provide the appropriate opportunities to explore their development and ongoing support to be more effective within the leadership support.

At the start of this research, I shared that previous research was clear that school leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating student success in terms of setting the school's direction, developing people, finding purpose, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Seashore Louis et al., 2010). Previous studies identified a broad range of indicators for what leaders need to be successful within their job roles as principal leaders. More recent research from the Wallace Foundation (2021) identified four practices that link effective outcomes and fundamental foundational skills. They included: high-leverage instructional activities, building a productive culture and climate, facilitating collaboration and learning communities, and the strategic management of personnel and resources. School leaders guide efforts to improve the quality of the school's instruction, professional development, and the implementation of targeted curricular changes. Aligning these indicators to what the participants stated influenced possible research studies to align not just with what is needed, but also what supports the development of school leaders. Based on the results of this study, the following areas merit further research on the development of school leaders:

1. An in-depth study regarding how cultural influences within the state of Hawai'i impacts the leaders of Hawai'i.

2. Initial research on the importance and influence of the alignment between state direction, district initiatives and training, and how local universities contribute to principal preparation in the state of Hawai'i.

First, further research is needed on how culturally-based education may affect students and communities who begin to incorporate this perspective into their educational program as whole. From a principal preparation perspective, this research might include how this relates to the role and duty of school leaders who believe it is important to align cultural influence and educational practice, and who work implement within their own schools. This type of research could focus on how cultural influence may impact other school-wide practices and what trends and influence this might produce on student data. This links back to the data identifying and strengthening the ties between cultural influences and student outcomes. This would encourage and support leaders as they enhance the experiences of those they lead and students they influence.

Second, as we explore the alignment between state, district, and the university system, we would further research the impact and influence this has with the state of Hawai'i being a whole state educational powerhouse. Earlier in the study, I examined the national alignment and the importance of aligning principal preparation programs between the state, district, and universities participating in school-leader development. Due to the state being a single educational entity, examining the structure and how it supports the development of school leaders would be an area for further research. This includes not just interviews from participants regarding their experience, but also interviewing those that plan the experience and how they consider the alignment between all entities for the principal preparation program. It would further examine how the planning stage to the implementation affects the outcomes for participants.

Understanding the importance and alignment from all levels is crucial to not just how they are trained, but also the importance of the alignment between practicum and researched-based practices and development of leaders.

All of these implications seek to explore more about the journeys each has taken and why administration is not for the faint of heart. It is a role that not many take on, but there are many lessons to be learned regardless of the direction they have all taken. This study fills a gap in connecting the experiences, perspectives, and the background of beginning administrators as they learn the roles and responsibilities of educational leadership.

Closing Thoughts

The educational journey to find supportive practices for beginning administrators as educational leaders will be useful for not just those within the state of Hawai‘i, but for educational practitioners in general. The lessons learned, the journey taken, and the continuous growth for each of the participants is ongoing. Each is finding their own story and making it their own as they find relevance regarding how they will guide others to be the best educators they can be. With Hawai‘i’s public educational system consisting of a single educational system on seven different islands, it is important that we look at the needs of each individual island and county as we continuously move forward to support all of our leaders, schools, communities and students’ needs. It is only natural that we look at the system as a whole, but also how we can continue to support our educational leaders’ success in their administrative journeys as they guide schools in diverse geographical locations within the state. At the conclusion of this study, I found it was useful for understanding how beginning administrators develop as educational leaders from the perspectives of educational leaders in the state of Hawai‘i. This study highlights the journey from teacher to successful school administrator. Living and working within the state of Hawai‘i creates unique experiences for new school administrators working within a single statewide

educational entity. It creates specific areas of need and creates opportunities that are varying and different from perhaps the experiences than other educational leaders in other parts of the country.

This study revealed the importance of connections and the way they have shaped and continuously guided beginning school administrators throughout their professional journeys. The relationships and connections shared throughout their leadership journeys built meaningful relationships with one another. All continue their work and their own development in their administrative journeys. It is clear the administrative leadership training provides a range of opportunities to support the learning, growth, and the relationship building for each participant.

As I interviewed various administrators, understanding work on maintaining a statewide educational system for the state of Hawai'i has created a multitude of educational ideas for ways for support to continue to be provided. Some have been identified through the research-based practices and others have been identified by the voices and perspectives of those participants who continued to engage through the process. The findings suggested that, overall, the participants felt continuously supported throughout their beginning administrative years. They also continued to utilize their friendships and their relationships with their administrative cohort to engage their learning and progression forward as educational leaders.

Understanding where my own values and beliefs lay was also important for me to understand, as phenomenology could have a lasting impact on the researcher and is a form of deeper learning that can transform perspectives (van Manen, 1990). In conducting this study, I appreciated the opportunity to continuously learn, engage, and appreciate others' perspectives and viewpoints. The research process was not so much about suspending my own values and perspectives, but rather enhancing my own viewpoint to appreciate the conversations, the elements that sparkle and shine, and returning again to what was at the core of this entire process

and conversation. To learn and be enlightened, but also to see, breathe, and experience what and how others may have interpreted and engaged in the same process as I have.

I have also reflected on phenomenology and understanding where my own bias is. It is understanding how throughout this phenomenological process, I have gained insight throughout this data collection and analysis regarding my own stories and perspectives, as well as the stories of the 11 participants who participated in and supported this research study. From sharing their experiences, several themes were revealed that supported their own leadership development. The themes came to life and supported previous research on school leadership development, but also illuminated several new areas that were important for them in their educational leadership journey. This included the relationships many continued to have throughout their first few years as school leaders. Understanding of how relationships are formed was critical to the way I understood my purpose and the way to move and motivate my research. Throughout this process, as I have continued to transform, I recognized the changes and the ongoing journey to make the changes necessary to continuously develop as a leader.

At the end of this research journey, I found this to be liberating and revealed much about myself and where my own passions and inspiration lay. I found myself looking at research in a different manner and looking at it to enhance my own practice—identifying where my interests are, and how I would like to continue to contribute to the leadership practices. This includes engaging in meaningful discussions around the stories shared and already thinking about the next steps and the next journey. I found that there is much more to learn about administrative practices, as we can continue to align research practices to what and how we will continue to move forward.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

National standards utilized across the nation in many principal preparation programs (NPBEA, 2015, formerly the ISLLC)

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015	
Standard 1 <i>Mission, Vision, and Core Values</i>	Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high quality education and academic success and well-being of <i>each</i> student.
Standard 2 <i>Ethics and Professional Norms</i>	Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 3 <i>Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</i>	Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 4 <i>Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</i>	Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 5 <i>Community of Care and Support for Students</i>	Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.
Standard 6 <i>Professional Capacity of School Personnel</i>	Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 7 <i>Professional Community for Teachers and Staff</i>	Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 8 <i>Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community</i>	Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 9 <i>Operations and Management</i>	Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
Standard 10 <i>School Improvement</i>	Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

Appendix B

Profile of an Effective School Leader (PSEL)

Profile of an Effective School Leader (2018)	
Standard 1	Keeping a clear focus on student learning, growth and achievement at all times.
Standard 2	Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Standard 3	Implements effective and efficient organization, operation, and resource systems for an optimal learning environment.
Standard 4	Engaging the community in a meaningful, culturally responsive environment. The applicant builds and sustains positive relationships with families, caregivers, and community partners.
Standard 5	Regularly examines decisions and actions while maintaining high ethical standards.
Standard 6	Understanding, responding to, and advocating within the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Appendix C

National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP, 2018) Standards

National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP, 2018)	
Standard 1 <i>Mission, Vision, and Improvement</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to collaboratively lead, design, and implement a school mission, vision, and process for continuous improvement that reflects a core set of values and priorities.</p>
Standard 2 <i>Ethics and Professional Norms</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to understand and demonstrate the capacity to advocate for ethical decisions and cultivate and enact professional norms.</p>
Standard 3 <i>Equity, Inclusiveness, and Cultural Responsiveness</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive and inclusive school culture.</p>
Standard 4 <i>Learning and Instruction</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, supports, and assessment.</p>
Standard 5 <i>Community and External Leadership</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to engage families, community, and school personnel in order to strengthen student learning, support school improvement, and advocate for the needs of their school and community.</p>
Standard 6 <i>Operations and Management</i>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to improve management, communication, technology, school-level governance, and operation systems to develop and improve data-informed and equitable school resource plans and to apply laws, policies, and regulations.</p>

<p>Standard 7</p> <p><i>Building Professional Capacity</i></p>	<p>Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to build the school's professional capacity, engage staff in the development of a collaborative professional culture, and improve systems of staff supervision, evaluation, support, and professional learning.</p>
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Appendix D

HIDOE Leadership Competencies:

1. Achievement Focus	Keeping a clear focus on student learning, growth, and achievement at all times.
2. Instructional and Learning Leadership	Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. Family and Community Engagement	Engaging the community in a meaningful, culturally responsive environment.
4. Talent Development	Developing and tapping internal expertise to promote learning, improved practice and leadership capacity.
5. Reflection and Integrity	Regularly examining decisions and actions to continuously improve while maintaining high ethical standards.
6. Communication and Relationships	Developing relationships, soliciting input and articulating ideas in a variety of ways to inculcate support, respect, and trust.
7. Change Leadership	Strategically and systematically adapting to and shaping change.
8. Resource Leadership	Implementing effective and efficient operational systems for an optimal learning environment.

Appendix E

In order to help principals and candidates determine if candidates are ready for the HICISL program, a readiness rubric is used to determine their leadership potential (see below).

Leadership Readiness Rubric					
1	2	3	4	5	6
Demonstrates limited or no evidence of experience, knowledge, or dispositions of a school leader.	Demonstrates limited evidence of experience, knowledge, skills, or dispositions of a school leader.	Demonstrates evidence of applying experience, knowledge, skills and/or dispositions of a school leader to impact the classroom or school/work setting.	Consistently demonstrates evidence of applying his/her experience, knowledge, skills and dispositions of a school leader to impact the classroom or school/work setting.	Consistently demonstrates evidence of applying his/her experience, knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a school leader to impact school improvement.	Integrates leadership experience, knowledge, skills, and dispositions to lead and impact school improvement.

Appendix F

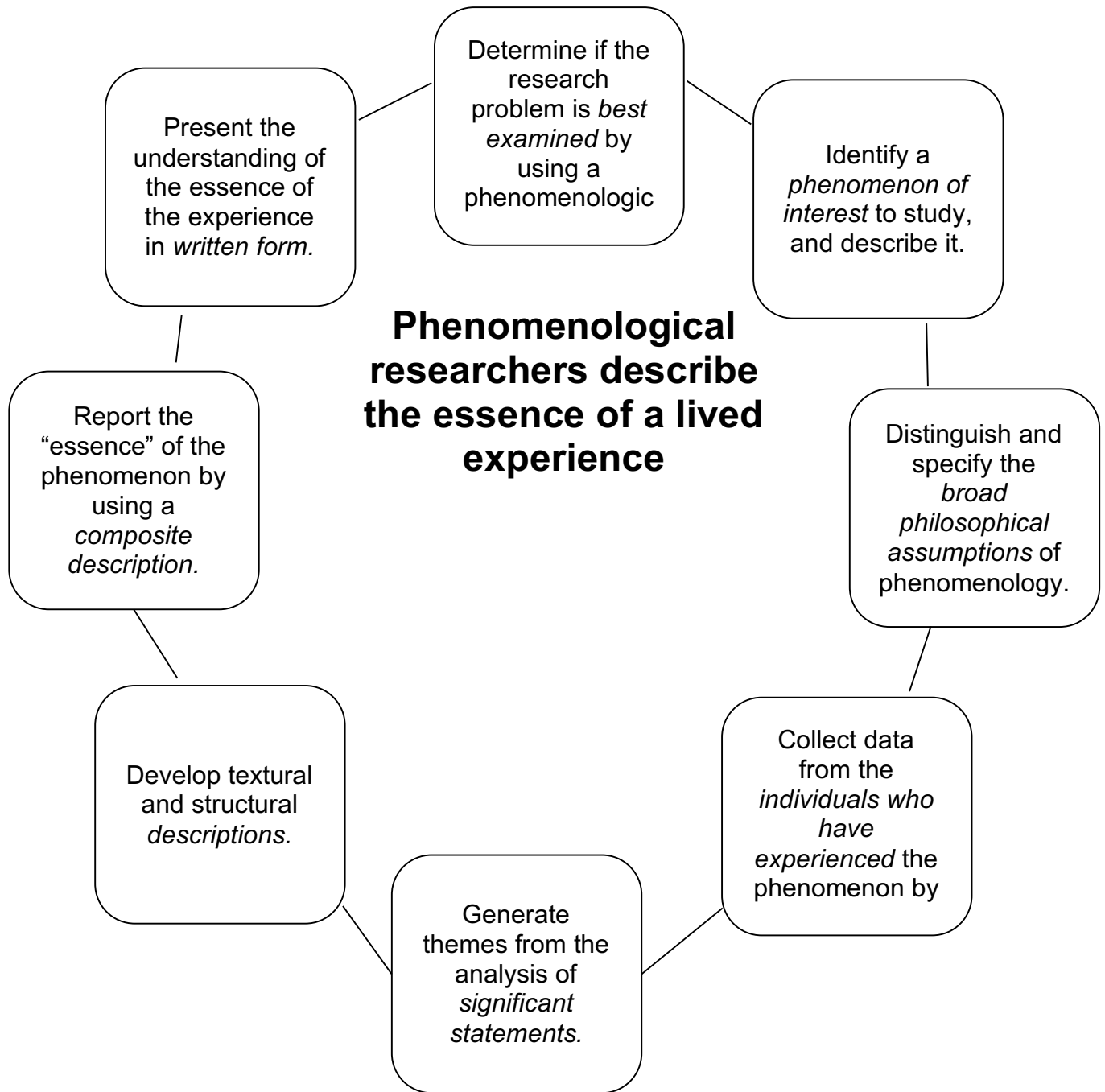
Moustakas's (1994) lists several elements with Phenomenology that occur throughout the research process. The process involves the use of how the research problem will be not just used, but how research will be collected, analyzed, and understood. They include:

1. *Determine if the research problem is best examined by using a phenomenological approach. An emphasis on the phenomenon of interest to explore, study, and be able to describe it in a single concept or idea through a shared experience.*
2. *Identify a phenomenon of interest to study, and describe it.* Explore the phenomenon with a group of individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews.
3. *Distinguish and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology.* Identify and understand the multiple perspectives of several individuals' shared experiences of the phenomenon. The goal is to understand common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon.
4. *Collect data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using in-depth and multiple interviews.* Ask questions around the experiences of the phenomenon and understand their own experiences. Reveal as the researcher discusses her or his own personal experiences with the phenomenon as a means to focus on the experiences of those being interviewed and bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences.
5. *Generate themes from the analysis of significant statements.* Generate themes from the analysis of significant statements and build the data from the first and second research

questions highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes regarding how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

6. *Develop textural and structural descriptions.* Develop and identify statements and themes to write a description of what the participants experienced, writing a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) also added an additional step where researchers write about their own experiences and the context and situations that have influenced their experiences.
7. *Report the “essence” of the phenomenon by using a composite description.* Focus on the common experiences of the participants where there is an underlying structure and has the same interpretation for all parties and the “how” and “why” of an individual’s experience.
8. *Present the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form.* There is a descriptive passage of the experience and a detailed description of the data collection and analysis. The results and interpretation focus on how the phenomenon was experienced with significant statements and a conclusion with a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon.

Appendix G



Source: Moustakas (1994)

Appendix H

Interview Questions:

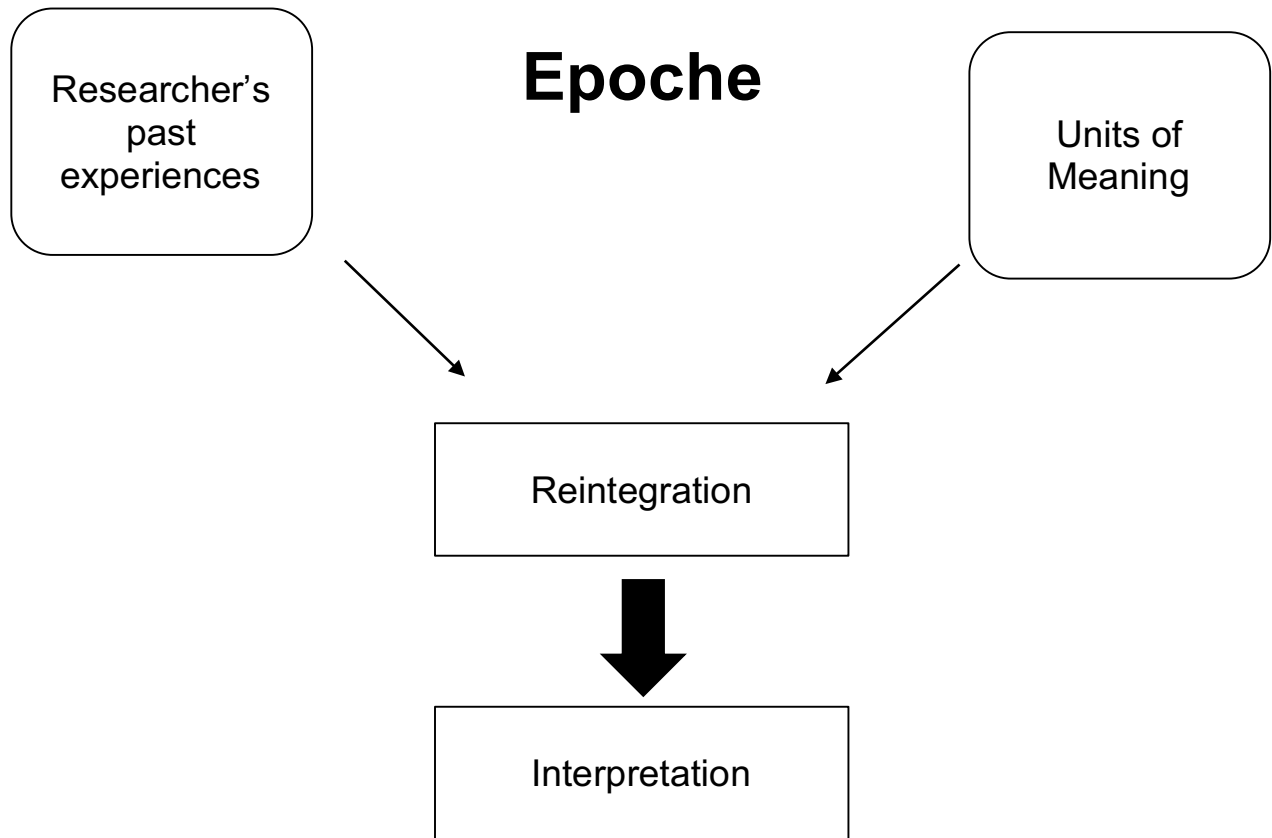
The interview questions I hope to include regarding the participant's path in becoming an educational leader include the following:

1. Research has stated that teachers generally have no intention of moving into administration when they enter the field. However, they move for a variety of reasons including increased salaries, personal growth, desire to make a difference, and the professional challenge. Can you share what your motivation was and if that continues to drive you as an educational leader?
2. Can you share some of your early experiences in education? School level experiences and background, prior learning and knowledge, professional preparation, and early experiences with school administration?
3. Given the many challenges school leaders face, how has the principal preparation program in Hawai'i developed and supported your instructional leadership?
4. The teaching and learning framework for school principal preparation programs and the understanding of them is vital to the success of leaders. What was your understanding of the framework prior to entering the program and has it changed since being an administrative leader within your school?
5. District, state, and university alignment is critical to the success and preparation of school leaders. Can you share your experiences and how these have shaped you as a leader?
6. Mentoring and internships play a critical element to the success of school leaders. Can you share your experience(s) both with your mentor and your internship to support your journey as a school level administrator?

7. What aspect of the program do you believe has supported you most through your administrative journey? (School level mentor, program mentor, program seminars, college coursework, etc.)
8. Where do you believe the future of education will be in 10 years? What does this mean for administrative leadership?
9. Do you have any other comments about school instructional leadership you would like to share?

These questions would serve as the foundation and guidance for the interview; however, it may be altered based on the responses from the participant based on their own personal experiences and may become “emergent in the design” and modified when and during the process of conducting the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Appendix I



Source: Gearing (2004)

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