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Assessment literacy influenced by administrator identity and professional learning confident administrators within Kentucky independent school districts.

Amy J. Harris
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ASSESSMENT LITERACY INFLUENCED BY ADMINISTRATOR IDENTITY AND
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
CONFIDENT ADMINISTRATORS WITHIN KENTUCKY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

By

Amy J. Harris
B.A. Kentucky State University, 2004
M.S. Eastern Kentucky University, 2009
M.A. Ed. Eastern Kentucky University, 2012

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Human Development of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education
In Educational Leadership and Organizational Development

Department of Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2023

ASSESSMENT LITERACY INFLUENCED BY ADMINISTRATOR
IDENTITY AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
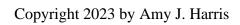CONFIDENT ADMINISTRATORS WITHIN KENTUCKY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
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A Dissertation Approved on

December 16, 2023

By the following Dissertation Committee:

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Diane Hatchett, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

"Perhaps this is the moment for which you were created" – Esther 4:14

This dissertation is first, dedicated to my family. My husband, Matt, for his constant love and support throughout my lifetime of learning. His encouragement has provided me with the opportunity to tackle many challenges in life and he's been right there beside me. Your love and support mean more than you will ever know. My children and grandchildren have been patient and understanding when my weekends and evenings were consumed with research or writing. I pray I have modeled the importance of education and the grit to persevere through whatever challenges may arise. My sister for always loving me and being a partner in fighting that status quo. My parents have been pillars of strength throughout my lifetime. You have taught me to praise God, advocate for others, persevere through challenges, love your work and work hard at it.

This work is also dedicated to all the men and women out there who have made choices that may have steered their life in a direction that was not expected. Embrace it and conquer the beast of doubt. Let God be your light. I am proof.

Lastly, this dissertation is dedicated to our profession and the students we serve. A mentor once told me that _every decision_ must be what is best for kids. Despite what the world may say, the future of our children and the guidance we provide is what matters. Take risks, be confident and ask the hard questions. Advocate for their education and your own. Education is freedom and we must continue to fight for that.

"Be extraordinary and uncommon" -Author unknown.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

ASSESSMENT LITERACY INFLUENCED BY ADMINISTRATOR IDENTITY AND
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
CONFIDENT ADMINISTRATORS WITHIN KENTUCKY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

Amy J. Harris

December 16, 2023

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to gain greater understanding surrounding how administrators in northern Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their own experiences with assessments (assessment literacy). In addition, this study sought to gain knowledge from administrator experiences which may or may not have contributed to their confidence as leaders of assessment literacy. The context of this study was with the 11 Independent School Districts in the Northern Kentucky region, specifically with school level administrators. The significance of this study is to inform teacher preparation programs and current administrators of how and why individual self-efficacy and professional learning experiences may influence administrator assessment literacy.

The methodology included a semi-structured interview process for collecting data as a way for participants to share their experiences in a narrative manner (Leavy, 2017). Cycle one of coding was conducted manually then initial coding and line by line. Cycle two of coding used In-Vivo coding where themes emerged aligned to the research questions to provide meaning to the experiences of the participants (Saldana, 2018).

The findings support the need for teacher and administrator preparatory programs to consider more emphasis on assessment education to support a deeper understanding of assessment literacy. In addition, the findings support the need for assessment literacy based professional learning and intentional mentoring to build capacity with assessments to strengthen confidence in school leadership.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

School administrators are expected to be jacks of all trades as there are multiple

dimensions to their day-to-day duties. In the realm of assessment and accountability, their

jobs can be dependent on the results of state assessments which can take them away from

important aspects of their job. High stakes testing and accountability expectations

spawned by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) paved the road to ineffective instructional

practices, specifically those regarding effective assessment practices and the focus

educators have on assessment (Himmele & Himmele, 2021). The emphasis on achieving

higher test scores has pushed school districts and their educators, as Zhao (2009) claims,

to see education more as a competition that undermines our strengths instead of keeping

our status as a nation of innovation by continuing to build on our strengths.

Research illustrates the importance of assessment literacy held by school

administrators having an impact on teacher and student success as Popham (2006)

indicates the need for educators to thoroughly understand a few, but not necessarily all,

measurements of student achievement that are likely to influence educational decisions to

be true professionals in the field of education. School Administrators may have

experiences as students, teachers or current school leaders with assessments that

influence their level of assessment literacy, how they see themselves as assessment

literate leaders and how they make professional learning decisions as a leader for

themselves and for their staff. For educators, specifically school administrators, to lead

from an assessment literate seat, they must understand the purpose of assessment, understand the actual assessment and data that are generated from the assessment, data that are useful and how to apply the data to make decisions for their school (Sharp & Ryan, 2018). My interest in this area is due to my personal experiences as a school leader and the lack assessment focused coursework in undergraduate classes for my teachers. Educational experiences related to assessment as a student, a teacher and school administrator, specifically focused on the purpose, analysis and benefits of assessment data was not modeled, expected or discussed in my educator preparation courses. As a student I did not understand the purpose of the assessments we were expected to take and how the information was used. As an education major in college, I had an assessment course, but connections were not emphasized to the importance of assessment and role assessment had in teaching and learning. Once I became a teacher, assessment seemed to be associated with the state accountability system and training was focused on how to improve state assessment results more so than how to develop assessments or how to use assessment data to improve classroom instruction. Many times, state accountability was viewed in a negative light as it was ever changing, which led to lack of commitment to and misunderstandings of what the target reflected. This, along with a lack of background knowledge of assessment systems including the reasons for assessing student knowledge, paved the way for my intimidation by the word assessment. As an administrator, I realize the power assessment can have in improving student achievement through teacher practice and the passion ensued as I sought out training to better understand the impact, the development and learning how to build capacity in others to

embrace assessment as a tool to support growth and build a culture of assessment literate educators.

Sharp and Ryan (2018) state the importance of an educator's assessment literacy, content knowledge and pedagogical skills being directly related to each other. The foundational understanding of assessment and being assessment literate is noted as lacking in pre-service teacher education programs and educational leadership programming by many authors, which indicates that a school educator and leader must acquire these skills once in the field (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). The belief in one's ability to build capacity in self and others in the realm of assessment literacy seems to be affected in relation to the educational experiences the leader has had throughout their life (Popham, 2006). This is especially true if appropriate professional learning has not been provided or lack of experiences with learning skills related to assessment have not been provided. Structured, designed experiences are required to make meaning of what is to be learned (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). My passion for becoming assessment literate and sharing my assessment experiences with colleagues led me to discover other administrators who have had similar experiences while on their professional walk.

The roots of this study began when, as a principal, I was planning professional development for my staff focused on assessment development and data analysis. The resistance I received from a few teachers made me question my development and delivery process of the experience. However, there were the teachers within the district that viewed innovation as positive, successful, and many were willing to try new concepts. In addition, there were teachers that viewed their roles with negativity. While many teachers were historically successful, many were unwilling to try new concepts

designed to sharpen their vocational skills. Then there were the teachers who just

struggled regardless of the process. I started to reflect on professional learning

experiences I had as a teacher and administrator that made an impact on my professional

practice. It made me wonder why there is such a difference between the teachers and how

could I, a school administrator, impact all teachers, not just the teachers who had an

obvious growth mindset.

Understanding the difference between professional development and professional

learning along with studying the adult learning process supported my growth as an

administrator. Examining my own experiences with professional development over the

years helped guide my work as I unveiled the many faces professional learning has had

and the impact possibilities.

Context of the Study

The context for this study will be the 11 Northern Kentucky Independent School

Districts and their 30 school level principals. There are 171 school districts in the state of

Kentucky with 1,477 schools. Of the 171 school districts, 51 are independent districts.

Within those 51 districts there are 217 schools and principals in multiple levels,

kindergarten through 12th grade. The Northern Kentucky Region was chosen as the data

location for this study. As part of the Northern Kentucky Cooperative and an active

member and participant of numerous cohorts within the collaborative, the researcher will

collaborate with regional leaders to gather data for analysis.

Statement of the Problem

Despite teacher preparation program certification and experience as teachers and

administrators, assessment literacy is lacking in public education. Though foundational

training for teachers may include a course associated with assessment, teacher candidates are not holistically trained on the purpose, development of or data related to assessment along with how to adjust instruction from the data analysis. With an increasing emphasis on student achievement through assessment and accountability, administrator experiences with assessment, and overall assessment literacy, is a crucial component of effective leadership. Colleagues in similar districts face related concerns which strengthens the need and purpose to learn more about the phenomena behind the problem.

Conceptual Framework

This qualitative research study will focus on the influence of professional identity and professional learning on assessment literacy. A researcher's predisposition suggests that experiences guide actions, inform decisions and influence learning processes. Individuals seek to understand the world in which we live and work. Therefore, an interpretive framework, social constructivism, will serve as the foundational theoretical lens aligning to Piaget and Vygotsky's research related to professional learning (Belanger, 2011). Originating from Jean Piaget, constructivism is defined as a learning process that constructs meaning through individual experiences rather than memorization. Vygotsky adds that learning includes, along with constructing meaning, the elements of creating, inventing, and developing individual knowledge and meaning within a social context (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Individuals make sense of the world through experiences and intentional reflection to make sense of those experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Alt (2015) describes constructivism as a method of learning in which individuals are active participants responsible for gaining knowledge in both the cognitive and social constructs.

Liu & Chen (2010) posits that social constructivism is consistent with adult learning theory in that learning is a multidimensional process through connecting meaningful experiences in a holistic manner to make sense to relate and build knowledge. Additionally, designing a learning environment for adults that includes the demonstration of knowledge through the learning avenues Vygotsky has defined provides for a deeper connection and application in the workplace. Malcolm Knowles et al. (2014) emphasizes the adult learner falls on their prior life centered experience to guide their learning along with emphasizes the learning experience must be enjoyable and applicable to daily work. Creating a narrative to story our lives allows us to make meaning of individual experiences. Critical reflection in adult learning theory, as with constructivist theory, allows for refining of understanding as individuals link experiences to greater understanding and learning (Merriam, 2008). Prior experiences have been noted to be the greatest resource for adult learners which provides a supportive element to utilize adult learning theory in connection with social constructivist theory (Ozuah, 2016).

Self-efficacy theory also connects with social constructivist theory. Studies show that constructivist learning environments have more positive outcomes, academically, compared to the traditional learning environment and should be recognized as so. Albert Bandura (1977) emphasizes the development of self-efficacy beliefs through information interpretation from four main avenues: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological feedback. Through these avenues of information interpretation, life experiences are connected to the belief in one's own ability to succeed (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). Due to little research or availability of literature, more time

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should be allotted to examine the connection between constructivist learning environments and self-efficacy (Alt, 2015).

Because lived experiences are emphasized through the chosen framework, the use of a phenomenological approach to my research makes the most sense. Specifically, Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, originating from Martin Heidegger, allows the observer to be a part of research and focuses on the lived experiences of the participants (Neubauer, B.E., et.al., 2019). The study will focus on the shared experiences of participants in relation to the chosen phenomenon of assessment literacy and the process of interpreting the meaning of those experiences. The participants who will all be school level administrators will have experiences related to the research being conducted. The focus on a phenomenological approach allows the use of methods in form of interviews and observations to collect data for this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to gain greater understanding surrounding how administrators in northern Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their own experiences with assessments (assessment literacy). In addition, this study seeks to gain knowledge from administrator experiences-which may or may not have contributed to their confidence as leaders of assessment literacy. Shared administrator experiences may influence professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff.

Research Questions

Exploring the identified phenomenon began with reflecting on experiences

throughout my career and those with colleagues in similar positions. There are three research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

RQ2: How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

RQ3: What educational experiences have influenced school administrator professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are specific to a professional teaching environment within the United States, specifically surrounding Kentucky schools.

Assessment - Any act of interpreting information about student performance, collected through any of a multitude of means or practice (Brown, 2004).

Assessment Literacy - An individual's understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions (Popham, 2018).

Identity - knowing/realizing oneself; formed through socio-cultural experiences; developed through daily engagement and lived experiences (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Professional learning - Collaborative practices that result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019).

Self-efficacy - A person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can

execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977).

Phenomenology - The study of the lived experiences of persons; the study of "phenomena", appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meaning things have in our experience, founded by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th Century (Pivcevic, 2013).

Procedures

Methodology

The experiences of school administrators regarding assessment, how those experiences have contributed to their confidence as leaders and professional learning opportunities is limited within the literature being reviewed. Therefore, a phenomenological approach to the method of collecting data was chosen for this study to obtain a stronger comprehension of the phenomenon through interviews to better understand administrator experiences. Specifically, using Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology to reflect on key themes of participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon while consistently reflecting on personal experiences as the researcher (Shah et al., 2013). Bringing to light and reflecting on shared lived experiences relating to assessment literacy to identify themed practices will provide insight to future needs to strengthen the education profession. The researcher plays an active part of the process and will utilize reflection to analyze data to better understand how assessment literacy is influenced by self-efficacy and professional learning experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Data Collections and Analysis

Invitations will be sent to independent school district principals from each of the 11 districts in Northern Kentucky to participate in the study. Through the use of

purposeful sampling, invitations will be sent to all qualifying school administrators. The

goal would be for one principal from each independent district to be invited to participate

in the study. Demographic data collected on individual participants will represent

varying years of teaching and administrative experience, age, sex, and race which will be

obtained by a survey.

An interview process for collecting data has been chosen as a way for participants

to share their experiences in a narrative manner (Leavy, 2017). Interviews will be

conducted in person and privately to ensure confidentiality or in the event an in-person

opportunity is not available, through a virtual platform. All interviews will be recorded

and transcribed to ensure accuracy in analysis and themed identification. Semi-structured

interview questions will be utilized to support specific direction of individual

experiences. This will allow the interview to be conducted in a conversational way to

allow for additional inquiry outside of the questions formulated in the event the

conversation leads to additional opportunities to collect relatable data (Castillo-Montoya,

2016). This investigative approach to data collection allows for a more explicit process to

analyze data holistically without depending on the statistical part of analysis (Shah et al.,

2013).

Significance of the Study

Administrator experiences related to assessment literacy and professional learning

could influence leadership decisions based on individual self-efficacy. The significance

of this study is to inform teacher preparation programs along with current administrators

of how and why individual self-efficacy and professional learning experiences may

influence administrator assessment literacy. Literature surrounding research related to

the influence administrator identity and professional learning has on assessment literacy is extremely limited. Literature and research on each of the constructs are abundant, however the triangulation of the ideas is scarce.

An influence of this study on teacher preparation programs may provide university program coordinators and professors insight to the need of more in-depth coursework related to assessment, understanding and experiences. Another significant influence on professional practice, to the discipline of teaching or to the field of educational leadership may provide administrators the information they need to identify personal identity strengths around self-efficacy and specific professional learning to strengthen overall assessment literacy. The study will build upon current research, address the gaps in research and provide administrators insight to how their personal experiences with assessment literacy may influence their assessment and professional learning opportunities.   In addition, the research will address how those opportunities are delivered, supported and encouraged to promote assessment literacy for themselves and those they lead.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study include power differentials between researcher and participants. As a district administrator working with school level administrators, there may be a perceived imbalance of leadership and the expectations associated with perceived experiences. Other limitations include the amount of time allotted for interviews, data collection discrepancies between virtual and in-person interviews and personal limitations related to time, travel, and ensuring principals have common experiences related to assessment. The lack of specific research in relation to the

influence of self-efficacy and professional learning on assessment literacy of administrators will also be a limitation. Lastly, the process of bracketing of biases through an interpretive phenomenological lens. Creswell (2018) emphasizes this lens "to integrate the participants' sense of lived experiences and the researcher's understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences" (p. 82).

Organization of the Study

The organization of this study is as follows: Chapter one includes an introduction to the phenomenon being studied, the context of the study, the statement of the problem, the conceptual framework to explain my study, the purpose of the study, the research questions to guide the work, the significance of the study, theoretical underpinnings and methodology, the definition of terms, the procedures used including methodology and data collection and analysis, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, the organization of the study and summary. Chapter two begins with a comprehensive review of literature relevant to this study. Chapter three reveals an in-depth description of the qualitative phenomenological methodology used to collect and analyze the data. chapter four provides the results of data from my study. Lastly, chapter five summarizes the findings of this study and offers implications for practice, and future research.

Summary of Chapter One

Chapter one provides an overview of the phenomenon to be researched, lived experiences of school administrators related to assessment literacy and the influence of self-efficacy and professional learning. Chapter one includes the problem being addressed and the need for continued research. The conceptual framework and supporting theory provided an avenue to focus on a specific phenomenon to guide the

research along with defining the purpose of terms utilized for better understanding of the study. The procedures of methodology and data analysis introduces a foundational understanding of how I will conduct my study. The significance of this study to teacher preparation and support, to school administrators in how they acknowledge their assessment literacy and proceed with professional learning and support for themselves and their staff are identified and further explored in the literature review.

The literature review will provide an in-depth review of identified constructs of assessment literacy, self-efficacy and professional learning related to school administrators. This review has allowed for a deeper understanding of the research associated with each construct and the connections between assessment literacy, self-efficacy and professional learning in the realm of school administration.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This study examines how administrators in Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their experiences with assessment, how those experiences have contributed to their confidence as leaders and their professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff. The research seeks to understand the influence of assessment literacy on administrator professional self-efficacy and professional learning. There are three research questions guiding this study:

RQ1: What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

RQ2: How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

RQ3: What educational experiences have influenced school administrator professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

This chapter includes a comprehensive review of the relevant literature providing a background to the constructs of assessment literacy, professional learning and administrator identity. The review begins with construct one as an overview of

assessment literacy in education and transitions to assessment literacy with leadership and school administrators. Construct two highlights professional learning with educators and school administrators focusing on the professional learning and assessment literacy relationship along with connections to constructivism and adult learning theory. Lastly, construct three defines identity with a specific focus on self-efficacy, self-efficacy in education, with school administrators and the theories associated. The chapter summary highlights the themes of the research justifying the need to conduct additional research.

Construct 1: Assessment Literacy in Education

Prior to understanding the term 'assessment literacy' and its varied influences, a careful review of the terms 'assessment' and 'literacy' is required. Assessment has been termed testing, evaluation or measurement by many, however Brown (2004) defines assessment as "any act of interpreting information about student performance, collected through any of a multitude of means or practices"(p. 304). The purpose of assessment to improve teaching and learning along with accountability of students for their personal learning and the accountability of schools and educators are noted by Brown (2004). Price et al. (2012) defines assessment as any process to evaluate the "quality of work submitted and to make suggestions for improvement to increase student understanding and the expectations and future performance" (p. 9). Wolsey et al. (2020) frames assessment as telling a story of one's learning, of one's experiences leading to knowledge through a process of gathering information which leads to decision making by the assessor. Whether in the form of formative assessment or summative assessment, educators utilize gathered data to adjust the teaching and learning process as needed to make informed decisions regarding instruction and student achievement (Popham, 2006).

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Literacy is mostly acquainted with language as far as fluency and competence when moving through progressions (Byrnes et al., 2019). The same principles are true when addressing assessment. In order to be able to understand, design, deliver, and analyze assessment data, one must be fluent and be able to comprehend what assessment is, understand the vocabulary associated with assessment, skills and competencies, the purpose of assessment and what to do with the data once collected (Price et al., 2012). This is what in the field is known as 'assessment literacy'.

Popham (2018) defines assessment literacy as an individual's understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions. Popham (2011) emphasizes the collection of evidence, reliability and validity of assessments, the utilization of rubrics and examination of bias within test items. The Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC, 2017) defines assessment literacy as the possession of knowledge about the basic principles of sound assessment practice, including terminology, the development and use of assessment methodologies and techniques, and familiarity with standards of quality in assessment. Components of assessment literacy include understanding the purpose for specific assessments such as classroom, school and district along with state or federal assessments; establishing learning targets aligned with content standards; identifying, selecting and creating assessments that match those learning targets which can include formative, summative, interim, benchmark and diagnostic assessments; gathering, analyzing and interpreting accurate and relevant student assessment data; utilizing data to inform instructional practices and decision making; monitoring student progress; open communication with

students and families about progress; and student involvement in using their own data to guide their learning (KVEC 2017).

Starck et al. (2018) posit that there are four phases of assessment literacy which educators must participate and interact with-in to become 'assessment literate'. These phases, initially introduced by Hay and Penny (2013) account for experiences of pre-service teachers in relation to their assessment literacy development but may be evident with teachers currently in the workplace as well. Phase one encompasses assessment comprehension or the knowledge and understanding of assessment. Teachers may be reluctant to use assessments if they were not exposed as students to understand how school curriculum, pedagogy and assessment all work together to promote holistic teaching and learning (Starck et al., 2018). Application of effective assessments makes up phase two. Teachers must be provided opportunities and experiences to apply their assessment knowledge to fully understand implications from assessment practices. If these skills are not taught in undergraduate courses to the depth needed to be successful in the world of teaching, the teacher will struggle understanding what needs to be assessed, developing quality assessments and evaluating data resulting from those assessments. This can translate over to leadership if not given ample opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired meaning educators who advance to administrative positions will struggle to be effective leaders with assessment as they lack the foundational knowledge needed to support assessment literacy with staff. Also, if teachers advance quickly into administrative positions without establishing the foundation of assessment literacy in their personal professional walk, their guidance as assessment leaders can be hindered (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). In phase three, making

sense of and implementing action when needed to inform practice or decision making is termed as the interpretation phase (Hay & Penney, 2013). Lastly, phase four focuses on critical engagement with the assessments and allows teachers to see the impact of their assessments on student progress or lack thereof. Being assessment illiterate will halt the progression through these phases that pave the way for educators and school administrators to become assessment literate. Mertler and Campbell (2005) conducted several studies that have revealed concerns that pre-service teachers are not trained effectively in assessment practices and when used, are unsound.

With that evidence, Stiggins (2014) consistently argues that administrators cannot continue to support ineffective assessment practices of teachers. Newfields (2006) states there are three reasons that educators need to be assessment literate. First, assessment is a huge component of an educational system whereas teachers spend from 10% - 50% of their time on assessment related activities (MacBeath & Galton, 2004). Second, understanding educational literature, terminology, specialized journals and academic publications are critical along with understanding basic statistical concepts. Lastly, assessment literate educators can communicate classroom progress and data results with others which allows for self-evaluation and reflection to improve professional practice.

In analyzing writing from Richard Stiggins, Sbai (2018) posits that educators "with assessment literacy know what they assess, why they assess, how to assess, what the possible problems with assessment are, and how to prevent them from occurring including negative consequences" (p 140). Rodriguez (2019) states school leaders who can articulate what a balanced assessment system is, can promote positive assessment practices, can identify clear learning target integration with assessment practice,

communicate results effectively, reflect on their own assessment learning growth and understand how assessment results inform practice are deemed assessment literate. Mertler and Campbell (2005) created an Assessment Literacy Inventory (ALI) to be administered to teachers to measure their level of assessment literacy. The research indicated the teachers average score was less than satisfactory and that teacher assessment literacy "deserves further recognition and investigation" (p. 380).

Sharp and Ryan (2018) identify three assessment literacy domains to explain the explicit skills needed to meet the definition of being assessment literate. Testing literacy is a teacher focused aspect of assessment design, development and use; Measurement literacy is utilized mainly by administrators to evaluate and determine validity; and Data Literacy utilized by administrators, teachers and stakeholders to organize and interpret to make educational decisions. The ability to apply assessment knowledge to influence decision making brings assessment literacy full circle to educators' application of and understanding of connected concepts and procedures (Sharp & Ryan, 2018).

Research indicates teachers who are assessment literate are "able to draw more valid and reliable inferences about their students' learning and to make better instructional decisions about the content they need to teach and the ways they need to teach it" (Levy-Vered & Alhija, 2015, p. 379). The noted research is imperative to this study because understanding the impact of solid assessment teaching and learning in pre-service educational programs is vital for teachers to be effective assessors and to be able to use the data to improve their professional practice. We must be confident that our teachers are prepared to enter the classroom by ensuring they have obtained the understanding of the importance and purpose of assessment through experiences prior to

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entering the real world of teaching. Without the foundational knowledge of assessment

purpose, development, use and analysis, ineffective assessment use will bleed over into

our future school leadership whether it be within the classroom, leading a school or

leading a district (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). While much research has indicated the

importance of assessment literate educators and the need for more intense pre-service

coursework and training to ensure sound assessment practices are being utilized, research

is still lacking around assessment literacy in leadership and with school administrators.

Assessment Literacy with Leadership and School Administrators

Educational leaders have different levels of assessment literacy due in part to the

experiences they have had in relation to assessment itself and the depth of specific course

work or professional training related to assessments. As indicated in the previous

section, lack of pre-service education surrounding assessments may cause a barrier to

educator assessment literacy and effective practices related to assessment that can be

continuous as educators advance into administrator positions. Understanding what

assessment literacy is, how to obtain it and understanding how to ensure the continued

growth and development can prove to be positive steps to assessment literate leaders

(Stiggins & Duke, 2008). Administrators must recognize deficits in the area of

assessment literacy in order to be effective leaders of assessment (Stiggins & Duke,

2008).

Ultimately, the teachers need to be the leaders with assessment practices within

schools and within their classrooms. It is noted that as assessment literacy expectations

increase through accountability processes, professional learning related to specific

assessments and their use for teachers and administrators are needed to ensure they stay

informed of best practices (Sharp & Ryan, 2018). Administrators, as assessment leaders,

are charged with guiding teachers through a vision of assessment and accountability to

fully embrace the purpose and story that assessment provides to improve professional

practice (Haviland, 2009). Being a leader of assessment requires creating a vision of

what assessment means within and implementing a process of utilizing the information

that is produced through chosen assessments. This includes building capacity with

stakeholders to establish the understanding of the importance of assessment and how it is

used to support continuous improvement (Haviland, 2009). With the emphasis on

accountability, assessment leadership is a priority and highly connected with instructional

leadership and an expectation of school principals. Noonan and Renihan (2006) indicate

an emphasis on the importance of classroom assessment literacy but lack a focus on

assessment literacy of the school level administrator. Glickman (2002; as cited in

Noonan & Renihan, 2006) ranks assessment content and methods at the top of the list of

what influences students' learning and that school level administrators are key influencers

that must have the support and knowledge needed to move schools forward. Noonan and

Renihan (2006) emphasize the expectation of assessment leadership in today's

instructional leaders and their need to assist teachers in maneuvering through the high

stakes assessment world.

Construct 2: Professional Learning and its Evolution

The United States identified the need to invest in teacher capacity due to decline

of instructional quality and many teachers were leaving the field (Sawyer & Stukey

2019). A historical review of professional development dating back to the early 2000's

with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Congress, 2001) which required states

to provide high quality professional development within their content area to strengthen instructional and technological skills also emphasized high stakes assessment practices. Reports such as the 2004 *Teaching at Risk: A Call to Action* referenced by McGowan (2004) indicates supporting professional development and success with educators to empower student learning was an investment in "human potential" (p. 2). This report identified the need to recruit and retain qualified teachers as many teachers were choosing to leave the profession.

Years after NCLB, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) was introduced which identified professional development for educators as an opportunity for reform and funds were allocated to states to invest in building capacity with educators (U.S. Congress, 2009). Then in 2015, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and redefined professional development of educators as a necessary component of student achievement to meet the challenges of state standards (U.S. Congress, 2015). Studies suggest, through teacher evaluation results and student achievement data, that the investment made in professional development of educators over the years has not had the positive impact as planned surrounding teacher practice and student growth (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019). ESSA also prioritized embedded, data-driven, sustained, classroom-focused professional learning into the workday which many times is in the form of professional learning communities. The 2015 New Teacher Project indicates the way professional development is planned, delivered and evaluated should be re-imagined (Sawyer & Stukey, 2019) .

Traditional professional development practices have been scheduled events when educators meet as a group to receive a form of structured learning. This type of learning

is delivered to teachers without the consideration of the teachers' learning resulting in a positive shift of professional practice (Fullan, 2007). With historical reform, teacher evaluation, and student achievement data showing stagnant or even negative movement in educational progress, there must be changes to how educators receive professional development. Hattie (2009) indicates the effect size of professional development on teacher learning is .90, but changes to teacher behavior related to this learning is .60. Teacher reaction to professional development is .42 and even more alarming is the influence on student learning is only .37. Effect size equals the level of impact on student learning. The larger the effect size, the larger the impact with the average effect size being .40 which is equivalent to one year of education for students (Hattie, 2009). Hattie found that specific types of professional learning that incorporated collaborative discussions with application were more effective. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), through review of 35 research studies, identified seven components of learning that takes professional development to another level and is better referred to as professional learning. These seven components ensure the learning is content focused, has active learning strategies, is collaborative, utilizes models/modeling, provides coaching and support, allows time for feedback and reflection and is sustained. Studies have shown that the noted elements allow for an environment of collaborative learning amongst educators that enhances the impact of school improvement, collective efficacy, and productive professional practices (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). This takes a professional development event, as McGatha et al. (2018) states, to an outcome based professional learning experience.

To best understand the learning process with educators, we must look at how adults learn and why it is different from how our students learn. Understanding the way adults learn may impact how professional development is planned, delivered and evaluated to ensure professional learning is taking place. Professional learning must be content focused, involve active learning, collaborative, incorporates exemplars, allows for coaching and support from experts, provides feedback and opportunity for self-reflection and is provided the time needed to ensure practice, implementation and self-reflection to make adjustments are embedded (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Professional Learning with Educators and School Administrators

When intentionally transforming professional development events into professional learning experiences, reviewing constructivism and adult learning theory is essential. First, McLeod (2019) highlights four principles needed to support educator learning: knowledge is constructed and built upon with prior knowledge, learning is an active process through experiences, all knowledge is socially constructed through collaboration and all knowledge is personal. These four principles support Hein's (1991) four guiding principles of constructivist thinking related to learning which also include that the language we use influences learning, learning is contextual, learning is not instantaneous, and motivation is a key component to learning. These principles support the research previously stated regarding effective professional learning opportunities and need to be considered when developing learning experiences for educators and administrators. Liu and Chen (2010) refer to a constructivist approach to learning through constructing, creating, inventing and developing personal knowledge through experiences that can have a deeper impact on learning. Administrators who deliver

professional learning to their staff by using a constructivist approach would align to the research of Vygotsky which allows for collaborative interaction with colleagues, referring to individual experiences and prior knowledge, providing guidance through coaching and organizing activities for learners to discover their own learning (Liu & Chen, 2010).

Connected to Constructivism, Adult Learning Theory, too, associates personal experiences to learning. Knowles (2014) added to andragogy, originally coined by Alexander Kapp in 1822, which focuses on how adults learn as in comparison to how children learn or pedagogy. Knowles (2014) states that pedagogy emphasizes the dependence of children to have guidance with understanding their learning needs, that learning is subject focused, learning is extrinsically motivated and prior experiences play little importance. Unlike pedagogy, andragogy characteristics of adult learning theory originated with Eduard Lindeman whose main concepts included motivation to learn through needs experienced, life situations support self-centered learning, experience is the most influential resource, adults need for self-directing and the need for adults to have individualized learning (Knowles, 1973). Lindeman, with additional input from Knowles, identified the need to make changes to how adult learning is provided to ensure experiences are incorporated into the process and that new methods need to be utilized to ensure true learning is occurring (Kelly, 2017). Knowles (2014) reflects on his work from 1973 supporting nine findings that correlate to exceptional adult learning conditions: having control of individual learning, immediate use of knowledge, focused attention on issues directly related to the individual, check for learning as the individual proceeds, reflect on how the knowledge will be utilized, expectation of improvement,

maximizing available resources, collaborative and trusting environment and relying on appropriately paced information.

Malcolm Knowles identified six assumptions about adult learners which should be considered when determining professional learning plans. Knowles stated that there is an assumption that the individual has reached a level of self-concept, the role of experience must be acknowledged, there must be a readiness to learn, there is an orientation for learning, an internal motivation to learn and finally, the learner must know the value of learning and what their personal needs are related to learning (Aubrey & Riley, 2020). To support even further, Trotter (2006) added that building from personal experiences is essential for adult learners along with the need to plan for individual learning paths focused on interest areas and inquiry plus reflection is needed. Following this line of thinking today will allow administrators to meet teachers where they are, allow for prior knowledge and experience to have a seat at the table of learning. Aubrey and Riley (2020) state that Knowles later adjusted his stance on pedagogy in his book from 1970 named *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus pedagogy*, to reflect that some children may react positively to an andragogical approach as they may be more independent and intrinsically motivated and vice versa for some adults.

Jack Mezirow (2000) posits that by focusing on thoughtful experiences, teachers bring supportive inspiration and a detailed discussion platform. Brookfield (1986) states, professional development cannot be a rigid planning process as discussions among teachers must be authentic and fluid as related to learning objectives. Predictability of the direction of collaborative learning cannot be determined in this context as everyone

brings their own experiences to share. Kelly (2017) studied teacher experiences

participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to understand how

participants experienced transformative learning. Her findings concluded that providing

professional learning experiences that allow for sharing of lived experiences were more

effective within PLC's and that if learning environments of teachers were more

conducive to adult learning, then a deeper learning and application would take place.

Joyce and Calhoun (2016) states that four additional steps were necessary for teachers to

put their new learning into practice which include understanding the rationale of a new

practice, seeing the practice in action, planning for the new practice and participating in

follow-up coaching. The research by Joyce and Calhoun (2016) revealed that when

coaching was incorporated, 90% of teachers put their learning into practice which

impacted overall student outcomes. This significant percentage of implementation when

support is present provides a positive guide for administrators to follow when reflecting

on their own experiences with receiving professional learning and as they plan and

deliver professional learning to their staff.

Kim (2020) explored how school principals experience transformative learning

related to developing leadership skills and how those experiences influence leadership

practices. Kim's study found meaningful learning with principals stem from significant,

personal and professional experiences related to unexpected challenges. Challenging

experiences faced by administrators that lead to analysis of previous understanding or

meaning supports building of new knowledge which transforms into productive

leadership practices (Mackay, 2014). In addition to experiences, Kim (2020) identifies

critical reflection and collaborative discussions with other professionals as a need to be

able to make sense of previous experiences to impact positive leadership practices and not to rely on pre-service programs to build this foundation. Kim's position suggests professional development for administrators should incorporate opportunities to collaborate, reflect and analyze prior experiences with peers in relation to the expectations of school leadership. Providing this same process for teachers may lead to deeper internalization of learning on a professional level.

Karen Acton (2021) conducted a study related to school leaders as change agents and if they were equipped with the tools needed to be successful. Her research suggests that school administrator preparation programs tend to not keep up with the ever-changing expectations placed upon the individual responsible for guiding and implementing school growth. Additionally, the research implies there is a gap in the support for principals as learners and a need to ensure these leaders are provided continuous opportunities to sharpen their skills related to the current state of education (Acton, 2021). Acton refers to Huber's (2011) research that led to a framework construction for leaders which included six components: courses, concrete experiences, feedback, collegial exchanges, self-study and reflection. Related to the previous literature discussion, Huber (2011) emphasizes similar avenues to support professional learning of leaders related to effective practices that have a positive impact on growth of which two were highlighted, collegial exchanges by networking with trusted colleagues and concrete experiences in the realm of on-the-job experiences. These two components were significantly impactful for school administrators when analyzing the impact of professional learning and putting into practice the skills learned (Acton, 2021).

Professional Learning and Assessment Literacy

Connecting professional learning and assessment literacy is critical for this study because a portion of the process is analyzing the influence of assessment literacy on professional learning. High quality professional development for in-service teachers focused on designing and implementing authentic assessments is the identified need from the reviewed literature (Koh, 2011). Educator professional development has been identified as a cornerstone to building teacher capacity in the area of assessment as teachers and school leaders are held to an expectation of being the experts of knowledge and relevant assessment skills. Research by Black and Wiliam (1998) indicates sustained formative assessment professional learning for teachers must be in place to effectively build capacity. Providing active learning through a constructivist approach to professional learning that emphasizes the importance of professional conversations focused on assessment development, application and analysis is critical to teacher and administrator assessment literacy. Stiggins (2014) emphasizes the importance of effective professional learning being content focused, being an active learning experience, having coherence, attention to duration and collaborative participation which will better prepare educators to develop authentic assessments and ultimately embed authentic assessments into their day-to-day instructional practice.

Malcolm Knowles' focus on andragogy and components of intrinsic motivation and independence of pursuing educational opportunities are very realistic when working with adults (Knowles et al., 2014). A consideration regarding this is when adults are encouraged or forced by administrators to complete training or professional development that does not align with their professional goals or personal interests. The professional

learning environment and opportunities may meet all the andragogical indications of a successful learning event, but misalignment to individual wants or needs can breed a negativity among staff and have a negative impact on self-efficacy (Aubrey & Riley, 2020). Kelly's (2017) research was significant to this study because professional learning for teachers is many times associated with student learning rather than learning for the adults, the teachers. If the adult learning environment were more conducive to their level of learning, quite possibly engagement would be higher and greater satisfaction of learning results would be more evident. These experiences will challenge individuals in any field, but for educators, the impact on students may either be positive or negative. As administrators, we must ensure the professional learning for our staff is relevant to what the needs are within the learning environment, focused on adult learning yet individualized to promote professional growth in every educator. The possible impact of understanding these connections solidifies the need for this study to ensure administrators have the foundational knowledge of assessment literacy to be able to lead their respective staff productively.

Construct 3: Identity and Self-Efficacy.

Identity can be categorized by two different theories, social identity theory and identity theory. Social identity theory focuses on groups or categories and identity theory focuses on roles (Stets & Burke, 2000). In both, the self is categorized in relation to other categories which is termed self-categorization in social identity theory and identification in identity theory. Whether in groups or roles, both theories acknowledge that individuals attach meaning to self through societal structures, self-regulation and self-verification. Specifically, identities focused on roles tend to relate to other theories that align with our

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focus for this research (Stets & Burke, 2000). Albert Bandura's (2005) Social Learning

Theory, later coined Social Cognitive Theory, suggests that thoughts, behaviors, and

motivations can be self-regulated by individuals that are goal oriented and proactive with

involvement in the environment in which tasks are being performed. This theory

promotes being proactive rather than reactive to and with experiences related to goal

attainment and motivation (McCormick, 2001). Bandura (1991) defined four parts that

make up the social cognitive theory: self-evaluation, self-observation, self-reaction and

self-efficacy. This section will focus on the self-efficacy component of this theory.

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and

execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). The

importance of understanding self-efficacy in regard to this study is that beliefs of

individuals in their ability to succeed can influence their individual pursuits, effort they

will put toward those pursuits, how they will handle barriers they come upon during their

journey, their resilience and thought processes moving forward. People are less likely to

move to action if they do not believe in their ability to meet their goals. Bandura (1997)

states that ultimately, efficacy beliefs are the bedrock of action. Bandura's self-efficacy

theory consists of four components that he explains are used for individuals to determine

their efficacy which include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal

persuasion and physiological feedback. All four relate to experiences an individual may

encounter and how they work through those experiences to move toward goal attainment

with mastery experiences being the most influential (Bandura, 1977). Mastery

experiences refer to the positive or negative experiences gained that can influence

individual task performance. If past performance was positive, individuals will more

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than likely feel competent to succeed with similar tasks in the future (Bandura, 1977).

Williams and Williams (2010) state that "individuals with high levels of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to master rather than as threats to be avoided" (p. 455).

Within the workplace environment, all four of Bandura's (1991) components are necessary to promote positive outcomes that can impact productivity, attendance and overall employee performance. Employees with low efficacy tend to set lower goals for themselves, work less on learning new skills, and tend to give up when encountering difficult tasks or challenges (Bandura, 1982).

The research focus for this study will be limited to administrator experiences related to assessments and how those experiences contribute to their confidence as leaders and their professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff. There has been extensive research conducted on self-efficacy in various areas such as weight loss, motherhood, employee productivity, among others, but school leadership is lacking (Kane, 1996; Bandura, 1997). The minimal research found related to school administration is why it is important to investigate critical experiences that shape school leader efficacy with assessment. Understanding what shapes a leader's efficacy can provide guidance for those providing training, mentoring and educational opportunities.

Self-Efficacy in Education

Educators leave the college classroom to mold the minds of students with only the experience of observing teachers in the field and student teaching. If one is fortunate enough to have been a substitute teacher prior to accepting a teaching position, they may have an idea of what a classroom environment looks and feels like without a supervising

teacher. Many new teachers say "I cannot believe I am trusted enough to have my own

classroom" knowing their inexperience is prevalent. Though administrators hire with

confidence in their ability, many times, they may not have that belief in themselves as

they are fresh to the world of teaching. Believing in themselves can be a struggle as they

begin their educator journey as they may face struggles with students, parents,

colleagues, instructional delivery and understanding of instructional materials. Albert

Bandura (1986) emphasized that self-efficacy is a belief in self-ability which does not

always correlate with their actual ability. Though research has indicated that most people

overestimate their academic abilities, Bandura stated that an overestimation can boost

persistence in working through difficult situations (Artino, 2012). When working with

teachers who struggle to believe in their ability to succeed, it can be difficult to move

them forward toward success. Leaders must incorporate the Bandura's four self-efficacy

components to provide teachers with experiences to be successful, allow for opportunities

to observe colleagues in successful situations, provide positive, realistic appraisal and

honest, timely feedback (Bandura, 1997). Tschannen-Moran et al. (2001) says that

teacher self-efficacy is directly related to behaviors, effort, instructional planning,

willingness to work with students at risk, commitment to their profession, and creativity.

Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2009) emphasized an increased amount of research

conducted that supports Bandura's (1977) theory that the self-efficacy of educators has

been linked to behaviors in the classroom, implementation of instructional change,

student motivation, student engagement and student achievement. Bandura (1997)

referred to teacher efficacy as more than delivery of content but also included

relationships with students and parents, classroom management resource management

and guiding students from negative social disturbances. Teachers with a high sense of efficacy tend to have a high energy, engaging classroom with little discipline issues whereas teachers with lower levels of efficacy believe there is little to be done to reach struggling students and their ability to do so is limited by outside factors (Swan et al., 2011). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) indicate studies have shown that veteran teachers tend to have a higher self-efficacy index than novice teachers which suggest that teachers with a lower self-efficacy will either increase their self-efficacy or leave the profession within the first three to five years of teaching. This same study revealed the level of implementation of a new method depends on the self-efficacy of the teacher and the professional development and support provided.

Research conducted by Knobloch (2006) and Roberts et al. (2006) revealed that self-efficacy among student teachers was inflated during their experience and was a result of support from their supervising teachers. Later data results indicated lower self-efficacy perceptions once they oversaw their own classroom. This is a prime example of the need to provide our teachers with ongoing support through Bandura's (1991) four components (mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological feedback), to promote positive self-efficacy and why this research may allow administrators to reflect on their own experiences to shape their approach to supporting new teachers.

Self-Efficacy with School Administrators

As teachers advance in their careers to become administrators, their level of self-efficacy can influence their overall success as a leader. Who chooses to become an administrator? What makes teachers decide to move to that next level? School

administrators are held to high standards in many areas other than student achievement, such as establishing a school vision, aligning academic goals with state expectations, building positive culture among staff, students, and families, hiring and retaining quality educators, and building capacity with staff which spreads their attention to detail very thin. The various responsibilities that principals face today would make anyone question their career choice at times (Schrik & Wasonga, 2019) which makes the focus of administrator self-efficacy such an important concept to research.   Bandura (1997) wrote:

> "Beliefs influence the courses of action people choose to pursue, how much effort they put forth in given endeavors, how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures, their resilience to adversity, whether their thought patterns are self-hindering or self-aiding, how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environmental demands, and the level of accomplishments they realize" (p. 3).

This guidance from Bandura exemplifies the needed components when teachers decide to transition to leadership that ultimately will result in effective schools and districts. Strong academic leadership, high academic standards, believing in student capabilities, student control of academic performance while experiencing high quality instruction, high levels of positive classroom management and parent support are all indicators of effective schools. Administrators who exemplify these principals have higher levels of self-efficacy and are seen as instructional leaders who seek out opportunities to improve overall instruction (Bandura, 1997).

Leadership self-efficacy, a person's belief in his or her ability to lead a group successfully (McCormick, 2001), has been determined as a critical component in the leadership process due to affecting leadership goal development, determining leadership strategies and the way those strategies are implemented. Bandura (1997) and Kane

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(1995) both found very few studies that focused on the self-efficacy of leaders and how it influences their leadership practices but saw promise in future research that would clarify processes connected to effective leadership.

More recent research supports the notion that school administrators must believe in their ability as supervisors if they are to be effective leaders that support high level performance with their staff. Daly et al. (2011) conducted a study with 594 school administrators in California and found that levels of self-efficacy were higher with the principals whose schools were not labeled as needing improvement. The research also indicated that the leaders who saw themselves as failures due to the labeling were more apt to utilizing coercive leadership tactics to promote change with their staff instead of making decisions on what was best for students. McCollum and Kajs (2009) collected data that proved a significant correlation between self-efficacy and goal development, meaning administrators with higher self-efficacy were more likely to develop productive instructionally based goals for their schools. They also found that self-efficacy was a high-level indicator of motivation as people tend to avoid experiences they believe they may fail at (McCollum & Kajs, 2015).

With school districts being expected to perform at specific levels established by the state or national education department, school leaders are possibly under more pressure than ever to be the leader who moves their school in all areas of accountability. McCollum and Kajs' (2015) focus on goal orientation and self-efficacy has shifted to more of a results-oriented or performance-based approach reflective of standardized tests which can negatively impact a school administrator's belief in themselves. Education reforms attenuate the pressure on school principals to succeed and research has found that

many times these principals poorly perform under such pressure (Kelleher, 2016). Kelleher exemplifies Bandura's (1995) research that provides guidance on ways to intervene to correct negative self-belief actions through professional development, reflection and knowing oneself. Walker and Carr-Stewart (2006) surveyed school administrators during their most critical years and found that the quality of mentoring experiences and prior experiences of success influenced their self-efficacy levels which correlate to Bandura's mastery experiences and verbal persuasion concepts. Reflection has been found to be a strong contributor to school administrator self-efficacy growth, therefore should be part of their growth plan along with encouraging the use with their staff. Iskik and Gumus (2017) state that school effectiveness is closely correlated with the perceptions administrators have of their self-efficacy. Cobanoglu and Yurek (2018) support this discussion with their study of school administrators' self-efficacy beliefs and leadership styles. Their findings indicate that administrator self-efficacy perceptions make a difference in their leadership style along with the belief that successful experiences might affect their self-efficacy in a positive manner as experiences of failure may not.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature review defined the terms of assessment literacy and may possibly suggest the need for more intentional structured assessment literacy focused programming in teacher preparation programs at the college level and throughout their career. With the ever- changing expectations for student achievement and the principal's ability to juggle multiple tasks, attention to teacher preparation prior to entering the workforce is vital to not only their success, but the success of their school. The research

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of Hay and Penney (2013) and Mertler and Campbell (2005) supports this statement and the focus on pre-service experiences with assessment along with the need for such programs to provide more in depth learning in this area. With the lack of assessment literacy concentration at the teacher level, struggles may extend once teachers become administrators (Stiggins & Duke, 2008). The literature also supports the need for administrator education and support in this area as well.

The literature on professional learning emphasizes the transformation from professional development as an event to an outcome based professional learning experience (Fullan, 2007). Professional learning research also identifies the importance of adult learning approaches to professional learning, as defined by Malcolm Knowles (2014) and the need for focused professional learning with assessment for administrators to be effective assessment literate leaders. The experiences that administrators have as teachers set the foundation for their understanding of assessments and how they plan for professional learning experiences for themselves and their staff. Kelly's (2017) research highlighted the need to ensure the learning environment is conducive to adult learning needs. A vital component of professional learning should include an opportunity to share lived experiences to learn from each other as emphasized through the lens of constructivism and the work of Vygotsky (Liu & Chen, 2010).

As leaders, to support educators in developing and strengthening self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) emphasized the importance of providing teachers with experiences to succeed in the areas of developing specific skills. Acknowledging gaps in opportunities to learn more about assessment to strengthen educator self-efficacy is recognized as a

need in pre-service programs and on the job experiences and training (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

The literature review exposed the various theories to support the study focus of professional learning and self-efficacy by defining and relating to the association with experiences of educators but provided little research focused on school administrators, specifically connected with assessment literacy. This supports the need for this study and why research should be conducted to determine if assessment literacy is influenced by administrator identity and professional learning.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the intended research methodology used to conduct research. The research design, strengths and limitations of the study, data sources, data collection, data analysis and an examination of researcher positionality will be explained as well. This study will explore how assessment literacy influenced by administrator identity and professional learning result in confident school administrators.

As an administrator working with school principals for several years, specifically with professional learning and assessment practices, many times conversations lean toward frustrations with assessment expectations. By following the lead from the Kentucky Department of Education while supporting assessment learning needs of administrators and teachers to build capacity around assessment literacy, confusion, lack of understanding and frustration have resulted.

While discussing these areas of concern, the question surfaced repeatedly of what meaning administrators give to their personal level of assessment literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs. Also, if a principal had capacity around assessment literacy, would their belief in their own ability to provide professional learning for staff result in more positive experiences with assessment throughout the school? Lastly, have administrators' educational experiences influenced their professional self-efficacy and assessment literacy as a leader

Research Questions

This study seeks to provide additional insight on how administrators in Northern

Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their personal experiences with

assessments (assessment literacy), how those experiences have contributed to their

confidence as leaders of assessment literacy and how those experiences have influenced

their professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff. The following are

specific research questions to guide my work.

        RQ1: What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment

literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

        RQ2: How have educational experiences with assessment influenced

administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their

staff?

        RQ3: What educational experiences have influenced school administrator

professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

Methodology and Research Design

The interpretive framework focus of the constructivist paradigm will guide this

qualitative phenomenological study. This study matched well with a constructivist

approach as it relates to relevant everyday work lives. Broad questioning to allow

participants to make connections and meaning to their experiences will allow for

interpretation based on personal experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a qualitative

study, the focus is about the participants and how their experiences, a phenomenological

approach, influence their practice and what those outcomes are in relation to their

leadership. A qualitative study meets the need of this research data collection that will

take place, as Creswell and Poth (2018) describe utilization of the natural setting of administrators in their independent school district; the researcher as a key data collection designer of multiple types; focusing on participant perspectives; keeping participant context in mind; is of flexible design; is reflective and holistic in nature by providing the big picture for the reader.

Phenomenology, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology, allows analysis and interpretation of participant experiences as individuals related to the phenomenon of assessment literacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Commonalities of participants allows for shared experiences to analyze the influence assessment literacy has on the identity of administrators and professional learning decisions. Through the work of Heidegger, Neubauer et al. (2019) state hermeneutic phenomenology allows a researcher to focus on the participants as "knowers of the phenomenon" (p. 94) and that participants rely on their background knowledge as they approach the phenomenon. As the participants rely on their background knowledge, so does the researcher. Understanding lived experiences related to the phenomenon has led to this research topic. Through this interpretive phenomenological lens, I will "integrate the participants' sense of lived experiences and the researcher's understanding of how participants make sense of their experiences" (Creswell, 2018 p. 82). Approaching the research from this view allows acknowledgement of preconceptions related to the topic and self-reflection in regard to opinions and biases (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Data collection will take place in the working environment of the participants. Through the process of conducting interviews to gather evidence of lived experiences, participants will answer questions related to self-efficacy, assessment literacy and

professional learning along with demographic specific questions such as race, sex, years of teaching and administrative experience. Data collected will be analyzed through a process using in-vivo coding to identify themes or categories that will unveil patterns of experience by the participants in relation to the constructs of this study (Leavy, 2017). The theoretical lens guiding this study is social constructivist theory with interrelated connections to adult learning theory and self-efficacy theory.

Social Constructivist Theory, Adult Learning Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory

A researcher's predisposition suggests that experiences guide actions, inform decisions and influence learning processes. Individuals seek to understand the world in which we live and work. Therefore, an interpretive framework, social constructivism, will serve as the foundational theoretical lens aligning to Piaget and Vygotsky's research related to professional learning (Belanger, 2011). Originating from Jean Piaget, constructivism is defined as a learning process that constructs meaning through individual experiences rather than memorization. Vygotsky adds that learning includes, along with constructing meaning, the elements of creating, inventing, and developing individual knowledge and meaning within a social context (Liu & Matthews, 2005). Individuals make sense of the world through experiences and intentional reflection to make sense of those experiences (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Alt (2015) describes constructivism as a method of learning in which individuals are active participants responsible for gaining knowledge in both the cognitive and social constructs.

Liu & Chen (2010) state that social constructivism is consistent with adult learning theory in that learning is a multidimensional process through connecting meaningful experiences in a holistic manner to make sense to relate and build knowledge.

Additionally, designing a learning environment for adults that includes the demonstration of knowledge through the learning avenues Vygotsky has defined, provides for a deeper connection and application in the workplace. Malcolm Knowles et al. (2014) emphasizes the adult learner falls on their prior life centered experience to guide their learning along with emphasizes the learning experience must be enjoyable and applicable to daily work. Creating a narrative to story our lives allows us to make meaning of individual experiences. Critical reflection in adult learning theory, as with constructivist theory, allows for refining of understanding as individuals link experiences to greater understanding and learning (Merriam, 2008). Prior experiences have been noted to be the greatest resource for adult learners which provides a supportive element to utilize adult learning theory in connection with social constructivist theory (Ozuah, 2016).

Self-efficacy theory also connects with social constructivist theory. Studies show that constructivist learning environments have more positive outcomes, academically, compared to the traditional learning environment and should be recognized as so. Albert Bandura (1977) emphasizes the development of self-efficacy beliefs through information interpretation from four main avenues: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological feedback. Through these avenues of information interpretation, life experiences are connected to the belief in one's own ability to succeed (Lopez-Garrido, 2020). Due to little research or availability of literature, more time should be allotted to examine the connection between constructivist learning environments and self-efficacy (Alt, 2015).

Because lived experiences are emphasized through the chosen framework, the use of a phenomenological approach to my research makes the most sense. Specifically,

Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, originating from Martin Heidegger, allows the observer to be a part of research and focuses on the lived experiences of the participants (Neubauer, B.E., et.al., 2019). The study will focus on the shared experiences of participants in relation to the chosen phenomenon of assessment literacy and the process of interpreting the meaning of those experiences. The participants who will all be school level administrators will have experiences related to the research being conducted. The focus on a phenomenological approach allows the use of methods in the form of interviews and observations to collect data for this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Strengths, Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Strengths with a qualitative phenomenological study are that it may provide real world, relative information for practitioners to utilize in their everyday work to strengthen and build capacity to impact their profession (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Limitations to qualitative studies are factors generally out of the researcher's control that could affect the results of the research (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Limitations to this study include ensuring all participants in the study have had similar experiences. If a principal does not work with assessment or professional learning within their school, it would be remiss to think they would understand the study or care of what the outcomes were or how they could contribute to a school's progress. Another limitation is the personal connection to the study for the researcher being directly involved with each aspect of this study in their professional work. Though being ingrained in the work itself may be a positive and part of the hermeneutic phenomenological process, ensuring self-reflective interpretation of the data collected from participants is critical. Other

limitations include the amount of time allotted for interviews, data collection

discrepancies between virtual and in-person interviews and personal limitations related to

time and travel. Lastly, the lack of specific research in relation to the influence of self-

efficacy and professional learning on assessment literacy of administrators. A

delimitation may be the focus on participants from the 11 independent school districts in

the Northern Kentucky Region. Limiting the participation from one of eight regions may

not provide the extent of data needed to answer my research questions to the fullest.

Future studies may extend to the other seven regions and carry the possibility to cross

state lines.

Context of the Study

This study will focus on administrators, specifically school principals, within

independent public-school districts in the Northern Kentucky Region. Kentucky has a

total of 171 school districts and 1,477 schools. Of the 171 school districts, 51 are

independent districts, meaning they are run by local municipalities (KDE, 2020). Within

those 51 independent school districts there are 217 schools and principals in multiple

levels kindergarten through 12th grade. In the Northern Kentucky Region, there are 18

school districts with 11 being independent districts. Specifically, there are 30 school

level principals in the 11 independent districts that will be the focus of this study

(Kentucky Department of Education, 2020).

As a member of the Northern Kentucky Cooperative Educational Services

(NKCES), collaboration with district level administrators in professional learning,

assessment and accountability is ongoing which allows for conversations about the

chosen research topic and permissions for school administrator participation.   The focus

in selecting participants was to purposely find school administrators who have had experiences with assessments and professional learning opportunities and willing to share those experiences. It is important that all participants can contribute to the process therefore a randomized process of participant selection will not be utilized (DeGagne & Walters, 2010). Using a purposeful sampling process to identify school administrators will provide a timely approach to conducting data collection. Purposeful sampling is ideal as the participants directly relate to the subject being studied and the site of the research is the participants workplace (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Sources and Instrumentation

Sources of data will be from the school administrators from the 11 independent school districts in Northern Kentucky who participate in the study. Data collected on individual participants will represent varying years of teaching and administrative experience, age, sex and race.

A survey to collect demographic data such as years of experience in teaching and administration, age, sex and race will be sent to all participants. An interview process for collecting data was chosen as a way for participants to share their experiences in a narrative manner (Leavy, 2017). Interviews will be conducted privately in person to ensure confidentiality. In the event an in-person opportunity is not available, utilization of a virtual platform will allow for the process to be completed. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy in analysis and themed identification. Semi-structured interview questions will be utilized to support specific direction of individual experiences. This will allow the interview to be conducted in a conversational way to allow for additional inquiry outside of the questions formulated in the event the

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conversation leads to additional opportunities to collect relatable data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). This investigative approach to data collection allows for a more explicit process to analyze data holistically without depending on the statistical part of analysis (Shah et al., 2013).

Data Collection Procedures

Creswell and Poth (2018) state there are three ethical principles all researchers should abide by: respect for the participants through ensuring their privacy is protected and asking and receiving consent from the participant, the importance of minimizing harm through keeping the concern for welfare in the forefront, and justice to ensure equitable treatment and inclusivity of participants are evident. Obtaining permission from the University of Louisville Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research will be the first process to approach.

Data collection involves varying individuals who are currently serving as independent school district administrators in the Northern Kentucky Region who also have experience as leaders of assessment practices and professional learning within their school. School administrators from 11 independent school districts in Northern Kentucky will serve as the data source for this study. Invitations to recruit participants will be sent to all school principals with questions that will qualify them for the study (See Appendix A). An explanation of the purpose for conducting this study and why they were asked to assist will be provided by email to all participants to ensure understanding of the process and the emphasis on confidentiality. Once approval from the IRB is obtained to ensure anonymity is protected and participants are chosen, a follow-up email and phone call will be conducted to answer any questions they may have before moving forward.

Once participants are chosen by identifying administrators who have commonalities that meet the dynamics of the study, an informed consent form will be given to each identified potential study participant (See Appendix B). A survey collecting demographic data such as sex, age, race, and years of experience in teaching and administration will be given to all participants prior to scheduling a semi-structured interview process (See Appendix C). For this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gather data related to my research questions. A semi-structured interview process uses conversation as a catalyst to data collection and allows the participants to be free to provide any information they choose to share (Leavy, 2017).   The semi-structured interview questions will reflect assessment and professional learning leadership experiences (See Appendix D). Interviews will be in person, not to exceed 40 minutes, recorded on two devices to ensure accuracy and reviewed to ensure all processes were followed. In the event interviews cannot be performed in-person, a virtual platform approved by the University of Louisville will be utilized. Recordings will then be transcribed by a transcription service chosen to meet the expectations of the study. To ensure accuracy, participants will receive a copy of the transcribed interview to review and feedback will be encouraged to be sure misconceptions are addressed.   All files will be stored in digital format throughout the term of the study and once the coding is completed, all data will be destroyed to assure privacy.

Ethical Considerations

Starting my career as an instructional assistant and transitioning in many other roles that include teacher and administrator has opened my eyes as to the ethical responsibilities regarding this study.   Throughout the years in education, transitioning

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into leadership roles has highlighted the need to identify core values on a holistic scale. Brene Brown (2018) emphasizes identifying these values to guide research and ongoing work is vital. Brown defines values as "a way of being or believing that we hold most important" (p. 186). To do this, Brown states one must "live into our values which means we must do more than identify values but actually practice them" (p. 186) in both personal and professional life. Six values were chosen as researcher reflection that include: integrity, courage, creative thinking, opportunity and trust. Working through this study and processing personal stance on educational practice and research, understanding the values held near and dear and how ensuring those values are reflected in the research work are vital. Keeping these values in mind through every stage of this study will provide direction to what matters most (Brown, 2018).

Identifying values for guidance through life and work has provided a compass in decision making with family, work and relationships. Intentionality while examining every decision as an educator, leader and family member through the lens of these values can sometimes fall short, but this is why reflection is so important. Integrity, trust and respect are at the top of the list. Without these three values, the research would not have any meaning and the participants would not be able to make real world connections to the work. Having courage is important when conducting research as it allows for trying something new, confidently asking questions and finding solutions through means that have not been explored. Open-mindedness is included as sometimes one solid path is seen when in reality, there may be several paths that can take the research in a direction needed to see the big picture. I have advanced enormously in embracing this value in my

life, but always have to be aware of my biases especially as I work through my research and analyzing data collected.

Developing a Structured Ethical Reflection (SER) (See Appendix E) has allowed for open and honest reflection to ensure the work stays on track when keeping these values in the forefront. The SER will enable a reminder while continuing through this study and will strengthen professional and personal experiences and reflections. Continued reflection of these values is vital throughout this study and remembering that it is not a one time event, but ongoing.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involves the organization and preparation of the collected data, coding to cluster into identified themes, and then forming an interpretation to logically understand what story the data is telling (Leavy, 2017). Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize the importance of understanding that there is not a prescriptive manner to the analyzation of data in a qualitative, phenomenological study, but many approaches to answer the stated research questions.

The initial phase of the phenomenological data analysis begins with a researcher epoche to describe my personal experiences related to assessment literacy to ensure I set aside those experiences so that the focus is entirely on the experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Demographic survey data collected will be analyzed to categorize participants in relation to years of experience in teaching and administration, sex, age and race. For this phenomenological study, In Vivo coding will be utilized as it protects and highlights the participant voice allowing for codes to organically emerge from the interviews which aligns to the emphasis of gathering data related to participant

experiences (Saldana, 2015). This type of coding will be the first cycle focused to produce emerging themes, or outcomes, from the collected data. Identifying significant statements related to participant experiences will be documented and then grouped into themes. Identifying themes allows for meaning to be made of the experiences shared by the participants of the study (Saldana, 2018). This method will be used to gather evidence related to participant sharing, in their own words, the experiences related to assessment literacy, professional learning and perceived self-efficacy. Memos will be kept to record participant quotes and comments to assist with making connections with identified codes and themes (Leavy, 2017). Depending on the number of codes generated through the initial cycle will determine if an additional cycle of coding will be needed.

Strategies for Ensuring Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

The researcher must use intentional strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the results related to the phenomenon being studied (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To establish credibility, this study will utilize a qualitative research internal validity measure called member checking. This is a strategy to establish credibility by asking participants to examine data for accuracy and any needed clarification (Leavy, 2017). Another strategy of peer review; utilizing those familiar with the phenomenon being studied will be utilized to ensure the researcher is staying true to the components of the study (Creswell, 2018). The methods to be used in this study to collect and analyze data for an interpretive phenomenological study are acceptable forms in qualitative research (Leavy, 2017). The identified constructs of assessment literacy, self-efficacy and professional learning are

directly related to the work of school administrators which strengthens the intent to ensure the study measures what it is intended (Shenton, 2004).

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) identifies transferability as a way of making the research findings relatable and usable in other settings. By providing a thick description of research design, methodology, participants, data and results of the study, the reader will be able to determine if the information can be useful in their life, profession or setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability is described by Shenton (2004) as the ability for findings of the study to be consistent and able to be replicated. The data analysis process aligns with the phenomenological approach through coding and theming of data within the qualitative research design. With the in-depth description of the methods used, future researchers will be able to follow this research process to conduct additional research. Confirmability is ensuring the verification of research findings are consistent with the data collected through documented collection and analysis processes. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Reflective practice through note taking and recognizing beliefs and assumptions as the researcher are critical to establish confirmability (Shenton, 2004). The steps followed in this study have been described in-depth to guide participants and readers outside of the study to understand the research process and to confirm the findings will be transparent in nature and clearly derived from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Researcher assumptions, biases and beliefs were addressed as were limitations and delimitations of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methods used to answer the identified research questions for this study. The research methods and design, strengths, limitations and delimitations, context, data sources and instrumentation, data collection and analysis processes, researcher positionality and strategies to ensure trustworthiness provide the framework for this chapter (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These components are essential to ensure the research is conducted in a holistic manner to understand the process of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Utilizing an interpretive framework guided by social constructivist, self-efficacy and adult learning theories, this study will provide guidance in researching the influence of assessment literacy on administrator identity and professional learning.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain greater understanding surrounding how administrators in Northern Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their own experiences with assessment of student learning. This study sought to gain knowledge from administrator experiences which may or may not have contributed to their confidence as leaders. This chapter provides the findings from this phenomenological study. The three research questions that guided this study are:

1. What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

2. How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

3. What educational experiences have influenced school administrator professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

The organization of this chapter begins with researcher positionality, an overview of the methodology and research design, data analysis process and participant description. Emerging themes will be discussed along with findings for each research question.

Researcher Positionality

Pursuing a doctoral degree was not always in my educational plan, but as time passed, it was the most logical choice to continue my own learning. I am a lifelong learner and crave obtaining and sharing new knowledge in the realm of education. The knowledge I gain continues to push me toward searching for opportunities to build

myself professionally and personally as I strive to eventually lead a district as superintendent. Though a doctoral degree is not required for this position, it is a positive process that will continue to build my capacity as a learner and leader. More so, the degree enhances my credentials and credibility in searching for such leadership opportunities. This degree is the finale as it is terminal, but also a beginning to a part of my career that provides a stage to share my knowledge with others. I want to reflect to my children and grandchildren that learning is ongoing and that no matter what struggles you may face, you can always learn, you can always work through those challenges and accomplish whatever it is that you choose to pursue.

I grew up in a rural farming community in Northwest Ohio with blue collar, factory working parents who taught me the importance of work, family and faith. College was never discussed in my household therefore was not a consideration for me or my sister, but as I grew older my interests in many avenues grew, which sparked an interest in determining a direction different from what my parents had taken. My school experience growing up was of mixed reflections. A few teachers had a great influence on my life while many, I do not remember or remember what I wish I had learned while under their guidance. Those memories have driven me to pursue a career in education and have fanned the flame of persistence as I maneuvered through college as an adult with three young children over 20 years ago and continue the journey through extended learning today in this program.

As a farm girl in Northwest Ohio, diversity was not well established as most students in my school were white. Though there was a small population of Latino and even smaller population of black students, I do not ever recall any racial issues arising.

All students worked together, played together and learned together and it was not assumed otherwise. We appreciated each other's stories and backgrounds, but did not focus on the color of our skin. We focused on relationships and built friendships out of respect for each other, celebrated successes and shared heartache in times of sorrow. Throughout my life, I have had opportunities to build my diverse experiences through work, relationships, grandchildren and education. From working at a Marine Corp Exchange in Norfolk, Virginia to attending college at Kentucky State University, to growing our diverse family, to working with some of the most challenging students in an alternative setting in Fayette County school system, my exposure to diverse populations and experiences bring me to the same conclusion: No matter the racial make-up of an individual, building relationships with and respecting the individual qualities of the person are what makes a difference. We all have struggles, we all have challenges, we all face adversity, but how we work through those situations determine our outcome.

The ideal action researcher in my area of educational study would be one who respects the cultural, ethnic, familial, educational, socioeconomic background and experiences of the participants in which they choose to study. Any of those mentioned may have had an impact on the participants experiences with assessment literacy that may impact their self-efficacy. Milner (2007) provides the basic best practice framework for researchers to work through, then, transitions through a lens of race. Focusing solely on race can be a danger, as it does not see all contributing aspects of the participant. Race does not define who a person is or the capabilities an individual has. Race is a component of the whole, therefore an aspect to acknowledge and understand while conducting research. With that being said, when people or systems in our society look at

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people and see race above all else, it can create practical limitations outside of our control.   I celebrate the uniqueness of all 12 of my grandchildren and emphasize that all have individual traits and characteristics that can change the world, if they choose. All 12 are very diverse regarding race, ethnicity, familial pattern and experiences which fuels my passion to understand my research participants' contribution to my work. In Milner's (2007) article, he states "there is value and promise in people who have had a range of experiences in life; different, in this sense, does not necessarily mean deficit or deficient" (p. 389). Acknowledging and appreciating differences and experiences is important and makes each of us unique. I am aware that the participants in my study may not have had the same experiences as myself or had work, family and faith instilled by their parents, but it is important that I provide context to their experiences to ensure any "seen, unseen or unforeseen" biases or ideas are identified and collaboratively worked through (Milner, 2007). Engaging in personal and collaborative reflection about myself as a researcher as related to the study and participants to ensure all voices are represented is vital and expected. I have worked in education for seventeen years and have had varying experiences within and supporting K-12 classrooms as an instructional assistant, a teacher and an administrator.

Personal values of integrity, trust and respect has established a firm foundation for as an action researcher in that with the current level of education, there is an obligation to students, families, teachers and administrators to ensure and advocate for assessment literacy practices that build capacity, confidence and understanding that will strengthen the learning process for everyone. Being a learner and a leader through this process of research, reflection, and analysis is important to sustain a focused look at the

problem. The passion for building self-efficacy around assessment literacy is emphasized from personal experiences as a student, a parent, a grandparent, a teacher and administrator. The goal is to tell the story of the participants and to have an impact on future assessment literacy practices that promote positive self-efficacy with school administrators.

Methodology and Research Design Overview and Data Collection

This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted through the interpretive framework of the constructivist paradigm. Phenomenology, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology, allowed for analysis and interpretation of participant experiences as individuals related to the phenomenon of assessment literacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Utilization of broad questioning through interviews allowed for participants to make connections and meaning to their experiences and allowed me, as the researcher, to interpret meaning based on personal experiences (Neubauer, B.E., et.al., 2019).

Data collection began with a demographic survey and semi-structured interviews with eight participants who met the study criteria of being 1) a school level administrator in a Northern Kentucky Independent Kentucky School District; 2) with experience as a leader of assessment practices and professional learning within their school. Participants completed at a five-question demographic survey that included years of experience as a teacher, years of experience as an administrator, age, sex and race. A semi-structured interview process for collecting data was used as a way for participants to share their experiences in a narrative manner (Leavy, 2017). Interviews were conducted through a virtual platform and recorded and transcribed on the same platform.

In the first cycle of coding, interviews were coded manually through initial coding and line-by-line analysis. The second cycle of coding used In-Vivo coding and documented the frequency as it highlighted participant voice related to their experiences which produced significant statements by the participants (Saldana, 2015). Through those statements, and comparing the first and second cycle of coding, themes emerged to provide meaning to the experiences of the participants (Saldana, 2018). Memos were kept, recording quotes and comments that assisted with identifying codes and themes (Leavy, 2017).

Participant Description

The purposeful sample of participants included eight who were school level administrators currently serving in a Northern Kentucky Independent School District. All eight participants identified as Caucasian. Participants were either serving as a principal or assistant principal. Table 1 details the participant age range in percentage.

Table 1

Age Range	Percent
30-34 years	37.5%
35-39 years	12.5%
40-44 year	37.5%
45-49 Years	12.5%

Seven of eight participants had 10-19 years of teaching experience. Fifty percent of interviewees had five to nine years of experience as an administrator while the other fifty percent had zero to four years of administrative experience.

RQ1: What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

The first research question focused on construct one of this study which is assessment literacy. Assessment literacy is defined by Popham (2018) as an individual understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions. Responses to interview questions provided insight to what assessment literacy meant to them individually. Participants shared college preparation experiences related to assessment and their experiences with assessment as both a teacher and administrator. Table 2 details the main themes that emerged from Initial and In-Vivo codes and the frequency of shared experiences among participants.

Table 2

Emerging Themes from In-Vivo Codes Aligned to RQ1

In-Vivo Codes	Frequency	Emerging Theme
"Creating assessment" "analyzing data" "knowing what to test" "knowing different tests" "backward planning" "If I only knew then"	27	Understanding
"No data analysis" "little exposure to assessment" "lack of assessment courses" "focus on terms not application" "no meaningful experiences" "learned from colleagues" "support from district" "teaching in reverse"	34	Preparation

Understanding

The theme of understanding became evident when condensing the data for the

first research question connected to assessment literacy meaning. Understanding what

assessment literacy is and is not may lend to the possibilities of how one leads staff in

this area. Starck et al. (2018) identified four phases of understanding to be considered

assessment literate; 1) comprehension of the components of assessment; 2) application of

learned knowledge; 3) interpretation or making sense of and implementing; 4) critical

engagement with assessment. Understanding what assessment literacy is, how to obtain

it and understanding how to ensure continued growth and development can prove to be

positive steps to assessment literate leaders (Stiggins & Duke, 2008).   Six of the eight

participants provided detailed summaries of what assessment literacy was and why it was

important. Two participants stated assessment literacy was associated with reading and

comprehension.

Preparation

The theme of preparation was a second theme that emerged related to the first

research question. Participants consistently shared their experience of not feeling

prepared regarding assessment while in teacher preparation courses. The reflection of

courses taken in their undergraduate process produced the following statements: "I did

not have any meaningful experiences related to assessment", "there was a focus on

terminology but not on actual application", "what I learned in college actually taught me

to teach in reverse of what I actually should be doing, plan, deliver then assess without

actually knowing and understanding what I was assessing". Lack of pre-service

education surrounding assessments may cause a barrier to educator assessment literacy

and effective practices related to assessment. Pre-service teachers are not trained

effectively in assessment practices and when used are unsound (Mertler & Campbell, 2005). Gaps in opportunities to learn more about assessment is a need in pre-service programs and on the job experiences (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

RQ2: How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

The second research question focused on construct two of this study, professional learning. Professional learning is different than professional development in that it is more than an event or a one-time opportunity to learn. Professional learning is ongoing, interactive, collaborative, reflective, sustained and customized to the needs of the participant (Fullan, 2007). Participants shared their experiences with professional learning related to assessment and how they make professional learning decisions for their staff. Table 3 details the main themes that emerged from Initial and In-Vivo codes and the frequency of shared experiences among participants.

Table 3

Emerging Themes from In-Vivo Codes Aligned to RQ2

In-Vivo Codes	Frequency	Emerging Themes
Teacher "nothing formal" "core content area focus" "never received" "limited" Administrator "not focused on assessment" "leadership styles" "SEL/biases" "Learn from colleagues" "district support "Required trainings" "grant requirements" "state assessment results" "CSIP goal review"	37	Priorities

"Needs assessment" "staff survey" "individual needs" "provide autonomy"	17	Personalized Learning

Priorities

The theme of priorities emerged in relation to the second research question

connected to educational experiences with assessment and leadership decision making.

When asked about professional learning experiences related to assessment participants

shared the following statements: " As a teacher and now a principal, I have never

participated in professional learning related to assessment or anything to build my

knowledge of assessment", "I have had plenty of professional learning, but not focused

on assessment", "I have learned more from our district leadership then in any

Professional Development", "Professional learning as an administrator has been mainly

focused on Social/Emotional, biases, and leadership styles", "I want to learn more about

assessment practices", "I do a lot of self-study".

There was a consistent pattern when participants shared how they make

professional learning decisions for their staff. Required trainings mandated by the state

took precedence over needs of their schools. Though such training was not disputed as a

need, the time required to complete such training was a consistent concern when

determining professional learning priorities. Statements such as "limited time to focus on

what the school has determined as a need is significantly impacted by what is

mandatory", "Meeting expectations of grant requirements takes a lot of time". Other

consistencies regarding how leaders determine professional learning for their staff

included Comprehensive School Improvement Plan goal review and Kentucky State

Assessment data results. When asked how assessment literacy training fits in the professional learning for their staff participants shared the following statements: "though it is a need, there isn't enough time", "we have to focus on basic teaching skills over assessment", "assessment literacy has to be a thread in all we do, connects to everything", "we need to focus more on assessment literacy", "embedded in our CSIP and PLC work". Professional learning for administrators stems from significant personal and professional experiences. Opportunities to collaborate, reflect and analyze prior experiences with peers may lead to deeper internalization of learning (Kim, 2020).

Personalized Learning

The theme personalized learning was the second theme that emerged related to the second research question. Many times, professional learning is aligned to student learning rather than learning for adults which can result in frustration for those participating in the experience (Kelly, 2017). Six of the eight participants stated they conduct a needs assessment and survey staff when determining professional learning for their staff. All participants stated they try to focus on the individual needs of their staff when planning professional learning, but time constraints can get in the way. In addition, a consistent attempt to provide autonomy to staff was emphasized.

RQ3: What educational experiences have influenced school administrator professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

The third research question represents construct three of this study which is administrator identity (self-efficacy). Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Participants shared their experiences with assessment and their

level of confidence related to assessment literacy. Table 4 details the main themes that emerged from Initial and In-Vivo codes and the frequency of shared experiences among participants.

Table 4

Emerging Themes from In-Vivo Codes Aligned to RQ3

In-Vivo Codes	Frequency	Emerging Themes
"inspired" "Principal believed in me" "role model" "saw leadership potential in me" "undervalued as a specials teacher" "support from administration" "voice for struggling teachers" "Help teachers grow" "Bigger impact" "positive relationships with colleagues" "made assessment less scary" "working with colleagues" "PLC discussions" "support from the district" "gaining with experience" "learning what not to do" "still learning" "Co-op support" "failed kids"	43	Capacity Building
"Lack of knowledge" "No course work in college" "minimal experiences in college" "a requirement but I didn't know why" "couldn't explain the purpose to students" "I want to learn from others" "observed a great principal" "PLC's"	31	Exposure

Capacity Building

      Capacity building was the first theme to emerge in relation to the third research question connected to educational experiences that influenced self-efficacy with

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assessment literacy. The quality of mentoring experiences and prior experiences of

success influence self-efficacy levels (Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2006). Providing

experiences to be successful to observe colleagues in successful situations leads to higher

levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When participants were asked why they pursued

school administration, a consistent message was that someone believed in them, someone

invested in their professional growth, and they had a mentor that modeled for them.

Participants shared the following statements in relation to assessment literacy: "I want to

grow teachers", "I want to have a bigger impact", "I've learned what not to do so I can

support others", "my mentor made assessment less scary and I want to do that for my

teachers", "district support and mentoring has positively impacted me", "I want to help

parents understand student data", "I'm still learning" and "once I knew more, I realized I

wasn't teaching the way I should and I failed kids".

Exposure

The second theme that emerged aligned to research question 3 was exposure.

Gaps in opportunities to learn more about assessments to strengthen self-efficacy is

recognized as a need in pre-service programs and on the job experiences (Tschannen-

Moran & Hoy, 2007). Participants consistently referred to the lack of field-based

experiences in college and opportunities to see other professionals in practice. As stated

earlier, Bandura (1997) emphasizes the importance of providing experiences to be

successful and allowing opportunities for observe colleagues in successful situations.

Participants shared the following statements about their level of confidence with the

purpose and use of assessment: "as a teacher it was very low, I didn't know what I was

doing", "I didn't have a chance to observe other teachers while in college to see how they

led students to mastery", "Our PLC allows for great conversation around assessment which has strengthened my confidence", "district support has helped me realize assessment doesn't have to be intimidating", "I wish I learned that in college, it would have made me more aware of what I was supposed to be doing". "I observed a great administrator a few times when I was in my principal prep program and that changed how I thought about assessment", "I am realizing I know more than I thought, need to give myself some grace and share that knowledge".

Summary of Findings

This phenomenological study intended to gain greater understanding surrounding how administrators in Northern Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their own experiences with assessment. In addition, this study sought to gain knowledge from administrator experiences which may or may not have contributed to their confidence as leaders of assessment literacy. Shared administrator experiences may influence professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff. In this study, school administrators described their shared experiences with assessment in teacher/administrator preparatory programs, on the job, their confidence with the purpose and use of assessment, how they determine professional learning for their staff and why they pursued administration. Though each participant brought their unique experience to this study, common themes emerged.

Based on the findings, confidence in understanding assessment along with experiences with assessment and professional learning experiences connected to assessment contribute to being assessment literate. The participants reported they became more assessment literate as their confidence grew through job experience and

their knowledge expanded in the realm of assessment. Throughout the interview data, a

common message was the need for teacher and principal preparation programs to provide

more assessment related content and relevant experiences to prepare for the role. In

addition, participants commonly shared that their district provided most of the

professional learning and support with assessment which may also support the need for

preparation programs to provide more opportunities in this area. A summary of the

findings for research questions, recommendations for the profession, implications for

future research and a researcher reflection are discussed in Chapter five.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This study sought to address the following research questions:

1. What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy
    when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?

2. How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator
    assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

3. What educational experiences have influenced school administrator
    professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

This chapter includes a summary of the findings for each research question, discuss the
implications of my findings for future research, provide recommendations for the
profession, and provide a researcher reflection.

**RQ #1: What meaning do administrators give to their personal assessment literacy
when tasked with leading assessment literacy for their respective staffs?**

My first research question explored the lived experiences of school administrators
that developed their personal meaning of assessment literacy. The findings provided
insight into the understanding of what assessment literacy is, how they came to
understand that meaning and how they share that meaning with their staff. As previously
stated, for the purpose of this study, assessment literacy is an individual understanding of
the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence
educational decisions (Popham, 2018). The 75% of participants who were able to
accurately define assessment literacy per the definition had common experiences that led

to their understanding and meaning. The commonalities such as professional learning

community discussions, embedded professional learning, exposure to various

assessments, and learning by doing were rooted in their on-the-job experiences over time.

In addition, district level personnel invested in their understanding of

assessment/assessment practices by working individually with them in preparing for

assessment discussions or assessment implementation and analysis. Determining the

confidence level, depth of assessment knowledge and how the district leaders became

assessment literate is a strong research interest of mine.

 With 25% of participant statements relating assessment literacy to assessing

literacy instruction, it is evident that additional focus on assessment literacy is a need

within university preparatory programs. This is congruent with research from Stiggins

and Duke (2008) finding that if administrators were not assessment literate as teachers,

their leadership of others of assessment literacy practices will be lacking. Exposure to

opportunities and experiences related to assessment were deficits that all participants

wished they would have had prior to their current position. This exposure with Hay and

Penney's (2013) and Mertler and Campbell's (2005) research that found pre-service

assessment experiences are needed along with in depth instruction to prepared educators

to use their assessment skills to build capacity with assessment literacy. For educators

and administrators to have a better understanding of assessment literacy, universities

should provide relevant coursework and experiences highlighting assessment learning to

better understand and analyze student progress and assessment for learning to ensure they

understand how to respond to the learning of their students. I believe providing clarity on

assessment of and assessment for learning is a need in all areas of education and will strengthen educator assessment literacy.

Interviewees also voiced their lack of understanding and exposure to assessments used within the state of Kentucky. This learning curve slowed their ability to understand what those assessments were and why they were utilized. This was also shared as a concern when entering administrative positions and tasked with serving as Building Assessment Coordinators (BAC) and leading professional learning of staff. Typically, BAC's serve as coordinators of assessment which include responsibilities of developing schedules, ordering materials, and ensuring implementation of state and local assessments. BAC's have access to and participate in trainings and conferences to build their knowledge and understanding of assessment and assessment practices but often only coordinate and not lead. There needs to be a greater, intentional focus of BAC's as assessment leaders within their schools. Through focused attention as leaders, BAC's are well sutied to build capacity in their staff. That position has more access to assessment resources and knowledge through the Kentucky Department of Education than any other position in the school. They are trained in systems of assessment and the vernacular related to assessment and accountability that teachers need to be aware of and receiving professional learning about. Teachers are tasked with teaching to mastery the Kentucky Academic Standards to their students, but many times do not know the structure of the assessment they are held accountable for, nor how accountability is determined. The BAC along with the District Assessment Coordinator has the knowledge and should be actively educating teachers so they are able to better understand and actively engage in

the conversations surrounding assessment and applying their assessment literacy knowledge in professional practice.

Each participant shared individual experiences that lent to their personal meaning of assessment literacy. Through the interview process, recording direct quotes from participants and coding for themes, commonalities were revealed. Collectively, all participants shared a common message that during their teacher preparation phase, course work was minimal related to assessment and experiences to utilize their assessment knowledge was lacking. A consensus for the need to better prepare teachers with holistic assessment knowledge was evident. In addition, all participants shared a common message that their administrator preparation courses also lacked a focus on assessment and assessment leadership. Lastly, through the sharing of lived experiences, all participants shared that most of their assessment literacy knowledge came from learning through doing and from others, not college experiences. This supports the research conducted by Huber (2011) finding collegial exchanges by networking with trusted colleagues and concrete experiences, such as on the job experiences, significantly impact professional learning and putting skills into practice.

RQ #2: How have educational experiences with assessment influenced administrator assessment literacy leadership decisions for themselves and their staff?

My second research question sought to reveal how experiences in their work have supported leadership decisions related to assessment. A consistent thread with all participants was the requirements related to professional learning outside of what a school finds as a need. Significant amounts of time are needed to complete mandatory

training. This consumption amount of time leaves little opportunity for leadership to focus on personalized learning or learning deemed a priority for the school. Results from the Kentucky Summative Assessment tend to be a driving force with school improvement plans instead of flags indicated as areas of focus through a documented needs assessment. These shared experiences have collectively brought a negative feeling of leadership autonomy when planning for professional learning opportunities for their staff because they are not able to consistently make the professional learning decisions that align with what their school may need. Professional learning aligned to student assessment results instead of teacher/administrator professional growth needs may result in frustration, low engagement, and lack of satisfaction of learning (Kelly, 2017). Educators want to know they will be supported in not only growth areas that are identified as a need, but also in areas they are interested in growing in. A high appreciation for personalized learning was shared as a commonality, but collectively the participants' experiences provide little opportunity to make that happen for their staff. This is especially true around assessment literacy, though consistently communicated as a need. One participant shared their experience of participating in professional learning through the regional education cooperative and though the offerings were broad in relation to assessment, the opportunity for support and input for more specific learning experiences was recognized and appreciated.

Evidence through interviews as documented quotes from interviewees and codes/themes generated from participant lived experiences, educational experiences have influenced their leadership decisions related to assessment literacy. The participants revealed the lack of assessment related professional learning they have experienced

personally has not prepared them for leading others but learning by doing, collaborating with colleagues, partnering with district leaders and the regional education cooperative has prepared them. Again, as a researcher I wonder how prepared district leaders are in supporting administrators with their assessment literacy journey and are regional education cooperatives equipped with the knowledge of assessment practices to best support educators?

RQ #3: What educational experiences have influenced school administrator professional self-efficacy with assessment literacy?

My third research question sought to find out what experiences have shaped confidence in school leaders, specifically with assessment literacy. Participants collectively shared the reason they sought out administrative opportunities was to have a larger impact on students and that someone believed in their ability to do so. The shared experiences of having a mentor who believed in their ability to lead and modeled leadership with staff strengthened self-efficacy with these participants. Specifically, the modeling by district staff in relation to assessment literacy practices was noted by all. Exposure to more opportunities to learn more about assessment and apply that knowledge in both teacher and administrator preparation courses were echoed as a need to strengthen self-efficacy as educators move through their career. Participants also emphasized that exposure to opportunities to build capacity and apply knowledge while serving in a teaching role then ultimately a leadership role would provide support in strengthening self-efficacy in assessment literacy. School effectiveness is closely correlated with the perceptions administrators have of their self-efficacy (Iskik & Gumus, 2017).

Implications

Implications from the findings of my study may include the following:

1. Awareness for colleges and universities providing teacher and administrator preparatory programs may need to have a greater depth of focus on holistic assessment literacy knowledge, understanding and application.

2. By strengthening the assessment literacy foundational knowledge of administrators, the design and implementation of professional learning for their staff may have a greater opportunity to build capacity to enhance professional practice.

3. Providing quality, structured, intentional mentoring and collegial collaboration surrounding assessment to invest in the professional knowledge of educators and build a community of support may enhance professional practice.

All participants were school level administrators from independent school districts in the Northern Kentucky region. With only eight participants, all being white, further research may be needed to determine if the findings from my study are consistent across the state of Kentucky, the tri state and the country. Determining if the findings are limited to the region or not may provide enlightenment to colleges, universities and school districts on how to focus their support for administrators around assessment literacy leadership.

Recommendations

High stakes accountability and an emphasis on assessment of learning has led to categorizing students, schools and districts based on assessments given at a particular moment in time. The focus on assessment literacy is required more now than ever before. Teachers and school administrators deserve the opportunity to experience

creative and assessment informed learning. The Kentucky accountability system is in a

constant state of change and this fluidity has often left educators frustrated. There is a

lack of confidence in the state assessment system and traditional assessments in general

that has prompted educators to advocate for alternative options to assess student learning.

This emphasizes the need to be assessment literate to ensure we are truly looking at the

assessment for learning and not exacerbating the assessment of learning crisis.

Through shared lived experiences, the participating school administrators

revealed three specific needs that I will provide recommendations for. First universities

need to enhance teacher and administrator preparation programs to incorporate more

focused instruction and application experiences related to assessment and provide clarity

on assessment for learning and assessment of learning. A deeper dive into understanding

the purpose and application of assessment relevant to teacher and administrator

utilization, exposure to Kentucky specific assessments for relevant context, and

opportunities to observe successful assessment practices are all needed.

Second, along with teacher and administrator preparation enhancement, the need

for focused, relevant and personalized professional learning experiences designed from

an Andragogy lens may strengthen administrator assessment literacy leadership. There is

a need for on-the-job experiences related to assessment to enhance leadership capacity.

Prioritizing opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and more focus on specific

professional learning needs of individuals may create leaders with a stronger sense of

self-efficacy to lead their staff. All administrators should be required to serve as a

Building Assessment Coordinator (BAC) prior to becoming a building level principal as

they are exposed to professional learning and assessment vernacular that provide

opportunities to learn, utilize their knowledge to become more assessment literate and then to lead others.

Required or mandatory training deemed necessary by the Kentucky Department of Education take time away from districts and schools that would be used to build capacity within themselves and their staff. The Kentucky Department of Education may need to address the seemingly countless training requirements and determine a more reasonable yearly rotation for completion. In addition, all districts should be provided at least two professional learning days a month in addition to their required professional development days that are focused on personalized learning of both teachers and administrators. The additional professional learning days, specific to individual and school needs may enhance teacher/leader pedagogy and strengthen assessment literacy capacity.

The third recommendation is to incorporate a collaborative quality mentoring experience for new administrators that involves the Kentucky Department of Education, district leadership and the regional education cooperative. Components of this type of support are in place, but as a collective resource working in collaboration to support new administrators, it is not. A multi-tiered, multi-year investment in new administrators could fill the void the participants have shared through their experiences as not being prepared to be the assessment literate leader they strive to be. This approach could support the administrator holistically as a leader. With a lack of research focused on self-efficacy and leadership, the data from this approach could inform future research in administrator self-efficacy.

Researcher Reflection and Summary of Discussion

This study has provided me insight into what leaders have experienced with assessment and professional learning as teachers and school administrators that has influenced individual assessment literacy. The shared experiences from the participants have provided me with a focus for advocating for teacher and administrator preparatory program adjustments and pre-service opportunities to strengthen confidence in the world of assessment literacy. It has also encouraged me to continue advocating for quality professional learning and intentional mentoring opportunities to enhance assessment literacy self-efficacy. Future research in these areas is of interest to me as a parent, grandparent, educator, and leader to ensure school administrators can be the confident leaders they are expected and want to be.

We cannot continue to produce teachers who are not equipped to communicate and employ assessment practices to the level that is needed to ensure our students are successful. Nor can we continue to produce administrators who are not equipped with the skills needed to lead their staff to become assessment literate in a holistic sense. By doing so, we fail our students, we fail our teachers and administrators, and we allow for continued frustration relating to assessment and accountability within the profession that contributes to lowered self-efficacy with assessment literacy and professional learning leadership. Our high stakes accountability system requires this mandate: We must do better on behalf of our administrators, teachers and the students we serve.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT

UofL Institutional Review Boards

IRB NUMBER: 23.0031

IRB APPROVAL DATE: May 19, 2023

Dear School Administrator,

My name is Amy Harris from the University of Louisville. I am reaching out to you because I would like to invite you to participate in a study that I will be conducting under the supervision of Dr. Deborah Powers from the university. We are interested in learning more about your experiences with assessment and professional learning.

As part of this study, I will be interviewing school administrators about their experiences in teacher preparation courses, experiences with assessment and professional learning as teachers and administrators. If you currently are employed in the Northern Kentucky Region and have assessment and professional learning leadership experience, you meet the study's participant criteria. A five question demographic survey will be shared with you that include sex, age range, race, years of experience as a teacher and administrator Interviews will be conducted at your convenience preferably in-person or online using an approved virtual platform if in-person is not available. Interviews will include 11 semi-structured questions and be completed in 40 minutes or less depending on follow-up questions and your willingness to elaborate. Participants will receive copies of their transcripts to be used for their own personal and professional use.

I have attached the study's Informed Consent form that details the inclusion criteria, how data will be collected and confidentially reported, and the voluntary nature of this study. You can reach me by phone or email to further discuss the details of this research study. Your participation is completely voluntary. Please let me know if you have any questions. If you agree to participate in this study, please reply to this email with your availability. Thank you.

Sincerely,
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University of Louisville
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INFORMED CONSENT

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to gain greater understanding surrounding how administrators in northern Kentucky Independent School Districts describe their own experiences with assessments (assessment literacy). In addition, this study seeks to gain knowledge from administrator experiences which may or may not have contributed to their confidence as leaders of assessment literacy. Shared administrator experiences may influence professional learning decisions for themselves and their staff. The context of this study will be within the 11 Independent School Districts in the Northern Kentucky region, specifically with school level administrators. The significance of this study is to inform teacher preparation programs and current administrators of how and why individual self-efficacy and professional learning experiences may influence administrator assessment literacy.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to answer questions in an interview about assessment and professional learning experiences. Demographic information such as sex, race, age, years of teaching and administrative experiences will be collected. The interview will consist of semi-structured, open-ended questions that should take 30-40 minutes to answer. Clarifying questions may extend the time of the interview with a guaranteed end time of 50 minutes unless you otherwise choose to continue. You may decline to answer any questions that may make you uncomfortable. Preferably, interviews will take place in a single session. The interview will be in person unless otherwise decided to conduct the interview virtually through a University of Louisville approved platform. The interview will be recorded and later transcribed. The recording and transcription will be shared with you via an approved platform. Your name and place of employment will not be identified in the final report.
Your interview transcripts will not be stored and shared for future research even if identifiable private information, such as your name, district, and school are removed.

Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks other than possible discomfort in answering personal questions. All participants' information will remain confidential and participants will remain confidential in writing and reporting of this study.

Benefits

The possible benefits of the study include the opportunity to share your professional experiences related to assessment, professional learning and the contribution of those experiences to your self-efficacy.

Alternatives

Instead of taking part in this study, you could choose to recommend a colleague to the researcher to take part, or you can simply decline to take part.

Payment

You will not be paid for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. We will protect your privacy to the maximum extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public.
Your information may be shared with the following:
- The sponsor and others hired by the sponsor to oversee the research
- Organizations that provide funding at any time for the conduct of the research.
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office, Privacy Office, others involved in research administration and research and legal compliance at the University, and others contracted by the University for ensuring human participants safety or research and legal compliance
- The local research team
- Researchers at other sites participating in the study
- People who are responsible for research, compliance and HIPAA/privacy oversight at the institutions where the research is conducted
- Applicable government agencies, such as the Office for Human Research Protections

Security

The data collected about you will be kept private and secure by being located on a password protected computer operating on a secure server. All paper transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked personal office.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide not to be in this study, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. If you decide to participate in this study, you may change your mind and stop taking part at any time. If you decide to stop taking part, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits for which you qualify. You will be told about any new information learned during the study that could affect your decision to continue in the study.

Research Participant's Rights

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a research participant, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may also call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study researcher, or want to talk to someone else. The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human participants in this research study.

Questions, Concerns and Complaints

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Dr. Debbie Powers at (502) 852-6428.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24-hour hotline answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgement and Signatures

This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature and date indicate that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document though you are providing your authorizations as outlined in this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

_____

Participant Name (Please Print)   Signature of Participant   Date Signed

APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. What is your sex?
    a. Male
    b. Female

2. What is your age?
    a. 25-29
    b. 30-34
    c. 35-39
    d. 40-44
    e. 45-49
    f. 50-54
    g. 55-59
    h. 60+

3. What is your racial background?
    a. Caucasian
    b. African American
    c. Asian
    d. Hispanic
    e. Bi-racial
    f. Other _____

4. How many years experience do you have as a classroom teacher?
    a. 0-4
    b. 5-9
    c. 10-14
    d. 15-19
    e. 20+

5. How many years experience do you have as an administrator?
    a. 0-4
    b. 5-9
    c. 10-14
    d. 15-19
    e. 20+

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe what assessment literacy means to you.

2. Please tell me about your college preparation courses related to assessment.

3. What were your experiences with assessment as a teacher?

4. Describe your level of confidence as a teacher with the purpose and use of assessment.

5. Describe professional learning experiences as a teacher in relation to assessment.

6. Why did you pursue school administration?

7. Describe your experiences with assessment as a principal.

8. Describe professional learning experiences as a principal in relation to assessment.

9. Describe your level of confidence as a principal with the purpose and use of assessment.

10. Please describe how you determine professional learning for your staff.

11. How does assessment literacy training fit into your professional learning for staff?

APPENDIX E: STRUCTURED ETHICAL REFLECTION

"Assessment Literacy and Self-Efficacy" - SER Tool

Values	Developing Partnerships	Constructing research questions	Planning project/ action	Recruiting participants	Collecting data/taking action	Analyzing data/ evaluating action	Member checking	Going public (presentation and publication
Integrity	Following through with decisions made collaboratively	Keeping the question focused	Transparent work with my advisor and committee	Being transparent about the research process	Ensuring the collection process is of high standard	Ensuring data analysis follows standards of practice	Ensuring communication and follow-through	Following expected guidelines
Courage	Being brave to reach out to those who may be reluctant	Taking risks when developing questions	Being brave to ask my committee the hard questions	Taking risks with district participants I am not familiar with	Taking risks with asking the hard questions and making difficult decisions	Taking risks to dive deeper to determine next steps	Communicating with participants who may be reluctant	Stepping out of my comfort zone
Creative Thinking	Consider various ways to invest in building collaborative work	Thinking of ways to create questions that intrigue participants	Looking for ways to keep the planning and research lively	Marketing the research	Collecting and Presenting data in an engaging manner	Determining what the data says and possible unique actions	Creating engaging ways for participants to provide feedback	Keeping my focus on engaging material/ presentation
Trust	Consider that it may take time to build relationships	Ensuring the question promotes trust building	Keeping the research true to the purpose	Building relationships	Communicating data collection clearly	Communicating data results as they are	Ensuring confidentiality	Presenting accurate data
Respect	Understanding	Ensuring the	Keeping the	Keeping time	Ensuring data	Ensuring data is	Keeping	Keeping

	the time restrictions partners may have	questions are constructed to provide real world benefits to participants	research process aligned with ethical standards	related to the research manageable	collection is conducted in a timely manner	not represented in a judgmental way	communications efficient	participants confidential
Open-Mindedness	Willing to take into consideration ideas from others	Understanding that the questions may change in some form	Understanding that the process may need to be adjusted if needed	Ensuring I hear the participant's voice and consider possibilities	Taking in options that may be different from my initial thoughts that may result from data collection	Understanding the data may tell me something different than planned.	Willing to listen to feedback	Engaging in open conversations about research, data, results, process

CURRICULUM VITA

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"Good leaders must first become good servants."

~Robert K. Greenleaf

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Amy J. Harris

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"Mrs. Harris is gifted with the ability to relate to staff, students, and community members and is dedicated to her own learning and growing,
-Misty Middleton
Former Superintendent, Williamstown Ind.
Superintendent, Bellevue Ind. Schools

"Ms. Harris has shown effective leadership in many areas. Her strength has been her collaboration with staff in the promotion and maintenance of an accomplished learning climate. Student and staff safety has been her priority while building a culture of high academic, social, and behavioral expectations and positive relationships throughout the building."
-Ruth Montgomery
TLC Administrative Dean
Fayette County Schools
KDE

"One of the many things I admire about Mrs. Harris is her humble dedication to her students. She bases every decision she makes on what is best for them. Additionally, she has a growth mindset, and always encourages those she encounters to be better than they were before."
-Christy Drury
SSS Interventionist/Teacher/principal

"Her passion, insight, and ability to connect with students, parents, teachers, and community members is unparalleled. We are ALL more aware, more determined, and more confident in our efforts, as a result of her contagious passion and example. She 'builds' people."
-Susan Fugazzi
Parent/Director of Preschool/Headstart
Williamstown Independent Schools

"Amy Harris' leadership is not only essential to TLC's success, but is transformative when it matters most."
-Josh Wilson
TLC School Counselor/Social Worker

Education/Honors/Certifications

2020-current University of Louisville
- Educational Leadership and Organizational Development Doctoral program; anticipated completion: December 2023

2007-2014 Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY
- 2017 Supervisor of Instruction Certification
- 2015 School Superintendent Certification
- 2012 M.A Ed. Instructional Leadership
- 2009 M.S. Physical Education/Exercise Sport Science
- KY Athletic Trainers' Society: College/University Athletic Trainer of the Year and Graduate Scholarship

2001-2004 Kentucky State University, Frankfort, KY
- 2004 B.S. Physical Education and Health/Teaching
- Minors: Athletic Training and Athletic Coaching
- Academic Dean's List, Academic Scholarship, KSU Department Honor's Scholarship, Secretary of HPERD Major's Club, KY Athletic Trainers' Society Undergraduate Scholarship, William Exum PE Student Award

1996-1998 Northwest State Community College, Archbold, OH
- A.S. Human Services

EPSB Superintendent and Supervisor of Instruction Certification
EPSB Instructional Leadership/Principal All grades
EPSB PE/Health P-12 KY Certification
Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA), committee member
Kentucky Educational Leadership Academy (KELA)
Kentucky Women in Educational Leadership (KWEL)
Administrator/Assistant Superintendent Roundtable
NKCES Consortium member/PLC facilitator
Cognia Accreditation Team/Participant
Kentucky Leadership Academy (KLA)
The Leadership Challenge
Principal Partnership Program (P3)
PBIS/KAGAN/MTSS Trained

Experience

2023-current Kentucky Department of Education/MOA
- Education Recovery Leader

2016-2023 Williamstown Independent Schools, District
- Assistant Superintendent
- Instructional Supervisor

2015-2016 Second Street School (SSS) K-8, Frankfort Independent Schools, Frankfort, KY
- Principal

2013-2015 Pendleton County High School, Pendleton County Schools, Falmouth, KY
- Assistant Principal

2009-2013 The Learning Center @ Linlee (TLC), Fayette County Public Schools, Lex, KY
- Administrative Interventionist

2007-2009 Georgetown College, Georgetown, KY
- Assistant Certified Athletic Trainer, NAIA; all sports
Adjunct Professor

2004-2007 Paris Independent Schools, Paris, KY
- Physical Education and Health Educator
- Certified Athletic Trainer

"Mrs. Harris is a thoughtful decision maker and collaborates effectively for the best decision for students and her schools. She is fully committed to the work because it impacts kids."
-Tony Dietrich, Principal
Pendleton County HS

"Amy has both personally and professionally been a tremendous asset to the education field on various levels. Her leadership is what others strive to follow and learn from."
-Bill Welsh
Certified Athletic Trainer/Professor

"Ms. Harris is unique, inspirational and motivated to reach kids who struggle to understand success. She has a true love for at-risk youth."
-Tara Gillian
Parent

"As a leader, Amy Harris has gone above and beyond to empower me by helping me capitalize on my strengths. She has also provided support and guidance for me. One of her greatest strengths is that she is approachable and relatable."
-Lianne Mitchell
TLC Social Studies Teacher

"Amy Harris is one of the most professional people that I have ever had the opportunity to work with. She sets the example for others to follow. She is a young lady of high moral and ethical standards that is hard to find in Education today. She cares about getting the best out of each student and staff member as she always goes above and beyond what is expected of her in whatever capacity she is working in. Amy's character, personality, and how she treats others are what I respect the most about her. She continues to make a difference in many students' and teachers' lives. "
-Cary Barr
Retired Paris High School Special Education Instructor/Athletic Director

"Ms. Harris motivates people to define their individual strength(s). She values uniqueness – She empowers each teacher/student to lead based on their respective talents. Ms. Harris is truly an amazing leader!"
-Dr. Ron Chi
TLC Principal
Fayette County School

References:

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